# U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATE March 18, 2020







The safety of residents and visitors to the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) is our priority as we work together to minimize the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The Department of Tourism is using real-time information to make the decisions necessary to protect our Territory and visitors and will share information as it becomes available at www.usviupdate.com.

The U.S. Virgin Islands remains open for travelers. The Department of Tourism is exercising local policy, protocol, preventative and mitigation measures to contain the spread of the virus.

At this time, the USVI is treating two confirmed cases of COVID-19, with a travel history from locations where transmission of cases of COVID-19 has been confirmed.

The Department's efforts are part of a coordinated approach with the Office of the Governor, the Department of Health, the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency and other local agencies. In addition, the Department is adhering to all guidance from federal agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as the White House Coronavirus Task Force, World Health Organization, the Caribbean Public Health Agency and the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association.

The Department of Tourism has taken steps to ensure that all tourism stakeholders have the latest information on COVID-19 to mitigate and contain spread, prevention measures, personal prevention tips, travel information, hygiene, food handling, and other cleaning and disinfecting protocols, and guidance for what to do if they or their guests begin experiencing symptoms.





#### **Travel Advisory**

Residents and visitors are urged to stay calm. Individuals who are ill should stay at home, their vacation home or hotel. Leading health organizations recommend that those who are sick avoid travel until they have recovered fully. The CDC recommends that "because COVID-19 can be more serious in older adults and those with chronic medical conditions, people in these groups should talk to a health care provider and consider postponing travel."

Airports

Cyril E. King Airport on St. Thomas and Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix are open for inbound and outbound travel. Adjustments in travel itineraries are at the discretion of each airline, in accordance with travel restrictions, as determined by the U.S. federal government. Please contact your airline directly regarding their cancellation or rebooking policies.



## **Seaports**

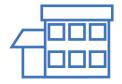
The Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands, The West Indian Company Limited and the Virgin Islands Port Authority, are moving to temporarily shut down the ports and docks in the Territory to cruise ships with passengers on board. This measure applies only to cruise ships with passengers aboard. At this time, cargo and supply ships entering U.S. Virgin Islands ports are exempt from the restriction. Cruise lines are temporarily suspending cruise ship operations for passengers from U.S. ports of call for 30 days.



#### Inter-Island Ferries

Travelers are asked to reduce travel on inter-island ferries as the Government works with authorities to reduce density and ensure safe social distancing on the ferries.





#### Accommodations

We continue to work with our accommodation partners, including the USVI Hotel and Tourism Association, regarding its messaging for visitors. Travelers are advised to contact their accommodation providers to determine their COVID-19 policies.



# **Mass Gatherings**

The U.S. Virgin Islands is complying with CDC guidance for large events and mass gatherings, and recommends that for the next eight weeks, organizers (whether groups or individuals) cancel or postpone in-person events that consist of 50 or more individuals. Exceptions will be made for larger structures that permit greater social distancing. There is no overall ban in place.



# Festivals and Events

The following events\* have been postponed:

- \*St. Thomas International Regatta
- \* Carnival Virgin Islands, St. Thomas
- Taste of St. Croix
- ★ St. Croix Food & Wine Experience

\*This list will be updated as information becomes available.



# Marketing and Advertising

We will pause all national media advertising as global travel demand dips significantly. We have moved into crisis communication and conservation modes, and will fully deploy our resources to attract visitors once the recovery begins.



### **Containment and Mitigation Measures**

The Department of Health and the Department of Tourism are advising the public to engage in the following prevention and control measures:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- **★** Gatherings of large groups are not recommended.
- \* If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should:
  - $\langle \chi \rangle$  Stay at home, your vacation home or hotel when sick.
  - $\langle z \rangle$  Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
  - $\langle \chi \rangle$  Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

For Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html



## Alerts and Information

Be prudent and vigilant, but not fearful. Sign up for alertVI to receive timely alerts in English and Spanish; text COVID19USVI to 888777.

For additional information or to report a suspected case of COVID-19, call the Department of Health's Epidemiology Division at (340) 718-1311 ext. 3891 or 340 712-6299 (St. Croix); and 340 774-7477 ext. 5647 or 340 776-1519 (St. Thomas).

We encourage the public to rely on official sources of information such as www.cdc.gov/nCoV or www.doh.vi.gov.

For further tourism updates, visit usviupdate.com.