

Mariner’s Resource  
Protection Guide

VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK WAS ESTABLISHED BY Congress in 1956 to preserve the natural and cultural resources on St. John. In 1962, park boundaries were expanded to include 5,650 acres of submerged lands adjacent to the island. In 1978, much of Hassel Island in St. Thomas was added to the park. The park is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, part of an international network of natural areas established to demonstrate the value of conservation. A presidential proclamation created Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument in 2001, adding 12,708 acres of adjoining federal submerged lands to the National Park System.

These waters are popular cruising grounds for thousands of pleasure boaters. The number of boats increased dramatically in the 1980s, resulting in escalating damage

to some of the very features that visitors travel here to enjoy. The coral reefs, seagrass beds, and algal plains have been heavily damaged by the anchors and anchor chains of boats. Although the weight of the anchor crushes marine life, the greatest impact is caused by the anchor chain sweeping and scouring the area clean of plants and animals as the boat swings with changes in wind direction.

Moorings have been installed and protected areas have been established around the more sensitive reef and seagrass areas to allow visitors to use these areas while protecting resources from anchor and chain damage.

This guide helps boaters preserve the park’s marine resources so that future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy them.



Caroline Rogers



NPS photo

A healthy, undamaged seagrass bed (above), and one damaged by an anchor (below).



Queen Angelfish



Caroline Rogers



NPS photo

Healthy brain coral (above), and one damaged by a boat (below).

The Marine Community

Mangroves, seagrass beds, and coral reefs are interrelated ecological systems. Fish and shellfish depend on these habitats for food and shelter. Coral reefs are among the most diverse, productive, and complex ecosystems in the world. Corals are fragile, living organisms. Most grow only a fraction of an inch per year. Seven coral species found in park and monument waters are listed as Threatened and receive special protection under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Striped sergeant majors, rainbow colored parrotfish, and spiny lobsters are just a few of the species living on the reef. Some fish, such as snappers and grunts, migrate daily from the shelter of reefs to feed in adjacent

seagrass beds at night. Federally protected green sea turtles and locally protected queen conch also depend on seagrass for food. The juveniles of many species rely on both mangrove and seagrass habitats, moving to deeper water and offshore reefs as they mature. Seagrasses are flowering marine plants that spread primarily through root growth. These roots also help to retain sediments and reduce shoreline erosion, resulting in improved water quality. When anchors rip up seagrasses, what’s left is a scarred sea floor that may take years to recover. Important food sources for marine animals are also destroyed and crystal clear water becomes cloudy with sediment.

More Information

Cruz Bay Visitor Center  
Open Daily 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
(340) 776-6201 ext. 238  
[www.nps.gov/viis](http://www.nps.gov/viis)  
[www.nps.gov/vicr](http://www.nps.gov/vicr)

Please help keep the moorings safe by reporting any defects immediately to the Bay Host or phone (340) 693-8950 ext. 241.

Additional mooring and anchoring information is available at:  
<http://www.nps.gov/viis/PlanYourVisit/index.htm>

Emergency

Park Headquarters: 911 or 1-866-995-8467  
Marine-related: VHF Channel 16 for U.S Coastguard and Virgin Islands Radio



Mooring photos by Jack Hopkins



Using the National Park Mooring System

Anchoring is prohibited in the park except in designated anchorages at Francis Bay, Lind Point and Cruz Bay. No anchoring is allowed in the monument. More than two hundred mooring buoys have been installed in the bays around St. John. Moorings are safe, easy to use, and eliminate the need to anchor. The moorings are fixed to the sea floor with either a steel auger twisted into the sand or a stainless steel eyebolt that is cemented directly into rock. The floating mooring line (painter) is picked up and tied to a short bow line on the vessel. Moorings have been load tested to 11,000 pounds of upward pull. If sustained winds exceed 40 mph, vessels must vacate moorings.

Although day use of the park moorings is free, a self-registration fee of \$26 per night is required for **overnight anchoring or mooring** between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. Golden Age/ Access Pass holders pay half price. Overnight fees must be paid before spending the night. This revenue helps offset the cost of maintaining the moorings.

