TOURISM



HISTORICAL

TOUR MANUAL VIRGIN GORDA

FIRST EDITION

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The British Virgin Islands Tourist Board & Film Commission

THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Foreword

This manual was commissioned and printed by the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board & Film Commission. It is intended to serve as a guide for the transportation sector to develop authentic tour experiences.

With this scripted presentation, drivers will have the foundation to personalise tours, allowing them to narrate an authentic Virgin Islands story. This ensures that each guest experiences the rich history, beauty, and culture of Virgin Gorda, in a way that is both informative and uniquely tailored.

No part of this manual should be edited, duplicated, reprinted, or disseminated without the written consent of the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board & Film Commission.

Introduction

Visitors are invited to tour Virgin Gorda and experience the history and heritage of this breathtaking island, which is home to a must-see unique geological structure, The Baths. The island comprises two distinct sections: Valley with extensive flat land, and North Sound with its rolling hills that allow for spectacular views of surrounding islands. All these features are brought to life with tales of a bygone era that captivate imaginations and paint a vivid picture of Virgin Gorda.

At 8 square miles, Virgin Gorda is the third largest island in the Virgin Islands, located about 10 miles (16km) east of Tortola with the second largest population.

The Virgin Islands is:

- a group of over 60 islands, islets, cays and rocks.
- located at the northern arc of the chain of islands in the Caribbean Sea.
- mostly hilly islands with the highest peak rising to 1,716 feet above sea level and the lowest being 25 feet.
- gifted with a tropical climate year-round, with an average temperature of 85 degrees Fahrenheit (30 degrees Celsius).
- kept cool by northeast trade winds.

The Virgin Islands

Virgin Gorda is the only individual island in the Virgin Islands named by Christopher Columbus.



THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

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European Presence

- The northeast trade winds brought Christopher Columbus to these islands on 16th November, 1493.
- Columbus named the islands Las Once Mil Virgenes, which translates to eleven thousand virgins.
- From a distance, the island resembled a fat woman lying on her back, so Columbus called it La Gorda Virgen (the Fat Virgin).

St. Thomas Bay

- The facility was initially built in the early 1960s by the Little Dix Bay Corporation. It replaced the longstanding government jetty, which was in Town Bay further along the southern coast. Prior to having a dock, passengers were transferred from sloops anchored in the harbour, to small row boats that took them ashore.
- This is the main port on Virgin Gorda, and it handles local and international traffic, including cargo.
- In 2005, the Government of the Virgin Islands acquired the facility and transferred ownership to the BVI Ports Authority.
- A small plantation era cemetery which dates to the 1600s is located where the current taxi stand sits. There is a sign posted which details the site's history.
- The beach is very popular with residents. Many picnics and musical events are hosted there during Easter and other times of the year. It is also popular with retirees who go daily for "sea soaks" to help rejuvenate the body. Churches also use the beach for baptisms.
- Virgin Gorda is home to some of the most beautiful and unique beaches in The Virgin Islands, with names as captivating as their shores — Devil's Bay, Crooks Bay, Bercher's Bay and Mahoe Bay.

The Virgin Islands

Virgin Gorda is the only individual island in The Virgin Islands named by Christopher.



Ferry Terminal

- Daily ferries allow for easy commuting between the islands in The Virgin Islands.
- Ferries also connect Virgin Gorda to the United States Virgin Islands.
- The United States Virgin Islands is one and a half hour ferry ride away.

Taddy Bay International Airport

- The airport was built by the owners of Little Dix Bay Hotel to facilitate air transfers for guests.
- The short, unsurfaced landing strip is only suitable for small commuter aircraft.
- In 2005, the Government of the Virgin Islands acquired the airport and transferred its operation to the BVI Airports Authority.

