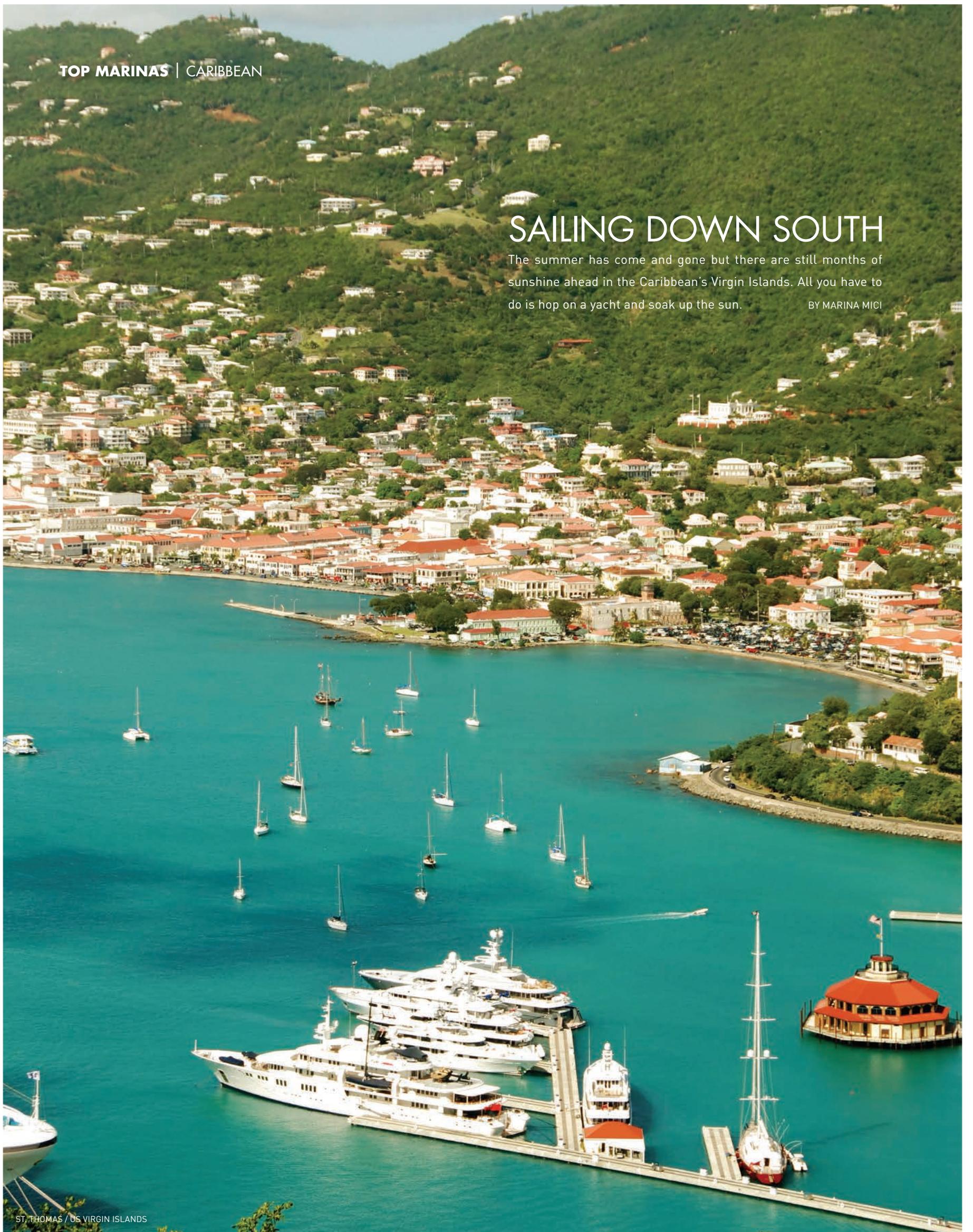


# SAILING DOWN SOUTH

The summer has come and gone but there are still months of sunshine ahead in the Caribbean's Virgin Islands. All you have to do is hop on a yacht and soak up the sun.

