



*Virgin  
Islands*

NATIONAL PARK

ST. JOHN ISLAND, V.I.

# Virgin Islands

## NATIONAL PARK

ST. JOHN is the most beautiful and least disturbed of the three major American Virgin Islands. Eighty-five percent or more of its area is covered with tropical vegetation and second growth trees. In its setting in the colorful and calm channels of the island archipelago, and with its unusual scenic quality, plantlife, coral reef formations, marine life, and history, it is quite unlike any other reserve now included in the National Park System.

The island is famous for scenic mountain trails, lush woodlands, and quiet coves. Magnificent coral gardens encircle the island. The richness of history can be seen in bush-covered remains of 18th-century forts and plantation buildings.

Swimming, fishing, snorkeling, and underwater photography are fast-growing sports. Equipment can be rented, serviced, or purchased on St. Thomas. Sailboats and other small craft can be rented on both St. Thomas and St. John.

Roads on the island are unimproved, but jeep taxi service is available, and scheduled jeep and boat tours begin in St. Thomas. Royal Road (Centerline), extending from Cruz Bay on the west to Coral Bay on the east, meanders along the high backbone of the island and gives access to many points of interest. Among the highlights are Coral Bay Overlook, Trunk Bay Beach, Annaberg Ruins, and Reef Bay Valley. Snorkeling is excellent at Hawksnest Beach, Trunk Bay, Lameshur, and Annaberg. Sandflies and mosquitoes are occasionally a nuisance. There are no poisonous snakes on the island.

### CLIMATE

Rainfall on St. John averages about 50 inches a year, mostly in brief showers at night; the humidity is comparatively low. The northeast trade winds blow in from the ocean and temper the heat of the sun, making days delightfully pleasant and nights cool. The average annual temperature is 79°, with a difference of only about 6° between

winter and summer. The lowest recorded temperature is 65°, the highest 96°. This equable climate—mildly tropical—is exceedingly healthful.

### CLOTHING NEEDS

Social activities on the islands are very informal, so casual sport clothes of lightweight material are in order. Bring bathing suits. Lightweight jackets are advisable for cool evenings, and some hotels require jackets at dinner.

### FACILITIES

Accommodations on St. John are extremely limited. The largest guest facility is Caneel Bay Plantation, operated by Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., a nonprofit conservation and education organization established by the Rockefeller family. It has 87 double rooms in beachfront units and cottages with a capacity of about 170 persons. A limited number of housekeeping cottages are available at Cruz, Maho, and Coral Bays. Limited drygoods, groceries, hardware, restaurants, a bank, and laundry are available on St. John.

The picturesque capital city of Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas has a wide variety of hotels, guest cottages, restaurants, shops, and other facilities. Rates are lower between April and December than during the winter season.

A small campground is located at Hawksnest Bay, and camping equipment may be rented in Cruz Bay. A day-use concession at Trunk Bay provides luncheon.

### Island paradise.



Naturalist-conducted trail trips and talks are presented each week, and park rangers are on duty to provide complete information on facilities and programs.

Contact a travel agent for detailed information about rates and accommodations on St. John and St. Thomas; or write to Department of Commerce, Division of Tourism, P.O. Box 806, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, V.I., U.S.A.; or to Virgin Islands Tourist Information Office, 16 West 49th Street, New York 20, N.Y. Reservations should be made well in advance.

### TRANSPORTATION

Scheduled air and steamship lines give regular service to St. Thomas. The Virgin Islands are about 4 hours from New York and 3 hours from Miami by Eastern Air Lines or Pan American World Airways to San Juan, P.R., where connections are made with Caribair to St. Thomas. Delta Air Lines serve San Juan regularly from New Orleans. No aircraft land on St. John.

There is regular 4½-day steamship service between New York and San Juan. The Mississippi Shipping Co. (Delta Line) runs steamships from New Orleans direct to St. Thomas. Alcoa Steamship Lines operates freighters with limited passenger accommodations from New York to St. Thomas.

Once on St. Thomas, you can take a taxicab from the port city of Charlotte Amalie to Red Hook Landing, about 9

miles away, where scheduled commercial boats are available for the 30-minute passage to the park entrance at Cruz Bay.

### HISTORY

Columbus discovered the Virgin Islands in 1493, on his second voyage to the New World, and named the group in honor of Saint Ursula and her 11,000 virgins.

