



Island GETAWAY

There are countless ways to explore the 60 islands that compose the British Virgin Islands. This is a Caribbean country with remarkable diversity – read on to find the ideal island for your next adventure

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M. DILLON/GETTY IMAGES

Some travellers experience the British Virgin Islands by sailing on a private charter yacht for flexibility and convenience, to see as many different islands as possible. The archipelago consists of 60 islands and keys, many of which are uninhabited. The most luxurious resorts are on small, remote islands, each with their own idiosyncrasies. A couple of commonalities include American-made cars driving on the left side of the road and wild chickens roaming free in the streets.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, privateers and pirates ruled the seas here, but today tourism and offshore financial services are the most important industries. North Americans and Brits make up the largest contingent of tourists, particularly during the winter. With a population of just 26,000 residents and one of the highest per capita incomes in the Caribbean, these idyllic islands are the perfect escape from hectic city living. You'll meet plenty of expats working at various resorts, and the few who become permanent citizens are considered 'belongers' by local islanders.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Spend a lazy afternoon on a pristine beach at Peter Island Resort & Spa; British Virgin Islands make for an idyllic escape from city living; Jean Kelly's famous coconut-crusted French toast

PETER ISLAND RESORT & SPA

Guests stepping off the ferry at this private retreat are greeted with a refreshing cold towel and rum cocktail chock full of freshly grated ginger to soothe queasy stomachs. Thoughtful touches like these and exceedingly friendly service make every guest feel instantly at home, whether it's your first visit or twentieth. There are just 52 rooms and three villas on the 1,800-acre island and 83 per cent of the land is left completely untouched, inhabited by wild goats and iguanas. Seclusion never leads to boredom here though – there's far too much to explore, both on foot and at sea. Book a romantic, private afternoon at Honeymoon

Beach, go beachcombing at Big Reef Bay or try snorkelling at White Bay. Take a leisurely walk or jog around the verdant island, with playful white and yellow butterflies flitting about to keep you company.

Most evenings there's live music at dinner, and guest services manager Collin will even serenade diners with pop ballads. The lavish Saturday evening gala buffet at Tradewinds is not to be missed and the resort has the most extensive wine list in the British Virgin Islands. A new general manager and new chefs are taking the dining to ambitious new heights, incorporating more local ingredients and flavours into the menu and starting a garden centre

this year. A few classics, like Jean Kelly's coconut-crusted French toast for breakfast, will remain though.

The 10,000sqft spa is tucked away on a secluded beachfront and specialises in Ayurvedic therapies developed by Sabari, an Indian-trained naturopath. After a consultation to determine your dosha, he will prescribe the best treatments to detoxify and revitalise the body and mind. For example, a turmeric and yoghurt body wrap to cleanse and moisturise or a hot oil abhyanga massage to calm the mind and increase circulation. Sabari even blends his own dosha-specific oils and leads yoga classes open to all guests each Sunday

ATLANTIDE/PHOTOFRAWEL/CORBIS; AMBER GIBSON





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Scrub Island Resort is a mere 15-minute ferry ride from Beef Island; Cooper Island Beach Club's rum bar boasts a selection of more than 100 rums; at Cooper Island Beach Club, the turquoise waters of Manchioneel Bay are just steps away from your room

There's good reason for the mosquito netting over the bed.

The self-sustaining ethos extends to beverages too. Importing beer – which is 95 per cent water – was seen as too wasteful, so the beach club recently opened its own microbrewery on Cooper Island, producing lager and pale ale. A spacious boutique offers fashion-forward resort wear along with local honey, tea and spice blends while the coffee shop next door has a selection of house-made ice cream and locally roasted coffee. The small rum bar could seduce Captain Jack Sparrow with its selection of more than 100 rums from across the Caribbean and around the globe. Try flights of premium rum, sip inventive cocktails like a rum lassi or Eldermeister (a surprisingly smooth martini-inspired concoction with rum, gin, Jagermeister and St. Germain) and smoke Cuban cigars while enjoying the sunset views. Richard Branson is known to visit with his friends and family every month. www.cooperislandbeachclub.com

SCRUB ISLAND RESORT

This Marriott Autograph Collection resort is the newest hotel and marina in the British Virgin Islands. It's a 15-minute ferry ride from Beef Island, where the international airport is located. There are 52 guest rooms

and suites along with nine two-to four-bedroom villas. The villas are all privately owned but available to rent, with additional villas currently under construction. Even the standard rooms have gorgeous views of the bay and villas include outdoor showers and plunge pools. Book the two-bedroom Beach House for direct access to secluded Honeymoon Beach below.

