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U.S. Virgin Islands Tops All Caribbean Destinations in Third Quarter With Highest Post-Pandemic Visitor Growth

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**Delta Airlines at the Cyril E. King Airport on Wed. April 28, 2022. By. ERNICE GILBERT/
V.I. CONSORTIUM**

Data released during the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association's Marketplace event held Oct. 3-5 in San Juan, Puerto Rico this year, show the U.S. Virgin Islands having the highest level of post-Covid tourism recovery in the entire Caribbean.

Nicola Madden-Greig, president of CHTA, released figures during the event's opening on Oct. 3 reflecting the strong recovery Caribbean destinations have been experiencing. The bounce-back has been so strong that in many destinations, the growth is exceeding pre-pandemic arrivals. In the

U.S. Virgin Islands, the post-pandemic tourism growth has been the strongest, representing a 36 percent increase in the third quarter of 2022 compared to the same period in 2019.

Tourism Commissioner Boschulte told the Consortium Saturday that the growth is owing to territory's precision in managing the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to a flood of not only returning visitors, but new arrivals who continue to visit the territory to this day. This along with incessant marketing strategies have caused the USVI's post-pandemic tourism growth to eclipse its Caribbean competitors.

"It's a testament to the overall strategy we had to manage the pandemic by working with the private sector and Governor Bryan to make sure that we had the necessary connections in place, and at the same time cautiously open up our economy," Mr. Boschulte said. "Now you're seeing the results. We did really well, we're number one again this year in terms of percentage increases for the third quarter. We're number two in the fourth quarter behind the Dominican Republic, but that's still very, very strong."

Ms. Madden-Greig said that between June and August 2022, 2 percent more travelers visited the Caribbean destinations than in the same period of 2019. "A truly amazing figure considering that the general figure for the Americas has been -21%," remarked travel website Travel Latam, an online publication that includes daily updated information for professionals of the travel and tourism industry.

The most resilient destinations in the third quarter were:

- U.S. Virgin Islands +%36
- Saint Marteen +16%
- Martinique +13%
- Turks & Caicos Islands +11%
- Guadeloupe +9%
- Curaçao +6
- Dominican Republic +1%
- Puerto Rico +1%

The autumn season is also expected to bring increased visitors from October to December, with an increase of 16 percent in arrivals over the same period in 2019 expected. This increase is expected to lead tourism growth forecasts worldwide.

Forecasts by destinations for Q4 2022 versus Q4 2019

- Dominican Republic +40%
- U.S. Virgin Islands +33%
- Bonaire +30%
- Martinique +26%
- Guadeloupe +22%
- Turks and Caicos Islands +21%
- Curaçao +15%
- Bahamas +15 %
- Jamaica +8%
- Puerto Rico +8%

Helping boost increased visits is the removal of Covid-19 restrictions by most destinations for international visitors.

Caribbean destinations without restrictions

- U.S. Virgin Islands
- Aruba
- Antigua & Barbuda
- Barbados
- Bahamas
- Belize
- Bonaire
- British Virgin Islands
- Cayman Islands
- Curaçao
- Dominican Republic
- Grenada
- Guadeloupe
- Martinique
- Montserrat
- Puerto Rico
- St. Barthelemy
- St. Kitts & Nevis
- St Lucia
- St. Maarten
- St. Martin
- St. Vincent & Grenadines
- Suriname
- Trinidad & Tobago

The CHTA study also revealed that the average number of visitors for each reservation is 3 passengers, who stay about 10 days equal to 2019 levels and delivery times are 77 days, figures that equal 2019 levels, Travel Latam said.

Relative to luxury tourism, Curaçao saw the largest percentage point increase of 120 percent, a jump credited to the opening of the new Sandals resort in the Dutch Caribbean island in July. Other notable increases in the luxury tourism segment include Bonaire with 110 percent increase, followed by Guadeloupe with 92 percent, Martinique with 84 percent, Dominican Republic with 83 percent, Turks and Caicos Islands with 56 percent, Saint Maarten with 49 percent, Jamaica with 36 percent, Grenada with 30 percent, and Aruba with a 28 percent growth.