For hundreds of years before Columbus arrived, villages of the peaceful, agricultural Arawak Indians dotted the shores of St. John. At one spot their rock carvings (petroglyphs) mark what must have been a sacred shrine. At the time of discovery, the fierce Caribs, who may have entered the island chain from South America barely a century earlier, were encroaching steadily on the Arawak lands.

After 1493, Dutch, English, Spanish, French, and Danish adventurers came to the Virgin Islands; the Danes first came in the 1670's but did not establish a permanent colony on St. John until 1717. By 1726 all available land on St. John was taken for sugar and cotton plantations. Many slaves were imported by the settlers. These slaves revolted in 1733, and some of the planters took refuge at Peter Durlieu's Estate, now known as Caneel Bay Plantation. The rebellion was finally quelled, but after the outbreak of 1733, the fires of revolt continued to smolder among the slave population until slavery was abolished in 1848. The act was an economic blow to the planters and contributed to the end of the estates.

As early as 1867 the United States manifested interest in those islands of the Virgin Islands group owned by Denmark. After a series of unsuccessful negotiations, the United States finally purchased the Danish Islands in 1917 for \$25 million.

### GEOLOGY, PLANTS, AND ANIMALS

St. John Island is of ancient volcanic origin; its topography is the result of geological processes of folding, faulting, and erosion, following volcanic activity and deposition of sediments. The scene thus created comprises steep mountains; deep valleys; gleaming white beaches; and extensive coral reefs, which are still growing on an underwater shelf of rock formed during a recent submergence.

Virgin forests mantling the island were largely removed during the 1700's and early 1800's as the land was cleared for sugar plantations. With the abandonment of the plantations in the mid-1800's, the landscape began to revert to tropical forest; but surprisingly few exotic plants have become established. Today, except for ruins of Danish sugar

All plants, animals, and historic objects are protected in the park for everyone to enjoy. Please leave firearms, nets, and spearguns outside the park.

mills, little evidence of agricultural land use remains. The relatively moist interior highlands and ravines are dominated by jungle forests of evergreen hardwoods, drier slopes by broad-leaved forests. Of several species of cacti, one resembles the organpipe cactus of the American Southwest. The 260 known species of native woody plants include figs, mahogany, cinnamon-bay, soursop, palms, mango, guava, breadfruit, and mangrove. Flowering shrubs, trees, and vines such as hibiscus, flamboyant, frangipani, and bougainvillea make a colorful display.

Of nearly 100 bird species, relatively few are water birds. But some herons and egrets, pelicans, ducks, gulls, frigate birds, and terns can be seen along the shores. Land birds are abundant, varied, and easy to observe; they include many striking forms not seen in the United States proper. Hummingbirds, doves, hawks, and warblers are common; parakeets have been seen.

The only native land mammals are six forms of bats. The red fig-eating bat, recently re-discovered, was known previously from a single collected specimen. Several introduced mammals, notably the mongoose, have become established. Native land vertebrates include toads, lizards, snakes, and turtles.

Viewed from Bordeaux Mountain or through snorkeling gear, the aquamarine waters of the coral reefs offer rewarding experiences. Undersea "gardens" contain multihued arrays of corals, sponges, and fishes. For the experienced

swimmer, there is a self-guiding underwater nature trail at Trunk Bay.

### REGULATIONS AND PRIVILEGES

The Virgin Islands constitute the only United States "free port" offering shopping free of customs duties. However, you must make customs declaration on your return to a United States port of entry, including San Juan, P.R.

1. No passports, visas, or health certificates are needed for United States and Canadian citizens.

2. During any 31-day period, residents of the United States may bring into the United States proper \$200 worth of merchandise from the Virgin Islands free of duty; but not more than \$100 may be applied to articles acquired elsewhere than in the Virgin Islands of the United States.

3. Postal rates and currency are the same as in the United States proper. Regular mail to and from the States may take 2 weeks. Airmail to the eastern seaboard usually takes 36 hours.

