

## A Fighting Chance

Dear Stakeholder:

It was a distinct privilege to visit six recently reopened hotels last week. When accommodations across Bermuda shuttered due to COVID-19 back in March, at the Bermuda Tourism Authority (BTA) we thought of jobless workers every single day. Even as our team members dealt with professional and personal sacrifices of their own, our strategies focused on others and one clear mission—bringing back visitors as quickly, safely and responsibly as possible, so the tourism workforce could get back to business. I can report from the frontline: Bermuda is making undeniable progress on this mission.



While the BTA paused paid media for several months, the team was on the job communicating with travellers regularly through our owned channels, including media outreach, social media, our database of more than 250,000 travellers, and a network of airline partners, travel professionals, sports organisers and meeting planners. These messages—including the well-received [“Bermuda motto” video](#) and virtual vacation video series—told of Bermuda’s efforts to keep its community safe and shared our collective desire to welcome back visitors when the time was right.

When Bermuda’s borders reopened to commercial air service in early July, advertising and marketing efforts were already prepared, ramped up and deployed. Our strategy was a balance of appealing to consumers that Bermuda was the escape they’d been craving for so many months, and a safe destination to choose. We targeted markets and audiences with strategic media:

- [Digital video and TV ads](#) announcing, “Bermuda is Open. You are Welcome.”
- Facebook and Instagram posts highlighting Bermuda’s openness, safety and welcoming resorts
- Customised gotobermuda.com landing pages by market, noting direct flight schedules
- Select email marketing with details on arrival protocols and the Work from Bermuda Certificate

Virtual webinars and conferences have also allowed the Bermuda sales team to stay engaged with clients. During the virtual version of Virtuoso Travel Week, that usually convenes thousands of travel professionals annually in Las Vegas, Bermuda was able to update more than 90 clients in a series of informative meetings.

Although 61 percent of hotel inventory is now back online, many hospitality employees remain out of work and the road back for the industry is a long one. Compare Bermuda, though, to other tourism destinations and you’ll find we are long strides ahead. Bermuda’s July 1 reopening, and the island’s progress since, have been careful and continual steps in the right direction. The same can’t be said of some of our competitors who reopened—and then painfully regressed. It’s like getting knocked down a second time in the same round of a fight. Through effective testing, diligent contact tracing, and stringent protocols, Bermuda has, to date, dodged a second punch.

The world has noticed. We’ve always been safe and clean, but now Bermuda has an endorsed performance record to back that up. It’s our differentiator:

- The US Centers for Disease Control improved Bermuda’s travel advisory ranking to Level 2—one of only four places to have a risk assessed as low as “moderate”
- The Foreign & Commonwealth Office in the UK waived the 14-day quarantine requirement for returning residents if those travellers were returning from Bermuda
- Bermuda earned the World Travel & Tourism Council “Safe Travels” stamp, a designation awarded to destinations with the highest in health-safety protocols

Bermuda's safety record is now a cornerstone of its destination marketing—and it stretches beyond copywriting in consumer ads:

- When Hollywood heavyweight Issa Rae visited the island over Labour Day weekend, she opened the eyes of her two-million-plus social-media followers to someplace so close to the US, yet offering out-of-this-world beauty, space, cuisine and culture that welcomed Americans. Our digital team is leveraging her posts with an invitation to would-be visitors and a link to our [Bermuda-bound traveller page](#)
- When visitors complete their COVID-19 test at Perot Post Office, they'll receive a postcard thanking them for following safety protocols and encouraging them to share their experiences on social media using #BERMUDAisSAFER
- When the [second Bermuda Championship](#) gets underway at Port Royal Golf Course next month, we hope the PGA TOUR feels it's safe enough to allow a return to live spectators. TOUR events restarted with a sports-bubble model, but they surely haven't played in a jurisdiction that has controlled virus spread as well as we've done out here

Bermuda is also front and centre at the US Open, with unmissable courtside signage, social-media engagement to global audiences, and a high rotation of [television advertising](#) that includes a visitor's sweepstakes in Bermuda's two most important feeder markets, New York City and Boston. It's another example of a sports-tourism strategy that puts Bermuda in all the right places, at the right times, and with an important message: Bermuda is open and safer than almost anywhere else right now.

Those who make the trip agree. According to exit-survey results since July, 95 percent of visitors said they felt safe from the virus while on-island. Our next challenge will be to convince a greater number of consumers that enduring Bermuda's testing protocols is worth the effort—because on the other side is the safe, uncrowded, stress-free trip they've longed for.

Sincerely,

Glenn Jones

Interim CEO & Chief Experience Development Officer