

# Frederiksted Pier

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## Overview

Description

Hang with us, this is a loooong description. The Frederiksted Pier is one of the most popular dive sights on St. Croix for a variety of reasons. First, it is an easy shore entrance and exit making it accessible 24 hours a day unless a cruise ship is in. Secondly, by and large it is a shallow dive, the majority of the pier is in 45 feet or less. That being said deeper water is available as well, down to 90 feet or so. Lastly, and most importantly, is the sea life. You can see more in one dive at the pier than any other dive sights on St. Croix, or the Caribbean. Year round turtles, morays, sting rays, eagle rays, octopuses, squid, sea horses, frog fish and more are seen on a regular basis. It is also a great place to find some of the rarer creatures such as red lipped batfish, flying ganards, and coronet fish. If you like snails, slugs and nudibranchs lettuce sea slugs, seaslugs, sea goddesses, seahares, leather backed platydoris, aeolid nudibranchs, top snails, tuns, cowries, helmets and more can be found for those with a discerning eye. For crustation lovers a host of shrimp, crabs and lobsters are abundant. Mantis Shrimp, cleaner shrimp, camel shrimp, banded coral shrimp, sexy shrimp, pea crabs, nimble spray crabs, decorator crabs, teardrop crabs, sponge crabs, box crabs, clown crabs, spiny lobster, spotted lobster, and slipper lobster are just a few of the species that can be seen there any time of year. During the spring and early summer months the pier is abound with juvenile fishes, baby spotted drum, burrfish and trunk fish are always crowd favorites. Large bait balls of silversides tend to hang out under the pier during the summer months, getting smaller every day as tarpon and larger jacks deplete their numbers. While octopuses can be seen year round for those visiting in the winter months dozens of octopuses can be seen any given night during their mating season. The pier is so large that it can be dove in a variety of different ways and you will assuredly need more than one tank if you want to see it all. The main pier, or the part you can walk on runs from 45 feet at the deepest end and goes all the way to shore. Under the pier you will see gorgeous columns, that resemble modern art with all the twisting colorful sponges that run from the water line all the way to the sandy bottom. It is spectacular during the day, but at night, aided by dive lights, the colors really pop. These sponges are home to dozens of creatures of all shapes, sizes and colors. The floor, though largely sandy, is also scattered with rubble fields and debris piles making happy hidey holes for all manner of crustations and fishes, and be sure to check the rope sponges growing in the sand for sea horses and juvenile long lure frog fish. The retaining bolders along the south side of the pier are home to large schools of colorful fish wrasse, parrot fishes, butterfly fishes, tang and chub swim all around by day. At night the crabs, shrimp, lobster, eels and ocotpuses take over coming out of their holes to hunt and scavage. Running parallel to the North of the pier a long rubble pile can be found. While not as colorful as the pier itself, it is a great place to search for sea horses, frog fish, bat fish, flying ganards, peacock flounder, octopus dens and all sorts of eels. Also keep your eyes out for treasure, chainey and old bottles can still be found. To the south of the pier is an area called the dolphins, which has nothing to do with the marine mammals. Instead these large standing stones with tie ups for the roll/rolls are supported by beautifully colored pillars. These pillars are much smaller in diameter compared to the colums supporting the pier, but are packed much closer together

in an A-frame sort of shape making for beautiful swim throughs. The dolphins are part of the original Fredericksted Pier and quite a bit older than the current pier. Because of this their sponge growth is even denser than that under the pier, and some of the columns sport impressive brain corals riddled with christmas tree worms. Between the two dolphins you can find large concrete slabs that seem to be arranged rather haphazardly. These were part of the original pier that was destroyed during Hurricane Hugo in 1989. After being submerged for over 30 years they have grown beautiful sponge coverings while providing nooks and crannies beneath them for sealife such as turtles, eels and rays to nap. Around the second dolphin you can almost always find a couple turtles hanging out in or around the turtle cleaning station. A little beyond the dolphins is an area dredged out for the cruise ships. While the area itself is largely devoid of sponges or corals, save the rare rope sponge, the edges of it have good sponge coverage and lots of rocky holes. Keep your eye out for scorpion fish, seahorses, octopus dens, flounder in the sand, and burried heart urchins. The very end of the pier, beyond where you can walk, drops off sharply from 45 feet and continues to 90 feet or so at the last columns. Without a boat it takes a while to surface swim out there, but it is worth it. Large healthy barrel sponges, are a high light in this area. While the seahorses and frog fish tend to stay in the shallower waters you can usually find a school of spade fish hanging out. There are also more large slabs of concrete covered in sponge growth. Make sure to watch your air and bottom time so you don't end up surface swimming back.

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### **Location**

17.71420, -64.88482

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### **Dive Types**

Wreck, Beach, Reef

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