Savannah Bay

- Savannah Bay is quiet and remote, yet easily accessible. The crystal-clear water offers amazing snorkelling experiences, displaying natural marine beauty at its finest.
- Hundreds of years of accumulated sand created extensive sand dunes, that protect the area from erosion.
- Although this beach is part of the land leased to the Little Dix Bay Corporation by the Government of the Virgin Islands, it remains accessible to the public.
- The beach is popular for picnics and gatherings on holidays throughout the year.
- The land mass between Savannah Bay Beach and the other side of the public road is the narrowest part of the island.

The Virgin Islands

Daily “sea soaks” help to rejuvenate the body.



Pond Bay

- Tucked away with little to no public access by land, Pond Bay is one of The Virgin Islands' most breathtaking hidden beaches.
- Accessible mainly by boat, it has become a favourite spot for seafarers and the vibrant location for the annual Christmas in July celebration (now branded Xmas in July).
- Launched in 2007, this festival attracts hundreds of boats and thousands of guests from neighbouring Puerto Rico and beyond.
- Each year, Puerto Ricans and Virgin Islands residents gather in Pond Bay's turquoise waters for a spectacular beach party featuring live local and Latin music, food and drinks, and a festive Caribbean atmosphere.
- More than just a party, this event is a celebration of the longstanding friendship between the people of Puerto Rico and The Virgin Islands.

The Virgin Islands

For decades, Puerto Ricans have sailed to the Virgin Islands in large numbers during Easter and summer holidays—earning them the affectionate nickname, "The Puerto Rican Navy".

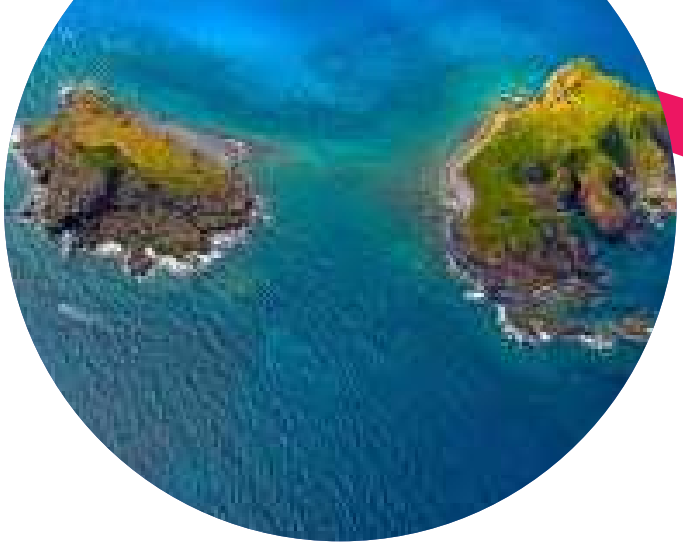


Little Dix Bay Resort

- In 1957, while on a sailing trip, Laurance Rockefeller was captivated by the natural beauty of the terrain surrounding Little Dix Bay. Inspired by its pristine charm, he went on to establish the Little Dix Bay Hotel, which officially opened in 1964. The hotel quickly became an exclusive retreat for the rich and famous, attracting visitors from around the world.
- The late British Monarch, Queen Elizabeth the second, visited the resort in 1966 during an official visit to The Virgin Islands. Her Majesty was 40 years old at the time.
- This was the first major development of its kind in The Virgin Islands, and it paved the way for further tourism development throughout the Territory.
- Its opening marked a turning point for Virgin Gorda, ushering in an era of economic growth fuelled by tourism and gradually replacing the island's struggling agricultural industry.
- It provided employment during its construction and after completion, enabling residents to make a living without having to migrate, as was common at that time.

INTERESTING FACT

In the 1950's many Virgin Islanders travelled to the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the neighbouring United States Virgin Islands for work.



The Dogs

- West Dog is a national park that serves as a nesting site for seabirds. It is nestled among a charming cluster of islets called The Dogs.
- Situated just west of Virgin Gorda, West Dog is surrounded by — Great Dog, George Dog, the Seal Dogs, and even Cockroach Island.
- Cockroach Island is the smallest of The Dogs group (1.2ha/3ac). It is barely 50ft (15 m) in elevation but is marked by very rugged cliffs all around.
- In the 1600s and 1700s, sailors reported hearing dogs barking on these islands. It was later discovered that the sounds were made by monk seals, now extinct.

