



©Candyce Stapen Photography

Small boat tours make for excellent snorkeling off Turtle Beach on Buck Island in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Photo courtesy of U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism.

## Magical St. Croix Makes For A Memorable Multigenerational Vacation

Creators | July 7, 2024 | by Candyce H. Stapen

Categories: A Port Day, Adventures, Beaches, Caribbean, Bahamas & Bermuda Destinations, Cruises, Cruises & Resorts, Destinations, Family, Featured News, Grade-Schoolers Ages 6-9, Multigenerational, Preschoolers Ages 3-5

Sharing favorite pursuits with the family's youngsters is one of the many pleasures of a multigenerational vacation. Snorkeling with them above blue tang and purple and pink dappled parrotfish at Buck Island Reef National Monument off St. Croix proved a highlight, even if everything didn't go as planned.

We chose St. Croix for its balance of nature and development. A laid-back gem larger than its sister U.S. Virgin Islands, St. John and St. Thomas, less-visited St. Croix lures guests with its iconic reef, great beaches, hotels, restaurants and lack of crowds. New nonstop flights by American Airlines, Delta and Spirit initiated in late 2023 and 2024 make access to St. Croix easier than ever before.

To ensure that James, age 7, and Charlotte, age 5, experienced a successful first snorkel outing, we booked Smooth Recovery, a 12-passenger boat operated by

Caribbean Sea Adventures. With the kids yelling, "Go faster," we bumped over waves, cruising the 1.5 miles to Buck Island. Since breathing through a tube can feel odd to kids, we brought along inflatable snorkeling rafts paired with underwater viewing buckets so that the kids could float while looking through the clear plastic to see the fish.

It was a good thing. James, frustrated by water flooding his snorkel, used the raft. Still, our spirits were buoyed by his joyous shouts — "There's a grouper," "a squid," "a barracuda," "a reef shark" as he followed the guide along the 25-minute underwater trail. Charlotte, unexpectedly frightened of being in the water with fish, stayed on the boat. Our captain held the raft near the vessel, and Charlotte, belly down on the deck, occasionally spotted a fish.

Some 20 years ago, the myriad schools of fish and giant rust-colored elkhorn coral amazed us. As a result of climate change, hurricanes and coral diseases, a portion of the elkhorn coral, which provides crucial habitats for fish, has died, reducing fish numbers. However, we did spot a good variety of the 250 species that inhabit the reef. St. Croix, in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is rehabilitating the reef by using land-based and underwater nurseries to cultivate corals and replant them in the reef.

Visiting Buck Island is well worth the trip, especially for those new to masks and fins. We saw only a few other snorkelers, and the boats stop for wading off Buck Island's Turtle Beach, a pristine swath of white sand that is home to nesting sea turtles. On the return ride, we spotted two green sea turtles locked in a mating embrace, a fascinating but tricky sighting to explain to the kids.

For this trip, we also craved space and convenience. On St. Croix, instead of blocks of high-rise hotels looming shoulder to shoulder, individual resorts dot the island. We chose the Buccaneer Beach and Golf Resort, whose sprawling 340 acres support three beaches and 149 rooms in various areas. Good options for families include the Family Cottage Suites, two bedrooms that sleep five and connect through a shared bath; deluxe oceanfront rooms whose patios practically touch the bay; and the oversized Doubloon rooms graced with large covered balconies that afford views of nearby Mermaid Beach.

Our group of nine — our son and daughter along with their spouses and children — gathered daily at Mermaid Beach. Its calm, clear water is perfect for kids and

families. We tossed Frisbees and footballs at the shore. Shaded by tall coconut palms, Kyle, the 20-month-old, endlessly delighted in shoveling sand into water-filled pails. We never had a problem finding free lounge chairs, so we didn't have to wake up at 7 a.m. to claim one.

Charlotte, wary of the juvenile palometa jacks that zig-zagged in the bay, splashed at the shore and swam at Grotto Beach's small but serviceable pool. When James wasn't swimming as part of the complimentary children's program and on his own, he enthusiastically played soccer, cornhole and other games on the large, grassy, oceanfront sports court just above Mermaid Beach. The Buccaneer has enough space for such unexpected, family-friendly amenities.

The complimentary buffet breakfasts at the resort's Terrace were ample, and the shoreside Beauregard's on the Beach, shaded by sea grape trees, served tasty sushi and tacos. Off-property, we liked Savant, tucked into a covered garden and historic building in Christiansted. The chef perfectly cooked the grilled mahi-mahi and the pan-seared snapper.

Another night, we drove by tall thickets of tropical trees to oceanfront Duggan's Reef on the East End. While waiting for our mahi-mahi, beer-battered fish, fried chicken and lobster, we stood on the seaside deck watching pelicans dive-bomb for fish.

We look forward to coming back to share more of St. Croix's magic, including kayaking St. Croix's bioluminescent bay (outings were unavailable during our stay because of the bright moon) with our family.

## **When You Go**

U.S. Virgin Islands: [www.visitusvi.com](http://www.visitusvi.com)

Buck Island Reef National Monument: [nps.gov/buis/index.htm](http://nps.gov/buis/index.htm)

Caribbean Sea Adventures: [www.caribbeanseaadventures.com](http://www.caribbeanseaadventures.com)

Buccaneer Beach and Golf Resort: [www.thebuccaneer.com](http://www.thebuccaneer.com)

Savant: [www.savantstx.com](http://www.savantstx.com)

Duggan's Reef: [www.duggansreefstx.com](http://www.duggansreefstx.com)



*The Buccaneer Beach and Golf Resort on St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands has everything a family needs for a multigenerational family vacation. Photo courtesy of Candyce Stapen.*



*A child plays on the oceanfront sports court at the Buccaneer Beach and Golf Resort on St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Photo courtesy of Candyce Stapen.*



*Small boat tours make for excellent snorkeling off Turtle Beach on Buck Island in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Photo courtesy of U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism.*

**Tags:** Creators Syndicate, St. Croix, US Virgin Islands

Share this entry



You might also like

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  <p><b>What to Know When You Share a Vacation Rental</b></p> |  <p><b>Come Aboard the Horizon for the Belly Laughs</b></p> |
|  <p><b>Watch the Tagging of Sea Turtles in Nevis</b></p>     |  <p><b>Whether to Cruise — or Not</b></p>                   |
|  <p><b>The Ultimate Virgin Islands Food Guide</b></p>        |  <p><b>Why Families Love the Carnival Horizon</b></p>       |