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# Ultimate Virgin Islands Packing List

2026 Edition • US & British Virgin Islands  
In the VI – Practical Travel Guides

The Virgin Islands reward smart packers. Expensive imports, limited store stock, strict reef protection laws, rocky shorelines, sea urchins, aggressive no-see-ums, and relentless Caribbean sun make strategic packing essential. Bring the right gear and you'll save money, stay comfortable, protect the reefs, and enjoy the islands like a local.

## ■ Sun & Reef Protection (Non-Negotiable)

*USVI law bans chemical sunscreens (oxybenzone, octinoxate, and octocrylene). Only mineral-based (zinc or titanium dioxide) sunscreens are legal and reef-safe.*

- Reef-safe sunscreen (SPF 30–50+): 2–3 tubes/bottles per person (ThinkSport, Badger, or All Good recommended)
- Wide-brim UPF 50+ packable sun hat with chin strap
- Polarized UV-protective sunglasses with strap
- Rash guards / long-sleeve swim shirts (UPF 50+): 2 per person
- Lip balm with SPF + after-sun aloe gel

*Pro Tip: A rash guard dramatically reduces sunscreen use while snorkeling.*

## ■ Snorkeling & Water Gear

*Rental gear is often low-quality or poorly fitting. Bringing your own transforms your experience.*

- Quality snorkel mask (low-volume, tempered glass) + dry-top snorkel
- Fins (short travel fins recommended)
- Waterproof dry bag (10–20L) — essential for boat days and beach hopping
- Water shoes or sturdy reef-safe sandals (rocky entries and sea urchins are common)
- Optional: Full-face snorkel mask, GoPro/action camera with float strap, mask defogger

## ■ Clothing & Footwear

*Pack light with quick-dry fabrics. Laundry is available at most villas.*

- 3–5 swimsuits (quick-dry)
- Lightweight cover-ups, shorts, tanks, and breezy dresses
- 1–2 pairs light long pants or leggings (evenings, bugs, and hikes)
- Light rain jacket or compact poncho
- Comfortable walking sandals with good grip + closed-toe shoes for hikes

- One nicer outfit for upscale dinners

## ■ Health, Bugs & Personal Care

*No-see-ums are notorious at dawn and dusk, especially after rain.*

- Strong insect repellent (DEET or high-concentration picaridin recommended)
- Basic first-aid kit (bandages, antiseptic, anti-itch cream, pain reliever, motion sickness tablets) + extra personal prescriptions
- Hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and small garbage bags
- Reusable water bottle

## ■ Beach & Boat Day Essentials

- Insulated beach tote or soft cooler
- Quick-dry microfiber beach towel
- Gallon and quart zip-top bags (wet suits, snacks, and phone protection)
- Small beach blanket or lightweight ground cover
- Collapsible cooler bag for villa provisioning

## ■ Electronics & Connectivity

- Portable power bank (10,000–20,000mAh) + waterproof phone pouch
- Chargers and extra adapters
- eSIM or prepaid SIM card (Verizon users: watch for unexpected BVI roaming)
- Waterproof action camera + extra batteries/SD cards

## ■ Food & Grocery Strategy

*Many visitors self-cater in villas. Groceries are expensive on the islands.*

- Favorite non-perishables: coffee, spices, protein bars, snacks, nuts, and condiments
- Reusable shopping bags and produce bags
- Soft-sided cooler bag for ferry transport

*St. John Tip: Stock up at larger, cheaper stores on St. Thomas (e.g. Cost-U-Less) before taking the ferry.*

## ■ Documents & Money

- Valid passport (required for any BVI travel)
- Real ID or passport for domestic USVI flights/ferries
- Printed + digital copies of reservations, ferry tickets, and travel insurance
- Cash in small bills (\$1s, \$5s, \$10s) for taxis, vendors, and beach bars
- Credit cards (widely accepted, but cash is still king in remote areas)

## ■ What NOT to Bring

- Regular chemical sunscreen (illegal in USVI and damages coral)
- Heavy luggage or non-quick-dry clothing
- Expensive jewelry or valuables
- Glass bottles (many beaches ban them)
- Single-use plastics
- Spray sunscreen (wind carries it onto reefs)

## ■ Seasonal & Island-Specific Notes

*Peak Season (Dec–Apr): Emphasize sun protection and light layers.*

*Green/Rainy Season (May–Nov): Prioritize stronger bug repellent, quick-dry gear, and a reliable rain jacket.*

*St. John: Extra sturdy water shoes and hiking footwear.*

*St. Thomas: More versatile clothing for shopping and dining.*

*St. Croix: Strong bug protection and reef shoes for east end beaches.*

*BVI Day Trips: Passport + extra cash for departure tax.*

## ■ Bonus Pro Tips

*Pack in a carry-on when possible.*

*Use packing cubes for organization.*

*Download offline maps and the Virgin Islands National Park app.*

*Consider a waterproof wallet for boat days.*