Nail Bay Estate

- Nail Bay Estate is a 148-acre mountainside resort with access to three unspoiled beaches: Nail Bay, Long Bay, and Mountain Trunk.
- The estate offers a range of guest services and features a stunning view of the ruins of a centuries-old sugar works (factory), now landscaped and maintained as an events space.
- The footprint of all the main buildings and structures of these ruins remains visible, enabling visitors to understand how the facility once functioned. Features include the boiling house, curing house, and mill round.
- This facility was likely built in the 1700s, during the height of the sugar era in The Virgin Islands.

INTERESTING FACT

Sailors claimed to hear barking sounds as they sail past The Dogs.



Virgin Gorda Island Sign

- The Virgin Gorda Island Sign combines a playful photo opportunity with impressive island views. Visitors to the area can pose in front of, between, or beside the colourful letters for a perfect "I visited Virgin Gorda" snapshot.
- Beyond the sign, the lookout offers panoramic views of Mosquito Island, Saba Rock, Necker Island, and on clear days, Anegada on the horizon.
- The sign was commissioned by the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board & Film Commission in 2022.

Mahoe Bay Lookout

- Mahoe Bay Lookout provides a stunning perspective over the calm, turquoise waters of Mahoe Bay.
- From this elevated spot, it's easy to see the bay's protective coral reef and one may even catch a glimpse of sea turtles swimming below.
- It is an excellent place to pause for photographs or to simply enjoy the peaceful scenery.

INTERESTING FACT

The Virgin Gorda Island Sign was designed and painted by local artist Ms. Nadia Winter.

Beverly's Little Bay Lookout

- Made possible through the generosity of Dr. Beverly Nuckols, this lookout provides elevated views over the North Sound.
- One can see Bitter End Yacht Club in the distance while enjoying a quiet and scenic view of Virgin Gorda's northern waters.

Soldier Bay Lookout

- Soldier Bay Lookout offers sweeping views of Spanish Town and the South Valley, with the island of Fallen Jerusalem visible in the distance.
- This vantage point is ideal for photography and for appreciating the contrast between Virgin Gorda's vibrant landscapes and the surrounding seascape.

INTERESTING FACT

The name Anguilla can be found on Virgin Gorda at Anguilla Point.

Gorda Peak National Park

- Established in 1974 with donations from Laurance Rockefeller, Gorda Peak National Park covers 260 acres, reaches a height of 1,370 feet, and is the second-highest point in The Virgin Islands.

Little Fort National Park

- This park hidden among the boulders at Fort Point, dates back to the Spanish occupation of Virgin Gorda.
- This is the most unique and isolated park.
- "Access is very difficult at this undeveloped site, as hikers must cross the rugged terrain and dense vegetation. The only area accessible for entrance into the park is located at the seashore, from here a difficult hiking trail leads to the munitions store."

INTERESTING FACT

Gorda Peak National Park is home to the world's smallest lizard, the endangered Virgin Gorda Gecko.



The Baths National Park

- The Baths is a striking natural attraction. Massive granite boulders measuring up to 40 feet across and several stories are scattered along white sandy beaches and tranquil pools.
- The giant boulders, sculptured rocks, and array of caves are testament to geological processes that occurred millions of years ago.
- Covering 6.9 acres, the site was designated as a national park in 1990.

Boulders

Virgin Gorda's large boulders strewn across the southern landscape have been described as "house-sized," enormous, and gigantic. The boulders tell an incredible story of the island's geologic history.

- These impressive boulders were given names reflective of their visual characteristics. Some such names include: The Skull, Lion Rock, Sentinel Rock, Whale Rock, Neptune's Hideaway, and The Garden Rock.
- In years past it was not uncommon to see women washing clothes on rocks throughout the island.
- Some sea birds also built their nests in these large boulders.

INTERESTING FACT

The Baths is the most visited and photographed area in The Virgin Islands.



