

GENERAL INFORMATION Tortola, Virgin Gorda and Anegada make up the three main islands of the fifty which comprise the United Kingdom's Dependent Territory of the British Virgin Islands (BVI). Though Tortola is the largest and most populated it remains a quiet, peaceful island with a leisurely lifestyle. The beautiful port of Road Town is the capital of the BVI.

The BVI has been claimed at one time or another by most of the major powers who were involved in Europe's expansion into the Caribbean beginning in the early 1500s. The islands eventually came under British control in the late 1600s and despite some early legal battles as to rightful ownership, they have remained a part of the empire ever since.

The slave-based plantation economy is long gone and it was not until the last few decades of the 20th century when tourism and offshore banking combined to slowly strengthen the BVI economy. Today the British Virgin Islands are one of the most popular vacation destinations for pleasure sailing and scuba diving to be found anywhere in the Caribbean.

HISTORY As was the case with most of the islands throughout the Caribbean, by 300 AD the Virgin Islands had been settled by a peaceful Indian tribe commonly known as the Arawak. Centuries later the warlike Carib Indians killed, enslaved or drove off the Arawak and occupied the islands of the Antilles. In November, 1493 on his second voyage to the New World, Cristoforo Colombo and his fleet of 17 Spanish ships came upon a group of islands which he named in honor of the 11,000 virgin martyrs of St. Ursula. No Indians seem to have been living in the BVI when the first Europeans arrived.

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PORT EXPLORER & SHOPPING GUIDE

Tortola B. V. I.

The Spanish were not interested in the Virgin Islands. This was a strategic and costly mistake. Less than 100 miles to the east of the BVI the Spanish built La Fortaleza and the great fort of San Felipe del Morro, protecting Puerto Rico's San Juan harbor. The British saw that the Virgin Islands were in a perfect position from which to launch attacks against Spain's Treasure Fleets.

The islands were first settled by the Dutch West India Company in the early 1600s. Each time they established a foothold the Spanish came ashore, drove them off or simply wiped them out. Though the BVI did not come under the full control of the English until 1672, some of the greatest English sea captains, explorers, pirates and privateers sailed the surrounding waters and made use of the BVI. Admiral Sir John Hawkins of the Royal Navy came through the BVI numerous times in the mid 1500s as he developed the England's lucrative slave trade. One of the most famous English sailors, Sir Francis Drake, used the British Virgin Islands as a base from which to sail and wreck havoc upon the Spanish Treasure Fleets. The main channel between the islands is named in his honor.

The most notorious buccaneer to never sail the waters of the BVI was Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard. We say "never sail" because the myth of



his daring exploits in the Virgin Islands persists despite the fact there has never been a single shred of evidence to support the stories.

Throughout the years the slave-based economy of the BVI was centered on cotton and sugarcane. After many violent revolts, in August 1834 the slaves were emancipated. However, it was the numerous devastating hurricanes in the mid 1800s which literally destroyed the plantations and the island's economy. Combined with the falling price

of sugar, the English planters basically abandoned the BVI to former slaves. Many of their descendants still own much of the land to this

The British Virgin Islands are one of the United Kingdom's Dependent Territories, a leading center for "off shore" banking and one of the most popular yachting destinations in the Caribbean.



PLACES OF INTEREST

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Road Town is easy enough to stroll, small enough to be inviting and vibrant enough to make it interesting and fun. As a harbor town visitors can admire many different types of boats; from inter-island ferries and sleek sailboats to monstrous mega-yachts. The center of town has some interesting wooden homes and businesses beautifully painted in the traditional bright tones of the West Indies. This is a wonderful place with people who are sincerely friendly.

The J.R. O'Neal Botanic Garden is just north of the waterfront Z shopping area. Visitors enjoy a tropical setting with beautiful flowers, majestic palms and towering banyan trees. There are paths, ponds and fountains which combine to make this an attractive garden oasis.

The Old Government House Museum is on the waterfront drive just past the ferry terminal. It was the former residence of the Territory's Governors. Furnished in the style of the 1900's, there are maritime displays and stamp collections.

Other museums within Road Town are the Virgin Islands Folk Museum on Old Main Street which contains artifacts from pre-Columbian and plantation life and the famous shipwreck of the Rhone; and the Old Sugar Works Museum which displays artifacts from the plantation era along with art and craft exhibitions.

