

Cruise Arrivals Surge 23 Percent, Helping Drive VIPA Revenue Growth

Passenger charges rose by \$2.2 million, or 26 percent, through Jan. 31 as the V.I. Port Authority reported 980,276 cruise passengers territory-wide, 185,041 more than the same period last year, along with 74 additional ship calls.

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Royal Caribbean's Icon of the Seas and the Celebrity Apex docked at Crown Bay, St. Thomas on Jan. 31, 2024. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. THOMAS — Cruise passenger traffic to the U.S. Virgin Islands rose sharply through the first four months of Fiscal Year 2026, helping drive higher passenger-charge revenue for the V.I. Port Authority, according to figures presented during the authority's board meeting on Wednesday.

VIPA reported that, through Jan. 31, the territory recorded a total of 980,276 cruise passengers, an increase of 185,041, or 23 percent, compared with the same period in Fiscal Year 2025.

The increase in arrivals translated into stronger passenger-charge revenue. According to the January 2026 financial overview presented to the board, passenger charges earned increased by \$2.2 million, or 26 percent, over the same period last fiscal year.

VIPA also reported that total cruise ship calls to the territory increased by 74 compared with Fiscal Year 2025, pointing to the continued strength of cruise activity in the territory during the opening months of the fiscal year.

The cruise figures were included as part of the authority's financial presentation for the period ending Jan. 31. Officials also reported that year-to-date operating revenues collected totaled \$31.5 million out of an \$88.5 million budget, while operating expenses paid totaled \$17.4 million out of \$73 million budgeted.

In the capital budget, VIPA reported year-to-date expenditures through Jan. 31 totaling \$2.6 million out of \$136.7 million budgeted for projects and other capital outlay in Fiscal Year 2026. During January alone, the authority said, \$1.8 million was expended.

The meeting also included an update on grant funding. According to the presentation, VIPA has been awarded \$210.2 million in grant funding through Jan. 31, 2026, and has drawn a total of \$19 million to date. No grant funds were drawn during the month of January, officials said.

The increase in cruise traffic comes as the authority continues to advance marine and airport infrastructure projects across the territory, including work tied to harbor improvements, terminal facilities and airfield upgrades.