Handsome Bay Water Desalination Plant

- Reservoirs were built in the 1960s after an extended period of drought that dried up most of the wells on the islands.
- As an emergency measure, the government imported a barge load of water from neighbouring Puerto Rico.
- This is one of two desalination plants on Virgin Gorda; the other is located in North Sound. The plant has an open seawater intake extending about 1,500 feet from the shoreline.
- To supplement the public water supply, homeowners are required to build cisterns to harvest and store rainwater for personal use.
- There are no permanent streams on Virgin Gorda. Streams (locally called ghuts) are generally dry. They flow mainly during intense rainfall; due to steep topography and the small size of watershed basins, stream flows respond quickly to precipitation. Most Virgin Gorda ghuts have their source originating from Gorda Peak, and flow eastward into South Sound into the sea.

INTERESTING FACT

Besides storing water, cisterns were also used to preserve perishable foods by placing them in buckets and lowering them down into the cistern.

Robinson O'Neal Memorial Primary School

- The Robinson O'Neal Memorial Primary School in North Sound, Virgin Gorda, was the first public facility in The Virgin Islands to be named in honour of a Virgin Islander.
- The institution, which was started in the 1930s, was housed in the North Sound Methodist Church building.
- The new school structure was built through the efforts of the district representative.
- On Sunday, 10th January, 1971, Honourable Hubert Robinson O'Neal, member of the Virgin Islands Legislative Council, lost his life in a vehicle accident. Hon. O'Neal was in the process of transporting furniture to the newly built North Sound Primary School, scheduled to be officially opened that same day.
- Honourable O'Neal 'lived to serve and died serving.'
- The school was rebuilt with the generous donations of the North Sound Foundation, founded by David and Pamela Johnson, after being hard hit by the Hurricanes of 2017.

Nurse Iris O'Neal Clinic

- Nurse Iris O'Neal Clinic is the main medical facility on Virgin Gorda, named in honour of a stalwart in the nursing field.
- In this role, she singlehandedly cared for the sick and injured. In 1977, shortly after her retirement, the clinic was renamed in her honour.
- Nurse O'Neal served as district nurse with responsibility for Virgin Gorda and Anegada for over 30 years.
- The need to expand the facility led to the construction of a new 20,000 square-foot building alongside the original structure.
- The clinic does not provide hospital services. If necessary, patients are transported to Tortola by boat to the Dr. D. Orlando Smith Hospital.

INTERESTING FACT

The new structure, which opened in 2020, cost over $7 million, and was funded by pledges from individuals and organisations.

St. Mary's Church

St. Mary's Church was one of five Anglican churches in The Virgin Islands that formed part of St. George's Parish in the 1800s.

- The original structure served as a chapel school until a separate schoolhouse was built.
- During this period cotton was so important, that senior students at St. Mary's School received instructions in planting, propagation, and care of the crop. Students also had garden plots at school to practice their skills.
- The current building was erected in 1875, enlarged in 1970, and had a bell tower added in 1983.
- Although a priest was stationed on Tortola, Virgin Gorda had an assigned Lay Reader, who also served as headmaster of the St. Mary's School.
- In 1981, the Virgin Gorda Vocational Centre School was taken over by the Government of the Virgin Islands and became the St. Mary's School Secondary Division.
- When St. Mary's School closed in 1982 after 141 years of existence, it was the oldest educational institution in The Virgin Islands.

Valley Methodist Church

- This church was the first place of worship established on Virgin Gorda in 1794. Funding for its construction was raised by the island's community and matched by church members on Tortola.
- A missionary was stationed on the island in 1804 to work with inhabitants on a full-time basis.
- In 1867, the church was one of the few Methodist chapels that did not sustain damage from that year's hurricane.
- It was severely damaged by a hurricane in 1924 and repaired in 1925.
- Rev. Selwyn Vanterpool, a church member, was the first and only Virgin Islander to be ordained as a Methodist Minister in 1966.
- In years past, residents were either of Methodist or Anglican faith.

