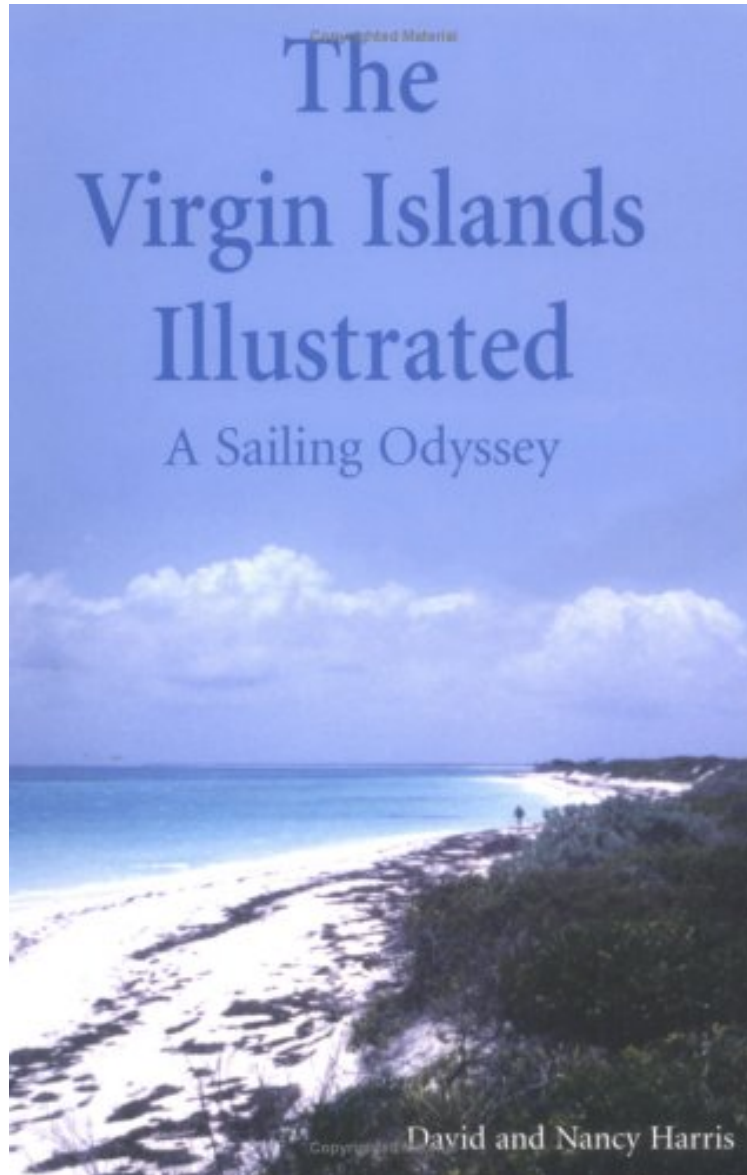


[Free] The Virgin Islands Illustrated: A Sailing Odyssey

## The Virgin Islands Illustrated: A Sailing Odyssey

*Nancy Harris, David*

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**Nancy Harris, David : The Virgin Islands Illustrated: A Sailing Odyssey** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Virgin Islands Illustrated: A Sailing Odyssey:

12 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Not a very useful or entertaining book By S. Bradford I was quite disappointed with this book for several reasons. First, it is not a travel or cruising guide. There is virtually no specific information on restaurants, shops, anchorages, dive sites, etc. Second, it is not a nature guide. The authors offer brief

and vague descriptions of the flora and fauna they encounter, but readily admit that they are not sure what several species are. Finally, this book is not very entertaining or well written...Reading this book is akin to going over to someone's house to look at pictures of their latest vacation and have them offer a terse (but redundant) narrative of their activities. How many times do they have to tell us they had a sandwich and a beer for lunch and then split another beer between them? The book is written with short, choppy sentences that give it a "Dick-and-Jane" feel that I found quite annoying. There are several maps and pictures in the text, but no nautical charts. Also, the pictures are often grainy and the colors are dull. I just don't see the point of this book.

The Virgin Islands Illustrated takes the reader along on a sailing trip through the U.S. and British Virgin Islands with cruisers Nancy and David Harris. Through maps, 181 photographs, and a lively, entertaining text, the book offers visits to popular island destinations, including The Baths on Virgin Gorda, the sea caves of Norman Island, St. John's magnificent Virgin Islands National Park, the fabulous snorkeling and diving waters off the Dogs, and the gorgeous wild beaches of Anegada.

