

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Norwegian Cruise Line Set To Dock In Frederiksted Saturday Cancels Call, Diverts To St. Thomas, Sen. Rivera-O'Reilly Says

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ST. CROIX -- Cruise ship vendors on St. Croix were preparing for some business on Saturday, the day the Norwegian Dawn, with a capacity of 2,340 passengers and 1,032 crew members, was supposed to dock at the Frederiksted Pier.

But the plans have changed according to Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly, who wrote on her Facebook page that the owners of the ship, after conducting an assessment of St. Thomas and St. Croix, chose the former over the latter for its cruise passengers.

"Cruise ship for tomorrow is cancelled. The Norwegian Cruise line inquired with WICO about berthing space and they have decided to divert to Saint Thomas. Somebody seriously dropped the ball on St. Croix. We are fortunate that at least the cruise ship will be in the territory," [wrote](#) Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly. "It appears that representatives from Disney and Norwegian cruise lines were in the region last week and surveyed the islands. This precipitated their decision. Why you ask? If you haven't toured Frederiksted recently, I encourage you to. Obviously the decision to divert the ship was a result of what they saw which was very little progress. The Department of Tourism and the Virgin Islands Port Authority have a lot to explain."

Monifa Brathwaite, the V.I. Port Authority's public information officer, told The Consortium that she wasn't aware of the cancellation, and would either issue a prepared statement or have David Mapp, V.I.P.A.'s executive director, reach out to The Consortium to comment on the matter. At time of publishing, The Consortium had not heard from Mr. Mapp.

The cancellation of the St. Croix berthing is a worrying sign for future ships scheduled to dock in Frederiksted. The balance of berthing between the islands is already [heavily weighted in St. Thomas's favor](#), with 60 cruise ships scheduled to dock in St. Thomas in December, while only 8 are scheduled for St. Croix in the same month. And the Norwegian Dawn's cancellation brings scheduled cruise ship visits to St. Croix in November down to four, and St. Thomas to 26.

During a release earlier this week, Dept. of Tourism Commissioner, Beverly Nicholson-Doty, hailed the then-scheduled berthing of the Norwegian Dawn as an opportunity for cruise passengers to experience Crucian hospitality.

"St. Croix looks forward to welcoming the passengers and crew of the Norwegian Dawn this weekend, and sharing with them our warm, resilient Crucian spirit," Mrs. Nicholson-Doty said. "We thank the countless Virgin Islanders and relief workers who have been working to restore power, clear roadways, prepare beaches and many of our key attractions so that visitors can experience our special Virgin Islands brand of Caribbean hospitality."

The commissioner had explained that taxis, tour operators and government agencies were working together to establish recommended routes for tours.

"Cruise ship passengers contribute important economic activity to the U.S. Virgin Islands," she said. "The combination of cruise traffic, the recovery and construction economy, and the current reopening of hotels to leisure guests on St. Croix are key components of our recovery."

While the St. Croix berthing cancellation disappointed many -- including vendors who had prepared for the tourists, Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly said there was at least some good news for business owners on the west side of the island. "The good news is that Fredericksted will be energized today. So we need to celebrate with the downtown businesses and keep plugging away," she said.