GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

# STATEMENT

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# Highest numbers since 2016 With Over One Million Visitors In 2024 January 14, 2025

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Premier of the Virgin Islands, Honourable Dr. Natalio Wheatley, has announced that the Virgin Islands tourism sector achieved another  milestone in 2024, with the welcoming over one million visitors to the Territory.

Premier Wheatley said the  increase was first achieved in 2016 and that 2024 marked the second time the Territory has achieved this milestone.

 “This marks an all-time high since Hurricane Irma and Maria. This achievement underscores the Virgin Islands’ position as a premier destination in the Caribbean,” he stated.

According to the Central Statistics Office, total tourist arrivals surged to 1,092,139 in 2024, a 9.8% increase compared to 994,896 in 2023. This performance the unit said reflected growth across all visitor categories:

- Cruise Ship Visitors amounted for 768,293 in 2024 compared to 719,519 in 2023, a 6.8% increase.
- Overnight Visitors: 305,876 in 2024 compared to 262,080 in 2023, a  16.7% increase.
- Day Trippers: 17,970 in 2024 compared to 13,297 in 2023, a 35.1% increase.

The Premier who also holds the ministerial portfolio of Tourism said welcoming over one million visitors this year is a monumental achievement for the Virgin Islands. “It is a testament to our enduring appeal, the resilience of our tourism sector, and the hard work of everyone who contributes to making these islands a world-class destination," he said.

He added "These impressive results highlight the diversity of our tourism offerings and reflect our commitment to creating exceptional experiences for all types of visitors. As we look to the future, we are dedicated to building on this momentum and ensuring that our growth benefits both our visitors and the people of the Virgin Islands."

Premier Wheatley stated that the Virgin Islands’ tourism performance was bolstered by sustained growth in the first half of 2024 as total tourist arrivals for the first six months reached 682,773, a 17.2% increase compared to 582,467 in 2023. He said highlights from the first quarter include a 30.3% increase in arrivals, driven by a 31.6% rise in cruise passengers, a 25.2% increase in overnight visitors, and a 34.8% surge in day trippers.

“This growth in the second quarter marks a shift towards a more balanced visitor profile, with substantial increases among day trippers and overnight visitors,” the Premier said adding that overnight arrivals, in particular, demonstrated a 13.4% year-on-year rise, while day trippers continued their strong trajectory with a 39.3% increase.

The Government of the Virgin Islands remains committed to fostering sustainable tourism practices and enhancing infrastructure to accommodate the growing number of visitors. Efforts to preserve the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the islands remain a top priority as the Virgin Islands continues to position itself as a leader in the global tourism landscape.

This commitment will be further highlighted at the inaugural Tourism Summit, scheduled for this week, where key stakeholders will come together to shape the future of the sector. By prioritising tourism as one of the pillars of the economy, the Government reaffirms its dedication to driving innovation, sustainability, and growth in this vital industry.