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## **St. Croix National Parks Close at 5 p.m. Friday as Erin Nears; Buck Island, Christiansted, Salt River Bay Shut for Safety**

**St. Croix's Buck Island Reef, Christiansted and Salt River Bay will close at 5:00 p.m. Friday, Aug. 15, as Erin's outer bands bring flood risk and dangerous surf. Visitors must depart and seek shelter; parks reopen only after inspections confirm safety.**

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**The Christiansted National Historic Site. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.**

All National Park units on St. Croix will close Friday evening in preparation for Hurricane Erin, which is forecast to pass just north of the islands, bringing outer bands, potential flooding and dangerous surf.

The closure, announced by Christiansted National Historic Site officials, affects Buck Island Reef National Monument, Christiansted National Historic Site, and Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve. Public access will end at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 15, with all associated facilities and concession operations suspended until further notice.

Visitors currently in the parks are being directed to leave by the deadline and seek safe shelter. Tourists are advised to consult lodging providers or airlines for guidance.

“With Hurricane Erin threatening the northern Caribbean, and coming uncomfortable close to the island of St. Croix, we must begin safeguarding human life and park assets now,” said Superintendent Angelita Alvino. “The safety of our guests, staff, and neighbors is my top priority and closing the parks is the first step to ensuring that as we implement our storm plans.”

The parks will remain closed until Erin passes and staff have assessed impacts, mitigated any hazards, and ensured conditions are safe for the return of visitors and employees, according to the release.

The three parks represent a wide range of St. Croix’s historical, cultural, and environmental heritage. Christiansted National Historic Site preserves 18th and 19th-century Danish colonial architecture and maritime history. Buck Island Reef National Monument protects one of the Caribbean’s most significant coral reef ecosystems and a key nesting site for endangered sea turtles. Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve contains archaeological sites dating back nearly 2,000 years and the only known location in the U.S. where members of the Columbus expedition landed.