For your convenience, payment stations have been placed at the following locations:

- **Land-Based Fee Stations:** Cruz Bay National Park Service (NPS) Finger Pier, Saltpond Beach, and Great Lameshur Bay (pier),

- **Floating Fee Stations:** Caneel, Hawksnest, Maho/Francis and Leinster Bays.
- Fees for the entire length of stay may be paid at one time. Secure and display the receipt with use dates in the cabin as proof of payment.
- Pay stations are identified by a green flag with the NPS Arrowhead logo.
- Floating pay stations are for the sole purpose of paying fees. All other activities are prohibited, including swimming and fishing.

Private Vessel Size Limits and Locations

**Mariners must use moorings in park waters** if they are available and the vessel is of appropriate size. Size is based on length overall (LOA). LOA is defined in 50 CFR 679.2 as the centerline longitudinal distance, rounded to the nearest foot, measured between:

- (1) The outside foremost part of the vessel visible above the waterline, including bulwarks (section of a vessel’s side continuing above main desk), but excluding bowsprits and similar fittings or attachments, and
- (2) The outside aftermost part of the vessel visible above the waterline, including bulwarks but excluding rudders, outboard motor brackets, and similar fittings or attachments.

**For larger vessels or when moorings are full**, vessels anchoring must use one of three designated anchorages for their vessel size as follows:

- **Francis Bay Anchor Area:** Private vessels less than 210 feet LOA may anchor in sand seaward of the mooring area, at depths greater than 50 feet, more than 300 feet from any park buoy, and shoreward (east) between the line created between the GPS points: 18° 22’ 0” N, 64° 45’ 5” W and 18° 21’ 36” N, 64° 45’ 3” W; (no buoys mark this area).
- **Lind Point Anchor Area:** Private vessels up to 125 LOA may anchor: 18° 20’ 22” N and 64° 48’ 8” W, 18° 20’ 34” N and 64° 47’ 48” W, 18° 20’ 34” N and 64° 48’ 8” W, 18° 20’ 22” N and 64° 47’ 51” W; (no buoys mark this area).
- **Cruz Bay-NPS Anchor Area:** Vessels less than 60 feet LOA may anchor in NPS waters (north of green channel markers along northern part) of Cruz Bay Harbor (former sea plane ramp area), for up to three hours. Hours of anchoring are 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Overnight anchoring in this area is prohibited.

**Anchoring is prohibited elsewhere in the park and in the monument.**

Overnight stays in park waters are limited to 30 nights in a calendar year and no more than seven consecutive nights in one bay.

**Monument moorings are day-use only.**

- Vessels up to 60 feet LOA use white mooring with blue stripe;
- Vessels 61–100 feet LOA use big boat moorings - white mooring with red stripe.

On the south shore of the park all vessels over 100 feet LOA are restricted from mooring and must be making way. On the north and northeast shores of the park all vessels over 100 feet LOA must be making way, except as provided by designated anchorages described above.

During the peak visitation months of November through July, a Bay Host will be available five days a week along the northern shore to answer questions and provide assistance. The Bay Host boat can be identified by a green flag with the NPS Arrowhead logo.

Virgin Islands National Park supports the principles of Leave No Trace. Please protect your natural environment, cultural resources, and the experience of other visitors.

Warning: Johnson’s Reef

Large yellow buoys mark Johnson’s Reef, a shallow reef one-half mile north of Trunk Bay. Stay outside of the ring of yellow warning buoys in this area. This dangerous reef lies two feet beneath the surface and many vessels have struck the reef and run aground.

How to Moor Your Boat

- 1) Approach the mooring painter line (pickup line with small surface float) by heading into the wind or current at a very slow speed. Shift engine into neutral before reaching the mooring.
- 2) Pick up the eye of the mooring painter with your boat hook.
- 3) Thread your bow line through the painter line eye. Do not tie off eye at the boat stern or cleat.
- 4) Bring your line back to the boat and cleat it off on the same side. DO NOT put the painter line eye over your bow cleat.
- 5) When leaving a mooring, back away with the wind, after casting off the painter line.
- 6) To moor a large catamaran, feed a line from each side of the front (bow) through the thimble, then cleat the line to the cleat from which it originated. (Two lines pass through the eye, one from each side of the bow). This helps reduce chaff at the thimble.
- 7) Securing vessels to moorings using stern cleats is prohibited.



Jack Hopkins

Proper approach and pickup of mooring.

Types of Mooring Buoys

For vessels on moorings with a tender, greater than 16 feet LOA , the combined LOA of the two (2) vessels must not be greater than the mooring (length) rating, either <60 feet or <100 feet.

