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# USVI Had Banner Year in 2021, D.O.T. Says, From Accolades in Respected Publications to Impressive Air Arrival Numbers

Tourism / **Published On January 27, 2022 05:44 AM /**

Staff Consortium **January 27, 2022**

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**Aerial shot of Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas. By. GETTY IMAGES**

The V.I. Dept. of Tourism on Wednesday reported what it says was an "impressive tourism success in 2021," beating the territory's previous performances in 2020 and 2019.

The V.I. Bureau of Economic Research reported 738,040 air arrivals for the period January to November 2021, a 102.5 percent increase over the similar period in 2020 and close to 30 percent from 2019, according to D.O.T. The high increase over 2020 was due to lockdowns that affected almost every destination as the Covid-19 pandemic took hold.

Dept. of Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte said he looked forward to receiving the final statistics for 2021 since December was a particularly impressive month for the territory, based on data gleaned from its Travel Screening Portal.

The portal registered more than one million submissions last year, and over 116,000 in December, Mr. Boschulte said, crediting the pre-arrivals screening tool as critical in protecting not only the lives of visitors and residents, but also the livelihoods of all Virgin Islanders.

Mr. Boschulte thanked Governor Bryan for his leadership throughout the pandemic, along with his cabinet colleagues, including Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion.

“We must also give thanks to the dedicated team at the Department of Tourism who played a key role in our chalking up numerous accolades throughout the year,” the tourism commissioner said.

The territory made Bloomberg Businessweek’s prestigious list of the top places in the world to go in 2022, while Caribbean Journal, an online tourism media outlet, named the USVI as the Most Innovative Destination of the Year and Yachting Destination of the Year, no doubt due to the inventiveness of the Territory’s approach to tourism development as well as the successful transformation of the marine sector, which flourished over the past two years, according to the release.

ForwardKeys, a respected data authority, adjudged the USVI as the Most Resilient Caribbean Destination for 2022 Travel, while STR data has consistently ranked the USVI among the leaders across the region in hotel occupancy percentages and average daily revenue.

Mr. Boschulte thanked the private sector for its commitment to promoting the destination and delivering excellent service as well as its commitment to public health safety, D.O.T. said.

The commissioner further reported that the Department of Tourism generated close to \$1.5 billion dollars in earned media coverage in 2021, highlights of which included the December cover story in United Hemispheres magazine as well as coverage in outlets such as ABC Dallas, Bloomberg, Caribbean Journal, CBS Miami, CNN, Miami Herald, MSN, NBC Dallas, New York Daily News, The New York Times, Skift, Thrillist, Travel + Leisure, Travel Pulse, Travel Weekly and USA TODAY.

According to the release, the territory continues to report strong airlift, and will aim to solidify its ties with airline partners at the upcoming Routes Americas route development conference in San Antonio, Texas.

Investment interest in the territory is strong, D.O.T. added, with the opening of Lovango Resort & Beach Club on Lovango Cay (off St. John and St. Thomas) and Concordia Eco-Resort on St. John attracting much attention. Anticipation is also building as the countdown to the 2022 scheduled reopening of the iconic Frenchman’s Reef Marriott on St. Thomas has begun, while next month’s reopening of Divi Carina Bay Beach Resort as an adults-only all inclusive on St. Croix will boost interest in “The Big Island”.

The commissioner pointed out that the USVI continues to appeal to multiple niche markets from romance and honeymoons to marine and affinity groups. “Our attendance at trade shows across the nation is paying dividends,” he said, announcing that there will be more training opportunities for travel agents and tour operators in the months ahead.