

Scuba diving the wall at Cane Bay

Scuba diving the wall at Cane Bay is a must do on St. Croix. Easily accessible from shore, Cane Bay is host to an amazing diversity of sea life, which can be enjoyed by divers of all skill levels. Caribbean reef sharks, hawksbill and green sea turtles, southern stingray, and even the occasional manta ray or dolphin can be seen along the wall.

Cane Bay has so much to offer that it cannot all be enjoyed in one dive. Strewn about the reef and seafloor are numerous anchors that date as far back as the 1700s. Many of the anchors can be easily located and explored. It is also worth searching for and riding Seabiscuit, a carousel horse, located in 26 feet of water.

Coral restoration efforts are also underway in the protected waters of the bay. Fields of large “coral trees” rise out of the sandy bottom in two locations, and aid in the growth of staghorn coral. Compact A-frame structures along with tables and PVC tubes can also be seen helping to facilitate the growth of elkhorn coral and different types of brain coral.

There is often a mild surface current running along the reef from east to west, and there is typically a little surge rocking back and forth from the beach. However, visibility along the reef is generally stellar making for an unforgettable experience.

Several dive shops frequent Cane Bay regularly, but the [Sweet Bottom Dive Center](#) is located on the opposite side of the road from the beach and is right on site. They can assist with anything from gear rental to guided dives.

The wall at Cane Bay can be explored in numerous ways, but two of the most common are diving along the wall to the west and exploring the shallow water reefs to the east.

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Diving West Along the Wall

This is the quintessential dive at Cane Bay and provides an opportunity to experience many of the main highlights Cane Bay has to offer. The best way to begin any dive here is to enter the water from the beach on the west side of the old boat ramp. The area is typically sandy with some coral rubble, and easy to walk through with good booties. The surf is generally low and breaks a few yards from

shore in three to four feet of water.



Discover the awe-inspiring topography of the wall, the vastness of the deep blue ocean, and ancient anchors scattered around the seafloor.

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 Three Anchor Chute



 Lettuce Coral Along The Wall



 The Wall



Green Moray Eel



After getting past the surf zone, don some fins and surface kick straight out to the training buoy. The buoy is located in 26 feet of water roughly 250 yards from the beach directly out from the boat ramp. It's a great point of reference for beginning the dive and also offers a visual reference for divers to orientate on while descending to the sandy bottom.

Take some time to explore the patch reefs on the seafloor around the training buoy then head north. The sandy bottom quickly starts to slope down to 80 feet, while large spur and groove coral reef formations come into view. The spurs are massive geomorphic ridges of coral that have large sand channels or grooves between them. The formations rise up 40 to 50 feet from the seafloor and create a dramatic awe-inspiring landscape teeming with fish.

Three Anchor Chute is one groove to the north of the training buoy that actually has six ancient anchors. Three of the anchors can be easily explored in 70 feet of water directly next to a towering ridge of coral. Leaving the anchors and continuing north a few yards, the coral ridges narrow and frame the entrance to the abyss as the sand channel drops off. The wall at this point descends thousands of feet. Deep blue water is everywhere. Take a moment and soak in the vastness of the ocean.

Continuing the dive to the west provides an excellent opportunity to explore the wall which is covered in leaf, plate, and sheet corals as well as sponges, sea fans, and soft corals. Keep an eye out for

caribbean reef sharks below as they are frequently spotted between 90 and 120 feet along the wall. Spiny lobster and moray eels also call the wall home and can often be found in the cracks and crevices between the corals.

