



# A SAILOR'S PARADISE IN THE TRADEWINDS

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A VOYAGE TO THE POPULAR CHARTER DESTINATION OF THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS IS ALL ABOUT COMPANIONSHIP, CAMARADERIE, AND SHARING STORIES WHILE SAILING FROM ONE RUM SHACK TO THE NEXT.

If the Caribbean strung together is considered a sailor's paradise, the British Virgin Islands deserve a special category of praise for their role in earning that reputation. In a small area relative to much of the Caribbean lie a group of islands with nearly flawless sailing conditions for any mariner cruising in the archipelago. Sailing here is a lifestyle; the winds blow from the east all winter and rarely change direction, so the navigation is dynamic yet simple with easy passageways that do not cause a fuss when sailing. You can't tack without missing a rum bar perched along a beach. With inviting anchorages scattered throughout the islands, it is accessible to new sailors and a favorite of experienced old-timers.

The island of Tortola is at the center of the cluster, with roughly 30 surrounding islands extending to Anegada in the north and stretching southwest to Norman Island. The greater archipelago includes not just the BVI but also the United States and Spanish Virgin Islands, which extend westward towards Vieques and south to Saint Croix. Differing from many Caribbean nations which are comprised of a single main island like Martinique or Dominica, the BVI is a cluster of smaller islands. This gives cruisers the ability to find coves in any direction with ease. Over the years, sailing charters have developed into a prominent business, providing easy access to rental boats for competent skippers.

These Virgin Islands are no strangers to the seafaring life. Dating back to the early civilizations that inhabited this land some 3,000 years before Christopher Columbus dropped anchor off Saint Croix, the Ciboney, Igneri, Taíno, and the Kalinago settled these islands and sailed the waters. Columbus named the Virgin Islands after the patron saints of maritime navigators Saint Ursula and her martyred maidens: *Santa y las once mil virgenes*. Though the artifacts remaining from the pre-Columbus era are limited, it's safe to assume that many of the anchorages, hikes, and snorkeling areas that sailors still voyage to were frequented by pre-Columbian people, and much of this land has remained naturally unchanged, appearing just as it has for thousands of years.