From Library Journal In his first book, *Sailing Through Paradise*, Harris told the story of his solo voyage from Florida to the Virgin Islands on Top Cat, a 32' catamaran. The *Virgin Islands Illustrated* picks up where that book left off. It chronicles Harris's month sailing and touring around the Islands (St. Thomas, St. John, Norman Island, Salt Island, Virgin Gorda, Anegada, and St. Croix) with his wife, Nancy, who flew down after he arrived. Written in unspectacular prose, the book is both a travelog and a guidebook of sorts. Each chapter is introduced by a map, and there's a brief introduction describing the equipment, gear, and food needed for such a journey to give neophytes an idea of what's involved (logistically, if not nautically). The text is also liberally illustrated with snapshot-quality color photos. Recommended for public libraries in the region and those with heavy sailing-related traffic. A Thomas K. Fry, Penrose Lib., Univ. of Denver Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. About the Author Cruisers David and Nancy Harris learned to sail on the cold waters of Lake Michigan while living in Chicago. Soon afterward, they bought their first boat, a tiny trailerable daysailer. Many boats and three children later, they became the owners of a cruising catamaran, Top Cat, and have since sailed around (and across) Florida and to the Bahamas. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. At Anegada: "We put down the sails as we reach the red and green buoys marking the entrance to the anchorage off Setting Point. We motor past Setting Point and find a spot to anchor at the west end of the anchorage, near Pomato Point, in 6 feet of water. The bottom is sand and grass, and appears to be good holding, but in this shallow water we put out about 60 feet of anchor rode just to be sure. We sit back in our new anchorage and watch a procession of Moorings charter boats follow us in, a total of 17 boats in all. All but one anchors or moors on the east side of the anchorage, close to Setting Point. One motors back toward us, then moves across our bow to a point a little closer to land. He is instantly aground, running his engines in a desperate attempt to escape, churning up grass and sand. He gives that up and gets into his dinghy with his anchor, drops the anchor, snorkels to look for deeper water. We know he has the cell phone issued to all Moorings charter boat customers -- will he use it to get help? The answer is yes. Here comes a small turquoise motorboat manned by an Anegadan. The rescuer pushes his boat's bow against the sailboat's bow, shoving the bow around until the sailboat is pointed toward deeper water. Next he goes down to the stern of the sailboat and gives it a push from the rear. The charterer helps by engaging the sailboat motor. Soon the sailboat is free of the shallows. Clouds of sand fill the water all around the sailboat. Free at last, the unstuck captain motors off to join the other charter sailboats in the deeper water closer to Setting Point. He has learned his lesson, and it is one that is not lost on other sailboats that are now arriving in groups of two and three boats at a time, dropping their sails as they slip between the entrance buoys. We remain in isolation in our little anchorage until another catamaran arrives. No other boats risk travel through these shallows, though, and we are pleased with our choice. It may be shallow, and far from the bright lights of the Anegada Reef Hotel and its convenient dinghy dock, but it is -- almost -- all ours. We are eager to see the beaches, so we head out in our dinghy after lunch, traveling west along the shore. Minutes into our trip we come upon a lone rock barely submerged between us and Pomato Point, and we nearly hit it. The water in this bay is not particularly clear, probably due to the strong wind and waves stirring up the shallow waters. Though the sun is directly overhead, the choppy waves make it hard to see submerged hazards. A line of rocks extends 50 feet or so from Pomato Point: these we easily avoid as we surf around the point in a 20-knot tailwind. We land on the west side of Pomato Point, and begin to explore the island. We find that, as mentioned in the guidebooks, there are orchids everywhere in the island interior just a few steps beyond the beach. Some are wiry-leafed yellow clumps of terrestrial plants with many foot-tall flower heads bearing tufts of white and pink flowers. Others are aerial plants growing in the lower branches of the scrubby island trees. These have gray-green leaves and amazing four- to seven-foot-tall stems tipped with many tiny, complicated blooms of pink and chartreuse that bob gently in the breeze. We take a few pictures, difficult on a windy, cloudy day like today. The orchids won't stand still, and their colors are muted in the shade from passing clouds. For anyone who believes the orchid is a delicate hothouse flower, requiring bright, cool, moist conditions, here is proof of its hardiness. These plants are living and flourishing in the most difficult of environments, lashed by constant wind and salt spray, baking under a hot sun." \*\*\*\*\*

