

Image not found or type unknown

Dept. of Tourism Celebrates Strong 2023, Eyes European and Canadian Connections, Partnerships

Dept. of Tourism successes, 2023 highlights, and global expansion strategies detailed

Tourism / **Published On December 21, 2023 07:25 AM /**

Staff Consortium **December 21, 2023**

Image not found or type unknown



An Aerial shot of Hotel on the Cay on St. Croix, and downtown Christiansted. By. GETTY IMAGES

The U.S. Virgin Islands bids farewell to 2023 with a sense of accomplishment and a vision for an even brighter future in the coming year, the V.I. Dept. of Tourism has made known in a comprehensive release. Guided by Commissioner Joseph Boschulte, the territory has made significant progress across various key areas, D.O.T. said.

Impressive Shared Economy Revenue

In a year-over-year comparison, the U.S. Virgin Islands has continued to thrive in the shared economy industry, generating \$343.4 million in revenue in 2023, down from the previous year's record-breaking \$360.53 million. The territory has a hotel occupancy rate of 61.8%, with hotel bookings within the territory exceeding the regional average daily rate (ADR), standing at \$463.23 compared to \$318.81 regionally. Additionally, the territory's Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) consistently surpasses regional standards, the department said.

Driving Caribbean Tourism Growth

The U.S. Virgin Islands has played a pivotal role in the Caribbean's impressive double-digit tourism growth, with international arrivals projected to experience a 39 percent increase above 2019 levels in the fourth quarter of 2023. Extended stay visitors have also surged by 25, D.O.T. said.

Positive Projections for 2024

Despite some challenges faced in 2022 due to industry constraints like pilot and airplane shortages, the outlook for 2024 is optimistic, the department said. Seat capacity from the continental U.S. to St. Croix has increased by 23 percent and to St. Thomas by 21 percent, largely due to maintaining strong relations with major carriers.

Strategic Marketing and Sports Partnerships

The Department of Tourism said it has expanded its strategic marketing efforts and ventured into sports marketing, forging partnerships with renowned sports teams and entities such as the Boston Red Sox, New York Jets, Chicago Cubs, and Klutch Sports Group. The department has also established ambassadorships with athletes having familial ties to the territory. These initiatives, combined with innovative marketing approaches, have contributed to a 21 percent increase in visitation to the territory from pre-Covid levels, according to the release.

Cultural Enrichment and Carnival Celebrations

The past year witnessed successful elevation of the territory's three Carnival celebrations, featuring more revelers on each island and expansion of the Village Nights, showcasing local talent and attracting performers from across the Caribbean and beyond. Carnival's success has opened doors for cultural exchanges with other islands in the region and African countries.

International Engagement and Expansion

D.O.T. said it is committed to re-engaging with international markets, with a focus on Canada, Denmark, and Italy. Integrated marketing and international media partners will promote the U.S. Virgin Islands as an ideal vacation destination.

2024 Goals and Initiatives

In 2024, the U.S. Virgin Islands will focus on strengthening its presence in the sports and entertainment industries, building cultural connections with the Caribbean diaspora, and expanding its presence in the marine and film sectors.

- **Airlift:** Engaging in conversations with airline executives to increase airlift from the U.S. mainland for winter 2024-25. Restoration of international negotiations with airlines in

Denmark, Italy, and Canada is a priority.

- Cruise: Partnering with the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) to increase cruise calls, create new experiences, collaborate with the local private sector, and generate employment opportunities.
- Marine: Strengthening partnerships with marine stakeholders, expanding marine experiences, and attracting businesses to set up headquarters in the USVI.
- Film: Attracting film production with its stunning landscapes and unique locations.

Awards and Accolades

In 2023, the U.S. Virgin Islands and its Department of Tourism received numerous awards and accolades, affirming its status as an outstanding travel destination.

A Destination of Choice

As the U.S. Virgin Islands reflects on its achievements in the past year and sets its sights on an ambitious future, it continues to stand as a destination of choice for travelers seeking natural beauty, cultural richness, and warm hospitality, according to D.O.T.

For more information about the U.S. Virgin Islands and its offerings, visit [here](#).