INTERESTING FACT

Churches in The Virgin Islands were once the main driver of education.

Bregado Flax Educational Centre

- Bregado Flax Educational Centre comprises of two schools, Bregado Flax Primary School and Bregado Flax Secondary School.
- The facility opened in 1982 and was named in honour of well-respected public officer, musician, and stalwart educator, Mr. J.A.Bregado Flax.
- Prior to the establishment of the high school division on Virgin Gorda many children were taken in by relatives and friends in Tortola to obtain a high school education. Students who could not do this had to remain on Virgin Gorda and seek employment.

Copper Mine

- The Copper Mine National Park, comprising 31.93 acres, was established in 1998 when restoration work on the facility commenced.
- The main structures, which are still visible, were built by a Cornish mining company that opened the mine in 1859, bringing 36 miners from Cornwall, England.
- A total of 68 local individuals, including carpenters and masons, were employed on the project.
- The main road from the Copper Mine to Town Bay was engineered and built by the miners with permission from the local government.
- This Town Road was essential to facilitate the transportation of materials to and from the mine site.
- In 1860, copper was exported to the United Kingdom from Virgin Gorda.

INTERESTING FACT

"The Cornish miners from England who went to Virgin Gorda were part of a group of miners who established the Virgin Gorda Mining Company in 1835."

Long Road

- Traditionally, Long Road was one of the most important roads on Virgin Gorda. Several successive government agents lived along this road, making it the centre of the government's operations on the island.
- The late Mr. Malvin Flax, a former District Officer, lived on Long Road; his house was often the place to conduct government business.
- Government agents were responsible for tax collection, the registration of births and deaths, and mail distribution.

Today, the government administration building is located on Millionaire Road, so named because one of the residents who lived there, Mr. Ernest Smith, was locally referred to as "the millionaire". Mr. Smith was originally from Salt Island and married a Virgin Gordian. He worked for many years as an engineer on the railway in Puerto Rico. He was seen as financially well-off and progressive.

Musical City

- Virgin Gorda is locally known as Musical City, a nickname that highlights the island's strong musical culture.
- Caribbean Ecstasy band out of Virgin Gorda had a long-standing run with Carnival Cruise Lines. Some of the original members still play on board their ships.
- 'It's a Beautiful Day in Paradise' was written by Morris Mark for Harry Hunter. Morris Mark dedicated "It's a Beautiful Day in Paradise" to Virgin Gorda.

INTERESTING FACT

In local fungi music, an 'Afro Pick' is used as part of a musical instrument.

Weather

- The Virgin Islands has two seasons, the dry season and the wet season. The dry season runs from January to April, and the wet season from May to December. Average annual rainfall in The Virgin Islands is about 45 inches.
- Early settlers realised that while there were no rivers on the island, there were boulders that served as water catchments, storing water all year round.
- The water in water rocks was often covered by a thick layer of moss, which prevented evaporation by the sun. To access the water, a hole was cut in the moss and reclosed after each use.

The Pump Well

- The Pump Well was dug by Agricultural Experimental Station officials in the early 1900s and upgraded in 1944.
- A pitcher pump with a submerged pump piston was installed on the well in the 1950s—the first of its kind on the island.
- The installation of the Pump Well meant that the well was sealed, improving hygiene and facilitating easier access to water.
- Wells in Valley provided water for humans as well as livestock.

Yachting Industry

- The Virgin Islands is a sailor's playground with its steady trade winds, easy navigation, picturesque scenery, and crystal-clear waters.
- Today, many charter companies operate in The Virgin Islands; they cater to novice and experienced sailors alike.
- The tourism industry is the bread and butter for many families as many are directly employed in tourism. The yachting sector is the leading tourism sector in The Virgin Islands.

Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour

- Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour, once owned by Little Dix Corporation, saw a change in ownership in 2004 when it was acquired by the BVI Investment Club.
- The yacht harbour has maintained its allure, attracting boating enthusiasts and those seeking the epitome of maritime luxury.
- It remains a captivating destination for visitors seeking a harmonious blend of luxury and natural beauty.