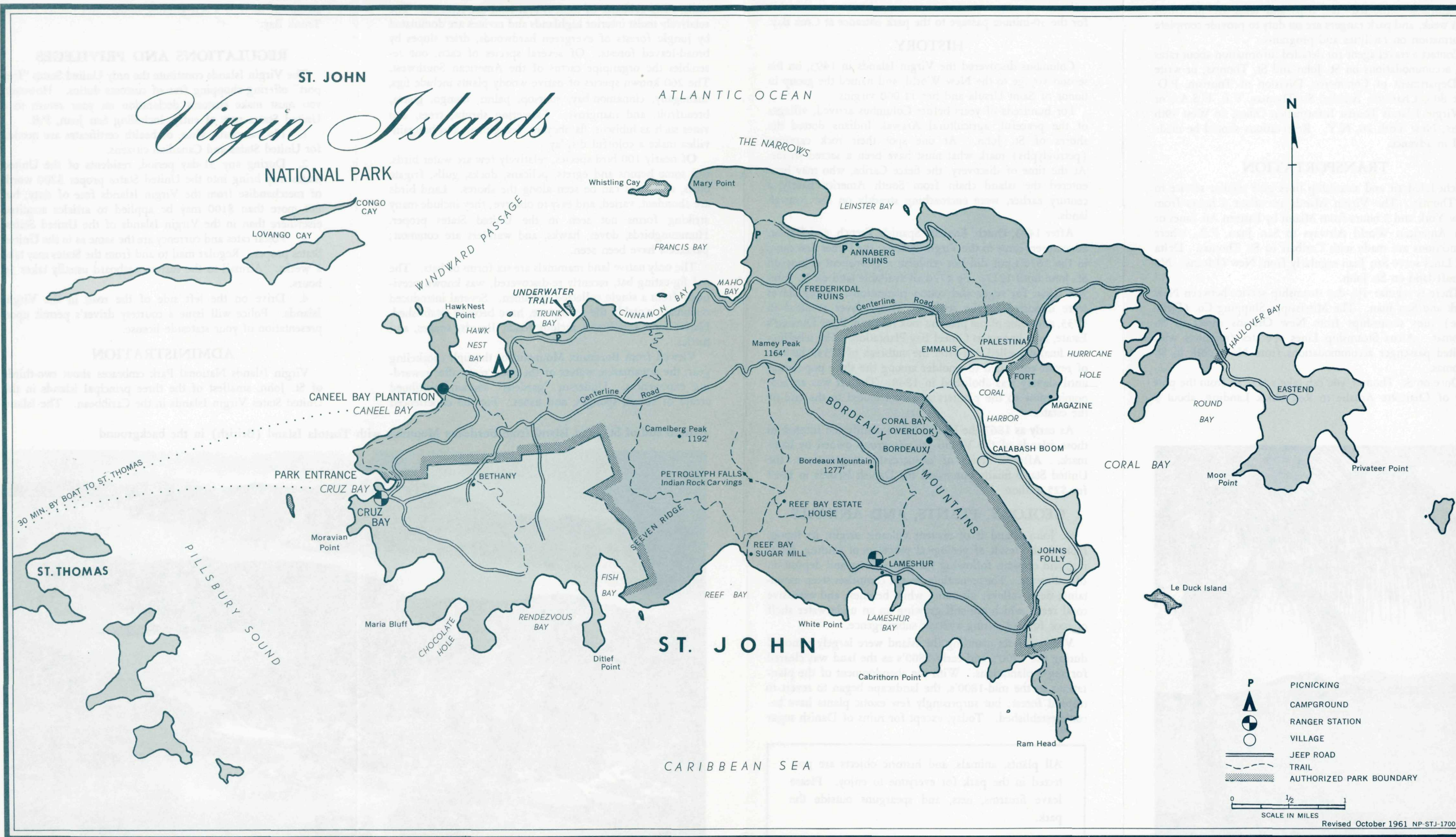
4. Drive on the left side of the road in the Virgin Islands. Police will issue a courtesy driver's permit upon presentation of your stateside license.

### ADMINISTRATION

Virgin Islands National Park embraces about two-thirds of St. John, smallest of the three principal islands in the United States Virgin Islands in the Caribbean. The Island

Eastern end of St. John Island from Bordeaux Mountain with Tortola Island (British) in the background





of St. Thomas, seat of the insular government, is 4 miles away; St. Croix is 40 miles to the south. Congress authorized establishment of the National Park on August 2, 1956, specifying that it should not exceed 9,485 acres on St. John, St. Thomas, and nearby rocks and cays.

