



Scuba Diving US Virgin Islands

[Follow US Virgin Islands](#)

[108 Dive Sites](#)

[21 Dive Shops](#)

[6 Dive Logs](#)

Part 1: Overview of Scuba Diving in US Virgin Islands

The Virgin Islands of the United States, commonly referred to as the US Virgin Islands or USVI, are an insular or island territory of the USA. The US Virgin Islands are made up of the three main islands: St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas. There are also small islands and cays of the main three islands, especially between St. John, and St. Thomas.

Tourism is the primary economic drive in the US Virgin Islands, including great scuba diving sites and scuba dive shops. The production of rum is the second top economic driver on the islands. The largest selling rum in the islands is Cruzan Rum Distillery. Tour the distillery on St. Croix, found near the center of the island. There are also some great golf courses and nature preserves on the islands.

Weather is fairly consistent year round in the Virgin Islands. As of writing this article, it is early March and the current air temperature in St. Croix is 78 degrees F with clear sunny skies. June, July and August tend to be the warmest months of the year on the islands with temperatures staying in the mid 80's. The weather is gorgeous and does not get too hot. The lowest recorded temperature ever recorded was on St. Thomas 52 degrees F in November 1999.

The water temperatures off the US Virgin Islands are ideal for scuba diving without a wetsuit. In summer the water temperature reaches about 83 degrees F and in winter drops just about four degrees to lows around 79 degrees F – no complaints here. Another great part about the Virgin Islands for scuba and beach lovers is that there really is not an official rainy season, it rains a bit more in the fall months and in May and August, but do not let this small factor determine your trip dates. The majority of severe hurricanes that have hit the islands in the past occur in August and September, but can occur as early as June. Hurricane season is a factor to consider, going to the islands in early summer rather than late summer gives divers a better chance of calm and clear seas.

Part 2: Dive Sites, Marine Life & Environment in US Virgin Islands

Some of the best scuba diving sites in the US Virgin Islands are off the southern shore of St. Thomas. There are some shore dives but the dive sites that are about to be described all require a boat and an experienced dive captain to get to where you need to be.

The best beginner dive sites off St. Thomas include Turtle Bay at Buck Island. This is a great dive site for those who are new to scuba or are freshening up on their scuba skills after too many years of dry fin syndrome. The depth at the Turtle Bay dive site is just 20 feet and is also ideal for snorkelers. There you will see green sea turtles, spotted eagle rays, and many schools of reef fish. Out from Buck Island there is the dive site known as Dive Flag. This is another dive where beginners will

do well with water depths, maxing out at just 65 feet. There are many nurse sharks at this sight and amazing fish to spot along this wall diving site.

There are also amazing wreck dives that even beginner and intermediate level scuba divers can explore off St. Thomas. Not far off the central southern coast of St. Thomas is the dive site known as Navy Barges. There are 4 wrecks here and some are shallow and safe enough locations for beginners. These wrecks were WWII barges that later sank in 1961, offering abundant environs for marine life and reef formation. The wrecks are famous for the octopuses that inhabit the nooks and crannies of the wrecks' structures.

For the more advanced divers or experienced intermediate level scuba divers, there are a couple dive sites off St. Thomas worth mentioning. The dive site called French Cup is great for intermediate divers and reaches a maximum depth of just 85 feet. This dive site is fair out from the mainland and close to the big walls that drop off, so the fish are large and the current can be stronger than more sheltered dive sites. Another dive site for advanced divers not to miss is the wreck WIT Shoal, at a maximum depth of 95 feet. This wreck is amazing and has five levels for scuba divers to explore. This 300 plus foot vessel will intrigue even experienced wreck divers. There is also the wreck dive of a fatal crash from 1997 of a Cessna Multi Engine Airplane; the dive site bears the same description name. In nearly 100 feet of water the Cessna rests in clear, peaceful waters with lobsters inhabiting the space under her wings. There are also many spots off St. Thomas to drift dive along its spectacular walls. High visibility and warm waters are famous off St. Thomas.