INTERESTING FACT

The Virgin Islands is 'The sailing capital of the world'.™



Flax and Vanterpool Administration Building

- Flax and Vanterpool Administration Building is the name of the government administration building on Virgin Gorda.
- Unlike other public buildings in the Territory, which were named in honour of individuals, this building was the first to bear the names of two families.
- Flax and Vanterpool are two prominent families who collectively contributed to the development of the island communities.

The Virgin Gorda Easter Festival

- The Virgin Gorda Easter Festival, held annually during Easter weekend, is a government-sponsored event supported by the Virgin Gorda community and attended by individuals from all over The Virgin Islands as well as visitors to the territory.
- A festival village is established and named in honour of outstanding individuals in the community who contributed to the continued success of the event over the years.
- The highlight of the festival is the annual Easter Monday Parade.
- In 2025, this festival celebrated its 58th anniversary.
- Several versions of the origin of this festival have been told over the years. One such story tells of a Christmas carolling group who hosted an annual beach picnic every Easter Monday as a thank you celebration for members of the choir who tirelessly spread Christmas joy throughout the community. Everyone on the island was invited, and the event became a permanent part of the island's social calendar.

INTERESTING FACT

Little Dix Corporation was a major economic driver on Virgin Gorda.

Planter's Cemetery

- The Planters' Cemetery is located at St. Thomas Bay, opposite the ferry terminal on Virgin Gorda. Graves tombed in brick and white lime mortar, dating to the 1600s, are visible at this cemetery for the planter class.
- Anecdotal evidence speaks of a visible tomb that was unearthed many years ago and transported to another site.
- There is a story told by a government official on Virgin Gorda, who said he saw a strange, tall ship sailing into St. Thomas Bay on a moonlit night. After some time, he decided to investigate. When he arrived at the beach, the ship was leaving the harbour, and he noticed that a large tombstone was gone. The grave was left open.
- Speculation was that a phantom pirate ghost ship visited Virgin Gorda to retrieve hidden treasure.

INTERESTING FACT

The Planters' Cemetery is a significant historical site that reflects Virgin Gorda's colonial past. It served as the burial ground for European settlers

Honourable Ralph T. O'Neal

- Honourable Ralph T. O'Neal, who was born in Virgin Gorda, served as the first Premier of The Virgin Islands after previously serving as Chief Minister.
- At the time of his death in 2019, he had been the longest-serving elected political representative in the territory, having represented Virgin Gorda continuously for 40 years.
- The main government administration building in the capital, Road Town, Tortola, is named in his honour.
- Early in his career he was an educator and the headmaster of the North Sound Methodist School for several years.
- He was educated in St. Kitts at the St.Kitts Grammar School and at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom.

Dame Janice M. Pereira

- In 2013, Justice Janice M. Pereira, a Virgin Gordian, became the first female Virgin Islander to be appointed Dame Commander in the Order of the British Empire (DBE).
- Dame Pereira was also the first from a Caribbean Territory to be appointed to serve on His Majesty's Privy Council in England.
- This appointment followed her retirement as Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, where she was the first woman and the first Virgin Islander to hold that post.

Currency

- The Virgin Islands, while a British Overseas Territory, officially adopted the U.S. dollar (USD) in 1959, replacing the British West Indies dollar.
- The change was made to strengthen trade and tourism links with the nearby United States Virgin Islands and to simplify financial transactions for American visitors and investors.
- Today, the U.S. dollar remains The Virgin Islands' official currency, ensuring stability and convenience in both tourism and international business.

INTERESTING FACT

The Annual Ralph T. O'Neal Hat Parade is held on Easter Sunday as part of the Easter Festivities in his honour.



Building Standards

- Advancements in the territory and availability of heavy equipment make it possible for homes to be built in areas previously considered inaccessible.
- Many builders utilise the concept of terracing on steep hillsides to erect houses of two or more levels.
- Some of these structures are erected in stages, making room for future growth and development.

