

St. Croix Real Estate reviews

Featuring real estate market updates and local news of St. Croix, USVI

MARCH 2011

HOSPICE REGATTA HOSTED ON ST. CROIX



The St. Croix Yacht Club Hospice Regatta kicked off the annual CORT (Caribbean Ocean Racing Triangle) series on the weekend of February 11th through the 13th. Colorful spinnakers and high heeling boats raced through the turquoise waters outside the reef, while the young Optimist sailors challenged each other inside. “We were in the boats that looked like bathtubs,” said twelve year old Ryan Hunter, winner of the blue fleet.

Hosting competitors from Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, St. Maarten and Tortola, the St. Croix Yacht Club was abuzz with visitors of all ages. A international race officer came in from the States, as did some crew. Julie Von Kanel, an avid racer from Connecticut, said “I came because the island is so beautiful and the people are so friendly and the breeze is always high.” Attorney Bob Eagan from the Rhode Island Yacht Club visits regularly for the regatta and cottons to the way our yacht club awards the winning skipper with his weight in Cruzan Rum. “I’ve been trying to sell that idea up here,” he said.

Regatta Director, Vicki Bandola, arranged for continuous roundtrip taxi service between the yacht club and Christiansted for Friday night’s Jump Up. “No other island in the Caribbean has Jump Up,” she said. Cruzan Rum hosted the party Saturday night and the nine-piece Crucian Rhythm Band enlivened tired sailors who danced to the sounds. Locals came out, too.

The St. Croix Yacht Club, along with Continuum Care Inc., aims to raise funds and awareness for hospice on St. Croix.

NEW PIER ON BEAUTIFUL BUCK ISLAND

Named one of the world’s most beautiful beaches by *National Geographic*, a top ten snorkeling spot by *Coastal Living* and a top green destination by *Travelocity’s* online community, Buck Island is getting ever better. In mid-February, the National Park Service began spring cleaning. The plan entails freshening up and repair of public amenities, erosion control along the hiking trail and demolition and rebuilding of the pier.

The beach will get a clean sweep, too. Work began in the picnic areas where overgrown vegetation was cleared. Picnic tables and grills were replaced with new ones and restrooms were repaired.

The project will continue through early May and a 300 foot area around the pier will remain closed to all boating and recreational activities during demolition and construction. Buoys mark the closed area, as the national monument becomes even more beautiful.

Along with our snowbirds and vacationers who flee the blizzards and bitter cold elsewhere, February brought St. Croix some other very special visitors: the whales!

Whales, like dolphins, head to the warmer waters of the Caribbean for our ideal calving grounds. Last month, they were spotted by fishermen about a dozen miles off the north shore and by hikers and sunbathers on the eastern tip of the island. Humpback, pilot, orca and sperm whales all come.



Amy Land-deWilde

A friend and I struck out one lovely Sunday with high hopes of a sighting. Cameras and binoculars in hand, we thought we’d try the new Isaac’s Bay trail and, thereby, double the enchantment of our excursion. We would see the magnificent whales and dip into the sea ourselves at one of St. Croix’s most beautiful and secluded beaches. While we did not have the fortune to see a whale, we spoke with other hikers who had. They were beside themselves and carried on in a flurry of exclamations. My chum and I happily indulged ourselves in the stunning beauty of Isaac’s white sands and turquoise waters and pledged to return again soon. Could there be another beach in the world as beautiful as our Isaac’s? Can’t imagine it.

From CCT’s excellent production of Cabaret to the 40th Agriculture Fair to the Good Hope Art Show, Art Night and a sundry of other events, February boasted a month chock-full of goings-on. Folks from Puerto Rico, St. Thomas and down island all descended upon St. Croix for Presidents’ Day weekend. They joined us for Agrifest festivities; some brought oranges or coffee or handmade sandals to peddle at the fair. Others came to enjoy the fun and check out the plants and livestock. Many wanted to see the Good Hope Art Show, which opened that Friday night to great reviews and remained up through the weekend. Even Richard Dinale (“Dino”), famous here for his Italian cuisine in the eighties and nineties, returned to the island and was a guest chef Saturday nights at the Cultured Pelican---to great fanfare, I might add.



Isaac’s Bay photo ©Al Dorsa

So, here we are in March. The cruise ships continue to stop in our port and visitors arrive by the planeload every day. Cruising sailors come too. The whales will be around until April or so, so do come visit us and try to catch a glimpse yourself! The weather remains idyllic---cool mornings and nights, sparkling days. And the docket is stacked with wonderful activities--Mardi Croix, the Antiques and Collectibles Fair, the St. Patrick’s Day Parade, the Krewe de Croix Masquerade Ball, historic Transfer Day. There’s so much to do here---we’re not just a beautiful island paradise.

St. Croix is such a beautiful island paradise that so many visitors have expressed desire to own a home here or they would like a piece of land on which to build their dream home. Some want to come and rent one of our villas for a week or so to try our island on for size and tool around and explore all the wonderful treats we have to offer.

Rest assured that when you select Coldwell Banker Land-de Wilde Realty, you will be working with one of the top-ranked home selling and buying real estate companies in the U.S., according to J.D. Power and Associates. Please come visit us at Coldwell Banker Land-de Wilde Realty at any of our three offices in The Buccaneer Hotel, Gallows Bay Marketplace and Gentle Winds Condominiums to preview our selection of available homes, condominiums, home sites and commercial properties. You can reach me at Coldwell Banker Land-de Wilde Realty at 340-718-7000, ext. 110 at the Buccaneer Hotel. Please note our new phone number. You can also visit our websites at www.coldwellbankervi.com or www.coldwellbankervi.com/vacationrentals.

