



Buck Island Reef

National Monument
Virgin Islands

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/ [Things To Do \(https://www.nps.gov/buis/planyourvisit/things2do.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/buis/planyourvisit/things2do.htm) / [Outdoor Activities](#)

Outdoor Activities



There are a variety of activities for park visitors to enjoy while at the park, including swimming, snorkeling, SCUBA diving, daily boat trips, hiking, bird watching, sunbathing and picnicking.

Snorkeling Beginners can snorkel Buck Island’s coral grottoes with advice and a short lesson from the boat crew. Guides take six visitors at a time on the underwater trail – closed sunset to sunrise – whose signs tell what you see. Maximum water depth in the grottoes is 12 feet. Always snorkel with a buddy and stay in front of moored boats. Scuba diving is allowed in the Monument only at two designated scuba moorings; 30- to 40-foot shallow dives go through haystack formations of elkhorn coral.

Private Boating Taking your own boat to Buck Island? Get information and [anchoring permit \(http://cms.nps.doi.net/buis/planyourvisit/upload/AnchoringPermit-Requirementsformupdated.pdf\)](http://cms.nps.doi.net/buis/planyourvisit/upload/AnchoringPermit-Requirementsformupdated.pdf) at the National Park Service Visitor Contact Station in Fort Christiansvaern, in Christainsted. Vessels over 42 feet should anchor at West Beach and visit the underwater trail by dinghy.

Picnic Areas At West Beach and Diedrichs Point there are picnic tables, charcoal grills, and vault toilets. There is also a 20x20-foot shelter at Diedrichs

Point. Take all trash off the island with you. Firewood may not be gathered in the park. Do not empty ashes from the grill on the ground; grease attracts biting ants. Put cooled ashes in container/plastic bag and take them off the island. If you must leave ashes before they are cooled, extinguish them with sand and leave them in the grill.

Walking Trails A marked hiking trail from either Diedrichs Point or the West Beach picnic area crosses the island (45 minutes at a walking pace); please note that this trail is fairly strenuous. Wear shoes and a shirt and bring plenty of drinking water. From West Beach the trail goes through a low-lying beach forest and over gentle hillsides covered in turpentine and pigeon-berry trees up to the island crest. A side trail to an observation point provides a stunning overview of the coral reefs and darker, deeper waters farther out, as the island’s underwater shelf falls in the Puerto Rican trench, 5,000 feet deep. The main trail continues down the southern side of the island, with several switchbacks through frangipani trees, organ pipe cactus, and bromeliads. It ends at Diedrichs Point, with an easy walk back along the shoreline to West Beach.

For those wishing a gentler stroll, the West Beach trail offers an easy hike through a manchineel forest to giant tamarind and sandpiper trees. Return via the water's edge to the picnic area.

Remember, Buck Island Reef National Monument is a marine protected area. Visitors are not allowed to remove anything from the monument, including rocks, shells, plants, and artifacts. Fishing and collecting activities are prohibited throughout the entire monument.

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