While there are great dive sites out beyond St. John's shores, I want to focus on the amazing shore dive sites that are absolutely ideal for intermediate level scuba divers who are ready to swim offshore with their buddies and explore on their own. Check out Haulover Bay on the East end of St. John. You can swim out from shore for about 100 yards to find a 60-foot mini-wall that is great to explore. Another shore dive is from Kiddle Bay in Coral Bay where you can swim out and dive through some arches and around nice coral formations. There are nurse and reef sharks as well as many schools of fish and lobsters prowling around the reef.

The largest of the three main US Virgin Islands is St. Croix, and the big island is famous for its spectacular wall dives. You can arrange drift dives to explore the steep, huge 1000-foot plus drop offs, or explore the many canyons and smaller walls that surround the island. One such deep drop off dive site is off the northern shore known as Salt River Canyon; there is a designated East Wall and a West Wall dive site. This historic site is where Christopher Columbus moored 17 ships on his second trip to the Americas. Make your way west along St. Croix's northern shore dive Cane Bay, a dive site ideal for both shore diving and boat trips out to explore its steep walls.

Part 3: Dive Shops, Airports & Logistics of Diving in US Virgin Islands

Getting to and from the US Virgin Islands usually includes a flight into one of the major international airports. For US citizens flying into the USVI there is no US

passport required. However, those traveling from Mexico, Central or South America, or elsewhere are required to show a passport.

Most people fly into either Henry E. Rohlsen Airport (STX) near Christiansted, St. Croix or Cyril E. King Airport (STT) near Charlotte Amalie in St. Thomas. There are many direct flights from US cities and from San Juan, Puerto Rico. There are hop flights that are in the air less than 20 minutes between St. Croix and St. Thomas. The island hopping flights that can easily be arranged last minute or as a reservation. Many tourists first visit the US Virgin Islands on cruise ships, porting and exploring for only a day. There are great scuba day trips that can be arranged in that short of time. Most who visit the islands for only a day fall in love and especially want to come back to stay for an extended time to explore the three islands, especially sweet St. John.

Scuba diving is very popular in the US Virgin Islands including St. Croix, the largest of the three major islands. Some of the top dive shops in St. Croix offering instruction and day trips for scuba divers around the islands include St. Croix Ultimate Bluewater Adventures, Dive Experience and the shop called N2 The Blue. Each of these shops delivers beginner level scuba divers up through advanced scuba divers to St. Croix's amazing wall dives and scattered reef dive sites around the island. There is great shore diving available under instruction from most dive shops and also boat diving and trips to St. Croix's ship wreck dive sites. For those arriving into St. Croix for the day on a cruise ship, you can also arrange to scuba with some of the local shops instead of organizing through your cruise staff if you want to get some personal scuba instruction or dive in a less popular dive site that only the local instructors know.

The dive shops that are worth checking out on St. Thomas include AAA St Thomas Diving Club and Aqua Marine St Thomas. Both scuba shops offer great access to the shipwreck dive sites offshore from St. Thomas as well as the many dive sites found, for the most part, off the southern shores of St. Thomas. There is a nice range of beginner, intermediate and advanced dive trips available through both of the above mentioned dive shops. Both shops also rent out high-tech equipment and offer instruction and certification programs for all levels of scuba diving experience.

St. John is the smallest of the three major US Virgin Islands but in many ways is the prettiest island, offering some amazing shore diving possibilities and reef dive sites. There are several scuba shops that are worth organizing a scuba trip through on St. John. Check out Cruz Bay's Low Key Watersports. Low Key offers scuba trips as well as snorkel trips, water sport rentals including kayaks, parasailing, and boat rentals for the adventuresome. Low Key is a great dive shop to rent scuba gear and tanks from. Renting gear is a great way for advanced level scuba divers to shore dive on their own. St. John is well worth staying on for several days to experience this amazing island's beauty and laid back vibe.