

VIP FAM Tour

Two thousand twenty-three began with the ongoing spirit of collaboration between the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority (VIEDA) to promote economic development opportunities in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In mid-January 2023, DOT and the VIEDA promoted economic development, trade and the hospitality industry on St. Croix to an eight-member delegation of U.S. Chamber of Commerce representatives. This delegation was led by Mauricio Patino, CITP, DOT's Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions (MICE) contracted agent. Mr. Patino is also the owner of Advanced Hotel & Hospitality Resources LLC.

Partnering with executives from the national Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, the Chamber of Commerce of the Greater Atlanta area, several travel and group travel professionals, the DOT hosted members of the delegation during a familiarization tour (FAM) allowing the group to experience first-hand the investment opportunities that exist on St. Croix.

The group also met with VIEDA's CEO Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., Executive Assistant Celina D. Morris and VIEDA Business Ambassador Yolanda Bryan. Some members of the delegation are interested in operating a health and wellness hotel while other members expressed interest in other business investment opportunities. The group also participated in a walk-though of Government House.

The goal of FAM was to market travel, hospitality & economic opportunities on St. Croix to U.S. Chamber of Commerce Executives to make St. Croix the hub for trade and travel in the Caribbean.

In addition to hosting meetings with members of the delegation, the VIEDA sponsored a dinner at the Galleon Restaurant on St. Croix. This dinner was attended by VIEDA's Chairman Kevin Rodriquez, CEO Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., Board Vice Chair Gary Molloy, and Board member Positive Nelson.

In addition to Mr. Patino, members of the delegation included the following individuals:

1. Carolyn E. Howell, president and CEO of Event USA

2. Nadine Smith-Garrett, Legal Administrative Assistant, Jones Day, Washington DC

3. Amber Batchelor, president and CEO of the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce in Southwest Georgia, CEO and Managing Partner of her boutique consulting firm Batchelor & Bradley Insights Group, national Board Chair of Black Executive and Student Program, and event architect and content curator of The Collective: A Women's Retreat;

4. Andres Hayes, president & CEO of AH Consulting, LLC

5. Zelda Lott, senior VIP Global Travel Consultant

6. Barbara J. Brown, Ph.D., founder and Owner of Capitol Hill Consortium for Counseling & Consultation, LLC (CCCC LLC)

7. Jess Sinclair, founder and CEO of J. Nicole Sinclair LLC

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