

PROJECT REPORT
Virgin Islands National Park Volunteer Expedition
November 2-13, 2014
Executive Summary

Conservation Volunteers International Program (Conservation VIP) organized and led a volunteer expedition to Virgin Islands National Park (VINP) on St. Thomas and St. John in the US Virgin Islands from November 2-13, 2014. After discussions with the Superintendent of Virgin Islands National Park and the President of the Friends Virgin Islands National Park, who share management of the Trails in Virgin Islands National Park on St. John, Conservation VIP decided that the volunteers would work on the following segments of the parks trails and cultural landscapes:

L'Esperance Trail: cleared vegetation and mowed from 1.25 miles of overgrown trail
L'Esperance Ruins: cleared vegetation and from 2.5 acres of masonry ruins
Frances Bay Boardwalk Trail: pruned mangroves along .25 mile of elevated boardwalk
Frances Bay Trail: removed vegetation and mowed .25 mile of overgrown trail
Frances Bay Ruins: removed heavily overgrown vegetation and vines from .5 acre landscape
Little Lameshur Ruins: removed heavily overgrown vegetation and vines from 1.0 acre site
Yawzi Point Trail: removed vegetation and mowed .5 mile of overgrown trail
Little Lameshur: cleared 3 grave sites; removed heavily overgrown vegetation from .1 acre site
Cinnamon Bay Campground: cleaned and opened volunteer campsites for season .5 acre site
Constructed one tent platform and erected 4 tents for Volunteer Camp
Cleared two sets of ruins along the Yawzi Point Trail .25 acres.



Conservation VIP provided 22 volunteers including trip leader Mark Hardgrove, assistant trip leader Gene Zimmerman and assistant trip leader Ed Eads. REI Adventures included this trip in their audit program; Justin Wood joined us and was extremely helpful to have along, especially on our maiden voyage. We also had Peter Murphy join us to video and photograph our work, which will allow Conservation VIP to demonstrate the type of work we do in the VINP and the types of conditions at worksites.

We had one walk up volunteer join us at Cinnamon Bay Campground for the day and another walk up volunteer join us at the Frances Bay Ruins. Both walk up volunteers were part of the Friends of VINP volunteer program. More than 1275 volunteer hours were dedicated to the improvements of approximately 2.25 miles of trails and removing aggressive vegetation in and around the historic sites preserved 3.76 acres of cultural landscapes/ruins/gravesites. Most sections of the trail and cultural landscapes can now be qualified as being in "good" condition; L'Esperance Ruins, Yawzi Point Ruins, Little Lameshur Ruins and Cinnamon Bay Campground are now all in good condition with enhanced visitor safety. The conditions of the resources have been vastly improved due to the efforts of the volunteers who joined Conservation VIP on this trip.

The Conservation VIP volunteers got along fantastically, and integrated well with our Virgin Islands Environmental Research Station (VIERS) staff, visitors and folks we met on the Island while doing our work. The volunteers took the opportunity to use all tools during the course of the work.



The weather was mostly sunny with mild trade winds and some rain during workdays. The temperatures were also good and were mainly in the mid to upper 80's in the daytime and upper 70's at night. Rain gear was required as we had 4.5 inches of rain one day and a few showers other days. Except for the one rain day, Conservation VIP Volunteers worked through the rain showers, as the warm rain was a relief to the folks who were already sweating during the day's projects.

Detailed Trip Report

Monday November 3rd

Orientation and tour of Archeology museum at Cinnamon Bay Campground

Cleared 25% of the ruins at the top of L'Esperance trail

Cleared a 1/4 mile of trail and the fish bay overlook on L'Esperance trail

8am-4pm

Monday November 3rd (Continued)

22 people

176 Hours

Tuesday November 4th

Continued clearing the upper ruins (50% completed) and trail (another ¼ mile) on L'Esperance

8am-3pm

22 people

7 Hours

157 Hours

Wednesday November 5th

Continued clearing the upper ruins (nearly completed) and trail (1 ¼ miles completed total) on L'Esperance

8am-4:30pm

22 people

8.5 Hours Worked

187 Hours

Thursday November 6th

Free day: 100% Participation; Virgin Islands Eco-Tours donated to the group a Walk/Kayak/Snorkel/Eco-walk/Honeymoon Beach Day.

Friday November 7th

Annaberg rain tour

8-12 (Volunteers took afternoon off rain delay)

22 people

4 Hours Worked

88 Hours

Work laid out with Ken Wild NPS Archaeologist for rain day options at Little Lameshur and Yawzi Pt.

3 People

3 Hours Worked

9 Hours

97 Hours total for this day

Saturday November 8th

Yawzi Pt. Trail completely cleared of vegetation

Two ruins sites off Yawzi pt. completely Cleared of vegetation

3 grave sites (assigned by Ken) completely cleared of vegetation

¼ of Lameshur Bay trail cleared of vegetation

8am-5pm

22 people

8.5 Hours Worked

192 Hours

Sunday November 9th (This Crew worked on their day off!)

Begun clearing Little Lameshur ruins

8am-12pm

6 people

4 Hours Worked

24 Hours

Monday November 10th

Volunteer camp site setup at Cinnamon Bay. Tent platform constructed, 4 tents setup, entire camp site cleared of debris, and 6 tarps set up.