**White moorings with blue stripes** can be used by vessels less than or equal to 60 feet in length overall (LOA) for overnight use; unless labeled “day use only.”

**Larger White moorings with red stripes** (Big Boat Moorings) can be used by vessels 61 - 100 feet LOA for overnight use; unless labeled “day use only.”

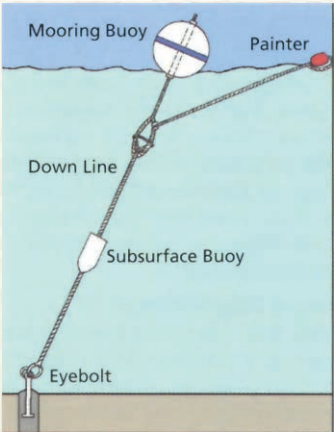
**Orange moorings with blue stripes** are for vessels engaged in snorkeling or SCUBA diving (commercial and non-commercial) activities; no overnight use is permitted.

**Yellow moorings with blue stripes** are for permitted hardnose fishing and are located offshore of Cabritte Horn in Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument.

**Blue moorings with blue stripes** are for commercial use authorization (CUA) permittees and vessels with CUA’s have priority.

**Blue moorings with red stripes** are Caneel Bay Resort moorings.

**Two green buoys with a blue reflective stripe with float lines** mark the dinghy tethers for vessels 16 feet or less. They are found at Trunk, Little Cinnamon, Little Maho, Maho, Hawksnest Bays, Honeymoon Beach and Waterlemon Cay.





North Shore Moorings

| Location      | Number | Type             |
|---------------|--------|------------------|
| Leinster Bay  | 20     | ⊖ Overnight      |
| Fungi Passage | 1      | ⊖ Overnight      |
| Whistling Cay | 3      | △ Day Use Only   |
| Whistling Cay | 3      | 🚢 SCUBA-Day Only |
| Francis Bay   | 31     | ⊖ Overnight      |
| Maho Bay      | 29     | ⊖ Overnight      |
| Cinnamon Bay  | 8      | ⊖ Overnight      |
| Trunk Bay     | 4      | ⊖ Overnight      |
| Hawksnest Bay | 13     | ⊖ Overnight      |
| Henley Cay    | 2      | △ Day use Only   |
| Caneel Bay    | 22     | ⊖ Overnight      |
| Scott Bay     | 10     | ⊖ Overnight      |
| Lind Point    | 11     | ⊖ Overnight      |
| Lind Point    | 1      | 🚢 SCUBA-Day Only |

South Shore Moorings

| Location        | Number | Type               |
|-----------------|--------|--------------------|
| Reef Bay        | 2      | △ Day Use Only     |
| Cloverleaf      | 1      | 🚢 SCUBA-Day Only   |
| Little Lameshur | 5      | ⊖ Overnight        |
| Great Lameshur  | 16     | ⊖ Overnight        |
| Cabritte Horn   | 4      | 🚢 Fishing-Hardnose |
| Tektite         | 2      | 🚢 SCUBA-Day Only   |
| Salt Pond       | 6      | ⊖ Overnight        |
| Ram Head        | 2      | △ Day Use Only     |
| Booby Rock      | 1      | 🚢 SCUBA-Day Only   |
| Eagle Shoal     | 1      | 🚢 SCUBA-Day Only   |
| Princess Bay    | 5      | △ Day Use Only     |
| Otter Creek     | 3      | △ Day Use Only     |
| Water Creek     | 3      | △ Day Use Only     |

Big Boat Moorings

|                   |   |   |                |   |   |
|-------------------|---|---|----------------|---|---|
| Lind Point/Caneel | 4 | 🚢 | Leinster Bay   | 2 | 🚢 |
| Hawksnest         | 1 | 🚢 | Great Lameshur | 2 | 🚢 |
| Maho/Francis      | 4 | 🚢 | Princess Bay   | 1 | 🚢 |

Anchorage at Lind Point for Vessels up to 125 feet

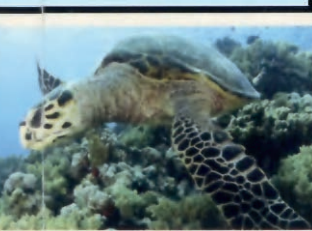
| ID  | LAT_DMS  | LONG_DMS  |
|-----|----------|-----------|
| LP1 | 18 20 22 | -64 48 48 |
| LP2 | 18 20 34 | -64 47 48 |
| LP3 | 18 20 34 | -64 48 8  |
| LP4 | 18 20 22 | -64 47 51 |

