



Discover Puerto Rico looking forward to reviving tourism in 2021

San Juan, PR, January 20, 2021- Discover Puerto Rico held their first Industry Update of the year, together with Hon. Manuel Cidre, designated Secretary of the Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DDEC) and José M. Suárez, the new Chairman of the Board of Directors of Discover Puerto Rico. Their goal is to collaborate to achieve success and ignite a recovery in 2021, paving the way for a brighter future for the Puerto Rico tourism industry.

During the presentation José M. Suárez shared that, "Puerto Rico has faced multiple crises that have altered the livelihood of our tourism dependent businesses. We need to rebound not only from COVID but also from the multitude of events that have affected our image and our demand in recent years, 2015 being the last "normal" year for the Island. Looking forward, as a destination we must compete for the attention of those future travelers. Our competitors will be very aggressive trying to steal market share. To compete we need to market Puerto Rico to the world and that requires funding."

According to Suárez, ex-director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC), "Currently Puerto Rico is in a major competitive disadvantage, with a budget of only \$25 million. Comparing to the last 15 years (2003-2018), PRTC's marketing budget averaged \$56 million of which an average of \$26.8 million were invested in pure advertising. Meet Puerto Rico's budget was around \$5 million annually. In order to counter the negative events of the last 5-6 years, it is important to invest and continue to work together as an industry.

The Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) is still marketing for future bookings. Following the recent Executive Order, today the DMO is transitioning between the "Regroup" and "Rebound" phases. Discover Puerto Rico has shifted to a more neutral tone, letting people know that Americans can travel to Puerto Rico right now, if done responsibly.

Discover Puerto Rico, like many mainland tourism organizations, applied for Federal Aid through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and recently received CARES funds to help support our tourism recovery and promote safe travel, which will help the organization in creating activity for 2021 in both leisure and MICE segments. In the DMO's commitment to transparency, during the presentation they shared how the funding will be invested.

The Cares Act media program launched at the beginning of January 2021, and the first part of the media plan will be spread through June 2021. With a strategy focused on health & safety education, the media mix includes for the first-time, spot TV.

The Spot TV buy will be a six-week flight with a one-week hiatus, starting the week of March 15 through May 10. The markets receiving this flight are New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Washington DC and Chicago. As the organization hones its targeting strategies, they continue adding layers to target those travelers who are more receptive to following the protocols and policies in place on the Island.

Research indicates that planners will be sourcing destinations for late 2021 and beyond. In the MICE segment, for the first quarter the CARES act funding will be used for advertising buys with Strategic Partners, like Cvent and other mainstream MICE media outlets.

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In the leisure segment, the DMO continues investing in partnerships that have substantial interest and coverage of the destination. For example, those accounts that have the most focus, properties, and potential selling Puerto Rico.

To finalize, Foundation for Puerto Rico and DigheonTech, Puerto Rico Department of Health's technical development team that built [Travelsafe.pr.gov](https://travelsafe.pr.gov), the online platform where travelers to PR complete the Travel Declaration Form, discussed the importance of a Biological Barrier and explained more in detail about the changes in the TravelSafe application for travelers.

With a Biologic Border in place, the destination will open in a safe way for our residents and visitors alike, by protecting them from new external infections including new, more contagious strains. It also provides the Puerto Rican community with the necessary confidence to be able to reopen travel and the local economy in a responsible matter. With help of Foundation for Puerto Rico, DigheonTech created PR's first digital biological border with capabilities of capturing data from travelers and connecting it directly to Puerto Rico's Pandemic Emergency Response Systems.

The TravelSafe application allows users to create a traveler account where they can view and manage all their Puerto Rico-Bound trips. This way, a user will always have access to their QR code, and they can also directly upload COVID-19 Test Results through the app and now, the app allows the submittal of vaccination reports. Additionally, our application allows frequent travelers to return to the app using their unique account and add a trip and its information to the system.

Brad Dean, CEO of Discover Puerto Rico, expressed, "2021 is going to be a year of recovery for all of us. Our value proposition is strong and appealing. Our vast array of unique experiences and amazing natural resources is perfect for the many travelers who are seeking to connect with nature and avoid big crowds. Our rich, vibrant culture stands out amongst other Caribbean Islands and key competitor destinations. Our Island has been through many challenging times and we know what it takes to come back from disaster. And we also know the importance of collaborating and cooperating to achieve success, together."

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About Discover Puerto Rico:

Discover Puerto Rico is a newly established private, not-for-profit Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) whose mission is to make Puerto Rico visible to the world as a premier travel destination. The DMO brings prosperity to the people of Puerto Rico by collaboratively promoting the Island's diversity and uniqueness for leisure and business travel, and events. It is responsible for all global marketing, sales and promotion of the destination and works collaboratively with key local governmental and non-governmental players throughout Puerto Rico's visitor economy and community at large, to empower economic growth. To discover all the beauty the Island has to offer, visit DiscoverPuertoRico.com.

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