

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Jetblue To End St. Croix Flights January 2019

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Ernice Gilbert **October 09, 2018**



ST. CROIX -- Jetblue announced today an end to its St. Croix flights effective January 8, 2019, a blow to the big island as it continues to rebound from Hurricane Maria. [In a post](#) on the carrier's website, Jetblue said the decision to cut its St. Croix route was part of its effort to expand to new destinations, while increasing service in the strongest parts of its network and reducing flights in existing markets.

Jetblue's St. Thomas route will not be affected by the changes.

"Despite connecting traffic from the mainland U.S. and via San Juan, JetBlue's 100-seat aircraft has proven to be larger than necessary for this particular market," read a JetBlue memo to the Department of Tourism (D.O.T.). "Additionally, JetBlue customers will still be

able to book flights to and from St. Croix through the airline's codeshare agreements with partner airlines, Cape Air and Seaborne Airlines, who offer up to a half dozen daily flights via San Juan."

In a release issued late Tuesday, D.O.T. Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty expressed disappointment with the airline's decision to exit St. Croix, but added that she understood the airline's reasoning behind the move.

"We are disappointed but we understand the contributing factors that led to JetBlue's decision," Mrs. Nicholson-Doty said. "Jetblue shared that the flights' poor performance extended over a two-year period. They cited total revenue, load factors and better opportunities for utilization of the aircraft in other markets based on their forecasts." The Consortium has learned that the Jetblue St. Croix flights were generally around 50 percent capacity.

D.O.T. said Mrs. Nicholson-Doty was encouraged that Jetblue would continue to sell St. Croix via its codeshare partners, and that the airline is committed to exploring the potential of new nonstop flights from the U.S. mainland to St. Croix for the 2019-2020 winter season.

"Continued dialogue is especially important with the return of newly refreshed rooms to our accommodations landscape as well as the demand for air seats with the increased business activity we are seeing at the Limetree Bay Terminals facility," she said, adding that in spite of the loss of San Juan service, St. Croix winter air capacity continues to be strong from the U.S. mainland.

The news comes during a heated gubernatorial race, and some candidates used the announcement to assail Governor Kenneth Mapp.

"Thanks, gov," wrote gubernatorial candidate Warren Mosler in a post on Facebook as he sought to cast blame on the governor for Jetblue's exit from St. Croix.

Senator Alicia Hansen, who is running as a lieutenant governor candidate with Adlah Donastorg, was more pointed with her chiding. "The administration is sleeping at the economical wheel of St. Croix with no regard for its welfare," she lambasted in a press release. "Residents are now going to face higher ticket prices due to the lack of competition and the inefficiency of the current administration. I am calling on the governor to be proactive in the best interest of the people of the Virgin Islands."