

Tourism Department Expands Preferred Partner Program to Boost St. Croix Businesses

The USVI Preferred Partner Program, launched in 2024, is expanding to St. Croix with free workshops, digital coaching, photography, and marketing tools to help local businesses increase visibility, revenue, and global competitiveness in the tourism market

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The V.I. Department of Tourism is preparing to expand its USVI Preferred Partner Program, an initiative launched in 2024 at the Governor's Tourism Summit, to focus specifically on supporting small businesses on St. Croix beginning in the fourth quarter of this year.

The program is designed to strengthen local tourism enterprises by combining destination optimization with digital marketing resources. Through in-person workshops, professional

photography, and one-on-one digital coaching, Crucian entrepreneurs will gain tools to increase visibility, attract more customers, and grow their revenue.

Participants in the Preferred Partner Program receive a suite of services at no cost. These include enhanced listings on VisitUSVI.com, featuring richer profiles, professional photography, and 360° imagery. Businesses are also offered access to digital marketing support through a learning management platform with guidance on Google Business Profile optimization, Tripadvisor strategies, and short-form video content, alongside personalized coaching sessions. In addition, the program provides marketing toolkits that include official Visit USVI decals, promotional materials, and branded merchandise.

Since its introduction, the program has already produced measurable results. Nearly 700 local businesses now have complete listings on VisitUSVI.com and Google, compared to fewer than 200 in July 2024. More than 2,600 professional photos, 360° images, and over 90 miles of Google Street View content have been published, generating more than 47 million views.

“The Preferred Partner Program is more than a marketing tool; it’s an investment in the economic health of our small businesses and the quality of our visitor experience,” said Jennifer Matarangas-King, Commissioner of Tourism. “We’re excited to dedicate this next phase to St. Croix, ensuring our Crucian entrepreneurs have the tools and visibility to compete in a global tourism market.”

According to DOT, the upcoming St. Croix programming aims to expand business participation, produce a Destination Dashboard Report, and increase in-market activations to capture additional photos and 360° content while engaging new businesses. The initiative will also enhance the territory’s tourism database, add visual assets, and provide skills development and networking opportunities with island organizations. Officials say the program will create pathways for international conversion through the Tourism Exchange for participating businesses.

Local businesses interested in joining can learn more and apply by visiting www.VisitUSVI.com/partners.