

The Complete Guide to Scuba Diving in St. Thomas, USVI

Scuba diving in St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands offers underwater explorers unique dive sites found nowhere else in the world.



Welcome to the US Virgin Islands! And specifically, St. Thomas! If you're visiting (*or planning to visit*) the beautiful island, I highly recommend reading all about the amazing scuba diving St. Thomas has to offer!

The US Virgin Islands has everything you'd want in a Caribbean dive destination and more. Lively coral reefs, immense biodiversity, boisterous shipwrecks, and most of all, unique underwater architecture found nowhere else in the world. World-class dive shops and dive charters are sprinkled throughout the island and offer ample opportunities to enjoy a full week diving in the Caribbean.

The rest of this page will go into detail about everything you need to know for a successful scuba diving trip to St. Thomas in the United States Virgin Islands. We'll cover the reasons you should visit, the best dive shops, the top dive sites, marine life you might see, and some can't miss dives. Enjoy!

Table Of Contents

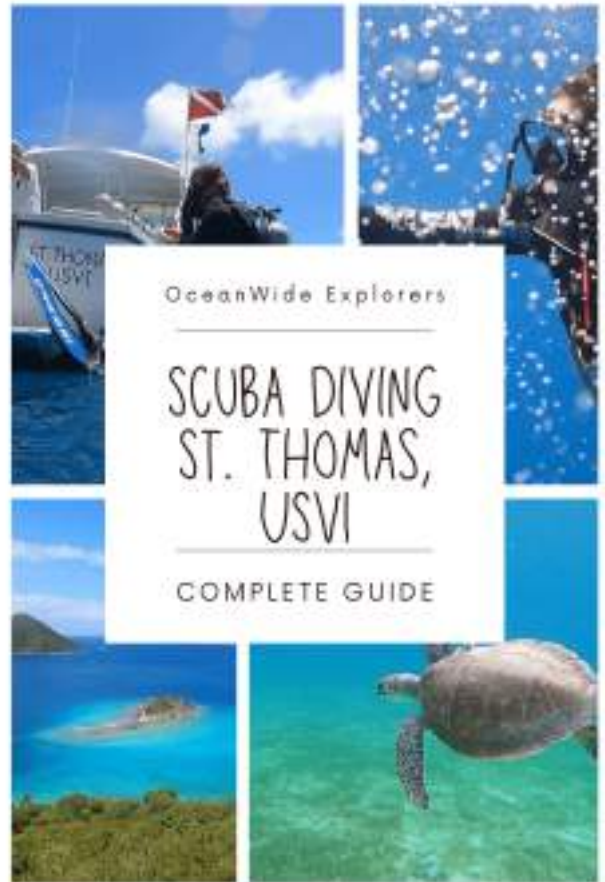
- [Reasons to Dive in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands](#)
- [Dive Sites in St. Thomas](#)
- [Dive Charters and Shops in St. Thomas](#)
- [Bucketlist Dives in St. Thomas](#)
- [Marine Life in the US Virgin Islands](#)
- [Dive Conditions](#)
- [Weather in St. Thomas](#)
- [Outdoor Activities / Things to Do](#)
- [Restaurants and Bars](#)
- [St. Thomas Facts & Info](#)
- [Where to Stay](#)
- [Useful Travel Articles](#)
- [When is the best time of year for scuba diving in St. Thomas and the Virgin Islands?](#)
- [Where can you dive in the US Virgin Islands?](#)
- [Is scuba diving good in St. Thomas?](#)
- [Which USVI is best for scuba diving?](#)



Dive Guide

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SCUBA DIVING ST. THOMAS, USVI

COMPLETE GUIDE

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Best of Scuba Diving in St. Thomas

Reasons to Dive in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands



Green sea turtles are a common sight while diving in the Virgin Islands

As with anywhere (*even the worst places*), there are always **more** reasons TO dive somewhere than to not dive. The same holds particularly true for St. Thomas.

The scuba diving surrounding the island is remarkable for a whole litany of reasons:

- **Thriving Coral Reefs.** Hurricanes Maria and Irma took their toll in 2017, but the coral reefs are fighting back with critically endangered Elkhorn coral leading the comeback.
- **Frequent Megafauna Sightings.** It's not uncommon to spot Caribbean Reef Sharks, Green Sea Turtles, and an Eagle Ray all within one dive.
- **Unique Underwater Architecture.** Millions of years of volcanoes, earthquake activity, and geological change have created a unique underwater landscape found nowhere else.
- **Crystal Blue Water.** The glimmering, turquoise waters of the Caribbean create strikingly clear visibility while scuba diving.