Anchorage at Francis Bay for Vessels up to 210 feet. Vessels must anchor east of the line and further or greater than 300 feet from any mooring.

| ID  | LAT_DMS  | LONG_DMS |
|-----|----------|----------|
| 1   | 18 22 00 | -64 45 5 |
| LP2 | 18 21 36 | -64 45 3 |

No Anchor Zone

Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument  
Hurricane Hole  
Round Bay  
Virgin Islands National Park (unless noted above)



The endangered hawksbill sea turtle eats sponges growing on reefs and finds shelter under coral ledges.

Safety Tips

Don't Go it Alone

Always swim, snorkel, and SCUBA dive with another person.

Storm Swells

Conditions may change rapidly, especially during winter months. If swells develop, you may need to alter your plans.

Leave Only Bubbles

To avoid injury to yourself and marine life, please do not touch anything while snorkeling and diving.

Look Out For Snorkelers

Watch for snorkelers and swimmers, especially when near a boat exclusion area or in an access channel. Run dinghies at a no-wake speed when travelling to and from a beach and within mooring field.

Wear Sun Protection

Protect yourself from overexposure to tropical sunlight; use sunscreen and wear a hat and shirt. If you burn easily, stay indoors or in the shade between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Dangerous Reefs

Boaters should be especially careful to avoid Windswept and Johnson's Reefs. Windswept Reef fringes the coastline between Trunk and Cinnamon Bays.

Fishing

In the monument cast netting for bait fish is permitted. Fishing for hardnose is also permitted while attached to yellow fishing moorings (see chart for location).

With the exception of boat exclusion zones, while on moorings, at the NPS finger pier, and NPS Cruz Bay Dock, fishing is permitted with hand-held rod and line.

Possession or use of any type of spearfishing equipment within park or monument boundaries is prohibited, unless under NPS permit.

Seasons & Limits for Conch, Whelk & Lobster

All dates are subject to change. Please check with the Virgin Islands Department of Planning & Natural Resources or a ranger for the most up to date information.

Conch Season

Open from November 1 to May 31.

Conch must be nine inches (9") (22.5 cm) long and landed in the shell. Within the boundaries for Virgin Islands National Park the limit for conch is two (2) per person per day. You may not have more than two (2) days limit in your possession.

Whelk Season

Open from October 1 to March 31.

Whelk must be larger than 2 7/16" (6.19 cm) in diameter.

Within the boundaries for Virgin Islands National Park the limit for whelk is one (1) gallon (in the shell) per person per day. You may not have more than two (2) days limit in your possession.

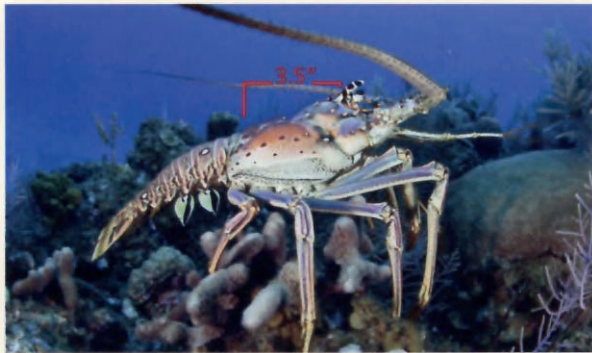
Caribbean Spiny Lobster

May be taken at any time.

Lobster must have a carapace length of at least three and a half inches (3.5") (8.75 cm).

