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Royal Caribbean Announces Cruise Call Dates for USVI During Community Business Forum

Projects Approximately 213,000 Guests Passengers
And $40 Million in Revenue for the USVI by the End of 2021

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – During the fourth USVI Community Business Forum held virtually on Wednesday, Royal Caribbean Group executives announced solid plans to safely return to the U.S. Virgin Islands beginning on July 6th of this year and projected some 213,000 guests will visit by the end of 2021, generating millions in revenues for the territory's small businesses.

The fourth forum was co-sponsored by the Office of the Governor and the Royal Caribbean Group. Governor Albert Bryan Jr., who opened the forum, said the USVI government had been working with the cruise line for several months in anticipation of their return to the territory.

"They have been exemplary in their commitment to the Virgin Islands and to the Caribbean as a whole," Governor Bryan said. "Looking forward to safe cruising coming back and entering our shores, not only in St. Thomas but also in St. Croix. We long for those passengers who we haven't seen for a year and Royal Caribbean has done the work in terms of preparing their vessels and their tourism products to enter back to our shores."

According to Jayne Halcomb, Director of Destination Development – the Caribbean and the Americas, for Royal Caribbean Group, the following calls are planned for the territory over the next several weeks:

- July 6th, Celebrity Edge, St. Thomas.
- July 29th, Allure of the Seas, St. Thomas.
- August 18th, Celebrity Equinox, St. Croix.
- September 28th, Explorer, St. Croix.

"These ships will be arriving with approximately 30 percent guest capacity because of course we want to start out more conservative to make sure we're doing in a safe way," Ms. Halcomb said. "But as we evolve, and as we learn, as this process unfolds, we expect that to grow."

Ms. Halcomb stated that with 15 to 20 ships cruising the eastern Caribbean this year and with the USVI holding steady as the most frequented port, the territory is poised to see approximately 213,000 cruise ship passengers – 48,000 for St. Croix and 165,000 for St. Thomas – generating an estimated $40 million in revenues, based on a Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association study indicating cruise passenger spends an average of $165 each per visit to the USVI.

Ms. Halcomb, making her third presentation in the USVI Community Business Forum series, reiterated Royal Caribbean's commitment for two-port visits and revealed new plans to stay in port longer, between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m., depending on the season.

During the forum, Royal Caribbean also described its COVID-19 protocols, which requires passengers who have not been vaccinated to provide a negative PCR test five days before arriving at the terminal, to be tested again once in the terminal, and then again five days into the cruise.

"When it comes to the Royal Caribbean brand, because we have so many children that are not eligible for the vaccine, we will actually fall below the 95 percent rate but based on the information we have, we can see already that 90 percent of our guests will be sailing with a vaccination, so we are not far from that 95 percent rate," Ms. Halcomb said.

With the loosening of COVID-19 restrictions by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Royal Caribbean is also working closely with the USVI government to remove limitations on passengers moving freely about the islands.

"This means all aspects of the local community can be engaged just like it was pre-COVID and not limited to just guests who decide to purchase a shore excursion through the cruise line," said Elisa Shen, Associate Vice President of Onboard Revenue & Hotel Operations for Royal Caribbean. "This really is, I think, quite a big deal."

Other presenters included the VI Department of Health which provided more details on its "Healthy" certification program to incentivize businesses to be ready for cruise passengers.

The Office of the Governor's Territorial ADA Coordinator, Julien Henley, also announced plans to launch a "Barrier-Free" webpage on the VI Department of Tourism's website to inform customers about businesses that are accessible in the Virgin Islands.

The USVI Community Business Forum series is an initiative of the Office of the Governor that encourages businesses to adapt and innovate in the new COVID economy. For more information about the forum visit www.vi.gov/cbf.

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