Dive Sites in St. Thomas



Snapping some pics of the Elkhorn Coral growth

- **Cow & Calf Rocks.** The two most famous dive sites in St. Thomas are remnants of ancient lava tubes producing adrenaline-inducing swim-throughs and scenic ledges.
- **French Cap.** A small islet 6 miles south of St. Thomas with a staggering pinnacle projecting upwards from depths of 100 feet.
- **Ledges of Little St. James.** Beneath the shadow of a troubled island is a picturesque series of underwater ledges teeming with marine life.
- **Cartanza Senora.** Popular wreck and reef combo for Discover Scuba Diving programs and seasoned scuba veterans.

Every dive destination has a series of elite dives. You know, the cream of the crop. Crème de la crème. The types of dive sites you simply can't find anywhere else in the world.

In St. Thomas, we have a few of them. The unique underwater landscape and geological structure of the area spawn some incredible dive sites.

Dive Charters and Shops in St. Thomas



Dive day with Red Hook Dive Center on the East End of St. Thomas

As one of the most popular cruise ports in the world and the top Caribbean destination for Americans, you won't find any shortage of dive operators on St. Thomas.

But pay attention, different dive operators cater to different crowds. If you're unsure which is right for you, read our full article on the best dive shops on St. Thomas.

- **Red Hook Dive Center.** Largest dive retailer and best dive charter on the island (*Not to be big-headed but I'm the head Boat Captain here and I'd have to say we run a pretty good show!*)
- **Admiralty Dive Center.** Only dive shop on the island making consistent trips to popular wreck sites on the west end of St. Thomas.
- **Coki Beach Dive Center.** Top dive center on the East End for beach

- **Aqua Marine Dive Shop.** Top-quality operation making frequent trips to Buck Island and southside dive sites.

diving on Coki Point.

Bucketlist Dives in St. Thomas



Marine Life in the US Virgin Islands



- **[Northside St. Thomas](#)**. Rough Point off of Outer Brass Island and Hans Lollick provide unique rock structures and underwater bluffs.
- **Buck Island**. The dives surrounding the small island just off St. Thomas are some of the best in the Caribbean.
- **Lionfish Hunting**. Deep coral reefs are filled with invasive lionfish. Inquire with one of the dive shops for a hunting trip.
- **Cow & Calf**. Swim-throughs. Ledges. Canyons. Incredible marine life. Need I say more?

Dive Conditions

- **Average Water Temperature**. 81 °F with lows of 78°F in the winter and highs of 83°F in the summer.
- **Ocean Conditions**. Tradewinds consistently blow from the southeast causing rough seas year-round. Many dive sites are sheltered but prepare for rocky seas, regardless.
- **Visibility**. Most dive sites in St. Thomas have around 60 to 70 feet of visibility. Deeper and distant sites may see 100+ feet.
- **When to Avoid**. Even if seas are rough, dive operators usually have a relatively calm dive site they can visit. You can dive in St. Thomas year-round.

- **Caribbean Reef Sharks**. These sharks lay residence at most of the popular coral reef dive sites around the island.
- **Spotted Eagle Rays**. I've seen more spotted eagle rays here than anywhere else I've been.
- **Nudibranch**. These unique mollusks are frequently found hiding on the sea floor of St. Thomas dive sites.
- **Caribbean Spiny Lobster**. These suckers dwarf the [spiny lobster found in Florida](#).

Weather in St. Thomas

- **Average Air Temperature**. Summer months see average highs of 84°F and winter months drop to 79°F
- **Climate**. St. Thomas is in a tropical environment with hot temperatures year-round.
- **Best Time of Year**. The best time to dive in St. Thomas is during the summer months. Although hot, seas are much calmer, the visibility is better, and water temperatures are warmer.