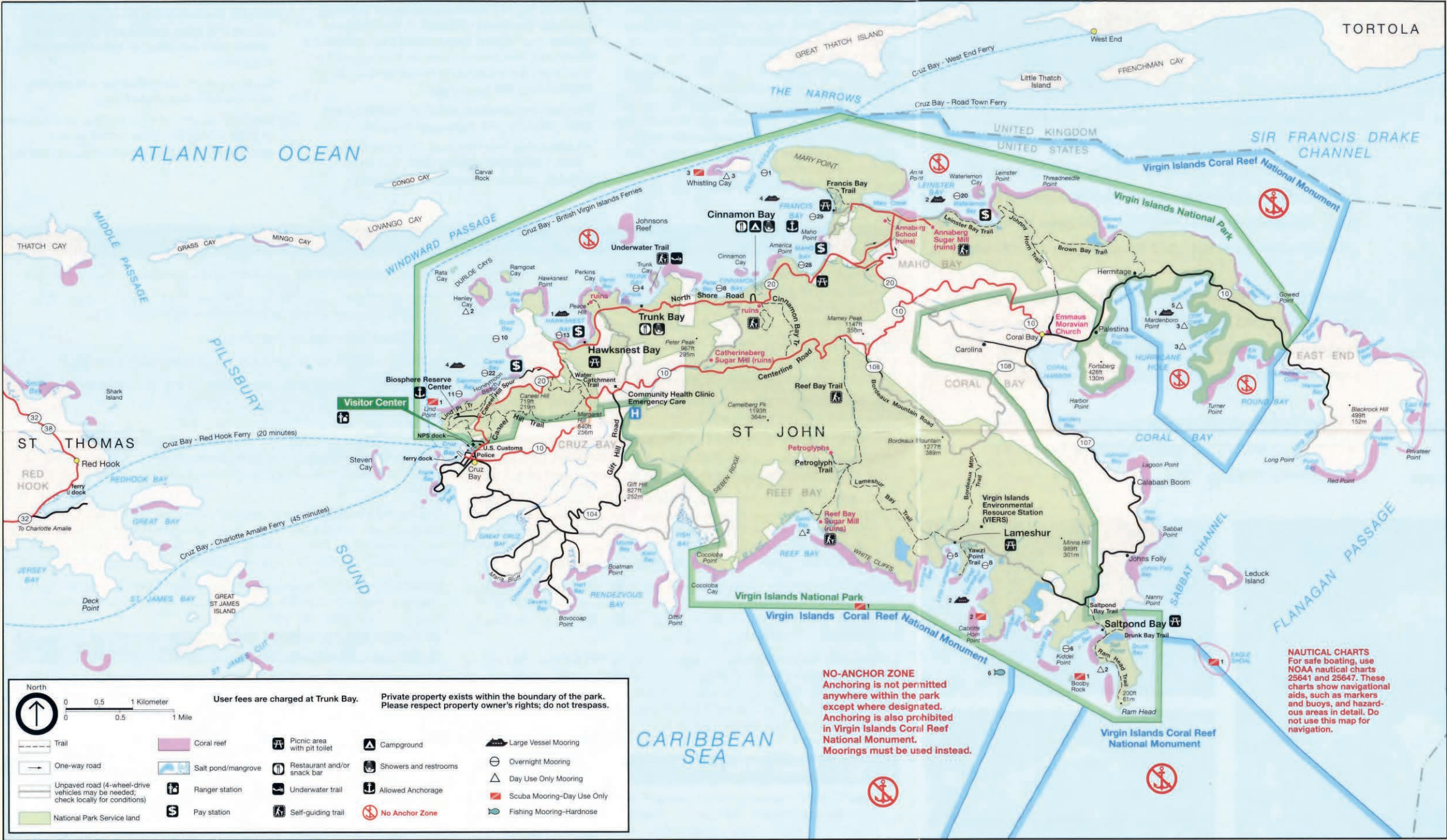
Females with eggs must be returned to the water.

Within the boundaries for Virgin Islands National Park the limit for lobster is two (2) per person per day. You may not have more than two (2) days limit in your possession.



CAUTION! Conch, Whelk, Lobster and fish may not be harvested from Coral Reef National Monument waters!

For more information contact Virgin Islands National Park at 340-776-6201 or the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, at 340-775-6762.



Regulations and Resource Protection

Do Not Touch or Feed Wildlife

Feeding, touching, harassing or removing any wildlife in the park (other than fishing-see fishing regulations), either on land or in water, is prohibited.

Balloons

Balloons are prohibited, because when floating in the water they are eaten by sea turtles and may cause their injury or death.

Waste & Trash

Do not dump human waste or refuse in park waters. Waste must be treated and discharged at least three miles from the nearest land. Trash may be placed in receptacles located at Cruz Bay near the Customs Office, Maho, Francis, Saltpond and Little Lameshur Bays. It may not exceed two 10-gallon bags, and must be placed inside NPS trash containers.

