



News of St. John

An Online Blog About the Daily Happenings of St. John, USVI



Enter to Win an Escape to Love City: “Operation Illegal Sunscreen” Starts TODAY!

April 22, 2022 by Hillary Bonner

On this BEAUTIFUL Earth Day here on St. John, some fantastic things, for the love of our Mother, are taking place. [Friends of Virgin Islands National Park](#), Get Trashed St. John and Giff Hill School are teaming up to clean up Cruz Bay. An Earth Day fair is taking place in Franklin Powell Park in order to raise awareness about recycling, birds, coral life, fruit and tree planting. [The Island Green Living raffle](#) has reached \$60,000 in support of their sustainability efforts on St. John with [one week left to enter to win](#) an Escape to Love City! AND, today, on Earth Day, the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs are hitting the streets of the USVI in order to sweep the shelves and beach bags of sunscreens containing the Toxic 3 O's!

I can't speak enough of the efforts of Island Green Living...From building a successful aluminum and plastic recycling program to the innovative trash displacement of the ReSource Depot to raising awareness about green businesses, reef safe sunscreen choices and a greener future for St. John. The energy and passion of the board, staff and volunteers of this organization is inspirational. But, there are some things that happen behind the scenes. [Some things that you might not know....](#)



USVI Senators & Island Green Living President Harith Wickrema celebrate passage of the "Toxic 3 Os" Sunscreen Ban – August 2019

In March of 2020, as the pandemic reared its ugly head, Harith Wickerema, President of [Island Green Living](#), rejoiced as the legislation that he penned himself went into effect, banning the use, possession, importation and sales of any sunscreen containing oxybenzone, octinoxate and octocrylene.

The USVI made history on June 25, 2019 with the unanimous passage of a ban of sunscreen containing the "toxic 3 Os" of oxybenzone, octinoxate and octocrylene in the territory. The legislation goes further than anywhere else in the United States, adding the dangerous chemical octocrylene to its ban and having earlier implementation dates. The groundbreaking legislation will protect coral, marine life and human health. The full ban will go into effect March 30, 2020, with retailers prohibited from receiving shipments of sunscreen containing these ingredients after September 30, 2019.

Additionally, placing new orders for sunscreens that include the "Toxic 3 Os" is prohibited as of July 20, 2019, the day the Governor signed the bill into law. – Island Green Living Association

Alas, our government here had their hands a bit full and, instead of the planned enforcement of this bill, they found themselves for the next two years navigating the unknown waters of a worldwide pandemic. Instead of checking for these, now illegal, sunscreens at the airport, they were checking COVID tests and then green codes. And, all the while, Island Green and Harith have been fighting the uphill battle of spreading awareness and engaging the government for the eventual enforcement of this law. For TWO years. But, today, DLCA kicks off a territorial island sweep called "Operation Illegal Sunscreen" to educate before they regulate and to ensure that retailers in the territory no longer carry sunscreens with the 'Toxic 3 Os' of oxybenzone, octinoxate and octocrylene.



From DLCA's Facebook Page: DLCA IS ENFORCING SUNSCREEN LAW TO PROTECT MARINE ECOSYSTEM, INCLUDING CORAL REEFS AND ITS INHABITANTS ON EARTH DAY

"How fitting that on Earth Day, this critical program will begin, protecting not only humans from toxic chemicals absorbed into our bodies but also coral and marine life," said Harith. "There are many safe and effective mineral sunscreens, [a selection recommended by Island Green Living are included here.](#)"

Oh, and we can all help support these efforts...If you see illegal sunscreen on the shelves of a retailer in the USVI, call DLCA on 340.713.3522 or 340.725.5129 or email at consumerawareness@dlca.vi.gov.



Chelsea Drugstore has an incredible selection of Reef Safe Sunscreen.

Now, I think it is always important to put some first hand observation into the mix of these conversations in order to better "paint the picture" of what programs like these are doing for our environment. I am lucky enough to get in the water and snorkel almost every day. Christmas Cove, Lovango Cay, Little St. James, Caneel Bay...Despite our heavy traffic of the past few years, a lot of the coral in these locations seem to be developing new life. Every time I put my face under water, I see new colors, new vibrancy. Maybe this is simply our

coral reefs finally rejuvenating after Hurricane Irma. Maybe it is the many new-ish coral restoration programs in place. But maybe, just MAYBE it has something to do with a whole lot less hazardous chemicals in our waters over the past two years...Just maybe 😊 Food for thought....