The park was formally established and dedicated on December 1, 1956, when Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., of which Laurance Rockefeller is president, presented more than 5,000 acres of park land to the people of the United States.

Lying to the southeast of continental United States, St. John is 1,435 miles from New York, 991 miles from Miami, and 75 miles from San Juan, P.R. It has an area of about 19 square miles, is 9 miles long and 5 miles wide, and rises abruptly to 1,277 feet at the top of Bordeaux Mountain. The population, less than 1,000, is concentrated in the Cruz Bay and Coral Bay areas outside the park.

Virgin Islands National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this park is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the great natural, historical, and recreational places of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of all the people.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 1707, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, V.I., 00802, is in immediate charge of the park. Ranger stations are at Cruz Bay, Lameshur, and Red Hook.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—bears a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute their full measure to the progress and prosperity of the United States—now and in the future.



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

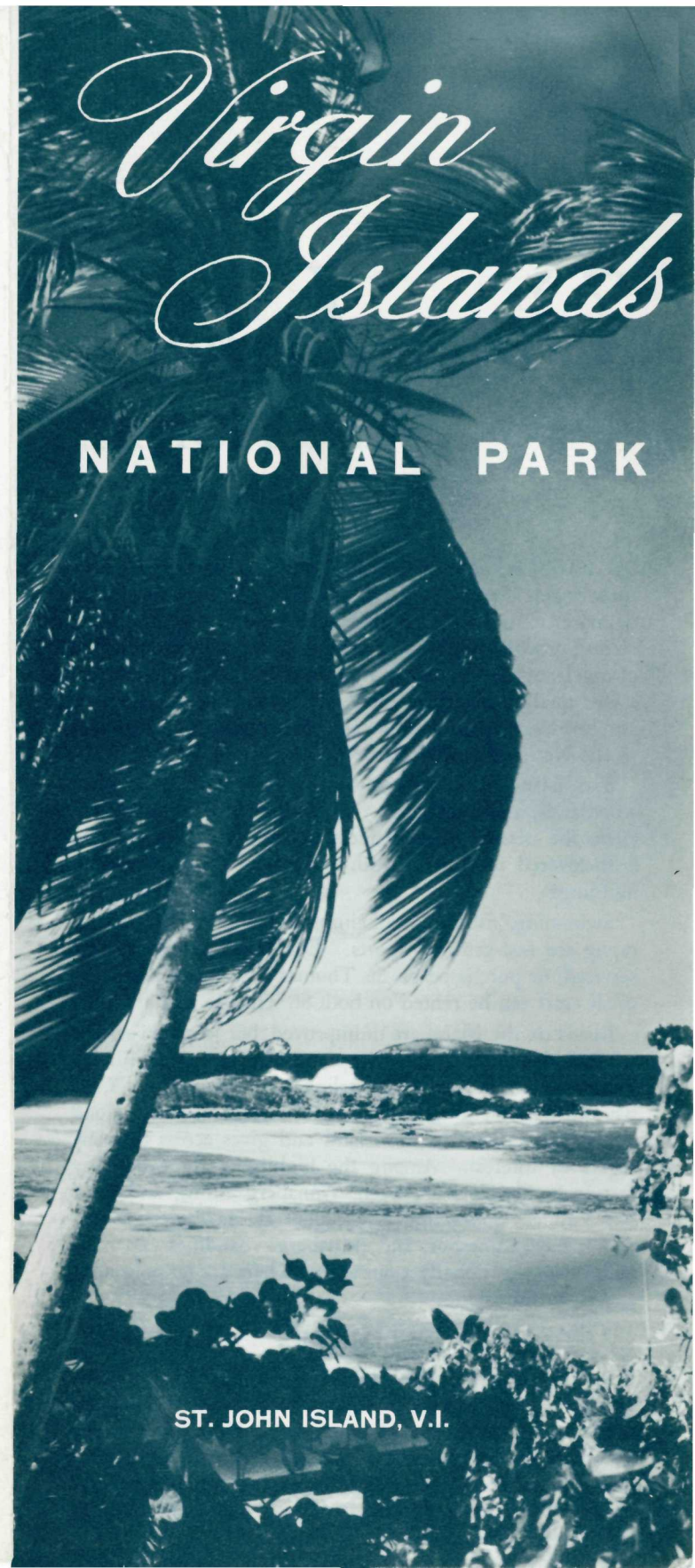


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