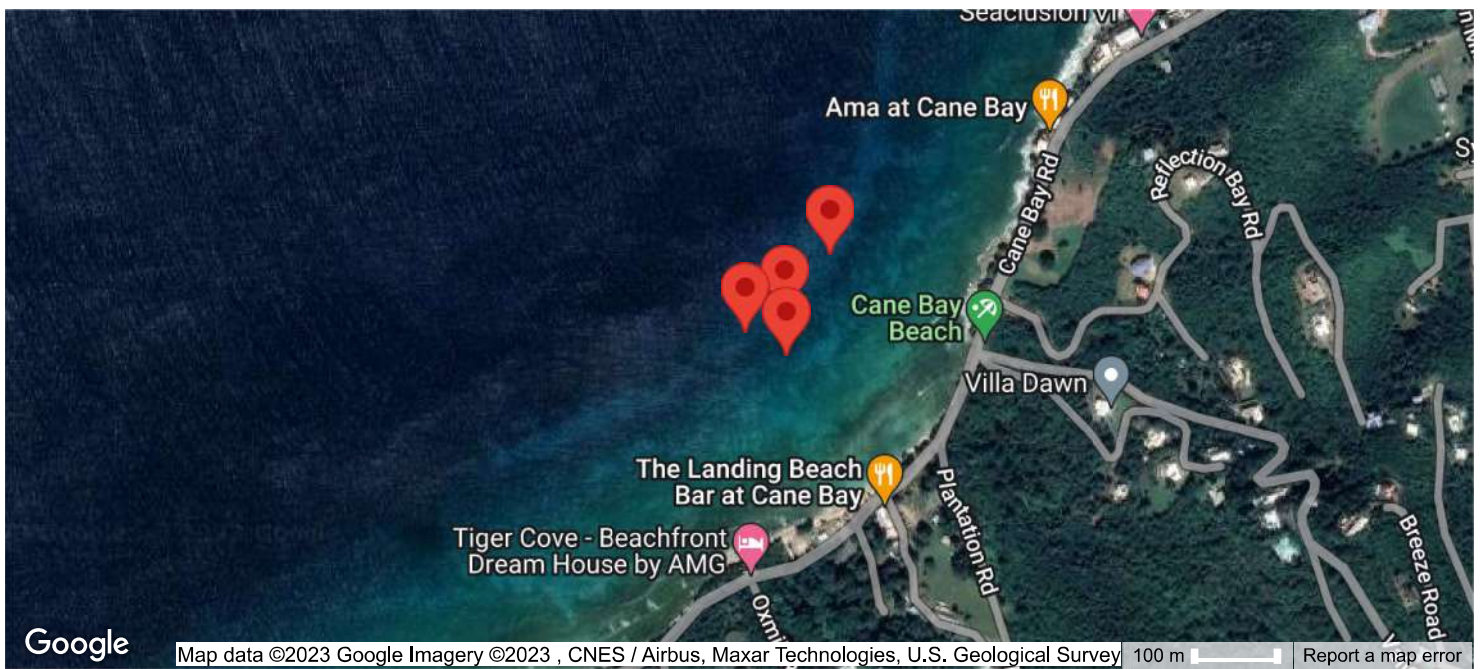
Halfway through the dive turn back to the south and head up another sand channel towards shallower water. Goatfish and southern stingrays can often be seen digging in the sand searching for a meal.

Turning back to the east and continuing the dive in 30 to 40 feet of water provides an excellent opportunity to take a closer look at the reef while heading back to the training buoy. Peer under coral overhangs for squirrelfish and soldierfish taking shelter in the shadows, watch for stoplight and rainbow parrotfish cruising around the reef and be sure to keep an eye out for sea turtles. The visibility is often good enough to also spot a glimpse of one of the coral nurseries in the sand area to the south of the reef.

Once back at the training buoy head south towards the boat ramp. Look for yellow head jawfish and garden eels in the sand, and be sure to look for octopus in the rocks before surfacing.

Exploring the Shallow Water Reefs to the East

This is a great dive to explore some different areas unique to Cane Bay. Enter the water for this dive in the same spot as the dive for the wall, to the west of the old boat ramp. Surface swim out to the training buoy and descend down to 26 feet. Take a few minutes and check out the patch reefs near the pin for the buoy, then head east northeast. Standing alone in the sand only a few yards from the last patch reef before the sand flats is Seabiscuit, a carousel horse. Take a moment to gallop along with him, scratch his mane, and head due east across the sand flats.



Seabiscuit, the coral nursery, an encrusted anchor, ancient chain, and pillar coral make Cane Bay east a great place to explore.

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 Training Buoy and Seabiscuit



 Coral Encrusted Anchor



 Coral Restoration



 Old Chain



The sand flats may initially look void of life but take a closer look. Fields of garden eels make their home in the sand and dance with the movement of water. They're shy, so take care when approaching otherwise they'll get spooked and disappear into the sand. Conch are also frequently spotted slowing cruising around the sandy bottom. Look for their trail, and you'll be sure to find one.

After a short 40-foot swim along the sandy bottom keep an eye out for the shank of an ancient anchor sticking straight out of the sand near a small patch reef. The flukes of the anchor are entirely buried in the sand and the shank is encrusted with coral, but the shape is recognizable.

One of the coral nurseries can also be found a short distance from the anchor. To locate it alter course slightly to the east northeast and keep an eye out for the towering coral trees growing staghorn coral. Also, look for staghorn or elkhorn coral that has been outplanted on the reef near the coral trees.

One of the shining stars of the reef in this area is a large pillar coral to the southeast of the anchor. The patch reef including the pillar coral is home to numerous species of fish including french grunts and yellowtail snapper.

Circling back to the west southwest completes the loop of the shallow nearshore patch reef at Cane Bay. However, keep a keen eye out for an old chain that is in approximately 15 feet of water. The huge links blend in almost entirely with the rocky bottom after years of laying on the seafloor.

Scuba diving Cane Bay is an unforgettable experience. Between the awe-inspiring topography of the wall, the vastness of the deep blue ocean, the ancient anchors scattered around, Seabiscuit, and the coral nurseries, there is something for everyone. Each and every dive at Cane Bay is unique and never disappoints.