9am-3pm

12 people

5.5 Hours Worked

66 Hours

Completed clearing ruins on L'Esperance trail

9am-4pm

6 people

6.5 Hours Worked

39 Hours

Tuesday November 11th

Guided bird walk around Francis Bay trail

Cut back vegetation on Francis Bay boardwalk

Completely cleared Francis Bay trail and overlook

Completely cleared ruins at beginning of trail

8am-3pm

23 people

7 Hours Worked

161 Hours

Wednesday November 12th

Completed clearing Little Lameshur ruins and grave sites (assigned by Ken) off Bordeaux Mt. Trail

8am-12pm

22 people

4 Hours Worked

88 Hours

1275 Total Volunteer Hours Contributed by Conservation Volunteers International Program



Brushing and Pruning: Many sections of the trails, cultural landscapes, ruins and gravesites had heavily encroaching grasses, vines, catch and keep (a thorny, stick to your clothing plant), cactuses and brush. As a result, volunteers worked every day on pruning back and removing the vegetation so that the trails, ruins, cultural sites and gravesites can be navigated by visitors to the park and hikers without the bush impeding their travels or safety. Where brush growth and/or tree branches encroached upon the trail and cultural landscapes width or height it was cut back and dispersed. Significant quantities of large trees, tree limbs and roots on the trails, cultural sites and ruins presented a hazard for tripping and hazards to the cultural sites and were sawed off by hand and discarded from the sites. Over 80 large trees were removed and cut up at the L'Esperance ruin alone.

These intensive work efforts by the Conservation VIP volunteers greatly improved trail quality and preservation of the cultural landscapes while providing for increased visitor understanding and visitor safety.

General Information

Social Interaction: The team of volunteers worked and “played” extremely well together and friendships were quickly formed. At the end of each day an EQ (Emotional Quotient) rating was taken to determine the overall spirit of the group. We all ate breakfast, lunch and dinner together each day and we all washed and dried our own dishes after each meal.



Safety: We started each day and each new project with safety briefings and safety reminders. In addition, we all worked together to watch each other for dehydration, safe tool use, use of protective equipment and safe work practices. No incidents or accidents occurred during the trip thanks to the good work of our leadership team and volunteers.

The team readily and cheerfully adopted all safety guidelines for tool usage and tool transport. All personnel wore required safety gear while working on the trails. Volunteers cordially and occasionally reminded each other to adhere to all safety guidelines throughout the workday.

Transportation: The National Park Service (NPS) provided two government owned vans at no charge for transportation from the meeting point at the Windward Passage Hotel at 9:00 a.m. Sunday November 2nd and for use during our entire volunteer work program. A 3rd seven-passenger van was rented at the St. Thomas (STT) Airport. The vans were driven by the Trip Leader and Assistant Trip Leaders, which proved to be exciting as they drive on the Left side of the road in the US Virgin Islands. The vans left the Windward Passage and toured St. Thomas where we left the island via Vehicle Ferry traveling from the Redhook Vehicle Ferry Site to the Vehicle Ferry Site on St. John. The tour continued through Virgin Islands National Park along the North Shore Road stopping at some of the overlooks to orient the volunteers and provide photo opportunities. Upon arrival at VIERS, which is a 45 minute drive across the 9 mile island of St. John, we were greeted by Tony and Carla who welcomed us to camp, gave us an orientation and we sat down for our first meal together. Each day the vans transported our work crews to and from the work sites with afternoon stops at the market to provide volunteers an opportunity for special treats or the spirits of

their choice. Most afternoons many of the volunteers read a book, swam or snorkeled Little Lameshur Bay.

Virgin Islands Environmental Research Station (VIERS) Accommodations: Prior to the “official” start of the expedition, the trip leaders stayed at VIERS. VIERS provided rustic and affordable accommodations with clean rooms and facilities. VIER is run by Clean Islands International and provides one of the most environmentally friendly lodging operations in the Virgin Islands. The food, lodging and amenities were adequate with acceptable bath facilities and sleeping arrangements. The rooms that had been upgraded were more popular than the dorm style rooms with the volunteers. VIERS was able to provide full size beds and private rooms for all of the couples on this trip.

National Park Service

The National Park Service Coordinator Keith McNair was on leave when we arrived but the maintenance team helped Conservation VIP get off to an exciting start.

Friends Virgin Islands National Park

The Friends VINP Trail Coordinator was hired two weeks prior to our arrival. Anna Adams spent her first two weeks hiking all of the trails in the VINP. Then she met with the National Park Service Superintendent to develop park priorities and then we arrived to start work. Conservation VIP purchased and donated some of the tools used by volunteers based on what was available in the hardware stores on St. John.



Summary

The Virgin Islands National Park and Conservation Volunteers International Program's first program together was a success based upon our safety record and the feedback we received. Positive feedback was received from the Friends Virgin Islands National Park, the National Park Service, as well as our volunteers' daily feedback. We also completed the important work that we were asked to complete to help preserve the cultural resources and maintain park trails. 1275 hours of work were donated to Virgin Islands National Park in less than two weeks. The knowledge gained, the skills acquired, and the work completed resulted in marked improvements and increased safety conditions on the trail, cultural landscapes and gravesites.

Our final evening was spent on a North Shore Educational and Sunset Cruise aboard the Sadie Sea, an evening that most will remember with special people, working in a special place with lasting memories and friendships for life.