There are many water sports at the marina, including an offshore sailing school and scuba diving. Swim or kayak over to the residential Great Camanoe Island for snorkelling at Cam Bay. The resort can also arrange private boats to take guests on day tours to other islands. If it's relaxation instead of adventure you desire, the lagoon-style pavilion pool is the place to be. There's even a swim-up bar for refreshing cocktails if day drinking is on the itinerary.

The marina's gourmet deli is well stocked with meats, cheese, drinks and snacks, including pizza and made-to-order sandwiches. Guests are equipped to prepare their own meals, as all suites include a fully equipped kitchen with a SubZero refrigerator, Wolf range and marble countertops. Seasonings and condiments from Tortola's Sunny Caribbean Spice Company will add a little local flavour to any meal. This is a vacation though, so



morning. There are also more traditional body treatments, massages and facials using Natura Bissé products. www.peterisland.com

COOPER ISLAND BEACH CLUB

The vibe at this eco-friendly resort is casual. Feel free to dine in a bikini or swimming trunks. As many as 30 sailboats and yachts moor in the bay each evening, so even though there are just 10 rooms, the restaurant and bar are always lively. The menu is frequently changing, but trust that the food is excellent. When in doubt, order whatever is on special or ask the servers for recommendations. Locally caught yellowfin tuna served with carrot mango slaw and spicy sesame purée and a sweet and spicy West Indian vegetable roti wrap are highlights. Both pair well with the

Saint Ursula cocktail – a fruity but not-too-sweet blend of Hendrick's gin, St. Germain, muddled strawberry and Prosecco served over ice.

Rooms are straightforward but clean and well-furnished in driftwood tones with tile floors. Sustainability is a core value, with more than three quarters of the energy used provided by solar power. Rainwater is collected under each guest room in cisterns and triple-filtered for drinking. Bathrooms are stocked with natural and organic bodycare from Pharmacopia. There is no air-conditioning or pool here, but there's no need for a pool with the turquoise waters of Manchioneel Bay just steps away. The calm seas are a great place to try scuba diving or snorkelling for the first time, or paddle a kayak to nearby Salt Island. Just be sure to wear plenty of insect repellent at all times.





don't feel obliged to cook just because the kitchens are so beautiful. Multiple dining options on property include open-air Tierra! Tierra! next to the multi-level pool and the white-tablecloth Caravela, which is open for breakfast and dinner. Jerk chicken is on the mild side and fresh fish surprisingly hard to come by, but service is superb.

The quaint spa is housed in a converted four-bedroom villa, with just three treatment rooms and one manicure/pedicure station. Check in at the kitchen before relaxing on the terrace or in the infinity pool with a glass of cucumber-infused water. The three treatment rooms were converted from bedrooms and all are designed for couples, with two massage beds. Instead of locker rooms, change into your robe and slippers in the comfort of spacious private bathrooms, complete with bathtubs and outdoor showers to enjoy before or after a massage, body treatment or facial, all with Elemis skincare products. The intimate nature of the location extends to the service – soft-spoken local ladies give satisfying, strong deep tissue massages to work out every kink in tight shoulders and backs. This should certainly be a first stop after a long haul flight. www.scrubisland.com

THIS PAGE: Aneгада is home to the Caribbean flamingos; beautiful stretch of white-sand beach in Aneгада. OPPOSITE PAGE: Take in the romantic sunset from Scrub Island Resort's infinity pool



ANEGADA

Even many islanders from Tortola have never ventured to Aneгада, so it's definitely off the beaten path. This northernmost of the British Virgin Islands is the least populated of the four main islands and the only one formed from coral and limestone. This means incredible snorkelling and scuba diving, particularly at Horseshoe Reef, the largest barrier coral reef in the Caribbean. Between the abundant marine life and Spanish, British and American shipwrecks there is plenty to discover underwater.

Getting to Aneгада from Tortola is fairly easy – a 15-minute flight with VI Airlink or an 80-minute ferry ride. Gourmands should visit the last weekend in November for the Aneгада Lobster Festival, a celebration of the beginning of spiny lobster season with nearly a dozen different restaurants on the small island offering up a multitude of ways to enjoy lobster. Visit Pomato Point Restaurant and peruse the shipwreck artefacts in the adjacent one-room museum while your meal is prepared. www.bviturism.com