Accommodation and Private Islands Resort

- Virgin Gorda is home to some of the most luxurious hotels, resorts, and private villas in the world. The island's modern tourism era began when Laurance Rockefeller established the iconic Little Dix Bay Hotel, setting the tone for world-class hospitality. Today, the level of accommodation on Virgin Gorda and its surrounding cays is exceptional, offering privacy, exclusivity, and unmatched natural beauty.

INTERESTING FACT

The U.S. dollar remains The Virgin Islands' official currency,



Private Island Resorts

- Biras Creek – Accessible only by boat, Biras Creek sits between two hills and offers seclusion, spectacular ocean views, and a focus on tranquillity and nature.
- Necker Island – Owned by Sir Richard Branson, this 74-acre island offers an exclusive luxury retreat with stunning beaches, vibrant marine life, and a reputation for hosting high-profile guests.
- Mosquito Island – Another Branson owned property (branded as Moskito), Moskito Island is a model of sustainable luxury, featuring eco-friendly villas and pristine landscapes.
- Oil Nut Bay – A premier resort community on Virgin Gorda's North Sound, Oil Nut Bay combines architectural elegance with state-of-the-art amenities, including fine dining, a marina, and wellness facilities.
- Saba Rock – A lively yet intimate resort perched on a tiny island in the North Sound, Saba Rock blends upscale accommodations with a laid-back atmosphere, ideal for yachters and adventurers.

INTERESTING FACT

Virgin Gorda is described as the billionaire's playground.

SALUTATIONS

An old Virgin Islands proverb states "Every hallelujah has an amen". I am your driver _____, it was a pleasure to be your guide. Thank you, see you on your next trip to The Virgin Islands.

All good things must come to an end. I am your driver _____, it was a pleasure being your guide. Thank you, see you on your next trip to The Virgin Islands.

ABOUT VIRGIN GORDA

- The Spanish began visiting Virgin Gorda in the 1500s. During this period, the island was referred to as Spanish Town, a name still in use today. The Spanish were said to have mined gold, copper, and other minerals on the island.

- In 1680, the first English planters to settle in The Virgin Islands established themselves on Virgin Gorda, planting cotton and tobacco to trade with passing ships. A visiting French missionary described the early settlers as very poor. These settlers came from neighbouring Anguilla in the 1600s. The last names of some families remain including: Harrigan, Gumbs, Hodge, Vanterpool and Flemming.

- After the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697, Britain made a strong effort to suppress piracy. New laws were passed, forcing colonial governors to take action against pirates; the Royal Navy began to actively patrol the Caribbean.

- Stories of pirates in The Virgin Islands abound, but scant evidence prevents us from elaborating on the subject. Pere Labat, a French missionary, sailed through The Virgin Islands in the early 1700's, and in his biography, he told of pirate activities in this area. He mentioned a pirate named Captain Daniel who he said planned to raid Paneston (Spanish Town), the capital of Virgin Gorda.

- The first capital of The Virgin Islands was Spanish Town on Virgin Gorda. This capital was moved from Virgin Gorda to Tortola in 1741.

About Virgin Gorda

- In 1751, survey revealed that Virgin Gorda had no defence at the time; it was documented that there was only one gun on the whole island, but no carriages or forts. The 1756 survey data pointed out some improvement: the island now had 62 small arms and 8 cannons.

- The first Quaker missionary to arrive in The Virgin Islands was Joshua Fielding. He landed on Virgin Gorda in 1727 after a short visit to Anguilla. He settled in Spanish Town where he remained for 12 days, during which time he was able to organise large meetings at the deputy governor's house and elsewhere on the island.

- In 1741, John Pickering became lieutenant governor, and the government residence was moved from Virgin Gorda to Fat Hogs Bay (Tortola); however, Virgin Gorda retained its deputy governor for a short time following.