A visit to The Baths in the British Virgin Islands (BVI): "The trip back to Virgin Gorda is bumpy, with winds upward of 25 knots and seas of 3 to 5 feet, but it is fast, and we make good time. We sail with a single reef and in under two hours we are nearing Virgin Gorda. We pass Spanish Town and then we reach our destination, The Baths, near the southern tip of Virgin Gorda. We quickly tie up on a day-use-only mooring. It is late morning, so we will have many hours here. Anchoring is not a good idea, as the bottom is very rocky, true of much of the west side of Virgin Gorda, and is poor holding ground. The Baths consists of hundreds of huge granite boulders jumbled atop each other for about a half mile along the shoreline. The spaces between these boulders form fantastic caves and crevices, some with sand floors, others with pools at the bottom -- hence the name, The Baths. We dinghy to the beach nearest The Baths and explore on foot. The BVI park service has developed a trail between The Baths and Devil's Bay that utilizes ropes and ladders to help the hiker over steep slopes and wooden bridges for crossing gaps between adjacent boulders. Some of the watersmoothed boulders are more than 50 feet across. Part of the trail requires a wade through shallow water and we are glad we wore our water shoes. Many hikers we meet along the way are barefooted. The trail is marked with arrows dabbed in concrete on the granite boulders. Off the main trail we detour along paths that dead-end in lovely cul-de-sacs, some with cascades of roots from trees growing above, some with window-like openings above that let a single shaft of light penetrate the cool, wet darkness, some that open onto lovely views of the rocks and the blue sea beyond. The beautiful rooms of The Baths are decorated by nature and shaped by the powerful forces of weather and the sea, truly one of the natural wonders of the world. It is easy to understand their popularity. We finally emerge from the darkness of The Baths at a pretty beach at Devil's Bay. Time for a hike, since there is a trail here. We continue upward on a path toward the parking lot. It winds through the brush and boulders of a hilly terrain. Large lizards with electric blue stripes in their tails scurry out of our way; we glance back over our shoulders now and then at the sparkling water of Drake's Passage below. Truly, here is a tropical island, and yet the jumble of boulders and sparse vegetation bring Colorado to mind. We continue on up the trail and eventually arrive at the parking lot, a distance of 600 yards from The Baths. Here the trail branches off toward the shore, wending its way to a small beach on the water, and presents a beautiful view of Fallen Jerusalem, the nearest island to the south. Another trail goes out to a boulder field, and gives us an opportunity to climb the rocks for even better views. At the parking lot we can see much of Virgin Gorda stretching to the north of us. From here we can head south by climbing, but the trail is covered with thorny underbrush. We barge ahead anyway, and find a few tall boulders that give us good views of the islands and of luxurious homes to the north." \*\*\*\*\* At Buck Island Reef National Monument, an island near St. Croix: "At about four in the afternoon we decide that the time has come to attempt a walk-around along its sometimes rocky, sometimes sandy shoreline. We are not sure if a complete circuit of the island is possible, but we intend to try. We follow the sandy beach of the picnic area around to the east until it becomes rock, and set out to circle the island counterclockwise. The sheer cliffs of Buck Island appear to be made of shale. Layered like fine pastry, tilted up on end, the cliffsides are coming apart all around the island. The fallen pieces have been washed smooth by the sea, creating a beach of pebbles. This rocky beach averages only about a yard in width, in some places more, in a few places a lot less. Features we saw from our dinghy prove to be rather commonplace when seen close up. A flag we saw waving in the breeze turns out to be a plastic bag that has caught on the thorns of an acacia bush. A large sign resolves itself into the top of a white plastic cooler, washed high up into the rocks and wedged in well. We find a shoe stuck over a rusted steel reinforcing rod, many large pieces of timber, a hatch cover, lots of little floats and lengths of plastic line in hues of red, blue, and green. We make it more than halfway around Buck Island before we run into a section of collapsed cliff that stops any further progress. More ambitious hikers (or those willing to get their shoes wet) would doubtless have completed the circuit. We watch a sailboat pass -- a catboat, with the mast far forward. It really is a pretty craft. A kite connected to its mast is flying ahead of it. What purpose this can serve we discuss for some time. Does the kite help pull the boat? We doubt it. Perhaps the kite is carrying a camera aloft, and these people are recording their trip from above. If so, they have chosen a bad time for it. The sun has gone away. It looks as if we are in for some rain. We return to Top Cat in a slight drizzle. The trawler that shared our anchorage has gone by the time we get back. A sunset sail-by of Renegade gives us some company for a while, and then we are alone, anchored in isolation for the first time on our Virgin Islands vacation.