

28 August 2026

Junior Minister Advances Virgin Islands Tourism at Regional Showcase

Junior Minister for Tourism and Culture Honourable Luce Hodge-Smith has reaffirmed the Government's commitment to strengthening The Virgin Islands' presence in key tourism markets following her participation in the 2026 American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) Caribbean Showcase.

The event was held from 22-25 August at the St. Kitts Marriott Resort and brought together more than 100 travel advisors from the United States, Caribbean tourism officials, destination representatives, suppliers and leading travel brands for educational sessions, business meetings, networking and destination experiences.

Honourable Hodge-Smith participated in the General Session alongside regional tourism leaders, including St. Kitts and Nevis Minister for Tourism Honourable Marsha Henderson; Premier of Nevis Honourable Mark Brantley; St. Vincent and the Grenadines Minister for Tourism and Maritime Affairs Honourable Dr. Kishore Shallow; and Turks and Caicos Islands Minister for Tourism Honourable Zhavargo Jolly.

The session, hosted by ASTA President and Chief Executive Officer Mr. Zane Kerby, featured destination presentations and industry discussions on emerging travel trends, traveller expectations and opportunities for the continued growth of Caribbean tourism.

Honourable Hodge-Smith said participation in the showcase provided an important opportunity to engage directly with the travel professionals who influence where their clients visit.

"The ASTA Caribbean Showcase provided a valuable opportunity for us to observe firsthand how destinations are using the organisation's extensive network to connect directly with travel advisors and promote their tourism offerings. We saw how destinations such as St. Kitts and Nevis were able to present their product, participate in the trade show and engage with travel professionals who influence where their clients travel. What was also very clear is that today's traveller is increasingly looking for more than the traditional sun, sea and sand experience. Cultural authenticity, immersive experiences and meaningful engagement with local communities are becoming powerful drivers of travel decisions. This presents a significant opportunity for The Virgin Islands, given the richness of our culture, heritage, people, natural environment and unique island experiences."

The Jr. Minister went on to say that her participation was also an opportunity to better understand ASTA, the reach of its network and how greater engagement with the organisation could help position The Virgin Islands more effectively, connect with travel advisors in key source markets and showcase the authentic, immersive experiences that distinguish our destination.

Discussions at the showcase highlighted growing demand for personalised and culturally authentic travel experiences, along with wellness, luxury and meaningful engagement with local communities. These trends present opportunities for The Virgin Islands to showcase its distinctive culture, natural environment, marine offerings and diverse visitor experiences beyond the traditional sun, sea and sand product.

Honourable Hodge-Smith said continued engagement with ASTA and its network could support closer collaboration with advisors in important source markets and create new opportunities to promote the Territory directly to travellers seeking authentic Caribbean experiences.

Participation in the showcase forms part of the Government's broader efforts to grow and diversify the tourism industry, strengthen the Territory's competitiveness and develop strategic partnerships capable of driving sustainable visitation and economic opportunities.

The ASTA Caribbean Showcase included general and educational sessions, marketplace meetings between advisors and suppliers, networking activities and destination experiences in St. Kitts and Nevis.

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About:

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sustainable Development is responsible for advancing the Territory's tourism sector, preserving and promoting cultural heritage, and implementing policies that support sustainable growth and environmental stewardship.