

Branches Association British Virgin Islands



Capital – Road Town, Tortola Island

Geography

Situated 96.5km east of Puerto Rico and the northernmost of the Leeward Islands group in the Caribbean. There are 60 islands, of which 15 are inhabited. The territory covers an area of 153km² and the largest island is Tortola (54km²). There are 80km of coastline. With the exception of Anegada, they are all wooded and hilly. The highest point is Mount Sage at 521m.

Government / Legal

A British Dependent Territory with self-government for internal affairs, and an Executive Council for other matters. A Governor represents the Queen. English common law provides the basis for the legal system.

Climate

Sub-tropical with annual rainfall averaging 127cm. Trade winds keep the air fresh. There are occasional hurricanes and tropical storms (July to October).

History

First settled by the Dutch in 1648, the islands were taken over by British planters in 1666. The islands attained the status of British colony, remaining part of the Leeward Islands from 1872 until 1956, when the British Virgin Islands became a separately administered entity. To preserve its ties with the U.S. Virgin Islands, it did not join the 1958-1962 West Indies Federation of British Virgin Islands.



Traveller Information

GMT minus 4 hours. There are 160 miles of paved roads. Car hire is available on the main islands and a British driving licence is acceptable. Driving is on the left and there is a 40mph speed limit. Persons under 25 are not permitted to drive hire cars. Direct sea-freight services link the islands with Britain and the USA. Beef Island airport, although small, receives flights from Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands and the USA. A departure tax is payable.

Economy

The economy, one of the most stable and prosperous in the Caribbean, is highly dependent on tourism. It generates around 45% of the national income; the islands are a popular destination for U.S. citizens. In 2006 a total of 825,603 people visited the islands (of whom 443,987 were cruise ship passengers). Incorporation fees for offshore registration of companies also generate substantial revenues. Livestock raising is the most important agricultural activity; poor soils limit the islands' ability to meet domestic food needs. Due to links with the US Virgin Islands, the British Virgin Islands has used the dollar since 1959.

How Guiding Started

Guiding was introduced to the British Virgin Islands by Mrs Perry-Gore, wife of the Rector of St George's Church, and Mrs Wailing, wife of the Island Commissioner. Initially there was one Company with 27 members – the first BVI Company was registered in 1936. It grew very quickly and soon split into two Companies. The first Brownie Pack was also registered in the same year.



1936	First Units registered.
1945	Guiding suspended due to the war.
1952	Guiding re-started.
1960s	Guide Units started on other islands of the BVI. Guides attended a jamboree on St Thomas in the US Virgin Islands.
1971	Guides began to raise money for their own Guide Headquarters.
1977	Guides from BVI camped in Canada.
1984	The Commonwealth Chief Commissioner, Lady Baden-Powell, visited the islands.
1985	A group of Guides camped in the UK.
1986	50 years of guiding celebrated with an international camp.
1996	Diamond Jubilee celebrates with an international camp, a special stamp issue, and a celebration concert.
1997	12 Guides and 3 Leaders joined a UK camp at Foxlease.
2006	70 years of guiding was celebrated on the islands.
2010	A patrol of guides from B.V.I. came over with their Leaders to join in with the Centenary Camp and then onwards to "Branch Out" at Waddow for a special Centenary Branch Association gathering for Branch members.
2012	A patrol joined Carricamp run by the Caribbean Link Guide association in Antigua



Guiding Today

The girls follow the same programme as that used in the UK, adapting just a few things appropriate to their environment. Uniform tends to be T-shirts with their unit names. Occasionally, girls and their Guiders are able to attend camps in other parts of the Caribbean or even overseas.

Units join the Queen's Birthday Parade and the Armistice Day Parade. There is a "Caribbean Knowledge" interest badge for both Brownies and Guides, which encourages the girls to find out about local wildlife, society and culture.