Special Advertising Section

## A WORLD OF INFLUENCES IN AMERICA'S CARIBBEAN

The United States Virgin Islands has flown under seven flags since it was discovered by Christopher Columbus. Its three major islands—St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas—are culturally a part of the sunny and blithe West Indies, but its eclectic European veneer lends visitors a strong sense of history, even to those lured by such amenities as snorkeling, beachcombing, and golf.

Denmark dominated the territory for more than two hundred years, until the United States purchased it in 1917. The St. Croix colonial towns of Christiansted and Frederiksted offer charming byways with pastel buildings and quaint boutiques. Visitors can ride horseback past historic sugar mills and Danish plantations, and golf on spectacular courses such as the coastline-hugging Mahogany Run Golf Club. Or they can wander the pristine white-sand beaches of Cane Bay or Issacs Bay beaches. The nearly thousand-acre nature reserve at Buck Island National Reef Monument is also a leisurely catamaran ride away.

Two-thirds of St. John, the smallest, most secluded of the three isles, is a national park best characterized by its unspoiled natural beauty. The island's relaxed pace—complete with feral burros—is perfect for enjoying beaches such as **Trunk**, **Cinnamon**, and **Salt Pond** bays. Scenic **Coral Bay** has remarkable ocean views from a hilltop belvedere.

St. Thomas offers a wide-range of sophisticated dining and resorts, and there's no shortage of duty-free shopping throughout the island. Harbor town **Charlotte Amalie** may brim with the energy that comes from being a major cruise ship port, but peaceful beaches are also readily found. The crescent-shaped beach at **Magens Bay** is known for its calm and shallow waters, set among lush, subtropical greenery. Here, the U.S. Virgin Islands only *feels* like a world away. ①

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