

Travel



Colorful flowers, friendly goats and Turks Cap Cactus are some of the interesting things you will see on the island.



Beach-hopping along St. John's North Shore Road is popular, as dozens of scenic bays encompass the island. Trunk Bay, Cinnamon Bay, Drunk Bay... take your pick. And don't forget your snorkel.



Reef Bay Trail, considered one of the most interesting and vigorous hikes on the island, leads to the Annaberg Sugar Mill Plantation Ruins.



The Ram Head Trail, which starts at Salt Pond Bay Beach on the southeast part of the island, will dazzle with its stunning scenery.

St. John is a slice of paradise

Photos and text by Elizabeth Nida Obert • enida@postbulletin.com

The hustle and bustle of St. Thomas, which is inundated with tourists, was starting to wear thin when we boarded the ferry to St. John. So close — 3 miles — but, metaphorically speaking, so very far.

The least developed of the U.S. Virgin Islands, St. John is the most preserved. Two-thirds of the island's 20 square miles are protected as national parkland.

Canopies of lush greenery and seemingly endless turquoise bays welcomed us as we made our way from the populated Cruz Bay — where our ferry landed — along the sometimes harrowing road to Saltpond Bay, located on the southeast corner of the island. We would call Concordia Eco-Resort home for the next few days.

Serene and pristine. A little slice of paradise, that St. John.

Travel tips

About the writer: Elizabeth Nida Obert is a senior staff photographer at the Post-Bulletin.

Getting there: The island of St. John may only be reached via ferry, which we took from the island of St. Thomas.

Where to stay: Concordia Eco-Resort in the southeast region. It is a place and experience you won't soon forget. Awesome.

Where to eat: Tourist Trap. The "roadside shack" has character and good food. Also loved the Caribbean food at Sweet Plantains, which was considerably more upscale. The decor is lovely.

Side trips: The island of St. Thomas, which is a short ferry ride from St. John.

Travel tip: Car rental is advised to commute around the island but be aware that roads are hilly and narrow. And British, so it will feel like you are driving on the "wrong" side of the road. Be attentive and cautious.

For further information: www.vinow.com/stjohn/

Good grief — airlines have buried bereavement fares



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If you're unfortunate enough to have

to travel due to the serious illness or death of a relative, so-called discounted bereavement fares that airlines offered for years are essentially a thing of the past.

About the only airline offering some form of a discount for a grieving flier is Delta, and the Associated Press notes that the benefit is relatively slight.

Of the other major carriers, American Airlines eliminated

its bereavement fares in February, while United did so a month later.

As far as Delta's policy is concerned, a spokesman told the AP that the airline will waive change fees when presented with proof of death (such as name and phone number for a hospital or funeral home). The waiver can be granted only via phone.

The AP notes that policy doesn't leave much help when buying a ticket — and last-minute buys are very expensive — but if you're due to fly back home Tuesday and the funeral is set for Wednesday,

dropping the change fee is a help.

Of the low-cost airlines — the likes of Southwest, Frontier, JetBlue and Virgin America — none offers lower-cost bereavement fares and spokesmen say their fares are already low.

The death of bereavement fares, which essentially discounted the cost of a last-minute fare to the price of the ticket had it been purchased weeks in advance, follows the demise of most of the airlines' other special-class discounts. Special fares for seniors, children and others have all but disappeared.

There are some options for travelers to explore at the last minute, the AP article points

out. Using frequent-flier miles is probably the best one, and if you don't have enough yourself, you usually can purchase some from the airline — and this usually would be less costly than purchasing a last-minute ticket.

One analyst told the AP that in any event, it is usually worth calling an airline to check options if you are faced with a bereavement situation.

"For instance, American's website doesn't say as much, but a company spokesman said that, like Delta, the airline is amenable to waiving change fees. Also, money spent on upcoming reservations can be reallocated to new flights when faced with a death in the family," accord-

ing to the article.

And it never hurts to ask.

NCL going high-end

Norwegian Cruise Line, the third-largest cruise company, is buying its way into the high-end market. It is making a \$3 billion purchase of Prestige Cruises International, which owns Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

Most businesses, according to Bloomberg Businessweek, want to have a premier product among their holdings and that's what Norwegian has purchased. The acquisition, say analysts, will help bring in more revenue from outside the Caribbean, where Norwe-

gian now gets about half its sales — and where sales have been hampered recently by a glut of new cruise ships.

Bangkok tower

A Super Tower is coming to Bangkok.

A property developer there has announced plans to build a skyscraper in the Thailand capital that will be among the 10 tallest buildings in the world when it is completed in 2019.

The 125-floor tower will rise some 2,018 feet and include a luxury hotel, offices and an observation deck with panoramic views of the city.

Bob Retzlaff is the Post-Bulletin's travel editor.