

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. of Tourism Promoting Territory's Festivals And Carnival As Unique Offerings All Summer

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The Department of Tourism has launched a vigorous summer campaign to market the islands' unique carnival and festivals, the department said in a release issued Friday.

Following the passage of Legislative Act 8153, D.O.T. Commissioner Joseph Boschulte now has the department actively promoting and managing festival tourism with a busy summer schedule in place to promote the rich heritage of St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas, according to the release.

The U.S. Virgin Islands celebrates three major events: Crucian Christmas Festival (St. Croix), Virgin Islands Carnival (St. Thomas) and the St. John Festival. Each event

features beauty pageants, music concerts, sporting events and food fairs, all displaying the rich history and cultural heritage of the territory.

This weekend, the department, represented by Assistant Commissioner Elizabeth Hansen Watley, is at the Charleston Carifest, a Carnival celebration in honor of Caribbean American Heritage Month, while Luana Wheatley, director of Film, leads the department's team at Caribbean305 in Miami, South Florida's premier Caribbean cuisine and culture celebration.

In Charleston, South Carolina the festival has a Virgin Islands theme, featuring Virgin Islands author and filmmaker Peter Bailey, who is Grand Marshal of the parade. Bailey screened his popular documentary "The Unbreakable Virgin Islanders" at a symposium ahead of the Carnival celebration to an engaged audience at the College of Charleston on Thursday evening.

At Caribbean305 in Miami, talented Mocko Jumbie dancers from the territory as well as four chefs, including author and champion boxer Julius Jackson, will display the culinary excellence of the islands. The culinary contingent also includes chefs Cory Magras and Madga Moolenaar as well as student chef Micaya Tuitt.

"While we work with the Office of Management and Budget to secure funding for the Division of Festivals and the Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute within the Department of Tourism, we are exploring every way we can to let travelers know about the outstanding cultural offerings of our islands," said. Mr. Boschulte, who is hopeful that the management of the territory's festivals will begin in earnest with the 2019-2020 edition of the Crucian Christmas Festival, which kicks off in December on St. Croix. Next month, the department will once again host travel journalists and a film crew to cover and promote the 65th anniversary of St. John Festival with the goal of securing similar coverage that was generated for Virgin Islands Carnival on St. Thomas, and to promote future celebrations in the territory.

D.O.T. said the territory will also have a strong cultural contingent at the National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators and Developers (NABHOOD) African American Hotel Ownership and Investment Summit and Trade Show, the International Multicultural and Heritage Tourism Summit and Trade Show, and the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) Convention in Miami; and in New York for the annual Caribbean Cultural Fest and for the West Indian American Day Labor Day Carnival.

Earlier this month, the USVI was also center-stage at the Central Alabama Caribbean American Organization's Caribbean Food and Music Festival in Alabama. Event patrons got a taste of VI hospitality in DeBardeleben Park, in Bessemer.