

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp And Delegation Meet With Air China Officials To Discuss Expansion Of Chinese Tourism To Territory

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Government House announced today that Governor Kenneth Mapp and his delegation have completed two of their first meetings in China today. The trade mission has set out to seek viable opportunities to grow trade relations between the Virgin Islands and China, says the release. Today's meetings included Air China, the opening meeting for the mission, followed by meetings with the United States Ambassador to China Max Baucus.

The governor met with Air China officials to discuss opportunities that are available to expand Chinese tourism to the U.S. Virgin Islands through private partnerships and promotional programs with Chinese partners. According to a recent report from consultancies Fung Business Intelligence Centre and China Luxury Advisors, China's

outbound traveler numbers are still growing and are poised to double by 2020 to 234 million passengers, from more than 100 million in 2014. China produced 109 million outbound tourists in 2015 – with retail spending of US\$229 billion dollars.

Representatives from Air China, which was established in 1988 and transports over 51 million passengers annually, included Vice Chairman Mr. Jia Tiesheng, Managing Director of Marketing Mr. Rever He and Director of Air China Network and Revenue Department Mr. Liu Peng. Talks were held at the Air China Headquarters Building in Beijing, China. Mr. Mapp and Department of Tourism Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty were among the delegation and focused on attributes of the U.S. Virgin Islands that would be appealing to the Air China destination traveler and options for including the Virgin Islands in its U.S. routes. The group also collaborated on identifying the interest of the Chinese traveler and how best they can be made aware of the Virgin Islands as an option when it comes to choosing a vacation destination. Within the Chinese travel market, the Millennials are less price sensitive and seeking more experience-based vacation travel which makes them an interesting fit for the V.I., according to Government House.

The delegations second meeting was with Mr. Baucus, who has long established experience in building trade relations, and was joined by Minister for Commercial Affairs Sarah Kemp, who has been serving at the embassy for the last two years. Deputy Chief Economic Section, Mr. Jay Kimmel and Commercial Officer of International Trade Administration, Jay Biggs also met to discuss expanding Chinese tourism to the US Virgin Islands through private partnerships and promotional programs with Chinese partners along with other economic opportunities.

Meetings will continue through Friday in Beijing with ArchLight and Sinopec. The delegates will then travel to Ningbo and Shanghai for additional meeting and facility tours.

Feature Image: Left to Right: Mr. Peng Air China, Mr. Tiesheng Air China, Governor Kenneth Mapp, Mr. He Air China and Commissioner Doty (Credit: Government House).