

Seizing Summer's Opportunity

Dear Stakeholder:

August brings critical opportunity to our tourism industry, albeit of the new-normal variety. The volume of commercial airline seats to the island rises from 10 percent of regular capacity in July to 20 percent this month, as more airlines return and flight schedules increase.

In tandem with that reopening indicator, Bermuda's available hotel inventory is also expected to rise, from 420 (or 18 percent of total inventory) at the start of August to 1,983 (or 84 percent) by September 1. These are the statistical measures that get more people back to work—a key goal for reopening the airport to regularly scheduled flights in the first place.

The gradual pathway for our tourism recovery remains gruelling—but the next four weeks will be the litmus test for building meaningful momentum.

Before looking forward, though, it's important to reflect, with gratitude, on the way the Ministry of Health has managed reopening to non-residents during a pandemic, while keeping our community safe. Jurisdictions far better resourced than ours have fallen short on this mission—and some recently have had to back-track on progress. The public-health performance in Bermuda should be a source of pride. We speak for the entire tourism economy when we say, "thank you," especially as the workload at the border dramatically increases.

Because the tourism industry reopened safely and responsibly, the Bermuda Tourism Authority was able to unfurl its inside-out marketing strategy that supports our industry partners. It has already included Independent Retailer Month and Golf Week in an effort to stimulate spending. Those initiatives will be followed by promotions to inspire staycations, yacht and boat rentals, and alfresco dining—among other campaigns. The premise is to simultaneously market to visitors who make the trip and residents who've had to cancel their own travel plans abroad.

Meantime, the BTA has worked closely with government and other stakeholders to get the message out on the new Work from Bermuda Certificate, a small but significant revision of the Ministry of Labour's residency certificate programme. It's a helpful policy initiative because, behaviourally, these guests are a hybrid of visitor and resident, very likely to spend into our tourism economy even if they're not staying at a hotel or traditional vacation rental. This fits neatly into the inside-out marketing strategy. The more residents our island has, the more consumers to infuse spending into local businesses at a time when visitor demand is low. More than 70 applications from a dozen countries have been submitted since the policy was launched just last weekend.

The Work from Bermuda Certificate is an example of the BTA team's nimble response to new opportunities, exhibiting the agility necessary for the moment. However, we're also busy staying true to the long-term strategies of the National Tourism Plan, including:

- Advancing cashless payment opportunities across the tourism eco-system
- Assisting with a fully digital border-entry process to ensure a frictionless experience for visitors
- Marketing more aggressively to Black travellers in key markets
- Attracting superyacht owners and captains and other private marine vessel owners
- Engaging in workforce-development plans to invite more Bermudians into the tourism economy
- Executing on a robust sports-tourism strategy

The latter includes returning to our multi-year journey to put Bermuda's stamp on the world of golf and tennis. Later this month, for the second year, Bermuda will be the exclusive tourism partner of the US Open Tennis Championship in New York, where state officials have approved the event's rigorous coronavirus safety measures.

Additionally, the island will host the Bermuda Championship this fall, as originally planned. Talks between the PGA TOUR and local health officials will take place this month to decide on the level of protocols necessary to keep everyone safe.

It may prove to be an important milestone in our tourism recovery because last year's inaugural Championship brought in more than 2,000 visitors, injected \$7.8 million in direct on-island spending, and generated millions more in media value.

While 2020 has been a crushingly difficult tourism year for Bermuda and destinations around the globe, there are emerging signs of recovery here at home, tangible green shoots. And even though the way back to where we were may be measured in years, not months, it's satisfying to know our collective path has created solid steps toward a comeback.

Sincerely,

Glenn Jones,

Interim CEO & Chief Experience Development Officer

