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USVI Showcases Tourism Growth at Seatrade Cruise Global 2024

With a 13% increase in cruise traffic, USVI sets sights on further growth in 2024

Tourism / **Published On April 12, 2024 06:01 AM /**

Staff Consortium **April 12, 2024**

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Gov. Albert Bryan, center right, Joseph Boschulte, far right, and RoseAnne Farrington, center left, pose for a picture with Disney executives as Seatrade 2024 By. V.I. DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

The V.I. Dept. of Tourism's participation in the 2024 Seatrade Cruise Global Conference in Miami, Florida, marked a significant occasion for the delegation to highlight the territory's accomplishments and partnerships in the cruise industry.

The USVI group was led by D.O.T. Commissioner Joseph Boschulte, Assistant Commissioner Alani Henneman, and Deputy Commissioner RoseAnne Farrington.

The conference commenced with the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) barbecue, sponsored by the Department of Tourism and hosted by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. The USVI delegation, comprising leaders from the Virgin Islands Legislature, the Virgin Islands Port Authority, West Indian Company Limited, Magens Bay Authority, and the U.S. Virgin Islands Government Employee Retirement System, presented the territory as a premier destination in the Caribbean.

Mr. Boschulte shared the strategic importance of the cruise sector to the USVI, noting, "Cruise has been and continues to be a leading entryway for visitors into the territory, and Seatrade allows representatives from the USVI to interface with and share pertinent updates needed to continue fostering positive relationships throughout the industry."



Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte and Deputy Commissioner RoseAnne Farrington at Seatrade 2024.

During the conference, the tourism commissioner was featured on the Caribbean Spotlight panel. The panel was moderated by Michelle Paige, CEO of FCCA, who highlighted Mr. Boschulte's recent recognition as the 2023 Caribbean Tourism Executive of the Year by Caribbean Journal.

Paige cited the journal, stating, "No Caribbean destination has seen more growth in the last three years than the U.S. Virgin Islands, which kicked off a full-fledged tourism renaissance just after the onset of the pandemic and hasn't looked back. And so much of that growth can be directly tied to the expert stewardship of Boschulte, who helped craft an innovative, flexible response to the challenges of the pandemic and has continued to drive the USVI's performance with a data-driven, creative approach to modern tourism."

The delegation also engaged in strategic discussions with executives from major cruise lines such as Disney Cruise Line, Norwegian Cruise Line, and Carnival Corporation & plc, focusing on ongoing partnerships and opportunities for expansion.

Highlighting the impressive recovery and growth of the cruise sector, Mr. Boschulte noted that St. Thomas and St. Croix saw a 13% increase in visitors in 2023 compared to 2019, with more than 1,600,000 passengers from 495 ship calls. This upward trend is expected to continue, with a projected 5% increase in cruise passenger arrivals in 2024.

"I am proud to see the Caribbean's appeal continue to captivate travelers. Our collaborative efforts with partners like FCCA and the Caribbean Tourism Organization underscore the unity of our region, ensuring unforgettable experiences for visitors while highlighting the unique strengths of the U.S. Virgin Islands. With a safe, welcoming destination and a shared commitment to tourism, we embrace our role as an integral part of the Caribbean community," Boschulte stated.

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