

The Virgin Islands Consortium

National Park Service Announces Covid-Induced Buck Island Restrictions

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BUCK ISLAND By. VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — The Buck Island Reef National Monument has announced modified hours of operation in support of territory and local efforts to assist in public health advisories and limitations implemented by the government of the Virgin Islands.

The national monument is implementing an immediate temporary public use limitation effective Thursday, August 12. Buck Island Reef NM will be closed by 4:00 p.m. daily to all boaters. This temporary closure is implemented under section 36 CFR1.5 (a) and based upon a determination that such action is necessary for public health and safety,

the National Park Service said.

Visitors to Buck Island are advised to maintain social distancing of at least six feet while on beaches and trail and on boats and encouraged to adhere to the guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and territorial and local public health authorities to protect their health, those around them and park employees.

NPS said that consistent with CDC recommendations, people who are not yet fully vaccinated must continue to wear masks indoors and in crowded outdoor spaces. Individuals looking to get COVID-19 vaccine can visit vaccines.gov, covid19usvi.com, or text their zip code to 438829 to find a location close to them and make an appointment.

The following are guides to follow while visiting Buck Island:

- Buck Island Reef NM waters will remain open to boating activities in open waters.
- Anchoring and mooring permits will be accepted.
- Comfort stations at Buck Island are opened for use.
- Parties, BBQ's and large gatherings are prohibited.
- No alcoholic beverages and/or containers are allowed.
- Guided hikes and other on-site public or educational programs remain cancelled.
- The park will not issue special visitor use or business permits.
- Boaters must make other arrangements for trash disposal. Do not leave trash on shore
- Maintain distance between vessels. Vessels should not be tied or "rafted" together.

Whether seeking wide-open spaces or exploring a historic urban neighborhood, visitors should follow CDC guidance to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and adopt the following recreate responsibly tips:

- Know before you go. Visit NPS.gov/findapark for current park conditions and availability of restrooms and other facilities. Make a plan, follow the 10 Essentials, and if you are sick, stay home.
- Keep it close. Follow state, tribal, and local orders of where you're traveling. The NPS is working closely with public health professionals to make operational changes and adapt to changing conditions.
- Keep your distance. Follow the CDC's social distancing guidelines and stay at least six feet away from other people. If you are not fully vaccinated, wear a mask indoors and in crowded outdoor spaces.
- Know your limits. Postpone challenging hikes or trying new activities while first responders, parks, and communities continue to concentrate on responding to the pandemic.
- Keep it with you. If you brought it, take it with you. Trash pickup and restroom facilities will continue to be limited in many park areas. Follow Leave No Trace principles.
- Keep it inclusive. Be an active part of making our nation's parks and public lands safe and welcoming for all identities and abilities.

Contact Supervisory Park Ranger Gabriel Laurencin, or Acting Superintendent Reginald M Tiller, 340-773-1460 Ext 222, or visit www.nps.gov/chri for additional information and updates.

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