

The Virgin Islands Consortium

USVI And Royal Caribbean Celebrate Reopening Of Megans Bay

VIC News / **Published On December 08, 2017 11:38 AM /**

Staff **December 08, 2017**



ST. THOMAS -- Speaking at the official reopening and dedication of Megans Bay on St. Thomas, Governor Kenneth Mapp asserted the September hurricanes, which damaged large swaths of the territory, present an opportunity for the destination to create a more vibrant tourism product, according to a release Government House issued Thursday.

"Hurricanes are about devastation, but when you turn that quarter over, hurricanes are about opportunities," Mr. Mapp said. "Here is our opportunity to turn a page and create a more vibrant product, a more vibrant experience for our guests that there's no question that the Virgin Islands ... can be the number one visitor destination in the entire Caribbean."

As part of the cruise company's disaster relief efforts in the Caribbean, Royal Caribbean International partnered with the Department of Tourism, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, the Magens Bay Authority and other government agencies and businesses to restore the world-renowned beach.

The unveiling of Magens Bay was a demonstration of true public-private partnership, Mr. Mapp noted, where people came to the aid of others at a time of great need. "I want to commend all of the people of the Virgin Islands for your resilience and your strength ... thank you, Royal Caribbean, for betting on us, for investing with us, for helping us when we needed help, and for being a very strong partner to the people of the Virgin Islands," the governor said.

Chairman and CEO of Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. Richard D. Fain was impressed with the organization, determination and passion of the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands to recover as quickly as humanly possible.

Describing his team as part of the U.S. Virgin Islands family, Mr. Fain shared that Royal Caribbean was keen to make a contribution to help the Virgin Islands and its people. He reported that tens of thousands of cruise passengers have visited St. Thomas since the storms and Royal Caribbean's visitor satisfaction ratings were now higher than before Hurricanes Irma and Maria came ashore.

Thursday's ceremony was particularly significant, Mr. Fain noted, because it was 47 years and one month to the day that Royal Caribbean's first ship made its first voyage, calling on St. Thomas. "This has been a long and important relationship," Mr. Fain said, adding, "It's very much a partnership."

Mr. Fain thanked the team at Royal Caribbean who took pride in the revitalization of Magens Bay. "I think they would all join me in expressing our admiration for the people here in St. Thomas for undertaking all of the work that's going on and for handling it with such aplomb and with such a commitment to make it better," he said.

The Category 5 hurricanes caused major damage to the beach facilities, including the restrooms and food and beverage concession and gift shop. Winds and storm surge also caused significant beach erosion and impacted trees and plants along the shoreline. Cleanup crews have been working daily since the hurricanes to remove fallen trees and debris, repair buildings, and replant hundreds of native plants and trees. About 530 new trees have been planted, and 470 trees have been pruned.

Managed by the Magens Bay Authority, Magens Bay is the most visited beach on St. Thomas, with approximately 250,000 to 300,000 visitors annually. The beach, which is nearly one mile long, is known for its crystal clear, calm waters, soft sand and gently sloping shoreline. In addition to being a popular tourist attraction, Magens Bay is equally appreciated by locals, who frequent the beach for swimming, watersports, exercising, camping and many other recreational activities.