Surface Interval



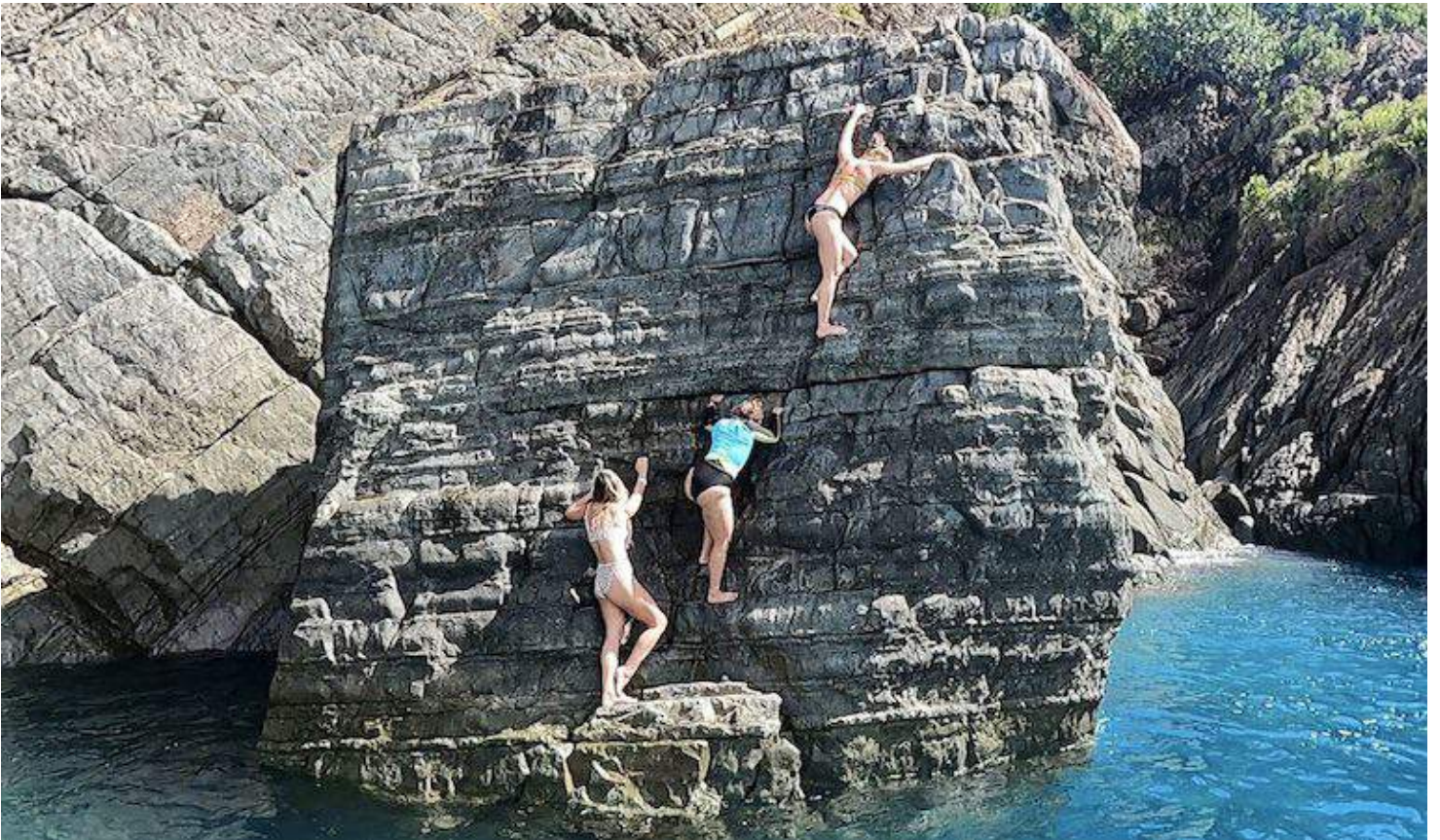
Outdoor Activities / Things to Do

- **Hiking.** Although lacking the epic hikes found on St. John, St. Thomas does have a few. My favorite is the hike up to **John Brewers Rock** on the west side of the island.
- **Beaches.** The US Virgin Islands are known for their beaches before anything else. Magens Bay, Lindquist Beach, and [Brewers Bay](#) are a few of my favorites.
- **Boating.** The tradewinds make the US Virgin Islands a premier destination for sailing. For non-sailors, I highly recommend hopping aboard a day charter boat at some point.
- **Snorkeling.** Most boat trips go snorkeling in some capacity. But honestly, some of the best snorkeling is right off the beach.