- In 1773, Governor Payne abolished the position of deputy governor of Virgin Gorda because he could not find a suitable person for the post. This was, of course, a diplomatic excuse, and Payne made no secret that he was convinced that because of the proximity to Tortola, one deputy governor was more than sufficient. In that same year, the institution of Legislature of The Virgin Islands brought in more substantial changes. Virgin Gorda was enabled to have political representation in the Assembly by two members.

- In 1776, due to the election, Virgin Gorda was divided into two constituencies: Valley Division and South Division. Each constituency elected a member of the Assembly, plus an additional member for Valley Town. In actuality, the 1776 Act had increased the number of members of the Assembly from 12 to 15, thus providing Virgin Gorda with the opportunity to be represented by three members.

- In 1797, a Methodist minister named Isham became the victim of French pirates. While on a trip from Tortola to Spanish Town his vessel was attacked, and he was robbed of all his clothes and books.

- In 1879, there were few roads on Virgin Gorda, and none of the cays

supported extensive development. Residents moved from remote locations around the island or to other islands by boat. Because roads are usually a pathway for further development, this relative lack of road infrastructure meant that, despite deforestation, land left untended quickly reverted to vegetation cover.

About Virgin Gorda

EARLY SETTLERS CAME TO VIRGIN GORDA WITH DREAMS OF PROSPERITY TO MINE COPPER.

- The land transportation tourism sector in Virgin Gorda started purely by chance when the driver of a station wagon carrying a load of sand was asked by a group of tourists to transport them to the beach.

- The Ashford Walters Community Centre served the Virgin Gorda community for decades until it was destroyed by a hurricane in 2017. The community centre was built by the Virgin Gorda Mutual Society of New York in 1962. Named in honour of Ashford Walters, who was one of the founding members of the organisation and served as its President for several decades. This centre was the first such facility in The Virgin Islands and highlighted the community spirit and ingenuity of the Virgin Gorda communities. It was used for wedding receptions, dances, community meetings, concerts, an emergency shelter, and even a polling centre during election.

- In 1971, Virgin Gorda was connected to the territory's electricity grid on Tortola by a submarine cable via Beef Island. The $1 million expansion initially served three hundred customers, including Little Dix Bay Hotel.

- The inter-island ferry service operated by Virgin Gorda Transport "Speedy's" between Virgin Gorda and Tortola commenced in 1974 with the vessel Speedy's Adventure.

- The first vocational school in The Virgin Islands was established on Virgin Gorda in 1978. The school was managed by the Virgin Gorda Education Committee, a community group, and was funded by the Little Dix Bay Corporation. The subjects taught at the school included home economics, hospitality, engineering, electronics and refrigeration, agricultural studies and straw work. The school was located on North Road.

- "The North Sound Harbour area is almost land-locked, and visitors have described it as being similar to Lake Gennesaret [Sea of Galilee]. The Harbour begins at Anguilla Point and is bounded on the south by the mainland of Virgin Gorda, partly by the islet known as Little Saba, to the north by the island of Prickly Pear and partly by a reef, and to the west of the island of Mosquito. There are entrances between Mosquito and Anguilla Point, the mainland of Virgin Gorda and Little Saba, Little Saba and Prickly Pear and between Prickly Pear and the Reef."

About The Virgin Islands

- In 1866, Samuel Hodge from The Virgin Islands was the first black soldier in the British Empire to receive the Victoria Cross for bravery.

- In 1867, The Virgin Islands was devastated by three catastrophic events within the space of a month: a hurricane [then called a gale], an earthquake, and a tsunami.

- In 1959, The Virgin Islands became the first non-US territory/country in the region to adopt the United States dollar as a legal tender.

- The Virgin Islands thrives on two economic pillars: financial services and tourism. The financial services industry accounts for just over 50% of the government's annual revenue. The industry was developed and guided for several decades by the late Director, Dr. Robert Mathavious, OBE.

- The national tree of The Virgin Islands is the white cedar, which was used to build homes, furniture and the traditional Virgin Islands sloop.

- On 29th December, 1960 at 8:30 a.m., the first cruise ship to visit the territory, the Meteor, glided into Road Town harbour with 115 passengers hailing from New York.

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