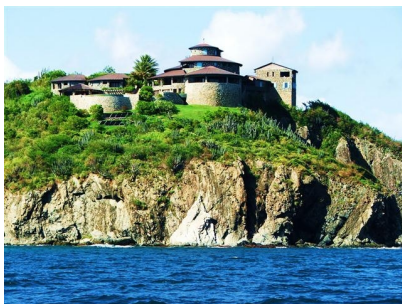


# Virgin Islands: Discover the Buck Island...Buck Islands!

The Virgin Islands consist of two groups of islands, the United States Virgin Islands (USVI) and the British Virgin Islands (BVI). Between them there are 8 major islands and over 90 smaller islands and cays. You likely can name the major islands: St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John and Water Island in the USVI; and Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Jost Van Dyke and Anegada in the BVI. Now it is trivia time; one point each, how many of the small islands can you name? If you can't think of any, take a clue from the title – Buck Island... Buck Islands!



Buck Island, yes, and that is three points! Why three, because there are three islands in the Virgin Islands named Buck Island. Popular name, wouldn't you say?

## **Buck Island, BVI**

Buck Island in the BVI is privately owned. Comprising of about 43 acres, it is located off the south eastern shore of Tortola. It was once the site of the first landing strip in the BVI. Today it is home to a luxury residential estate which is available as a vacation rental. And if you are looking to buy an island, the property is currently for sale at around U.S. \$50 Million.

For Buck Island number two and three we hop over to the USVI, first St. Croix and then St. Thomas.

## **Buck Island, St. Croix, USVI**

Buck Island, located 1.5 miles off the north eastern shore of St. Croix, is part of a protected area called Buck Island Reef National Monument. In 1961, by presidential proclamation, the National Monument was established by President John F. Kennedy to preserve "one of the finest marine gardens in the Caribbean Sea".

The park included 176 acre Buck Island and 704 acres of underwater marine habitat. In 2001 the park was greatly expanded by President William Clinton to its current 19,015 acres.



The island and the surrounding coral reef marine environment support a large variety of native flora and fauna. The island is one of the few places in the Virgin Islands where endangered brown pelicans and threatened least terns nest. Another endangered resident of this area is the sea turtle; hawksbill, green and leatherback.

An Elkhorn coral barrier reef surrounds two-thirds of the island. Access to Buck Island is by boat only. Half and full day charters are available from St. Croix. At Buck Island visitors can snorkel or scuba dive through the beautiful reef, follow the underwater snorkeling trail at the eastern most point of the reef, hike over the island to enjoy the view or take a swim and relax at the gorgeous beach.

### **Buck Island, St. Thomas, USVI**

Buck Island is located about 2 miles south of St. Thomas. In 1969 the 45 acre island was transferred to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service due to “its value for migratory birds” and it became the Buck Island National Wildlife Refuge. Birdwatchers may see red-billed tropic birds, frigate birds, terns, laughing gulls and other species in the vicinity of the island.



On Buck Island there is also a historic lighthouse. Though it is no longer operational and it is closed to the public, it is noteworthy as one of only three Danish built lighthouses in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Buck Island is characterized by cactus, shrubs and grasslands. Its coastline is rocky consequently it allows little opportunity for recreational activities on the island. In the surrounding crystal clear waters however there are beautiful coral reef habitats and an artificial reef – a shipwreck.

The marine area is home to a variety of fish and animals, in particular endangered sea turtles. Visitors can snorkel or scuba dive through the reef, observing and enjoying the fascinating underwater scenery and its special resident turtles. Excursions by boat, including snorkeling and diving trips, are available at St. Thomas.

**Source:**

**<http://www.vinow.com>**

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