Restaurants and Bars

- **Island Time Pub (ITP).** The rooftop bar in Red Hook has the best pizza on the island.
- **Tap & Still.** A delicious, greasy burger for a fair price. You can't go wrong here.
- **Caribbean Fish Market.** Upscale seafood restaurant serving freshly caught fish from local fishermen.
- **The Easterly.** Rustic Caribbean-style restaurant with fantastic cocktails and even better cuisine.
- **French Quarter Bistro.** A touch of New Orleans in the Caribbean – the French Quarter Bistro is a delectable spot for a wonderful evening out.

Travel Tips for St. Thomas



St. Thomas Facts & Info

- **US Transfer.** The United States purchased the US Virgin Islands in 1917 from Denmark.
- **Good Day!** It's customary to greet all Virgin Islanders with an emphatic "Good morning! Good afternoon! Or Good day!"
- **Size and Population.** St. Thomas is the second-largest yet most populous of the US Virgin Islands.
- **Driving on the left.** The Virgin Islands is the only territory of the United States that drives on the left side of the road.

Where to Stay

- **[Ritz Carlton](#).** The top hotel on St. Thomas is conveniently located on the island's East End.
- **Secret Harbour.** Aqua Action Dive Shop and their boat are located within this extremely popular resort.
- **[Lime Tree Resort](#).** Aqua Marine Dive Shop is conveniently located within the Lime Tree Resort.
- **[Sapphire Beach](#).** Privately-owned condos, often featured on VRBO for rent, with their own beach and near dive shops in Red Hook and Coki Beach.

Useful Travel Articles

- [Best Travel Insurance for Scuba Diving](#)
- [How to Find Cheap Stay for Dive Travel](#)
- [How to Find Cheap Flights for Scuba Diving](#)
- [Best Travel Scuba Gear in 2022](#)

Travel Planning Resources for the US Virgin Islands

Book Your Flight: Book cheap flights on [Skyscanner](#), one of the best tools to find good deals.

Rent a Car: [Discover Cars](#) compares prices all over the globe – finding you the best deal on a car rental.

Book a Place to Stay: [Booking.com](#) is a great resource to compare hotels and guesthouses. Or book a local apartment rental on [VRBO!](#)

Protect Your Trip: Protect yourself from theft or gear damage! [World Nomads](#) covers all things scuba diving while traveling.

Travel Scuba Gear: Check out the [top-rated scuba diving gear](#) designed for travel.

Scuba Diving in St. Thomas: Important Terminology

Cow and Calf

Cow and Calf are two dive sites on St. Thomas – they're most definitely NOT a mother whale and her baby.

Tradewinds

The tradewinds are the strong easterly winds that are ever-present throughout the Virgin Islands. They typically cause rough seas at many dive sites around the islands.

Christmas Winds

The Christmas Winds in the Virgin Islands refer to the strong winds during the winter months from the north or northeast.

North Swell

The north swell in St. Thomas is a result of the Christmas Winds we mentioned above – strong north-northeasterly winds in the winter months. The North Swell makes northside dive sites almost impossible to dive.

French Cap

French Cap is an epic dive site in St. Thomas – NOT Frenchman's hat (although, I see where confusion might arise).

ITP

ITP stands for Island Time Pub in Red Hook – the after-dive / evening hotspot for Happy Hour and delicious pizza.

Little St. James

THE infamous island for all the wrong, disgusting reasons. Prepare yourself, because most of amazing scuba diving is within the vicinity of the place.

FAQs: Scuba Diving in St. Thomas, USVI

When is the best time of year for scuba diving in St. Thomas and the Virgin Islands?

The best time of year for scuba diving in St. Thomas and the US Virgin Islands is the summer season. During the summer, the water is comfortably warm and the seas tend to be calmer than other times of the year. Plus, you'll have more access to the amazing dive sites on the North side of the island.

Where can you dive in the US Virgin Islands?

You can dive just about anywhere in the US Virgin Islands. Some of the best dive sites are found on the south side of St. John and St. Thomas along with the northern wall dives of St. Croix.

Is scuba diving good in St. Thomas?

Scuba diving in St. Thomas is some of the best in the Caribbean. The island enjoys blue water year-round warm temperatures, scenic fringing reefs, a plethora of marine life, plenty of megafauna, and unique underwater architecture that's perfect for scuba diving.

Which USVI is best for scuba diving?

The best US Virgin Island for scuba diving is St. Croix with its epic wall dives and biodiversity underneath the Frederiksted Pier. However, dive sites on the southside of St. Thomas and St. John offer unique underwater structures found nowhere else in the world. No matter which US Virgin Island you end up on, scuba diving is sure to be amazing.