Beyond Road Town

Fort Burt (now a hotel) was originally built by the Dutch in the 4 1600s and strengthened by the British in the 1700s. Overlooking the Road Town harbor, the view is spectacular.

K Nanny Cay is a short distance southwest along the coast fr Road Town. It is a marina village with a number of cafés a shops in addition to bike, boat and water-sports rentals.

Sage Mountain National Park was established in 1964. This **O** the highest point of land in all the Virgin Islands. The park is very large but what it may lack is size it more than makes up for w spectacular, panoramic views of the surrounding islands.

Smugglers Cove is located at the far western tip of Tortola. I not easily reached but the local taxi drivers know it well. On the hideout of pirates the water here is clear and the snorkeling superb.

O Long Bay has been improperly named. It should be called "Long • white sand, tranquil water, great swimming and swaying pal Bay". Too long?

9 Apple Bay is one of Tortola's best surfing and boogie-boarding beaches

Cane Garden Bay offers beachgoers many water sports a activities. When you finally need a break there are some n little bars and cafés along the beach.

Brewers Bay is named for the rum distilleries which w here many years ago. Many ruins of the old sugarcane plan tions are still visible. This beach has fantastic snorkeling.

Josiahs Bay Beach has plenty of room to spread out and so up the sun. A bar on the beach offers cold drinks.

Lambert Bay (or Elizabeth Bay) has bright white sand a) shade palms. This is one of the most beautiful beaches on T tola. It's a popular family beach and a great site for a picnic.

SHORE EXCURSIONS To make the most of your visit to Tort we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For m information, please consult your Shore Excursion Order Form or c tact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to ta with you only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

LOCAL CUSTOMS Bargaining: Prices are fixed in restaurants a stores. Major credit cards are widely accepted. Some local vendors the open-air markets may bargain with shoppers just for the fun of it

Tipping: A 10-15 % tip is customary.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES As is common throughout much of the Caribbean, local cuisine in the BVI is a combination of European (primarily English, Spanish, French and Dutch), West African and East Indian. When the early explorers, sailors and settlers came to the Antilles they brought their local recipes for beef, pork and salt fish (cured fish was a necessity on long sea voyages). The same thing occurred when slaves from West Africa were transported to the islands. They brought their love of such foods as beans vams, okra, and greens. Following the abolition of slavery, workers from the East Indies came to the region. Their favorite recipes and spices came along with them. It is this combination of styles and techniques, flavors and foods which make up the West Indian cuisine which we know today.

The popularity of seafood in the BVI is understandable. There is a fishing zone known as the "North Drop" located off the coast of the

om and s is	island of Anegada, north of Tortola. The combination of currents and very deep water draws a wide variety of fish to this area. Tuna, marlin, and Mahi-Mahi are a few of the many "blue water" fish which make it to the grills of local families and restaurants. Other popular selections
not vith	in the BVI include lobster and conch. When West Indian dishes are combined with the amazing variety of fresh tropical fruits it all adds up to a wonderful dining experience.
t is nce g is	Rum has been produced in the BVI since the 1700s. If you are not a rum drinker and you decide to try a fresh fruit rum punch take one thing into consideration. The drinks are delicious, however, the rum is very smooth and the fruit will disguise the strength of the alcohol.
ng, ms	SHOPPING The primary shopping areas in Road Town are along Main Street, Waterfront Drive and Wickham Cay. Visitors will find a wide variety of quaint shops, boutiques, cafés and restaurants.
ing	LOCAL CURRENCY The U.S. dollar is the official currency throughout the BVI.
and ice	POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE The main Post Office in Road Town is located on Sir Olva Georges Plaza, near Main Street.
ere	Dial the following access numbers to use a personal calling card:
ita-	AT&T: 1.800.225.5288 MCI: 1.800.888.8000
oak	TOURIST INFORMATION There is a Tourist Information Center (BVI Tourist Board) near the pier.
and `or-	TRANSPORTATION Car rentals, taxis, bicycles and scooters are available for rent. Keep in mind, as drivers do in England, in the BVI driving is on the left.
ola ore on- ake	LANGUAGE English is the official language of the British Virgin Islands
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