



*October 2015 Holidays / Celebrations  
in the United States Virgin Islands*



*October  
VI - PR Friendship Day ... October 12<sup>th</sup>  
Columbus Day ... October 12<sup>th</sup>  
Local Thanksgiving Day ... October 25<sup>th</sup>*



*Holidays observed by the United States Virgin Islands  
strengthen an important process in the development of the  
territory.*



Compliments of:

Virgin Islands Department of Education  
Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education

*Building Our Future Through  
Education, History and Culture!*

# *Virgin Islands - Puerto Rico Friendship Day*

Over fifty years ago on February 20, 1964 through Bill #2019 Act #1076, Virgin Islands – Puerto Rico Friendship Day became law. It recognizes and strengthens the bonds of kinship that exists between the United States Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. It is observed and celebrated on the second Monday of October (Monday, October 12, 2015) the same day as Columbus Day.

The law reads ...

## **Designating Virgin Islands — Puerto Rico Friendship Day in the Virgin Islands**

WHEREAS the people of the Territory of the Virgin Islands and the people of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have had a long, happy association as relatives, good neighbors, business partners, fellow Americans and warm friends; and

WHEREAS this close and friendly relationship between the American Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has been mutually beneficial; and

WHEREAS this territory has been particularly enriched by the settlement in the Virgin Islands of a large number of natives of Puerto Rico whose contributions have been greatly responsible for the substantial progress achieved in this territory during recent years; and

WHEREAS we gratefully acknowledge the prompt and generous assistance rendered on numerous occasions over a long period to the people of the Virgin Islands by the people and Government of Puerto Rico as we strove for solution of various solutions of various vexing problems; and

WHEREAS the leadership provided by Governor Luis Munoz Marin and his associates in the commonwealth of Puerto Rico has been a source of great pride and inspiration to their fellow Americans and neighbors in the American Virgin Islands; and

WHEREAS the Governor and Legislature of the Virgin Islands believe it is fitting and proper to designate a day when we can proudly call attention to the remarkable social and business ties and cooperation between the people of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS Columbus Day which marks the anniversary of the discovery of the Western World is an appropriate day for commemorating the solidarity of Americans in the Caribbean. Be it enacted by the legislature of the Virgin Islands;

Section 1: The Governor of the Virgin Islands shall, by proclamation not less than thirty days before said date, designate Columbus Day each year as “Virgin Islands—Puerto Rico Friendship Day” within the Virgin Islands. He shall call upon the citizens of the Virgin Islands to observe the occasion with ceremonies honoring Puerto Ricans residing in our midst and other Puerto Ricans who have made substantial contributions to the advancement and progress of the Virgin Islands. These ceremonies shall be coordinated by special committee in St.

Thomas and St. Croix to be appointed by the Governor. Said committees shall be established no later than July 31st of each year.

Section 2: the Governor shall transmit copies of this Act to the Governor of Puerto Rico, the President of the Senator and the Speaker of the House of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.



*Seal of the VIPR Friendship Committee Created in 2006 by Mr. Luis Alicea depicting the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico and their flags united in a friendship handshake. Pablo Rojas*

**Suggested Family and Classroom Activities:**

**Research the history of Virgin Islands – Puerto Rico Friendship Day and creatively share what you learn with someone.**

**Interview an older Puerto Rican and Virgin Islander about their interactive experience (s)**

**Attend an event sponsored by the Virgin Islands - Puerto Rico Friendship Committee**

**Courtesy of**

**Text: A Teachers Guide to Holiday Observances in the Virgin Islands**

**Pictures: VI - PR Friendship Committee Booklet 2014 (St. Thomas)**

# Columbus Day

Columbus Day, a legal national holiday, is celebrated on the second Monday of October. It commemorates Christopher Columbus' discovery almost 525 years ago on October 12, 1492 of the Americas from Spain to Hispaniola, North America, as well as it celebrates the influence that Italian immigrants played in making the United States of America a great nation.

