

Salt River Bay

National Historical Park
and Ecological Preserve
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

CROSSROAD OF CULTURES

Salt River encompasses the entire spectrum of human history in the West Indies. Archaeological sites bear evidence of several prehistoric cultures (beginning ca. AD 100). The major settlement on the west side of the bay is the only known site in the Lesser Antilles to feature a ceremonial plaza or ball court. On November 14, 1493, during his second voyage of exploration to the New World, Columbus sighted this island, which the Caribs called *Cibuquiera* (the "stony land") and which he named *Santa Cruz* ("Holy Cross"). At Salt River, an unequal skirmish between Spaniards and Caribs resulted in fatalities on both sides – the first documented Native American resistance to European encroachment. Subsequent events in the early 1500s served as the pretext for the attempted extermination of "Caribs" by the Spanish. More than a century later, Salt River became a focal point of European struggles for dominance in the Antilles, played out among the Spanish, English, Dutch, French, and Knights of Malta between 1641 and 1665. Under later Danish sovereignty (1733-1917), the area was utilized for extensive agricultural development.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Salt River's natural significance and beauty derive from the association of upland terrestrial, estuarine, and marine environments within a relatively small geographic area. It encompasses the single largest mangrove system remaining in the Virgin Islands. The mangroves and the bay's seagrass beds provide some of the most important foraging and nesting habitats for resident and migratory wildlife in the territory. The submarine canyon at the entrance to Salt River Bay, together with the sheer outer wall (with its diversity of deep water corals, caverns, grottoes, and ledges) descending to almost 2,000 feet, is one of few such features found worldwide.



CARIBS BATTLE SPANIARDS, DOMINICA, 1494.

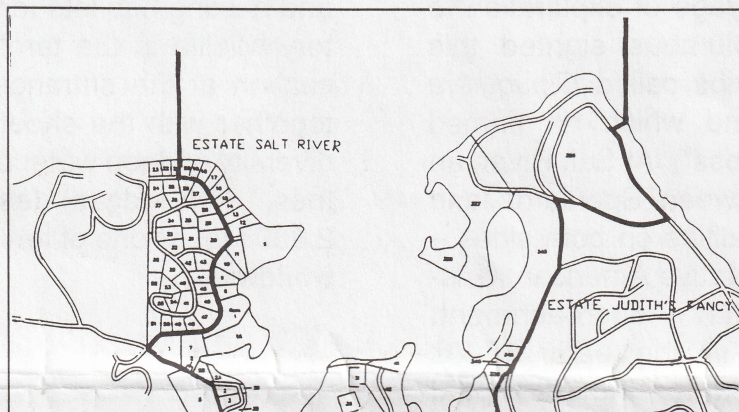
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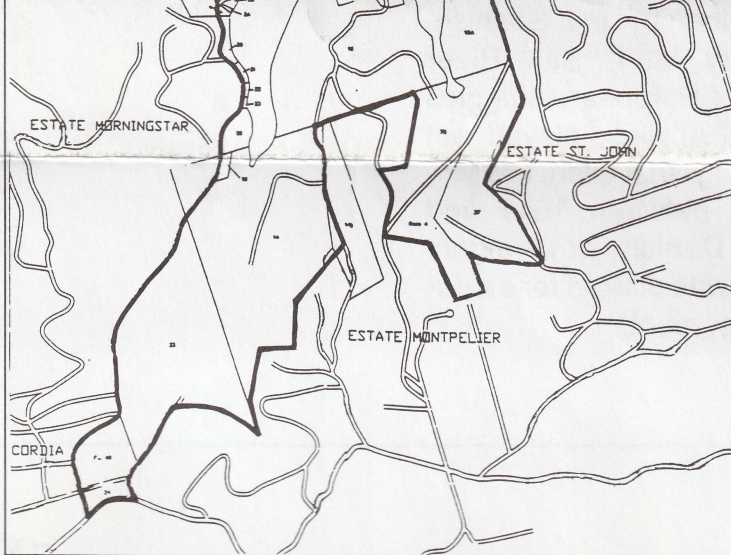
Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve is located on the north-central coast of the island of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, approximately 5.5 miles west-northwest of the town of Christiansted. The importance of Salt River to America's cultural and natural heritage has been recognized by its inclusion in the National Landmarks program and the National Natural Landmarks Program. In 1992, Salt River Bay joined Virgin Islands National Park, Christiansted National Historic Site, and Buck Island Reef National Monument as units of the National Park System in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

At the present time, the Columbus Landing Site is the most accessible part of Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve. It can be reached by taking Route 80 north at the intersection with Route 75. Follow the paved road alongside the Salt River Marina to the traffic circle at the beach.

No amenities currently exist at the park. More information can be obtained at the District Manager's office, which is located at the second floor of the Scale House, Christiansted National Historic Site. Group interpretive talks at the



The park is co-managed by the National Park Service and the Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands. A ten-member Park Commission advises the Secretary of the Interior and the Government of the Virgin Islands on planning and policy matters. The park's Management Objectives and Land Protection Plan (which prioritizes land acquisition on the basis of resource protection and operational needs) have already been adopted. Work on the General Management Plan, which will define long-term objectives, will commence in Fiscal Year 1998.



BOUNDARY MAP OF SALT RIVER BAY NHP

Columbus Landing Site must be scheduled in advance through the District Manager. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except federal holidays. The telephone number is (340) 773-1460.

Enquiries may be addressed to:
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