

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Keeping in Line With Governor Bryan's Order, National Park Service Reopens Beaches; Trails and Parking Areas Also Reopening.

Coronavirus / **Published On April 20, 2020 04:09 AM /**

Staff Consortium **April 20, 2020**



Buck Island, St. Croix By. Trip Savvy

The National Park Service early Monday announced the reopening of the beaches under its jurisdiction in the territory, a move that falls in line with Governor Albert Bryan's decision to [reopen the territory's beaches today](#).

"Beginning Monday, April 20th, Virgin Islands National Park will reopen park beaches, trails, and parking areas. These areas were temporarily closed on April 6th, in order to protect the health of the public visiting the park, and to assure consistency with USVI

Governor Albert Bryan Jr.'s order for the closure of all territorial beaches for two weeks," the Park Service said.

"I am pleased to reopen these areas of the park so that visitors can again experience their park lands and waters," said Virgin Islands National Park Superintendent Nigel Fields. "Visiting natural places is important for our wellbeing, especially so during this challenging time."

Like the governor, Mr. Fields emphasized that individuals who plan to go to visit the park must remain mindful of social and physical distancing guidelines and to maintain plenty of space between families at the beach and on trails. Park pavilions remain closed, and BBQs and parties are prohibited.

Previously, on March 21st, Governor Bryan ordered all non-essential businesses to cease in-person operations until April 6th and to require those employees to stay at home. Hotels, villas and similar business are not to accept guests and reservations for 30 days. Bars are ordered closed and restaurants are allowed to provide take-out service only. On March 30th, Mr. Bryan extended those closures through April 30th.

On March 23, Virgin Islands National Park began limiting services outside those that support visitor or resource protection. The following services and operations have been modified in order to comply with the territory's orders, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and NPS guidance: ?

- The Cruz Bay Visitor Center is closed. Information and services will not be available.
- The park dock and bulkhead at the Cruz Bay Visitor Center is closed to commercial activity.
- No more than two individuals may occupy a dinghy when travelling to or from the NPS dock.
- All restrooms and porta johns in the park are closed.
- Guided hikes and other on-site public or educational programs are cancelled.
- Food service and watersports rentals at Trunk Bay are not available.
- The park will not issue special visitor use or business permits.
- Trash is not being collected. When visiting the park bring garbage bags so you can take your trash with you. Pack it in, pack it out!
- Trash receptacles are not available for boater trash. Boaters must make other arrangements for trash disposal. Do not leave trash on shore.
- The pavilions at Trunk, Maho, and Hawksnest Bays are closed, as are changing rooms and showers.

NPS said moorings remain open for use and mooring fees are being collected. The waters of both Virgin Islands National Park and Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument remain open. Law enforcement staff will remain on duty and may be reached at 1-866-995-8467. "We will continue to work through this time together—please continue to respect park lands and waters, and one another," NPS said.

The NPS encouraged people who choose to visit Virgin Islands National Park and the Monument during this pandemic to adhere to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and territory and local public health authorities to protect visitors and employees. As services are limited, the NPS urges visitors to continue to practice Leave No Trace principles, including pack-in and pack-out, to keep outdoor spaces safe and healthy.

Updates about NPS operations will be posted on www.nps.gov/coronavirus. Please check with individual parks for specific details about park operations.

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