

PRESS RELEASE

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Inaugural Boston Whaler Takeover Opens New Tourism Opportunities for The Virgin Islands

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The Virgin Islands has welcomed the start of what is hoped will become a major annual boating event, bringing visitors from Puerto Rico during September, traditionally one of the slowest months of the Territory's tourism season.

The inaugural Boston Whaler Takeover brought members of the Puerto Rico Whaler Owners Club to the Territory from 4 to 7 September for four days of island-hopping and activities across the British Virgin Islands.

Premier and Minister of Tourism, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, welcomed participants during the opening and described the initiative as an important step towards expanding the Territory's relationship with the Puerto Rican market beyond the highly successful Christmas in July celebration.

"A few months ago, I sat down with Tommy and Natalia, and we thought about the fact that we wanted to be able to do a little more with the Puerto Rico-BVI connection, especially when things slow down a lot in the BVI, and you can really have a lot of the resorts to yourself," Premier Wheatley said.

The Premier explained that he challenged the organisers to develop an activity that would encourage visitors from Puerto Rico to travel to the Territory during the slower tourism period. "I put the challenge to Tommy and to Natalia. I didn't expect it to be pulled off so quickly. It's amazing what you all were able to do," he said.

A total of 15 boats brought more than 45 individuals to the Territory for activities at Cane Garden Bay on Tortola, Scrub Island, and White Bay on Jost Van Dyke. Participating visitors also accessed special accommodation and marina rates offered by several properties across the Territory.

While many tourism businesses traditionally close or reduce operations during September, the event highlighted opportunities for hotels, marinas, restaurants, taxi operators, charter companies, vendors and other tourism-related businesses that remain open to attract additional business during the slower months.

Premier Wheatley thanked the organisers and participants and expressed the Government's support for the event becoming an annual fixture on the Territory's tourism calendar. "On behalf of the Government and the people of The Virgin

Islands, I want to thank both of you. And I want to thank each and every one of you who have participated in this first Boston Whaler Takeover of the BVI,” he said. “I want you to do this every year. We would welcome you with open arms. And I just want to see this relationship continue to blossom.”

The Premier and Minister of Tourism also reaffirmed the importance of the Puerto Rico market to The Virgin Islands and the Government’s commitment to strengthening that relationship.

“We had the biggest Christmas in July ever this year. We’re so grateful for the event. It does so much for our economy,” Premier Wheatley said. “We love Puerto Rico. We love Puerto Ricans. And we just want to continue to see that relationship grow and blossom. Whatever we can do on the BVI side to strengthen it, we are certainly willing to do.”

Mr. Tomas Dardet, BVI Tourist Board's representative for the Puerto Rico Market, stated: “We wanted to do something for the Territory after Christmas in July, and the Premier issued the challenge to hold an event in September. We have succeeded in hosting this event.”

Ms. Natalia Castro, Chief Marketing Officer for Wally Castro Marine, further stated that: “We are delighted to partner with the BVI and to strengthen this special relationship. We love coming to the BVI.”

Premier Wheatley concluded: “The inaugural Boston Whaler Takeover demonstrates the potential for targeted events to generate visitor arrivals and economic activity outside the Territory’s traditional peak tourism season, while creating new opportunities for local businesses.”

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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.

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