



Travel Advisors Have Become Experts in Selling Puerto Rico

San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 13, 2021- As consumers feel more comfortable traveling, many in the travel industry predict that travel advisors will play an enhanced role in helping them choose their destinations and travel safely. Discover Puerto Rico partnered with these professionals to educate and provide them with tools to promote the Island. During the Coronavirus lockdowns, Puerto Rico's Travel Expert program was instrumental in keeping the Island top of mind and enrollments and graduating experts in the program increased by 18%.

"When it became clear in March of 2020 that the leisure distribution channels would suffer and consumer campaigns would be placed on hold, we began to prepare for the inevitable recovery. As travel advisors are often the first point of contact for many consumers and corporate business travelers, we chose to reinforce our partnerships with key agencies, consortia, airline vacation clubs, wholesalers and other buyers who consistently book Puerto Rico. The Travel Expert Program provides important facts and promotional materials designed to inform, engage and excite prospective tourists," said Ed Carey, Chief Sales Officer for Discover Puerto Rico.

With no possibility of visiting agencies and attending tradeshow, the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) offered incentives to travel advisors to become Puerto Rico Master Experts. In 2020, there were 2,864 new enrollments and 1,618 graduations. In 2021, Discover Puerto Rico has gained 1,811 enrollments and 737 graduates in the first five months of the year. This brings the total number of enrolled advisors to over 20,000.

"To further the effort, we have partnered with the top producing consortia, with an emphasis on creating landing pages for Puerto Rico, and implementing actions to drive traffic to those sites, helping increase bookings both via the third parties and growing direct reservations to each property in the programs. Companies like AAA, COSTCO, American Airlines Vacations, Apple Leisure Group, and organizations like ABC/CCRA, Internova, Travelsavers are multimillion and billion-dollar enterprises at the forefront of selling travel, and so are the tens of thousands of agents who are affiliated to them," explained Carey.

Virtuoso, a leading global network of agencies specializing in luxury and experiential travel, reported that 140 out of their 1,000 affiliated agencies have recorded sales to Puerto Rico hotels in 2021 that exceeded the first and second quarters of 2019 sales by 12% and 25% respectively.

Zane Kerby, President and CEO of American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA), expressed, "I believe other destinations could learn a lot from the approach taken by Discover Puerto Rico. By blending marketing savvy with a facts-based approach to responsible travel, they are keeping the Island – and its many charms – top-of-mind for the next wave of travelers. Discover Puerto Rico is relentlessly focused on educating, informing and partnering with travel advisors. As I've seen repeatedly in the decades I've worked in this industry, ensuring that travel advisors are well-informed about your destination is the gift that keeps on giving – with bookings."

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