

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 day.

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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1 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.

2 The J.R. O'Neal Botanic Garden is just north of the waterfront 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.

3 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

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

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

6 Sage Mountain National Park was established in 1964. This is the highest point of land in all the Virgin Islands. The park is not very large but what it may lack in size it more than makes up for with spectacular, panoramic views of the surrounding islands.

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 Lambert Bay (or Elizabeth Bay) has bright white sand and shade palms. This is one of the most beautiful beaches on Tortola. It's a popular family beach and a great site for a picnic.

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

LOCAL CUSTOMS Bargaining: Prices are fixed in restaurants and stores. Major credit cards are widely accepted. Some local vendors in 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 yams, 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

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 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.

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.

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.

LOCAL CURRENCY The U.S. dollar is the official currency throughout the BVI.

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE The main Post Office in Road Town is located on Sir Olva Georges Plaza, near Main Street.

Dial the following access numbers to use a personal calling card:

AT&T: 1.800.225.5288

MCI: 1.800.888.8000

TOURIST INFORMATION There is a Tourist Information Center (BVI Tourist Board) near the pier.

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.

LANGUAGE English is the official language of the British Virgin Islands