Leave Only Footprints

Help us preserve the historic treasures of these islands. If you find something old please leave it right where you found it and if you see someone collecting artifacts be sure to contact

a park ranger—removing artifacts from a national park is a federal crime and can result in fines and or prison.

Metal detectors, magnetometers, side scan sonar, and sub bottom profilers are prohibited.

Use of bright deck lights or underwater lights of any kind, from boats to attract fish or other purposes (other than hand held dive lights) is prohibited.

Commercial vessels with an LOA greater than 125 feet are prohibited from anchoring or mooring within park waters.

Water skiing, towing of any recreational device and use of motorized personal watercraft (jet skis, wave runners, etc.) are prohibited.

SCUBA and snorkeling is permitted in areas adjacent to beaches and inside boat exclusion areas. SCUBA and snorkeling is prohibited in designated boat channels, shipping lanes, and dock areas. SCUBA diving is prohibited in Trunk Bay.

Use of stationary positioning systems is

prohibited in the monument. Use of stationary positioning systems is allowed within the Lind Point and Francis Bay anchorages by vessels that meet the vessel length restrictions for those areas.

Use of underwater diver's scooter or dive propulsion vehicles is prohibited.

Dinghies

Dinghies are permitted on beaches with designated channels, including beaches with dinghy tethers. Anchoring OR tying to natural features is prohibited.

Dinghy Tethers

Dinghy Tethers are provided at Trunk, Little Cinnamon, Little Maho, Maho, Hawksnest Bays, and Honeymoon Beach and Waterlemon Cay for vessels up to 16 feet in length; overnight use is NOT permitted.

NPS Cruz Bay Creek Dinghy Area

The NPS Cruz Bay Creek dinghy area at the finger pier: South side – vessels 16 feet or less may tie up for up to three hours, North side – CUA vessels only.

NPS Cruz Bay Creek Finger Pier

Vessels docking at the NPS Cruz Bay finger pier are limited to 15 minutes to load and unload passengers.

NPS Dock in Red Hook

Commercial and recreational use of the NPS dock facility at Red Hook is by special use permit only. Only vessels 60 feet or less may be considered for a permit.

NPS Pier in Great Lameshur Bay

Commercial and scientific use of the NPS dock facility at Great Lameshur Bay is by special use permit only.

NPS Bulkhead at Hassel Island

Commercial use of the NPS Bulkhead at the historic Creque Marine Slipway is by special use permit only.

Beach Access (Dinghy) Channels

Vessels less than 26 feet LOA may access beaches inside boat exclusion areas via beach access channels, designated by red and green buoys. Vessels must stay inside these channels. Channels are primarily for pick-up and drop-off. Vessels that can be pulled completely

out of the water may be kept on the beach; other vessels must immediately leave the boat exclusion area after picking up or dropping off passengers. Beached vessels may not be anchored or tied to any feature including rocks; overnight use is not permitted.

Boats may not anchor in channels.

Boat Exclusion Areas

A row of white cylindrical buoys with an orange 'X' within a diamond shape delineates boat exclusion areas. The following are prohibited in these areas:

- Motorized vessels
- Operating a vessel under sail, including windsurfers
- Surfing or skim boarding
- Fishing with hook and line

NOTE: A motorized vessel, being rowed or paddled, is allowed in a boat exclusion area while being used for cast netting for bait fish.

Operating a vessel in excess of 5 mph or creating a wake in mooring fields or within 500 feet of a mooring field is prohibited.

Rafting or second vessel on a Mooring

- Vessels on moorings and utilizing a second vessel greater than 16 feet LOA as a registered tender, the combined LOA of the two vessels must be less than the rated vessel length for the mooring, either <61 feet or <101 feet.
- Rafting with other boats while on moorings is permitted if the combined lengths of both vessels are less than the length rating of the mooring.

Abandoned Vessels

No abandoned dinghies or vessels are allowed in the park under any circumstances. Any equipment left in the park for over a 24 hour period is considered abandoned and will be removed.

Beach Definition & Use

NPS beaches are defined as the area between the water's edge and 50 feet landward and seaward of the water's edge.

Glass bottles and containers, pets, and smoking are prohibited on all NPS beaches.

Smoking is also prohibited within 50 feet of pavilions, picnic tables or restrooms.