BY MARINA MICI





YACHT HAVEN GRANDE / ST. THOMAS

## YACHT HAVEN GRANDE, ST. THOMAS, US VIRGIN ISLANDS

The **US Virgin Islands** of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix are just a short flight from the United States, making them ideal and versatile locations for a weekend escape. **St. Thomas**, the primary of the three islands, is sometimes referred to as the New York City of the Caribbean as it is a constant hive of activity. As an official port of entry to the US Virgin Islands, it attracts the most tourists. They come for its pristine beaches, immaculate weather and dramatic history. Danes, French Huguenots and Spanish Jews are some of the nationalities that have settled on the island since the 1600s, when two industries flourished: Piracy and the slave trade—St. Thomas had one of the largest slave markets in the world. By the 1700s, however, legitimate trade had won over and prosperous merchants lined the streets. The island became the central trading point of the West Indies. Today, Dutch-style doorways, grand English manor houses and French-inspired design throughout the island reflect its international heritage. The US purchased St. Thomas and its neighbors in 1917, leading to the split between the US Virgin Islands and the British Virgin Islands.

### SPORT & LEISURE

The US Virgin Islands are free ports. Head to Yacht Haven Grande for high-end boutiques like **Louis Vuitton** and **Bulgari**, just a stone's throw from the pier; downtown Charlotte Amalie, meanwhile, is best for Caribbean artifacts.

Yacht Haven Grande also comprises tennis courts, a lagoon-style swimming pool and putting green. Serious golfers can also play at the 18-hole **Mahogany Run** course. The Tom Fazio-designed course has scenic holes with tight fairways, elbow doglegs and strong winds that make the game challenging and rewarding. From neighboring Buck Island and beyond, the waters surrounding St. Thomas offer a plethora of diving possibilities.

### CULTURE

Any charter through the USVI should include at least a day spent wandering through **Charlotte Amalie** to soak up the architecture and museums. Most of the original buildings from a century ago are still in use as they were built to survive hurricanes and earthquakes and have withstood the test of time. **Fort Christian**, located on the waterfront in downtown Charlotte Amalie, is the old-

est building in continuous use on the island and dates back to the 1680s. Used as a fort, courthouse, jail and police station over the years, the building now houses a historical museum that is worth a visit. The **Seven Arches Museum** is another must-see site. The building, once home to a 19th-century Danish artisan, was named for the arches that support its staircase.

### DINING

There are plenty of establishments on St. Thomas where you will find local Caribbean cuisine, including the popular West Indies-influenced dishes of curried roti, pates (fried breads with meat fillings), mutton soup, conch, plantains and johnny cake (fried unleavened bread).

### AFTER DARK

Join fellow seafarers at the marina's collection of casual bistro-style establishments like the **Fat Turtle**, a Caribbean roadhouse. For a more formal occasion, try the wine bar at **Grande Cru** (Contact: *Grande Cru Chef/Owner Patricia LeCorte*, [340] 513-3983; *grandecruvi@hotmail.com*; *www.grandecruvi.com*).

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Yacht Haven Grande** is one of the latest marinas developed by the Island Global Yachting Group (IGY). Located near St. Thomas's cruise terminal, it can accommodate 48 superyachts of up to 175 feet stern to. The marina also has docks that allow alongside berthing for yachts up to 450 feet. In addition to its first-class yacht amenities—high-speed in-slip fueling, black-water fuel pump-out and waste oil removal—Yacht Haven Grande is a shopper's mecca and has plenty of other leisure activities (Contact: *Marina Manager Gili Wojnowich*, [340] 770-9500; *gwojnowich@igymarinas.com*; *www.igymarinas.com*).

### RECOMMENDED

The **International Rolex Regatta**, organized by the **St. Thomas Yacht Club** at the end of March each year, is one of the main regattas in the Caribbean and is often referred to as the crown jewel of Caribbean racing. The island will host the event from March 22 to 24, 2013. The **St. Thomas Carnival** follows in April and is a monthlong fiesta of parades, fireworks, calypso contests, dance competitions and nonstop eating, drinking and dancing in the streets.



SAILING WITH BITTER END YACHT CLUB / VIRGIN GORDA



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YACHT CLUB COSTA SMERALDA / VIRGIN GORDA

### YACHT CLUB COSTA SMERALDA, VIRGIN GORDA, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

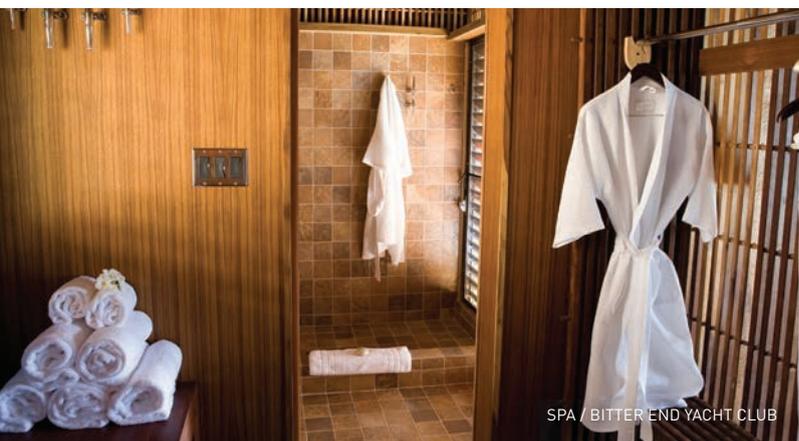
With a balmy climate, steady easterly trade winds and sheltered anchorages, the **British Virgin Islands** are a haven for sailors. Forming part of the archipelago, **Virgin Gorda** is amongst the larger islands of the chain and has beautiful white beaches, gentle shallow reefs and world-famous resorts. No wonder it is such a lure for superyachts. Red postboxes dot the town's landscape (a nod to its British heritage), and Spanish influences are evident in its historic ruins.