Amy Land-de Wilde, Broker Owner
Coldwell Banker Land-de Wilde Realty

FEATURE PROPERTY OF THE MONTH

19 & 20 Cotton Valley Shores



Guest House

This is 'Paradise Found' --a breathtaking five-bedroom waterfront villa located on Cotton Valley Shores. Through a gated entry, you access the lushly landscaped courtyard. Anchoring the lovely pool is a three-bedroom main house and a two-story, two-bedroom guesthouse. Everything is oriented to the panoramic views of Buck Island and the glistening turquoise waters. Contact Amy Land-de Wilde to schedule a private showing and receive the informational supplement regarding this beautiful property which is currently an excellent vacation rental. Listed by Amy Land-de Wilde, 340-718-7000 or amydewilde@att.net

MLS 11-209

\$2,445,000

THE PLAN FOR PROPERTY TAXES

The Berne Property Tax case was at last settled in late January, resulting in a lift of the VI property tax bill freeze. District Court Judge Curtis Gomez's ruling allows the Tax Assessor's Office to issue tax bills for 2007, 2008 and 2009 at the 1998 assessment values. Bills for 2010 forward will be based on a more current market valuation, although precise guidelines have yet to be laid down.

Resolution of the Berne case has brought about a "credible, reliable property tax system" said VI Tax Assessor Bernadette Williams, addressing the Rotary Club of St. Croix. Williams stressed that the system features transparency and that property tax records are public documents available at the assessor's office. She also encouraged anyone with questions on their property valuations to visit her office. "If we made an error, we will surely correct it," Williams said, adding that she felt they could explain how the valuation was derived.

Lt. Governor Gregory Francis expressed satisfaction with Judge Gomez's findings and said in a prepared statement that the ruling "reflects that the government of the Virgin Islands has implemented an assessment system ... that not only meets industry standards but is fair and equitable."

Meanwhile, the 2007 tax bills, issued the first week in February, will be due March 15th and considered delinquent May 15th. 2008 bills are scheduled for release in May or June.

ISLAND PROPERTIES



MLS # 10-577

\$80,000



MLS # 10-1966

\$238,500



MS #10-1961

\$259,000

66DC CLAIRMONT



REAL ESTATE DEAL

Terrific pristine home in a very private and secure location with unbelievable views of both shores day and night. This lovely 3-bedroom 3-bath home has solar hot water, new appliances and a beautiful tiled pool. The house is in great condition, is convenient to everything, has great east breezes, a generator, and good storage space. The 3/4 acre lot is easy to care for. Offered by Amy Land-de Wilde, 340-718-7000, amydewilde@att.net.

MLS 10-565 \$529,000

THEY'RE FLOCKING TO SOUTHGATE

Back in 2007, the St. Croix Environmental Association had big aspirations for their Southgate Coastal Reserve. The idea was to build a 5,000 square foot nature reserve center, complete with classrooms and managed nature trails and bird blinds. Plans further included a caretaker's cottage and a 40 car parking lot. Coastal Zone Management felt differently and denied them a building permit.

SEA appealed the decision, but enthusiasm, once robust, was forced to the back burner. All these years later, the Virgin Islands Board of Land Use Appeals has now overturned CZM's denial and SEA will finally get their aspirations back on the drawing board.

Paul Chakroff, SEA's executive director, is in high spirits. "CZM will issue a permit without conditions. They (BLUA) ruled in favor of everything we asked for," Chakroff said.

When SEA first acquired the 100-acre reserve surrounding Southgate Pond, the previous owner, an avid birder, stipulated two conditions: 1) protect the wetlands for the birds and 2) bring in children and educate them about the importance of wildlife. "It's about appreciation of nature and animals, from bugs to bats," Burke said. She mentions the host of migratory birds that move through the reserve and the very rare Red Knot which has been sighted on the property.

SEA will revisit their initial plans with an eye toward resources and finances available now. Bird blinds and nature trails are an essential part of wildlife education. Those, along with self-guided tours and shelter from the sun or rain, are at the top of the drawing board.

AMERICAN AIRLINES INCREASES FLIGHTS TO THE USVI

Beginning in June, American Airlines plans an additional Boeing 737 daily flight from Miami into St. Croix. The new service will depart Miami at 6:25pm, arriving here at 9:10. It will leave St. Croix at 7:30 in the morning and land at Miami International at 10:25, ideal for connecting flights.

"As the region faces diminished service on American Airlines from Puerto Rico, it is encouraging that our partners at the airline are taking proactive steps to ensure continued robust jet service to the territory from their Miami hub," said Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty of the VI Department of Tourism.

Paul Prevost, who has a house here and in Atlanta, flies Delta regularly. Delta Airlines operates a flight into St. Croix three days a week. "Delta also flies into St. Thomas every day and, with the seaplane at the airport now---it's a Godsend," said Prevost. The seaplane offers a good connection, ditto Cape air.

For over a year now, Tourism has worked closely with the airline industry through cooperative marketing to support flights to the territory.

ST. CROIX REAL ESTATE MARKET WATCH

CLOSED SALES COMPARISON - 2/28/09-2/28/10 VERSUS 2/28/10-2/28/11

	2009-2010 SOLD	AVERAGE DAYS ON MARKET	AVERAGE PRICE	2010-2011 SOLD	AVERAGE DAYS ON MARKET	AVERAGE PRICE
Home Sales*	120	261	363,572	97	287	503,231
Condo Sales*	43	283	200,936	60	283	186,893
Land under \$39,999	45	233	28,309	32	297	30,150
Land over \$40,000	78	275	151,665	55	296	100,965
Commercial	12	364	412,916	9	238	313,333

Information from the St. Croix Multiple Listing Service

*The average sales price and the average days on market could be skewed greatly by only one sale or because of the small number of annual sales.