Harith and Island Green Living's noble efforts in the territory, however volunteer driven, CANNOT go on without outside support. In 2021, during their annual Earth Month fundraiser, we raised \$120k to support the hard work and necessary programs. Over the past year and with that funding, they have been able to expand necessary programs that are transparent within our community. But, the fight to green St. John is far from over. Decades of damage has been done to our precious island ecosystems. And YOU can support the continual efforts to combat that [AND get the chance to win an Escape to Love City for two in the process!](#)



Now, let's take a look at where you will use your Reef Safe Sunscreen if you [win this amazing escape!](#)

This year's incredible prize package includes all you will need to kick back for a week on St. John [including lodging and travel vouchers](#), dining and ACTIVITIES! The winner of this year's raffle will have plenty of opportunity to play outside in the sweet St. John sunshine and a bit of space to relax afterwards...



First, spend a day on the beautiful waters of the USVI with [Happy Island Charters](#). You'll experience VIP status on board the beautiful 50-foot sailing yacht, Sea Level, for a private full day sail for up to four guests.



Not only will you get swept away for a day of snorkeling, sailing and exploration. But, you will also enjoy a complimentary "low country" boil feast for lunch including Caribbean lobster on board! Now, that's my idea of a great day!



If a full day of sailing isn't enough, you can also apply your \$220 gift certificate towards a trip on the mighty [Kekoa](#)! You all know and love that beautiful black sailed catamaran with an incredible crew and a long and inspiring story to tell. You can use your gift certificate towards a sunset, a St. John half day or a St. John full day sail aboard this incredible vessel as a part of your prize package.



Ready for some sandy adventures in your life? Well, swing by [Virgin Islands Expedition Company](#) in Cruz Bay to pick up your boards for two 24 hour stand up paddle board rentals before you hit your favorite beach. The boards come with a roof rack system for easy transport to the beautiful beach of your choice where you can explore hidden coves and shorelines as you paddle on top of the crystal clear waters of St. John.



Oh, and speaking of crystal clear...Have you tried the crystal kayaks at [Maho Crossroads](#)? If not, you are in for a treat because you'll also have \$100 to spend at this pop-up village across the street from Maho Beach. If you have had enough adventure, you can apply the gift certificate towards beach chair rentals, lunch at the food truck or drinks at the tiki bar. But, if you want to hit the water again, they are also applicable to stand up paddle board, crystal kayak and snorkel rentals!



Paddle about amongst the sea turtles at Maho Bay!

If you aren't up on your Reef Safe Sunscreen shopping skills, don't worry. The winner of this amazing escape will also receive a supply of [Caribbean Sol](#), an exceptional coral-safe mineral sunscreen that is compliant with the USVI's ban on sunscreen containing the "Toxic 3 Os" of oxybenzone, octinoxate & octocrylene.



Are you exhausted after all of that outdoor activity? Me too! Relax with [VI Body Spa](#) in a luxurious spa setting with a t a luxurious spa setting and a soothing, 60-minute couples massage. Unwind at the end of your trip or relax into the beginnings of your vacation at this award winning spa in Cruz Bay.



Another additional opportunity you will have while visiting during your winning prize package is a look behind the scenes with Island Green Living Association! The winner of the Escape to Love City will get a private tour of the ReSource Depot and a voluntourism opportunity with this amazing organization and their staff.



Get a personal behind the scenes tour of Island Green Living's Resource Depot

Well, what are you waiting for? [Head over to the Island Green Living Earth Month Fundraiser and ENTER TO WIN your Escape to Love City today!](#) If you are looking for a good way to celebrate Earth Day, this is it. It is an incredibly easy way to support sustainability efforts on our favorite island and, you just might find yourself here for an all expenses paid trip in the near future by loving on Mother Earth a little bit today. Last year's winner only purchased ONE \$50 ticket in exchange for a week of bliss in Love City!

I hope that all of you out there can enjoy some sunshine and soak in the loving glow of nature at some point in time today. Happy Earth Day 2022!