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## In Texas, Bryan and Boschulte Seek to Strengthen Territory's Ties With American Airlines

Tourism / **Published On November 16, 2021 06:37 AM /**

Staff Consortium **November 16, 2021**

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**From left: AA's Lindsey Hanbidge, Henning Greiser, Michael Eng and Brandon Norman; Gov. Albert Bryan, Joseph Boschulte and Special Asst. to Gov. Dave E. Davis; and AA's Haley Finkenbinder and Liz Plunkett. By. V.I. DEPT. OF TOURISM**

After a remarkable tourism performance over the past 12 months, the U.S. Virgin Islands is getting back to basics and strengthening its relationship with its airline partners, the V.I. Dept. of Tourism announced this week.

During a visit to American Airlines' newly minted headquarters in Dallas last week, Governor Albert Bryan thanked the carrier for its strong commitment to the territory during the Covid pandemic, which D.O.T. said helped the destination register robust arrivals throughout the year.

Airports in both St. Thomas and St. Croix were hubs of activity as the airlines honored what D.O.T. said was the governor's clear approach to managing the pandemic by keeping the territory's airports open and protecting lives and livelihoods through smart public health safety protocols.

Over the summer, American served St. Thomas with daily flights from New York and Philadelphia, twice daily flights from Dallas, and thrice daily service from Charlotte and Miami. On Croix, Charlotte flights arrived daily, while Miami service operated twice a day.

"Traditional seasonality was disrupted in the U.S. Virgin Islands," said Governor Bryan, who highlighted that summer air arrivals rivaled and surpassed traditional winter statistics.



USVI Commissioner of Tourism Joseph Boschulte (right) speaks with WFAA (ABC 8) morning anchor Cleo Greene on Sunday. (Credit: V.I. Dept. of Tourism)

According to the release, the governor underscored the territory's business-minded approach to route development, the work currently taking place to improve the islands' infrastructure – including enhancements to airports, downtown and waterfront areas – and the rebuilding of hotels and resorts that were impacted by the 2017 hurricanes.

“We are undergoing a transformation for the better, and intend to not only lead the region across multiple tourism indicators, but also to work with our neighbors to help position the entire Caribbean as a first class location for vacationers and business travelers,” Mr. Bryan said.

D.O.T. Commissioner Joseph Boschulte, who also attended the meeting, said the Department of Tourism had begun amplifying its messaging in the marketplace. “As the world opens up, the availability of aircraft has become a challenge for small states and territories such as ours, so it is critically important to remain visible and strengthen our relationships across the sector,” he explained.



**USVI Governor Albert Bryan Jr. (right) with NBC 5's Vince Sims in Dallas last week. (Credit: V.I. Dept. of Tourism)**

He added that the territory will continue to communicate its value proposition and ensure that travelers have a seamless travel experience through its custom-built Travel Screening Portal. "Ease of access will continue to be our mantra as we position the Territory and prepare for upcoming challenges and opportunities in travel and tourism," Mr. Boschulte said, according to the release.

During their visit to Dallas, the governor interviewed with two-time Emmy award-winning journalist Vince Sims of NBC 5, while Mr. Boschulte appeared on ABC's daybreak show anchored by Cleo Greene, who got her first gig as a feature reporter on the island of St. Croix.

The USVI commissioner of Tourism also met with representatives from Southwest Airlines to explore possibilities for new service into the territory, according to the release.

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