

# Chenay Bay Beach Resort-St. Croix

by Kathryn Lemmon

Seven flags have flown over the island of St. Croix, including the flag of the Knights of Malta. Curious souls will have to look that one up in the history books. She's tranquil these days and under the U.S. flag.

While her complete history is long and complicated, we can begin in 1733 when France opted to sell the island to Denmark. Ownership changed hands through the years, but eventually, the U.S. purchased St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John from the Danish government. These three tiny points on the map became the U.S. Virgin Islands, as we currently know them.

A fine choice for a honeymoon on St. Croix, Chenay Bay Beach Resort will provide life-long memories and entice you back again and again. Named for a French sea captain, the property sits on a gently terraced hillside on the north East Side of the island and it's just three miles from the capital city of Christiansted.

The entire resort has exceptional ocean views, but the uppermost cottages can claim the most scenic vistas. As dusk approaches and lights cast their glow across the water, you couldn't ask for a better vantagepoint to witness the dramatic darkening skyline. Another island called Green Cay sits directly out of Chenay Bay, adding variety to the horizon.

Mega-resorts are fine for some, but if you want to be more than a face among the masses, a smaller, more personable resort might suit. Chenay Bay has just fifty West Indies-style cottages with fully equipped kitchens and welcoming, why-not-rest-awhile front porches. Three cottage options are available, oceanfront, ocean view and garden view.

The resort sits on thirty acres of a former sugar plantation and they have the camera-friendly ruins to prove it. At one time, St. Croix was dotted with over two hundred sugar plantations.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say the on-site management at Chenay Bay takes a special interest in the welfare of every guest. It seems no question or problem is too small and everyone is eager to make your stay flawless. Within a short time you'll come to recognize the staff by name and vice versa.

The intimate bar and restaurant at the resort sit at the water's edge. Their good food, captivating view and caressing sea breeze make it difficult to get up from the table, whatever the meal.

At Chenay Bay an over-programmed life can be quickly transformed by the surroundings. Beach and quiet is their motto. After the chaotic months leading up to your wedding day, the relaxation offered by Chenay Bay will replenish even the most frazzled nerves. You can do absolutely nothing all day if you prefer not a To-Do list within miles. Wouldn't that be a nice change?

The pool and hot tub overlook the ocean, providing a soothing view of water everywhere you look. Add to the mix tropical landscaping bountiful with bougainvillea and hibiscus in continuous bloom and you get a peaceful, isolated sensation.

If you want a break from your lounge chair and paperback, the resort offers sunfish sailboats, ocean kayaking, snorkeling, and floating mats for the beach or pool.

When it's time to explore St. Croix, go sightseeing with St. Croix Safari Island Tours. Leave the driving to others and let the fragrant breezes envelop you while tooling along in an open-air bus. It's a great way to get an island overview from a knowledgeable guide. The tour has a number of stops, including the St.

George Village Botanical Gardens, Historic Frederiksted, and the Cruzan Rum Distillery.

Another popular attraction is the bright yellow and white fort, part of the Christiansted National Historic Site. With its defensive position on the water, few pirates dared to approach this harbor. The fortress was completed in 1749, and has exhibits inside. Tall cannons sit topside, quiet now, though they lead useful lives as photo backdrops.

One exhibit shows the living arrangements of the Danish soldiers. Pity the poor fellows who had to wear wool uniforms and long underwear, regardless of the tropical temperatures of 80 degrees and up. Apropos for winters in Denmark perhaps, but not an island in the Caribbean. Whatever month you honeymoon on St. Croix, long underwear need not be part of your packing list.

The historic site is actually a collection of structures in addition to the fort. The park service maintains the neoclassical-style buildings as they appeared in the 1830s through the 1850s; the period following the peak of prosperity for the island's rum, cotton, sugar and slave trades.

More Danish heritage is evident at The Carl and Marie Lawaetz Museum. The 18th-century greathouse contains the family's antique furnishings and heirlooms-bits of Scandinavia transported to the New World. Old time photos fill the walls and a family member conducted our tour. Tour times are limited so it's a good idea to phone first.

Uninhabited Buck Island has been on the "must-do" list of activities for decades. President John F. Kennedy visited and was charmed by the island, later declaring it a national Monument.

Buck Island's main attraction is snorkeling. An arc reef creates a wide, shallow lagoon between the shore and the reef. Located within this area is the park's well-marked underwater trail, which rambles through coral grottoes and out to the reef's edge.

Several tour operators around St. Croix offer trips to Buck Island, which lies one mile from the island's northeastern shore. I'd suggest a full or half-day excursion with Big Beard's Adventure Tours and yes the owner really does have a big, bushy beard!

Beach aficionados will want to explore the many beaches of the island. If a breath-taking sunset is your goal, head west to the shore beyond Frederiksted and prepare to be mesmerized. This early-evening show, courtesy of Mother Nature, is one of the best deals around, free of charge and it has a repeat performance every day. Rainbow Beach, also on the west coast, has been touted as one of the island's best snorkeling spots.

Another beach off the beaten path is Sandy Point on the Southwestern most tip of St. Croix. In the 1980s the area's 398 acres were designated a national wildlife refuge. Sandy Point is a nesting ground for endangered leatherback and green sea turtles. The beach is protected during the nesting season, early April to early June, so check before making the trip.

Finally, you can take a small boat, available at Green Cay Marina to Green Cay and enjoy its isolated beach.

There's no shortage of restaurants on St. Croix. The Sunset Grill lies right on the water at Sprat Hall Beach. With its open air setting, beach hammocks and brown dog sleeping under the nearest palm tree, you can't get much more laid back.

Another choice, The Cultured Pelican features homemade pasta and seafood in a more traditional

restaurant setting.

For more information on the resort got to <http://www.chenaybay.com/>. For the U.S. Virgin Islands <http://www.usviplanner.com/>.

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