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**Saint Croix: Marvel In The Colors Of The Caribbean**

**By Clinton Douglas IV**

Beautiful Saint Croix Island, located in the tropical Caribbean Sea just 1,200 miles off the Miami

coast, is the largest land body in the United States Virgin Islands. Long, peaceful beaches, sugar and rum plantations shape the landscape. Homes, historic churches, commercial ports and plantations boast architecture dating as far back as the early eighteenth and nineteenth century and reflecting Spanish, Dutch, French, Danish, British, Knights of Malta and American influences. Thriving sugar crops gave way to tourism in the late 1960s as the islands primary source of income. So you're sure to be treated like royalty.

When visiting Saint Croix, you'll discover a wealth of indoor and outdoor activities from which to plan your days around. Outdoor adventures abound, with scuba diving along 702 acres of vibrant coral reefs, horseback riding across lush, green hills and pastures, snorkeling among underwater trails, sport-fishing, bicycle riding, hiking and island exploration. >From wide streets to haunted plantation ruins, this enchanting island is a perfect vacation get-away.

Golf is another popular sport, with several notable courses including the award-winning Carambola Golf Club which hosts the annual LPGA tournament and has received Golf magazine's prestigious gold medal.

Nightlife abounds both at island casinos and clubs, and at seasonal local events. Many vacationers schedule their trip around Jump Up, a thrilling block party ideal for all age groups. Watch calypso and youth bands decorate the night, while streets are blocked from regular traffic. Enjoy face painting and watch the tall Mocko Jumbies, elaborately costumed characters on stilts, dancing and parading down the streets.

Indoors, you'll find the thrill of casinos, duty-free shopping and fine dining. Island cuisine is influenced by St. Croix's oldest crops, from okra to cabbage and corn. Food fair also includes succulent seafood, lobster, conch fritters, burgers, barbeque delicacies and savory mango salsa sauce. Then give your meal the perfect island twist with a Cruzan Rum infused Calypso Daiquiri.

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Island tours and trails help you explore all of the island's beauty, attractions and beaches, as viewed through local eyes. When visiting, discover the natural beauty by air, open-air jeep, open-air bus, four-wheeler or foot. You'll gain a different perspective than you would staying poolside in your hotel or resort.

Purchased by the United States in 1917, visitors don't need a passport to enter. However you do need some form of identification which may include a valid passport, government issued ID card or drivers license plus an original birth certificate.

Discover Saint Croix today by booking your travel vacation.

By Clinton Douglas IV of

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### **Caribbean Cruise Guide**

**By Jonathan Medcalfe**

Comprising of around 50 islands (750 if you count the archipelago of the Bahamas), the Caribbean is a real treasure trove when it comes to cruising. A rich variety of vistas, people and places await, along with swaying palms and idyllic beaches of golden sand. The network of islands in the Caribbean is in fact so extensive that it is possible to book several Caribbean cruises and avoid going to the same islands twice!

There are four basic Caribbean cruise routes used by cruise operators:

Western Caribbean Cruise Route – Departing from seaports in Texas, Louisiana and Florida, the Western Route takes in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, the island of Cozumel, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, and any number of islands off the coasts of Honduras and Belize.

Eastern Caribbean Cruise Route – One of the most popular Caribbean cruise routes, the Eastern Route typically departs from Florida and other seaports along the eastern seaboard of the United States. The route calls on destinations such as Key West, The Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands the Virgin Islands (including St. Thomas and St. Croix), and Puerto Rico.

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Southern Caribbean Cruise Route – This route normally commences at San Juan in Puerto Rico, and takes in many possible destinations along the Lesser Antilles and the Netherlands Antilles as far west as Aruba.

Exotic/Long–duration Caribbean Cruise Route – This route takes in any/all of the above destinations, and can sometimes end in a different place to where the cruise started.

Given this broad assortment of destinations available in the Caribbean, it can be a bit overwhelming when trying to make that crucial decision on which islands to fit into your itinerary. After all, you don't want to miss out on some true Caribbean gems, do you? So, whether you're planning a short vacation or a longer cruise break away from home, here is a selection of 'must–sees' & 'must–dos' on your Caribbean adventure.

St Croix (Virgin Islands) – Take a night kayak trip in Salt River National Park and visit the first landing site of Christopher Columbus on his voyage to the New World.

Grenada – Although ravaged by Hurricane Ivan in 2004, Grenada is still well worth a visit for its scuba diving. You can explore the largest shipwreck in the Caribbean here and see an underwater volcano.

St. Thomas (Virgin Islands) – The Cinnamon Bay National Park offers excellent snorkeling opportunities. You can see a wealth of underwater life in the shallow waters around St. Thomas.

Jamaica – Why not try your hand at bamboo rafting in Montego Bay?

Puerto Rico – No Caribbean cruise would be complete without a visit to the world famous Condado Beach on the island of Puerto Rico.

Aruba – Want to find Caribbean paradise? How about relaxing on one of the 365 beaches that surround the Dutch island of Aruba.

St Kitts – Swim with the turtles in the waters around St Kitts and then relax on the pink sand beaches on this beautiful island.

Good luck with planning your trip and happy cruising.

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