

## Media Kit: Ecological Efforts

### Preserving Nature's Little Secrets

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS – With more than 60 islands creating a mystical archipelago, the British Virgin Islands presents “Nature’s Little Secrets” in the form of coral atolls, verdant hillsides, endangered wildlife, reefs scattered throughout the Technicolor Sea and a biodiversity of marine life rivalled only by the Amazon. From a primeval rainforest on Tortola and Mother Nature’s finest creation on Virgin Gorda, to the droves of wildlife roaming Jost Van Dyke and the rich reefs surrounding Anegada, the BVI is committed to protecting her natural wonders through environmental preservation organizations and partnerships with the biggest names in conservation.

With more water than land making up the destination (a marine world measuring an astounding 18 square meters), the BVI plays home to more than 160 species of fish and reef systems that span throughout the chain.

On land, environmental protection of the flora and fauna is just as important and is closely monitored by the British Virgin Islands National Parks Trust, established in 1961 to preserve the natural beauty and historic features of the territory.

Programs enacted by the Trust include scientific research, public education, reforestation and species restoration, which, is demonstrated in no better place than the remote Anegada. Here, the population of roseate flamingos has flourished to 41 over the last eight years while the critically endangered Anegada rock iguana is bred in a special research facility that ensures the maturation of hatchlings safely away from natural predators.

The Trust also instated a Moorings/Reef Protection Programme in 1991 to protect the fragile coral reefs in the area. To date nearly 200 buoys have been installed for safe dockage.

Currently there are 20 National Parks throughout the BVI totalling more than 727 hectares on both land and sea including sites on off-shore islands including The Dogs and Fallen Jerusalem. On Tortola, the mysterious Sage Mountain National Park -- a protected area of forest spared from clearance in the plantation era -- rises 910 meters above the island (Mount Sage peaks at 1,562 meters as the highest point in the Virgin Islands both U.S. and British) and is home to several rare and endangered plant species normally found in rainforests including bullet wood and balata. Centred along the pulse of Road Town in Tortola, J.R. O’Neal Botanic Gardens offer a colourful haven with native flora including ginger, heliconias and anthuriums as well as a cacti collection and an extensive palm collection with more than 62 species.

On Virgin Gorda, the 107 hectares high Gorda Peak National Park supports some of the best dry forests remaining in the Caribbean showcasing plants with waxy leaves and some with no leaves at all thanks to their arid home. Reaching 380 meters above sea level, the park also cradles native animals ranging from reptiles and invertebrates to birds, bats and amphibians, including three species of tree frogs and the world’s smallest lizard -- the Virgin Gorda Gecko. In addition to the multitude of plant and animal species, Gorda Peak is also notably known for panoramic views of the necklace of islands below, from Anegada 20 miles north of Tortola.

Located at the tip of the southwest legs of the Virgin is the most notable park on the island -- The Baths -- nature’s wonder formed from eons of evolution. Large granite boulders stacked and strewn across white

sand beaches form caverns and grottoes filled with shallow wading pools of the crystal sea. The rock labyrinth, with some individual stones as large as three-story houses, welcomes snorkelers to discover coral, sponges and marine life encrusted on the underside of boulders. Above the water, the cavernous spaces are illuminated by beams of light squeezing through slender crevices in the cathedral-like ceilings. On the surface, the rocks, reminiscent of faces yearning to tell the secrets of centuries past, are both rough (perhaps the place of a pirate's plunder) and smooth, as if polished by Mother Nature's own hand. The BVI, consistently recognized as one of the most breathtaking destinations in the world and the undisputed Sailing Capital of the World, presents 60 plus islands for exploring its secrets.

The BVI is rich with the storied islands of Norman (the inspiration for Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island,") Dead man's Chest and Anegada, while the islands of Peter, Necker, and Guana anchor luxury resorts and sun worshippers find a haven on Jost van Dyke, Cooper Island and Virgin Gorda. Whether it is discovering the natural phenomena of The Baths or diving the Indians, Sandy Spit or the fabled Wreck of the Rhone, the BVI is bountiful with Nature's Little Secrets.

To discover these secrets and create new ones, call the BVI Tourist Board toll free: 866.835.8530 or visit [www.bvitourism.com](http://www.bvitourism.com).