



PERFECT DAYS

Sint Eustatius

By *Poupette Smith*

Perfect Days

Residents of this tranquil little Dutch outpost - commonly called Statia - are keen to restore and preserve what remains of their rich, if quite often turbulent, colonial past.

If you're a history buff, you'll want to start the day by getting a glimpse of yesteryear at Oranjestad's Doncker House; the 200-year-old residence has been renovated and is now home to the island's Historical Foundation Museum.

Follow up with a walking tour through the capital. Ask one of the museum's excellent volunteers to guide you, or pick up a map for a stroll on your own, but be sure not to miss these highlights: the Dutch Reformed church, Government Guest House, and Honen Dalim, which is one of the oldest synagogues in the Western Hemisphere.

Nature lovers may want to forego the history and start the day with a rousing hike to the 1,960-foot rim of The Quill, the isle's inactive volcano. The reward for the effort is an unforgettable view that takes in neighboring islands Saba and St. Kitts. Keep an eye peeled for harmless red-bellied racer snakes and iguanas. The hike can take from one to four hours, depending on your pace. Bring a picnic if you plan to linger, or if you want to descend into the volcano's lush crater.

Thanks to Statia's National Park Service, the island has its share of protected underwater sites featuring good visibility, abundant sea life, and choice corals. You can sign up for an afternoon scuba trip or simply snorkel close to shore, where parts of the 18th-century ruins of Lower Town lie just below the water's surface.

And what better way to end a perfect day than by sipping a fruit punch and watching the tropical sunset? Choose the elegantly restored Old Gin House or the less formal Ocean View Terrace, up by the fort, but check first to see where Statia's very own killy-killy band is playing.

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