

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Boschulte Update About Territory's Tourism Performance And Trajectory; Will Propose Marketing St. Croix As Its Own Brand During Budget Hearing

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The Department of Tourism will take advantage of trends which confirm the territory as a top vacation destination for American travelers, D.O.T. said Wednesday.

Speaking ahead of the department's Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Hearing presentation on Thursday, D.O.T. Commissioner Joseph Boschulte highlighted a recent study released by MMGY Global called the "Portrait of American Travelers 2019-2020", which lists Caribbean destinations as a top choice for American travelers.

The Caribbean was the second to Europe as the most popular region for American travelers, and the U.S. Virgin Islands second to the Bahamas in terms of popularity, with 25 percent of those surveyed expressing interest in visiting the territory within the next two years.

"As more travelers from the mainland look at visiting the U.S. Virgin Islands, this is very good news for our people and our economy," said Commissioner Boschulte, whose testimony to the 33rd Legislature will include plans the destination is taking to use tourism to elevate the quality of life of Virgin Islanders.

During today's budget presentation, the commissioner will highlight the marketing and sales accomplishments of the tourism department team, and how their work has instilled confidence in both consumers and travel professionals.

"We have met with the legacy and low-cost carriers serving our districts and we have been successful in growing airlift, opening up access to the Territory from cities such as Dallas, Houston and Chicago. We continue to keep the lines of communication open with these important partners as we stabilize and grow the economy," reads Mr. Boschulte's testimony reads.

According to D.O.T., while the demand for the destination is strong, the commissioner explained the importance of designing tactics for ensuring strong load factors on new routes which include the execution of nimble, yet strong public relations and advertising campaigns focused on data and analytics, "where we geo-target to areas and consumers most [inclined] to visit the USVI."

He reiterated that the department will spend its resources creatively in local and regional stateside markets, "where we can realize a much stronger bang for the buck."

The commissioner will propose marketing St. Croix as its own brand, while solidifying the identities of St. Thomas and St. John under the overarching USVI brand.

In addition to new flights, the Department of Tourism will highlight its accomplishments in the cruise sector, the sharing economy, voluntourism, marketing, film development, and customer service.

Plans for the upcoming Fiscal Year include aggressive marketing and business development planning to coincide with the reopening of additional hotel rooms; promoting sports tourism, enterprise development, culinary tourism, the dive sector; and launching the Division of Festivals and Cultural Heritage Institute.

"Notwithstanding the obvious challenges, Governor Albert Bryan Jr., his office, and the Department of Tourism are committed to engaging key stakeholders to aggressively refocus our activities and execute effective strategies to improve the tourism product and attract additional investment," the commissioner's testimony reads.