

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. Of Tourism Markets Territory In Philadelphia Market

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ST. THOMAS -- The Department of Tourism announced on Thursday that it actively promoted the territory in the Philadelphia market last week with a series of strategic meetings, held with travel industry partners, followed by participation in the annual Philadelphia Travel & Adventure Show at the Pennsylvania Convention Center.

According to the release, during the week, D.O.T. Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty held deskside appointments with representatives from the media, including Metro Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Daily News, to explore coverage opportunities, as well as press group getaways to the territory. D.O.T. also hosted a reception for more than 25 media representatives in downtown Philadelphia to drive awareness of this year's

Centennial commemoration, as well as to promote the series of events and activities planned for the year.

The USVI team met with meetings and event planners in the area to share the destination's value proposition for the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) market, and on Friday evening, participated in the African American Museum in Philadelphia (AAMP) 40th Anniversary Gala, where a prize trip giveaway to The



The USVI team discussing opportunities for

the MICE market with meeting planners last week

During the week, the USVI's sales team held a destination specialist training session for travel agents in the area and interacted with hundreds of consumers at the Philadelphia Travel & Adventure Show at the Pennsylvania Convention Center.

According to the territory's Bureau of Economic Research (BER), stay-over visitor arrivals to the territory in 2016 were up 4.3 percent compared with 2015. St. Croix registered a 6.5 percent increase and St. Thomas/St. John was up by 3.8 percent. For the month of January this year, stay-over arrivals were up by 4.6 percent over the same period last year, with St. Thomas/St. John reporting a 4 percent increase in arrivals, while St. Croix was up by 7.2 percent

"We are encouraged by the momentum we are seeing in the marketplace, but we cannot be complacent," warned Commissioner Nicholson-Doty, who noted that D.O.T. is focused on rolling out a strong marketing program throughout this Centennial year. "Philadelphia continues to be an important gateway and feeder city for the territory, so it's important to maintain our presence in this area to encourage travelers to visit this spring and the rest of the year."

Tourism has a \$1 billion direct impact on the USVI economy, contributing an estimated 30 percent to the territory's Gross Domestic Product. Not only is it a significant contributor to the economy, but because of its expansive influence on related sectors and industries (e.g., retail, dining, arts and entertainment, and other services), its impact is substantially greater than the direct value. Indirect economic impact is estimated at \$1.2 billion, for a total economic impact of \$2.2 billion, D.O.T. said.

Visitor activity supports about 8,000 direct jobs in the territory or approximately 20 percent of total wage and salary employment in four core tourism areas: accommodations, transportation, food and beverage, and other tourism industries.

