



News of St. John

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



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Earth Day 2021 – Things You Can Do to Help Preserve Our Paradise

April 22, 2021 by Hillary Bonner

Happy Earth Day Everyone! I hope that all of you are planning a little something to do your part in your own neck of the woods today in an effort to preserve our beautiful Mother Earth. I always say, saving the world is overwhelming, but if we each do a few easy things each day it can make a big difference! I wanted to take this opportunity to share some small things you can do to help out a little on St. John today, or the next time you're visiting, to help preserve the paradise that we all love so much.

First thing's first. TODAY, on Earth Day, you can support an organization that is dedicated solely to environmental sustainability efforts, education and awareness on St. John. And, possibly [win an all inclusive trip for two to Love City!](#)



Island Green Living Association launched a fundraiser this month that will give two people the opportunity to stay at Gallows Point in Cruz Bay for seven nights with round trip airfare, dining vouchers, boat days and sunset sails and a cabana day at Lovango Beach Club + Resort!

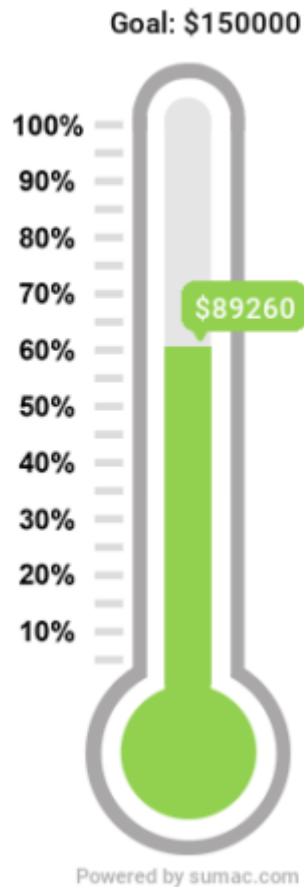


Spend a bucket list day at Lovango in a poolside cabana!

Island Green has been at the forefront of the Reef Safe Sunscreen initiative, the USVI ban on plastic bags and plastic straws, St. John's aluminum can recycling program, the ReSource Depot thrift store, composting projects and many, many more creative green solutions in the USVI.



The Two Tickets to Paradise Fundraiser is set up as a raffle and you can purchase tickets in support of Island Green today to give this competition a healthy boost on Earth Day! Tickets are \$50 a piece or \$250 for six tickets so [head over to their site to get the details](#) and enter to win your dream vacation! They are more than halfway to their goal of \$150,000 with TEN DAYS left to go. Let's do this!



Also, from the comfort of your own home, YOU can [adopt a sea turtle!](#) [Friends of Virgin Islands National Park](#) is another great local non-profit that seeks to preserve the beauty of St. John and protect the adorable critters and sea life that call her and her surrounding waters home.

Founded in 1988, Friends of Virgin Islands National Park is the official philanthropic partner of the park. The Friends assists and advises the National Park Service in assuring the park's unique terrestrial and marine resources are protected, the Virgin Island's cultural treasures in the park are preserved, and visitors and community are connected to their park through volunteerism, education, and advocacy. – Friends VINP Mission Statement



The Friends' "[Sea Turtle Program](#) aims to protect sea turtle nests, facilitate research projects, and spread awareness of sea turtle conservation in Virgin Islands National Park and its surrounding waters in the Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument." Last season they helped more than 2000 Hawksbill Sea Turtles safely reach the sea in an effort to protect this majestic, and endangered, species! But, they cannot continue their efforts without the support of their "friends!" So, [adopt a turtle](#) today to ensure that the next time you take a dive into the blue Caribbean waters, there will be a smiling turtle face there to greet you 😊



Photo Courtesy of Scuba Maxsta

While we are on the subject of marine life, let's talk about protecting the reefs and sea life the next time you take a snorkel, swim or a dive!

Wear only REEF SAFE SUNSCREEN!

Sunscreen containing the [Toxic Three O's](#) is actually illegal in the USVI. Our territory was the first US possession to pass a ban on sunscreens containing Oxybenzone, Octinoxate and/or Octocrylene. They are not only hazardous to the health of the coral and other sea life but they also can be harmful to YOUR health! Stick to a mineral based sunscreen with Zinc or non-nano titanium dioxide. The bonus with a lot of the reef safe alternatives popping up out there is that many of them contain antioxidants and supplements that are actually GOOD for your skin.



Five simple ways to protect the Marine Life!

