



Discover Puerto Rico Focuses on the 2021 Winter Season

Research data reveals that the booking window has shortened

San Juan, Puerto Rico, November 18, 2020- Discover Puerto Rico hosted its monthly Industry Update, sharing that with rising COVID cases across the U.S., consumer sentiment has been shifting. The Destination Analysts survey finds that consumers remain in an elevated state of anxiety, showing that excitement levels about taking a getaway in the next month and openness to travel inspiration decreased, while perceptions of travel activities as unsafe are increasing.

“Overall booking of travel is a mixed bag of results, with many consumers holding off making plans or cancelling their holiday travel plans as they watch what happens with the pandemic in their own communities and beyond. At your Puerto Rico Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), we want to help revive the tourism industry and make the upcoming 2021 winter season the best it can be, in spite of the circumstances. As tourism levels slowly increase, we expect our funding for promotion to increase as well, and we remain hopeful we will soon have federal funds from the CARES Act and CDBG Disaster Recovery funding program to help us boost promotion for the winter season,” said Brad Dean, CEO of Discover Puerto Rico.

Even though recent surveys show a change in the sentiment of future travel, the data shows that there has been an increase in arrival of passengers since mid-September, which shows that consumers are not waiting for an official opening date to arrive. With these arrivals the Puerto Rico hoteliers are being able to hold rate, right now, the RevPAR for Puerto Rico hotels is outperforming the rest of the U.S. This is especially encouraging as once Discover Puerto Rico can market for short-term arrivals, we will see a faster recovery than our counterparts.

Alisha Valentine, Director of Research and Analytics of the DMO, explained, “Data from our partner Adara, also shows how the booking windows have shortened, pre-pandemic, consumers were booking 31-60 days out. Now, however, it is 0-15 days before their trip that these consumers are booking. Since Adara tracks both searches and bookings, we can understand how the booking window has changed over time. Currently we are seeing more U.S. domestic travel by couples and singles, this audience has made 62% of Puerto Rico visitors in the past months.”

Looking forward, it is critical for the destination to harness trends and form long-term alliances with industry leaders. Puerto Rico was selected as a beta partner to join Airbnb in an all-new collaboration, at absolutely no cost to the DMO. As part of this partnership, Airbnb launched a Puerto Rico-dedicated page that lives within Airbnb’s platform to promote safe and sustainable tourism on the Island. Also, the DMO has partnered with Brands of Puerto Rico, a local e-commerce product platform, working different efforts to support Puerto Rican entrepreneurs, currently activating a Small Business Saturday campaign. With these new partnerships, Discover Puerto Rico will have access to valuable insights that will better inform the ongoing marketing strategy and overall promotion of the destination.

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Another important initiative is the remote work strategy, since remote work will extend long beyond a pandemic trend. Puerto Rico has many advantages as an ideal remote work destination for Americans on the mainland looking for an escape, while they continue their corporate duties. A micro campaign has been developed and will target a specific audience, which has been working from home for 6+ months in 2020 with no re-entry plan to work in 2021.

“As we focus on future travel, the messaging has transitioned to actively encourage travelers to start planning and booking their future visits to the Island. The goal is to continue to instill confidence and inspire, while educating on the protocols that the Island has in place. Discover Puerto Rico has officially re-entered the media marketplace, focused on driving bookings for early 2021. We’ve ramped up investment in search advertising, with Google searches for travel on the rise. We are putting a high importance on targeting to make sure we are reaching the right travelers, with a specific focus on responsible travelers, outdoor and luxury travelers. Our media strategy has put a large emphasis in video with investments in OTT and digital video to drive inspiration and put Puerto Rico back into travelers’ consideration sets,” expressed Leah Chandler, CMO of Discover Puerto Rico.

In the MICE section, the lead activity is showing real signs of improvement. From the middle of September thorough the end of October we are seeing a consistent pattern of increasing volume. The total number of leads for 2020 is 392, with of total requested rooms of 277,296 with a potential revenue of \$238.4 million. Since restrictions began in mid-March the leads are 70% corporate, 25% associations and 6% were Specialty or social, military, educational, religious or fraternal (SMERF) events. From these potential groups, 47% are looking to take place in 2021, and in total 82% intend to meet within the next two years.

During the Industry Update, the newly elected President of the Board of Directors of the Puerto Rico Hotel & Tourism Association (PRHTA), Joaquin Bolivar III, expressed his commitment with the tourism sector of Puerto Rico and the DMO. As well as, the importance of the industry working together in order to the lead the recovery and revive the tourism industry of the Island as soon as the circumstances permit, and to be stronger and better than the competition.

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