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St. Croix Carnival Happening in All its Glory Come December: Jouvert, Parades, Village and More; Tourism Securing Artists Early

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Jouvert Morning during the 2018-2019 Carnival Season on St. Croix. By. REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRAPHY FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS CONSORTIUM

The Crucian Christmas Festival (St. Croix carnival) was cancelled in 2020, a decision forced by the Covid-19 pandemic that ravaged the world. In late 2021 and early 2022 — with Covid-19 first-dose vaccinations in the U.S. Virgin Islands [crossing the 50 percent mark](#), and herd immunity expected in the coming months as more people become inoculated either through vaccination or previous infection — the V.I. Dept. of Tourism and its Division of Festivals are planning a full-blown carnival event featuring all the spectacle that participants have come to expect: Jouvert Morning, Children's and Adults' Parades, Village and more.

So said Dept. of Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte during an interview with the Consortium Tuesday evening. The commissioner, speaking cautiously about the pandemic while praising the Bryan administration's efforts against the virulent disease, said what is currently being planned is a Crucian Christmas Festival event in all its glory.

"We're planning for a full-blown carnival activity assuming that the virus continues to be relatively under control and the governor continues to relax some of the protocols put in place," Mr. Boschulte said. The commissioner referenced the governor's [latest action](#) to ease restrictions for bars, nightclubs and restaurants as "another positive sign that we're moving in the right direction."

The Dept. of Tourism is promoting its ["Three Reasons to Fete"](#) marketing plan as it gets ready to recommence the territory's carnival and festival events, with the St. Crucian Christmas Festival kicking off the action. St. John will get a vaccinated fete this year in July [similar to St. Thomas's](#), but the true restart of carnival begins with St. Croix in December.



"Right now we're pushing Dec. 31, 2021 to January 5th, 2022 as the highlight week of the Crucian Festival, and then of course for St. Thomas's 70th, the highlight week is April 23rd-30th, 2022 and for the St. John celebration, the highlight week is June 26th to July 4th, 2022," Mr. Boschulte said.

The commissioner said Shamari Haynes, assistant director of the Division of Festivals who represents St. Croix, and Ian Turnbull, the division's director, have been holding conversations on plans to start organizing committees for the upcoming events, and also making sure entertainers are booked.

"Expectations are that the artists in the region will be traveling again by that point as well, so we're definitely having conversations with artists about booking dates and getting that moving," Mr. Boschulte said. He said D.O.T. would revisit contracts with artists that were already signed for the 2020 V.I. Carnival (St. Thomas Carnival), as the department aggressively pursues talent for the upcoming season.

Throughout the interview, Mr. Boschulte stressed that the Covid-19 pandemic remains top-of-mind as D.O.T. launches the "Three Ways to Fete" campaign beginning with St. Croix. "The pandemic has been a very difficult virus. We know it, we all lived it for the past year plus. The hope is we continue to do what we need to do," the commissioner said. "If I had one hope relative to Covid for the USVI is that we continue to listen to the medical advice, and if you feel comfortable to take the vaccine, please do it, and if you don't, continue to follow the protocols," he said.

Mr. Boschulte said D.O.T. does not simply want to host carnival, but the plan is to do it like "we've known it," he said, adding that while the department and its festivals division could put together an event with Covid-induced limitations, "we want to have it where there are thousands of people enjoying themselves and moving around. Thousands of people on the parade route, thousands of people in the Village — so that's what the hope is."



In the coming months, D.O.T. will launch an aggressive marketing campaign aimed at compelling Virgin Islanders on the mainland to come home for the events, while attracting mainland-born Americans to partake in the activities. The territory already has some of the strictest Covid-19 travel rules in place, and has shown its [willingness to arrest individuals](#) who flout those rules.

The plan is to have one of the most memorable carnival seasons in V.I. history, Mr. Boschulte indicated. "We want to have it for us, but we also want our people who are away to come in and experience it too. So a big part of it too is to make sure that everybody feels comfortable traveling and coming to see their friends and family, and it's like when we did the first carnival under Tourism," he said.

"Everybody has been so pent up not being able to fete that when we do get a chance to do it, everybody's going to be excited," the commissioner stated.

The plans for full-blown carnival activities on St. Croix point to a broader march toward normalcy not only in the U.S. Virgin Islands, but on the mainland as well. On Tuesday, Governor Bryan [signed an executive order](#) further easing restrictions for bars, restaurants and nightclubs, even as he extended the eviction ban through July 30. On Monday, Mr. Bryan said [schools are set to reopen](#) to full in-person learning in August, and in March, he too, [foresaw carnival activities on St. Croix](#) this year.

Mr. Boschulte has been spearheading a resurgent Tourism economy as U.S. tourists — many with stimulus dollars to spend and eager to get out — descend on the U.S. Virgin Islands, completely booking out hotels and packing restaurants. Over the weekend, the department said it has [big plans](#) to strengthen its position as a leading Caribbean destination for marine tourism.

Speaking after the St. Thomas Yacht Club Invitational Regatta two weeks ago, Mr. Boschulte said the department's focus on welcoming mariners throughout the Covid-19 pandemic has returned strong dividends for the destination.

"Despite numerous pandemic-related challenges, we have leveraged the talent and creativity of our team to sharpen our focus on our incredible marine and charter yacht industry," said Mr. Boschulte, who believes the U.S. Virgin Islands will "take full advantage of our natural resources and assets to deliver world-class experiences for visitors arriving on our shores."