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# The Ritz-Carlton Reopens Bigger and Brighter, After a Two-Year Storm Recovery Project

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## Ritz-Carlton St. Thomas, USVI

ST. THOMAS — The Ritz-Carlton St. Thomas has officially reopened to visitors, after two years of storm renovations and upgrades to the landmark hotel and resort. In what the property is calling a “new era of island-inspired elegance,” the resort has been redesigned and updated, with renovations the owners, Marriott International, has tagged at \$100 million.

The new 180-room resort on the east end of St. Thomas is the first of the island’s luxury hotels to reopen since Hurricanes Irma and Maria destroyed much of the territory’s crucial hotel stock in 2017.

With the addition of the new rooms, the Virgin Islands has reached close to a 50 percent increase in stay-over arrivals this year versus 2018, a fairly clear signal that tourism in the territory is on a

strong rebound, according to the travel publication *Travel Agent Central*.

Virgin Islands Bureau of Economic Research stats show the territory welcomed 347,725 stay over arrivals on St. Thomas this year, a 70 percent increase over 2018, while St. Croix has had an increase of 5.2 percent, with 117,203 arrivals from January to August this year.

Room availability will rise in the coming months. Ritz-Carlton's parent company Marriott will be reopening its Frenchman's Reef resort, along with an adjacent new resort called Noni Beach. This latest property will open under Marriott's Autograph Collection brand; the two properties' openings will mean a combined investment of \$200 million, the company said.

According to Marriott International, the Ritz has a transformed infinity pool; a kids' pool; a re-imagined club lounge and four dining concepts, from a Sicilian eatery called Alloro to the U.S. Virgin Islands-inspired Coconut Cove, all with a focus on farm-to-table dining and locally-sourced ingredients.

With amenities like the brand's signature Ritz Kids programming, tennis courts and a newly-added 55-foot catamaran for private excursions, there is a wealth of daily activities, from fitness classes and resort garden tours to rum tastings and complimentary use of snorkel gear.

V.I. tourism officials say the reopening of the Ritz-Carlton is a welcome return of the territory's luxury brand accommodations.

With the planned opening of Frenchman's Reef & Morning Star Marriott Beach Resort and Noni Beach, a St. Thomas Resort (which will be a member of Marriott's Autograph Collection), along with Renaissance St. Croix Carambola Beach Resort & Spa and Divi Carina Bay on St. Croix in 2020, Dept. of Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte said the territory is building on the upswing of travelers this year.

Mr. Boschulte has also reported good news for airlift to the territory this winter season, with air capacity to St. Croix ahead of 2017 pre-storm levels, while seat capacity to St. Thomas is projected to approach 90 percent of pre-storm levels.