#### SPORT & LEISURE

Early morning is an ideal time to hike to **Gorda Peak** or to discover one of the island's other national parks at Devil's Bay, Spring Bay and North Sound.

Later on dive into **The Baths**, a natural formation of volcanic boulder-formed pools, caves and grottoes on the island's southwest coast, which provide ample snorkeling and kayaking opportunities. Kayak around the dramatic boulders or take one of The Baths' trails to snorkel in seawater pools teeming with fish and coral.

Located close to the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda marina, the **Biras Creek Resort** has all manner of sports and relaxation facilities that are available to guests of the sparkling new marina. These include tennis courts, beach volleyball, a spa and wellness center, a stretch of beautiful beach and water sports aplenty. Alternatively, test your small-boat sailing skills at the **Bitter End Yacht Club** (Contact: Director of Guest Activities John Conway, [284] 494-2746; [watersports@beyc.com](mailto:watersports@beyc.com); [www.beyc.com](http://www.beyc.com)).



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LAGOON POOL / ROSEWOOD LITTLE DIX BAY



SPA ENTRANCE / ROSEWOOD LITTLE DIX BAY

## DINING

The new **YCCS Clubhouse**, which opened earlier this year, has an Italian-influenced restaurant with indoor and terrace dining options (*Contact: Maître d' Fabio Fraticelli, (284) 393-2001; fabio.fraticelli@yccs.vg; www.yccsmarina.com*). Both the open-air restaurant of the Biras Creek Resort and the **Clubhouse** at the Bitter End Yacht Club in North Sound are perfect lunch spots. **Top of the Baths**, set on the trailhead leading to The Baths, offers amazing views and a swimming pool for a pre- or post-lunch dip. While there, make sure to sample their famous Painkiller cocktail (*Contact: Front Desk, (284) 495-5497; www.topofbaths.com*).

Come evening, head to **Rosewood Little Dix Bay** for an amazing sunset accompanied by rum punch at the resort. The aforementioned Bitter End Yacht Club, meanwhile, is the place for like-minded seafarers dining on fresh fish, steak and West Indian cuisine. Only accessible by boat, it has two restaurants and bars (*Contact: Food & Beverage Manager Marielle Arneaud, (284) 494-2746; marneaud@beyc.com; www.beyc.com*).

For local cuisine, Spanish Town has a number of fine eateries including **Chez Bamboo** for Cajun and Creole dishes, while **Saba Rock** is perfect for dinner followed by live music and dancing into the wee hours of the morning at the **Calypto Bar**.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Located on the northeastern tip of Virgin Gorda, the **Yacht Club Costa Smeralda** is the Caribbean's equivalent of the infamous original club in Porto Cervo, Sardinia. The new, state-of-the-art superyacht marina in North Sound Bay is



YACHT CLUB COSTA SMERALDA / VIRGIN GORDA

protected from surge and swell, and is an ideal base from which to explore the neighboring islands. With 38 slips for yachts from 93 to 328 feet, the marina includes a clubhouse, extensive onboard provisioning services and on-site customs. Superyacht owners and guests can access the facilities of the nearby Biras Creek Resort, which is located adjacent to the YCCS (*Contacts: Biras Creek Resort General Manager Steven Beaumont, (284) 494-3555; sbeaumont@victorintl.com; www.biras.com; YCCS Marina Manager Jerzy Zdrojkowski, (284) 346-2000; dockmaster@yccsmarina.com; www.yccsmarina.com*).

## RECOMMENDED

Late afternoon, as the sun begins to lower, head to the spa at Rosewood Little Dix Bay, set on a hillside with views over the bay. The treatments draw on ancient therapeutic practices of the Carib Indians, using ingredients from the island's indigenous plants (*Contact: Spa Manager Christine Parillon, (284) 495-5555; christine.parillon@rosewoodhotels.com; www.rosewoodhotels.com*).