First documentation of Columbus Day was held in 1792, but it was not until the urging of President Benjamin Harrison on the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christopher Columbus discovery in 1892 that it was officially acknowledged. From 1920, the day was observed each year, however, it was in 1937 when President Franklin Roosevelt declared all October 12<sup>th</sup> as 'Columbus Day'. It was proclaimed by Congress in 1971 as a national holiday on each 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of October.

As some residents both nationally and locally embrace the celebration of Columbus Day, others oppose it for reasons including:

- History clearly supports that Columbus was not the first explorer to land on America, but rather the first European who brought European culture to America;
- Columbus could not have discovered America when there were inhabitants living there;
- Millions lost their lives because of the infectious diseases (such as influenza and smallpox) from the Europeans and the warfare which erupted between them and the Native Americans;
- Their colonization of America negatively affected America.

Officially, United States of America encourages its inhabitant to celebrate with church services and other activities. In some towns and cities, especially the Italian-American community, special church services, parades and large events are held. Schools, government offices, post offices, and banks are closed. Though some businesses are also closed, some remain open and hold special sales.

In the Virgin Islands of the United States of America, Columbus Day is observed too. However, special recognition is placed on the celebration of Virgin Islands – Puerto Rico Friendship Day, which is celebrated on the same day – October 12, 2015.





### Suggested Family and Classroom Activities:

Research about Columbus Day

Make a map of Columbus' voyage and tiny replicas of his three ships – the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria.

Make a tiny birch bark canoe (materials can include construction paper - or a brown paper grocery bag - and yarn).

Courtesy of

Text: A Teachers Guide to Holiday Observances in the Virgin Islands, <http://columbus-day.z12.net/2012.php>; <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/us/columbus-day/>; <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/columbus/>; <http://www.letusfindout.com/why-do-we-celebrate-columbus-day/>; <http://suite101.com/article/columbus-day--celebration-of-myth-torture-and-genocide-a277248>

Pictures: Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education; <http://www.midatlanticbuilders.com/blog/index.php/2013/10/happy-columbus-day-from-mid-atlantic-builders/>

# Local Thanksgiving Day

Local Thanksgiving Day is observed on October 25<sup>th</sup>. Although no longer a paid holiday, it was established to give thanks to God for sparing the islands from the horrific disaster of hurricanes. As such, the residents of the US Virgin Islands were called to observe this day by attending church services. Although this pattern is no longer actively practiced, a few still take the time to observe the day by going to church in celebration of their spared lives.

As early as 1837, the Danish government released the proclamation below because the people in this territory realized the need to meditate on being spared from the ravages of hurricanes ...

## PROCLAMATION

**When on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, instant this Colony was ravaged by an awful Hurricane and Earthquake, Lightning and Conflagration augmented its terrible effects, it was a great consolation to find that no kind of disorder was committed, and that all did their best to put a stop to the fire: I beg that every one in particular who in the time of danger exerted himself will accept of many warmest thanks.**

**Inhabitants of St. Thomas: To you distress needs no interpreter. Let us hand in hand alleviate the general calamity. I need no warn against profiting by the misfortune of others; no one will be raising the prices of necessities and shelter stamp himself with public contempt.**

**As soon as the severest distress is relieved, we will assemble in the House of the Lord, and on this mournful occasion join in Prayers to the Almighty.**

It is therefore encumbered upon us that through this law, it is important for the government of the United States Virgin Islands to remind children and adults to be thankful to God for saving our lives during the hurricane season. Hence, the Local Thanksgiving Day should always continue to serves as special meanings / blessings for the people of the Virgin Islands to pray that the ....

1. The threats of the hurricanes were not as great
2. During the season, there were no storms.
3. And if there were storms, their lives were spared.



Suggested Family and Classroom Activities:

Learn how to track a hurricane.

Prior to hurricane season, research what precautions should be taken during a hurricane watch.

View a weather documentary on how hurricanes are formed.

**Courtesy of**

**Text: A Teachers Guide to Holiday Observances in the Virgin Islands & Special Holidays of the Virgin Islands by Jean H. Esannason**

**Picture: <http://www.clipartpanda.com/categories/child-praying-hands>**



To receive monthly complimentary electronic holiday / celebration recognitions, kindly contact .....



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