I know, I know, there are a ton of options out there but there are also a ton of great resources for you to read in order to find the sunscreen that's best for you, and the reefs. Here are a few places to start:

- Travel and Leisure Article: [Reef Safe Alternatives](#)
- Chasing Coral is an Exposure Labs Production. We watched it a few weeks ago and man, it's an eye-opener. The film has a page on its website that is dedicated to [Reef Safe Sunscreen education](#) and calls out St. John by name as a reference. They also list several great Reef Safe Sunscreen options for you to try! Check it out and while you're at it, [watch the movie](#) to educate yourself on Coral Reef preservation in celebration of Earth Day (Available on Netflix).
- The [Safe Sunscreen Council's website](#) is another great resource for finding your perfectly safe sunscreen match.



Healthy Coral to the left, Unhealthy Coral to the right.

Additionally, avoid applying bug spray, perfumes, lotions, hairspray, etc., prior to entering the pristine waters of the Virgin Islands. Many of the products we use on our skin and hair contain chemicals that are not so great for the sea life and coral reefs! Hop in the shower for a rinse off before grabbing your reef safe sunscreen and hitting the beach!

Look- Don't touch!

Never, ever, ever touch the marine life! I know its tempting to grab that conch shell or sea star for a closer look or to give the turtle that is grazing just inches away a pat on the shell. But please don't. Humans are already interrupting the fragile marine eco-system just by being here. The least we can do is let the marine life go about their days without direct human contact.

Additionally, don't stand on the reef or sea grass beds. It is super tempting to put your feet down or try to push away when you get uncomfortably close to the coral. If you are not super comfortable in the water, pick up a [snorkel belt](#) or a pool noodle to keep yourself in your comfort zone and prevent endangering the marine life.



Here are a few tips and tricks for your next trip down that will help you help St. John stay pretty 😊

- **Pick up a reusable, insulated souvenir cup!** Many bars and restaurants on island use those horrible disposable plastic cups for regular service and takeaway drinks. But, most will refill your cup instead if you ask ahead of time. Not only will a reusable cup help dissolve some of your footprint on St. John, but it will also keep your drink cold all day long, support a local business and give you a reminder of your amazing vacation each time you use it at home.



Cocktails in Paradise

- **Pack in-Pack out:** Our poor beaches are over run with so many visitors right now. And, at the end of the day, the overflowing NPS trash cans are reflective of the day's traffic. Do your part by bringing a trash bag to the beach with you and take your trash out of the park and to a dumpster in town or along Centerline road. While you're at it, be a good samaritan and pick up any trash you notice on the beach on the way back to your car or taxi.
- **Car Pool or Taxi:** The beach parking lots are so incredibly full and beach goers have resorted to parking on the side of the road. Not too long ago, some of the young native plants at Maho were backed over by a truck that was attempting to park in a no parking area. Not only could you be restricted to certain beaches based on parking availability, but you could also get a ticket from NPS for parking in an illegal parking area. Save yourself the hassle of an unwanted fine and go to whichever beach suits your fancy by taking a cab. You will help decrease your footprint AND make for a hassle free beach day.
- **BYOB-** No...not beer. Bag! Plastic bags are banned in the USVI but many stores still have them available due to lack of enforcement. Be a part of the solution by opting out on the plastic and bring your own reusable bags from home! It will save you the

hassle of realizing at check out that there are no bags available and totes are a great way to travel home with your souvenirs!

PROTECTING OUR PLANET STARTS WITH YOU

BIKE MORE DRIVE LESS
A bicycle icon.

reduce REUSE recycle
A recycling symbol icon.
Cut down on what you throw away. Follow the three "R's" to conserve natural resources and landfill space.

choose sustainable seafood
A fish icon.
Learn how to make smart seafood choices at www.FishWatch.gov.

Trees provide food and oxygen. They help save energy, clean the air, and help combat climate change.
PLANT A TREE
A tree icon.

EDUCATE
When you further your own education, you can help others understand the importance and value of our natural resources.
An icon of books.

Volunteer!
Volunteer for cleanups in your community. You can get involved in protecting your watershed too!
An icon of hands raised.

CONSERVE WATER
The less water you use, the less runoff and wastewater that eventually end up in the ocean.
A faucet icon with a water drop.

-SHOP-WISELY
Buy less plastic and bring a reusable shopping bag.
A shopping bag icon.

Don't send chemicals into our waterways.
Choose nontoxic chemicals in the home and office.
A spray bottle icon.

Long-lasting light bulbs - ARE A - BRIGHT IDEA
Energy efficient light bulbs reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Also flip the light switch off when you leave the room!
A light bulb icon.

oceanservice.noaa.gov

I hope that all of you, wherever you are in the world, get the opportunity to go outside and play today in order to appreciate Mother Nature in celebration of Earth Day.

Whatever you do and wherever you are, do [buy a raffle ticket](#) in support of Island Green's efforts to preserve our paradise AND enter to win a trip for two to St. John!

