

# Sailing in the BVI

## *Charter a Boat in the World's Sailing Capital*

From Rebecca Louie, for About.com

The British Virgin Islands, a cluster of some 60 rugged Caribbean isles just east of Puerto Rico, lie in a trade-wind belt. The warm and gentle breezes that surround the BVI earned the territory its self-proclaimed title as sailing capital of the world.

Couples who long for elegance and privacy in both lodgings and location would be challenged to find a better way to visit the BVI than by chartering a boat.

Imagine sailing on a charter through the BVI on a custom-tailored cruise for two. You pick your stops, tailor your menu, and have a captain and crew poised to accommodate your every need.

Sailing, you have the luxury of stopping anywhere you wish in the BVI, whether it's to explore the land, spelunk the sea, sunbathe in privacy, or snuggle.

These are the basics of sailing in the British Virgin Islands



### **Chartering a Boat**

There are two ways a sea-faring couple can embark on a sailing vacation and rent a boat in the BVI. Nautical do-in-yourself types may opt for a bareboat sailboat or catamaran that they stock, cook on, and captain themselves. Renters are required to submit a detailed sailing resume outlining their boating experience.

Landlubbers inclined toward less work and more play can get a crewed BVI charter, on which housekeeping, sailing, tours, and meals are provided. Boats range in size and amenities and can house anywhere from two to more than ten guests intent on exploring the islands.

### **Life Sailing on a Chartered Boat**

On most vessels, the price will vary based on the number of passengers. We went sailing on the Double Feature, a 57-foot, mid-range catamaran captained by Jonny Coop with 1st mate/chef Kelly Becker. With four staterooms, the Double Feature can accommodate up to 8 guests.

Like many charters, the boat came fully loaded with great amenities. Plugged-in types have Internet access, DVD/CD players, flat screen TVs, and air-conditioning throughout. The adventuresome have access to kayaks, fishing gear, water skis, wake boards, a windsurfer and snorkel gear. Jonny is the Feature's instructor and guide.

The bar on this sailing vessel is stocked and drinks arrive around the clock, including the BVI's signature rum and coconut concoction, the Pain Killer. Kelly whips up delicious meals that include seared tuna nicoise salad, filet of beef in a red wine, and key lime pie.

Staterooms are surprisingly comfortable despite being small. The cockpit sits up to eight if several couples are traveling together, and the entertainment center is stocked with games, gadgets, and a vast library. Private and deck showers keep the salt water off, which is a good thing, because you'll be jumping off the side of the boat for a quick dip in between sailing.

Charter renting is not for those who don't like the sun, water, confined spaces, or obviously, sailing. The Double Feature is hardly cramped, but once aboard, there is nowhere else to go until you dock. A creative couple will make use of the boat's many nooks, including the broad trampoline stretched between the hulls, excellent for sunning and relaxing.

Should you care to make a stop on an island, or crave a motorized zip over the water, the catamaran is also equipped with a small dingy.

### **Essential Stops When Sailing in the BVI**

Couples sailing in the BVI will want to see the following:

- **The Baths, on Virgin Gorda** This is no standard beach, nor an everyday beach walk. After a quick snorkel, the true gem of the Baths is a rugged beach trail that twists, winds, and clambers through towers of boulders. The moderate trail moves up, down, and around the rocks, through eerily gorgeous, tranquil chambers and ponds.
- **Monkey Point, on Guana Island** Located on the southern tip of the island, this densely populated snorkel point is packed with schools of colorful fish and beautiful reef. Hang with blue striped grunt, yellow snapper, minnows, and yellow jacks. If you're lucky, tarpon as long as your body will wander majestically — and harmlessly — by.
- **Kitchen Point, George Dog Island** There is only one anchorage off Kitchen Point, and the quiet that ensues in this deserted, wild corner proves it. Hop in a sea kayak and row yourself ashore to a tiny beach that is perfect for a picturesque picnic for two.