



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.



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

Queen Angelfish



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
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



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 deck), 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.



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.

