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## USVI Sees Strong Mid-Year Surge in Airlift, Cruise, Accommodations, and Global Recognition

At midyear 2025, the V.I. Dept. of Tourism reports growth in airlift, cruise calls, hotel occupancy, and global branding, fueled by new flights, strong media exposure, cultural events, and accolades that reinforce the territory's Caribbean appeal.

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**Airline carriers at the Cyril E. King Airport in St. Thomas, USVI. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.**

At the halfway mark of 2025, the V.I. Department of Tourism is reporting substantial growth across key sectors, including air and sea arrivals, accommodations, cultural tourism, and global branding. With continued momentum, the territory remains one of the most active and in-demand destinations in the Caribbean.

“We’ve reached the halfway point of 2025 with exceptional results that reflect the appeal and strength of the U.S. Virgin Islands,” said DOT Commissioner Joseph Boschulte. “This is a testament to the dedication of the Department of Tourism team and local stakeholders who together remain focused on sustainable growth, strategic partnerships, and cultural authenticity.”

According to the release, air connectivity continues to be a driving force behind the territory’s tourism performance. New daily nonstop flights from Dallas to St. Thomas are now operational, while additional service from Chicago and Boston is expected to begin in December. St. Croix will also benefit from new nonstop flights out of Chicago later this year. These additions follow record-setting air arrival numbers in 2024, with projections for 2025 remaining just below last year’s high.

Cruise activity is also on the rise. St. Thomas and St. John are projected to receive 1,487,753 passengers across 414 ship calls in 2025—a 4 percent increase compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, St. Croix is forecasted to welcome 86 cruise ship calls and over 208,000 passengers, further strengthening its place in the territory’s cruise strategy.

In the accommodations sector, both hotels and short-term rentals are delivering solid results. Hotel occupancy has grown by 4.3 percent, and hotel tax collections through April 2025 are 6.7 percent ahead of the same period in 2024, and 41.0 percent above fiscal year 2023. Short-term rentals have also seen an uptick, with current collections running nearly 11 percent ahead of last year. The U.S. Virgin Islands now ranks third in the Caribbean in both average daily rate and revenue per available room—each exceeding the regional average by over 30 percent.

Cultural celebrations continue to draw visitors in large numbers and generate significant media value. The Crucian Christmas Festival and St. Thomas Carnival brought thousands of travelers to the territory and produced over \$5.6 million in combined earned media value. The St. John Celebration, set to take place from June 29 through July 4, is expected to continue that trend by highlighting the island’s vibrant cultural identity.

Tourism marketing efforts have extended the USVI’s reach in key markets. Strategic brand partnerships with major names including the LPGA, Chicago Cubs, New York Jets, Boston Red Sox, Klutch Sports Group, Fenway Sports Management, “Way Up with Angela Yee,” and I Heart Radio have helped elevate the territory’s visibility. The U.S. Virgin Islands was also featured at the 2025 Dreamville Festival and will participate in upcoming events such as the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen, the LPGA FM Championship, Angela Yee Day, and One Musicfest.

Meetings and incentive travel have also contributed to the territory’s strong showing in 2025. During fiscal year 2023–2024, over 17 incentive programs were booked, generating nearly 7,000 room nights, \$2.7 million in room revenue, and more than \$330,000 in tax revenue. According to Cvent, St. Thomas now ranks fifth among Caribbean destinations for incentive travel—surpassing both Puerto Rico and Jamaica.

The U.S. Virgin Islands has also received a wave of accolades that further confirm its status as a premier Caribbean destination. In 2025, Caribbean Journal named the territory both Caribbean Yachting Destination of the Year and Event Destination of the Year. St. Croix was honored as Caribbean Culinary Destination of the Year, while local chef David “Benji” Benjamin earned the title of Caribbean Chef of the Year. On a global scale, Tripadvisor ranked Trunk Bay and Magens Bay among the top ten beaches in the world in its Travelers’ Choice Best of the Best Awards.