

Media Kit: Virgin Gorda

Natural Wonder And Island Of Mystery

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS – Creating the eastern most border of the British Virgin Islands, Virgin Gorda -- named by Christopher Columbus in 1493 for her long shape and belly-like feature -- beckons sailors from all ports-of-call to discover her bountiful gifts, from Mother Nature's work of art at The Baths to the luxurious accommodations and charming Jewels of the BVI. A short sail from the main island of Tortola, just 19 kilometres across the Sir Francis Drake Channel, Virgin Gorda tempts visitors with the best of both beaches and mountains -- flat, powdery sands on the south side and lush vegetation on peaks and hills running along the spine of the north shore. Sitting more than 366 meters above the sunlit sea in a natural preserve of mahogany trees, Gorda Peak (the belly of the Virgin), provides panoramic views of the necklace of islands below, from remote Anegada high in the north to the smaller Fallen Jerusalem and Round Rock to the south.

Perhaps best known for her natural masterpieces, the Virgin stretches 16 square kilometres long and features uninhabited beaches including the nearly abandoned Savannah Bay, Pond Bay and Mountain Trunk on the North shore with spectacular views of Tortola and the northern islands. The North Sound on Virgin Gorda offers near perfect sailing conditions with protected waters and close proximity to several tiny islands including Mosquito overlooking Colquhoun Reef, Prickly Pear with cacti-covered hills, Eustatia and Saba Rock. Along the south shore at Bercher's Bay and the South Sound, a glimpse of the empty ocean is captured as it seems to extend into eternity with nothing but a soft haze to separate sea and sky.

Located at the tip of the Virgin's southwest legs are the most notable beaches on the island -- The Baths - - whose mysterious origins are thought to be from eons of evolution. The initial trail leading down to The Baths provides a hint of what is yet to be experienced as huge stones and twisted branches overhead line the way. Anticipation heightens as the first slender beach is reached, laden with granite boulders stacked and strewn across the white sand with palms appearing to grow out of the stones.

A second trail leading to Devil's Bay winds through grottoes filled with shallow wading pools, formed from the giant stones that lean against and support each other, only giving way to slender crevices that allow the sea to rush in. On approach, the entrance to the rock labyrinth appears to be too slender to breach, however a simple duck of the head and bend of the back lets bodies manoeuvre into what opens into a grand cavern accented by a series of smaller caves. Illuminated by beams of light squeezing through slender crevices in the cathedral-like ceilings, the caves are lined with colourful stones -- some purple with black spots, some grey and others white with pink coral growing atop. Tiny, silver fish explore toes through water so refreshing and cool it feels like spring water rather than the sea. Boulders that create the walls are marked by various hues, including teal, burnt orange and violet chalked across the surface.

Complementing the environmental treasures of Virgin Gorda is a handful of high-end resorts and rustic Jewels of the BVI dedicated to the natural preservation of the island. Facing the Sir Frances Drake Channel, Little Dix Bay -- the first luxury resort in the BVI built in the 1960s by Laurence Rockefeller -- positions guests on a wilderness preserve of quiet elegance, surrounded by seagrapes and coconut palms along a white crescent beach. With interiors and exteriors incorporating the rocky island appearance, Little Dix is renowned for its supple spa services, with private treatment cottages tucked into dramatic cliffs amidst lush foliage of ivy, palms and vibrant flowers in shades of oranges, reds, pinks and yellows.

Sitting on the Virgin's thinnest appendage and only accessible by boat, Bitter End Yacht Club is a haven

for yachties embarking on an island-hopping holiday. Visitors stay in discreet villas tucked into the verdant hillsides or opt to revel in the more luxurious setting of a floating room -- a 27-meter yacht. Known as the best sailing and diving complex in the island chain, Bitter End opens into one of the most secluded, deep-water harbours in the Caribbean.

Standing like a fortress against worldly stresses, Biras Creek Estate -- flanked by the sea on three sides -- is a romantic hideaway where televisions are replaced with outdoor verandas and most guests opt to trade in air conditioners for open windows with cooling trade winds. Even when the resort is full, another guest is rarely seen.

Complementing these luxury resorts, Virgin Gorda is also home to almost 20 private villas perfect for families and large groups vacationing together, allowing an intimate playground for reminiscing while keeping a close proximity for quality time.

Dining on Virgin Gorda is a simply extraordinary experience with restaurants as full of character as the natural wonders surrounding them. Rock Café, serving cuisine infused with Caribbean, Italian and Mexican flavours, surrounds diners with dramatic boulders. Top of the Baths (situated, well, on top of the Baths) satisfies guests with menu items including filet mignon and fresh from the docks lobster. Visitors travelling by water can dinghy up to the Fat Virgin's Café and dine on classics like homemade soups, sandwiches made to order and their famous outdoor grilled burger in paradise.

The BVI, consistently recognized as one of the most breathtaking destinations in the world and the undisputed Sailing Capital of the World, presents 60 islands for exploring its secrets. The BVI is rich with the storied islands of Norman (the inspiration for Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island,") Dead man's Chest and Anegada, while the islands of Peter, Necker, and Guana anchor luxury resorts and sun worshippers find a haven on Jost van Dyke and Cooper Island.

To discover these secrets and create new ones, call the BVI Tourist Board toll free: 800.835.8530 or visit www.bvitourism.com.