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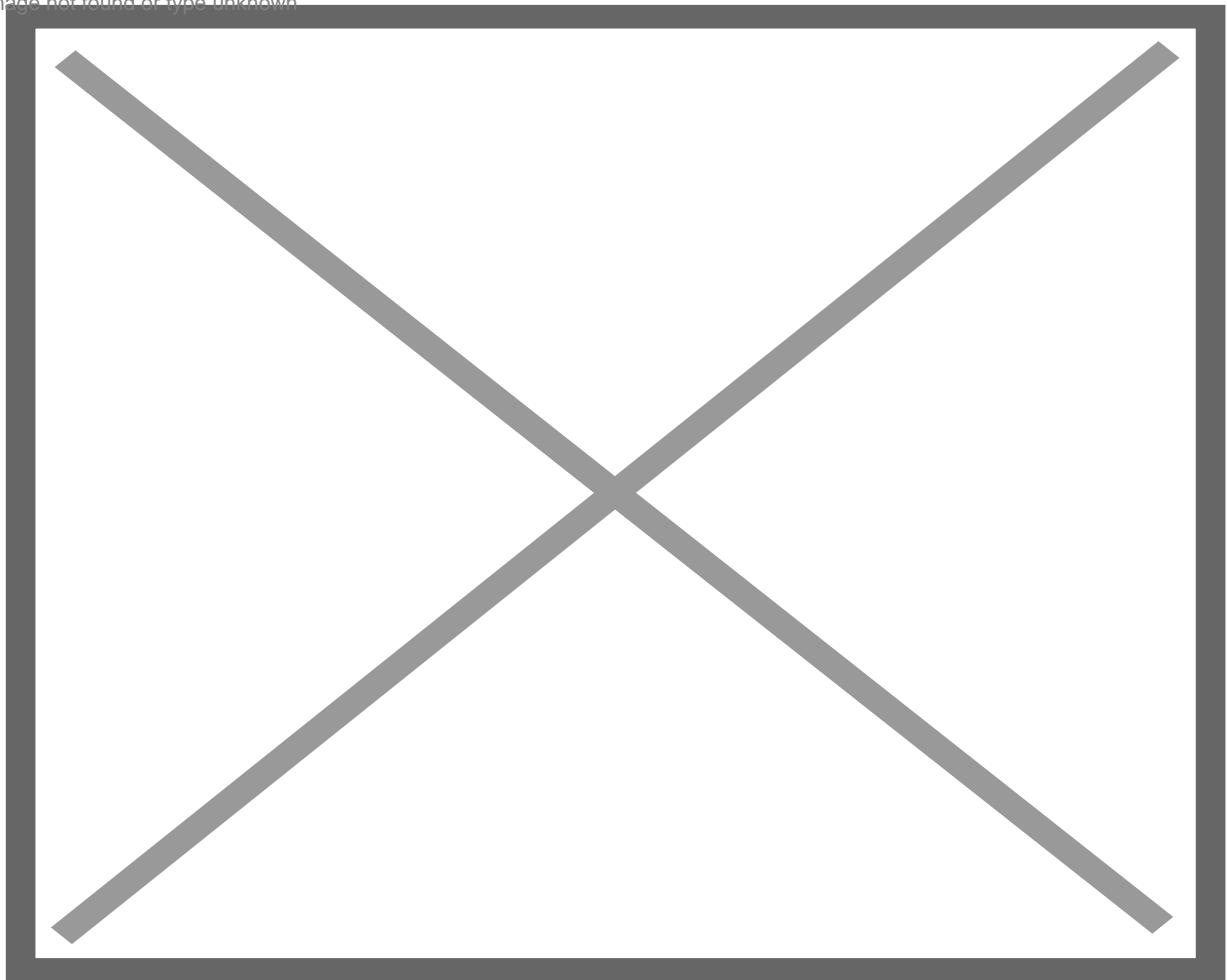
U.S. Virgin Islands Shatters Tourism Records in 2024

The USVI celebrates a record-breaking 2024, including over 932,000 air arrivals, a 9.8% rise in cruise passengers, and accolades like the world's best beach. Growth is fueled by innovative marketing, expanded airline routes, and strong partnerships

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Ernice Gilbert **January 08, 2025**

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Several carriers at the Cyril E. King Airport on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

The V.I. Department of Tourism announced on Wednesday that the U.S. Virgin Islands has reached new milestones in tourism, with record-breaking passenger arrivals reflecting the growing popularity of St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John as premier Caribbean destinations. D.O.T. revealed that 2024 was a year of exponential growth for the territory, driven by innovative strategies, new airline routes, and strengthened cruise partnerships.

According to the release, on December 28, the territory welcomed 4,606 air passengers, setting a new single-day record. This achievement capped off a record-breaking week with over 24,000 arrivals, a 5.92% increase compared to the previous weekly high. Overall, 2024 saw 932,265 air passengers arrive at Cyril E. King Airport in St. Thomas and Henry E. Rohlsen Airport in St. Croix, surpassing the previous record set during the Covid-19 pandemic by over 100,000 passengers and marking a 16.5% increase from 2023.

The tourism boom extended to the cruise sector, where the USVI welcomed 1,770,922 cruise passengers in 2024, reflecting a 9.8% increase over the previous year. The arrival of new vessels, including Scarlet Lady, Icon of the Seas, Disney Treasure, and Explora I and II, contributed significantly to this growth. D.O.T. Commissioner Joseph Boschulte credited these achievements to the department's collaboration with local and international partners to enhance the territory's visibility and appeal.

“This accomplishment is a testament to the consistent hard work of the Department of Tourism and Division Festivals staff, together with our agency partners, who continue to showcase and elevate the Territory on a global market,” said Mr. Boschulte told the Consortium. “As a destination, we continue to explore, elevate, and improve, which further supports the ongoing goal to build upon our commitment to be a premier Caribbean destination.”

The territory also received multiple prestigious accolades in 2024, further solidifying its status as a top destination. These include:

- Best Caribbean Cruise Destination 2024 by Porthole Cruise and Travel Magazine
- Caribbean Culinary Destination (St. Croix) and Caribbean Yachting Destination of the Year by Caribbean Journal
- Top 10 Best Beach for Honeymoon Beach, St. John, by USA TODAY 10 Best Readers' Choice Travel Awards
- Number 1 Best Beach in the World 2024 for Trunk Bay, St. John, by The World's 50 Best Beaches
- Number 1 Domestic Trending Summer Destination for St. Thomas by Expedia 2024 Summer Outlook
- Experiential Marketing Bronze Award for the Caribbean Way of Sports & Lifestyle Tourism Integrated Campaign by HSMAI Adrian Awards

The Department of Tourism also celebrated its highest-ever monthly air passenger total in March 2024, with 106,026 arrivals. New or reinstated airline routes from carriers such as American Airlines, Delta, JetBlue, and United Airlines played a critical role in bolstering accessibility to the islands.

“As we look to 2025, we will continue to push the creativity of our marketing strategies, which includes advertising, social media, public relations, and partnerships to connect with and keep the U.S. Virgin Islands top of mind for new and returning travelers,” added Boschulte.

DOT said it is committed to maintaining this upward trajectory by positioning the U.S. Virgin Islands as the ultimate destination for travelers seeking natural beauty, cultural heritage, and hospitality.