



**Remarks by
Director of Tourism Donovan White
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“Where Creativity Meets Purpose: Tourism’s Digital Transformation”
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Jamaica as a brand is internationally perceived as a larger than life destination. Our culture, our music, our food, our attractions and our people are the pulses of the Heartbeat of the World. It is these passion points that visitors desire most when they come to our shores. But these elements look different as we live and travel with COVID, and it is crucial that we find creative ways to preserve these experiences while we navigate our new reality.

Crisis and challenges always serve as turning points – they are defining moments. We can choose to turn away or seek solace in the old ways, but as a nation I’m proud to say we chose the path to lean into a new and brighter future.

Over the past six months, we have challenged ourselves to think differently, and it has strengthened our position at the forefront of tourism recovery.

One clear example of our efforts is the establishment of our Resilient Corridor model. This game-changing approach to re-opening was an industry first. It allowed us to prioritize safety while mitigating the spread of COVID-19, and continuing to provide authentic, enjoyable and seamless Jamaican getaway experiences. A significant piece of our success implementing the Resilient Corridors was because of the strong help of our partners. This model has now become an industry standard and many destinations around the world are following in our footsteps. We have seen similar areas established in places from Thailand to Kauai (Hawaii).

While our borders were closed, we also reimagined and transformed in-person experiences into digital activations in order to generate consumer anticipation, desire, excitement and ultimately the necessary confidence to drive travellers to visit Jamaica again.

While Jamaica has remained at the leading edge of online marketing to maintain consumer connections, by expanding our digital initiatives, we

provided consumers with exclusive access to the destination like never before.

Across the industry, we are seeing that virtual activations succeed when they're highly curated and offer a distinctive experience that bridges physical distance. In Europe, the Bristol from Home campaign was aimed at keeping sofa tourists busy with a collection of online visits and tours – including a Banksy street art trail. Meanwhile in South Africa, the We Are Worth Waiting For! campaign painted parallels to a long-distance relationship with a reminder that absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Our own virtual activations such as Escape to Jamaica, the World's Largest Virtual Wedding and Virtual Tours highlighted our brand pillars of culinary, adventure, romance, music, and above all, our people. It was clear from the engagement and feedback we received from this digital programming that the demand for the destination remains strong. So much so that our reach was over 450 million impressions.

But that was just the beginning. As we look towards the future, we have to keep pushing to innovate and ensure that our audiences remain engaged

with our destination. I truly believe that Jamaicans are the most resilient people in the world. We will always rise up against any challenge, we have done it in the past and we will do it again!

You may recognize this Nike video I'm about to share, as it garnered significant praise over the summer. I want you to pay keen attention to the creativity, the attention to detail and of course, the message. The spot sends a clear message of perseverance and resilience. Coronavirus can't stop sports, and it can't stop us.

NIKE – You Can't Stop Us Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WA4dDs0T7sM>

Again, I say, you can't stop us either! We have our eye to the future and we are continually navigating and creating new ways to meet the demands of the consumer, including those who are ready to travel and are taking to the skies, and those still wanderlusting from their living rooms.

But the JTB can't do it alone. The success of the private and public sector working together was evident in the implementation of the country-wide

health and safety protocols. Looking ahead we must continue the collaboration as we seek new and inventive ways to connect, not only to our potential visitors, but also to each other. It is through this partnership that we can achieve greater success to affect our tourism-led economy.

Demand for rural tourism is on the rise all over the world, and Jamaica is at the forefront of this trend. Jamaica has already started implementing rural tourism programs through the Ministry of Tourism's newly launched Community Tourism Unit. Aimed to help strengthen the relationship of tourism to other sectors of the island's economy, rural tourism development will further enrich the Jamaican experience for our travellers while benefiting our local communities, economically and socially.

The success of rural tourism in Jamaica will be further driven by projected consumer demands. As people experience continued screen fatigue from efforts to remain connected for their work or personal lives, they will want to fully disconnect, specifically seeking out remote, leisure and educational experiences beyond the beaten path such as local markets, cultural exchanges, personalized and private farm-to-table-experiences and increasingly nature-focused getaways, without technology.

In continuing to stay ahead of consumer expectations, Jamaica's approach to product development is also transforming as we move into a new age. Our latest wellness initiative "Discover Jamaica By Bike" is a glimpse into what the future holds for our visitors, laying the groundwork for new initiatives rooted in active and outdoor experiences to enable physical distancing. I can attest to the thrill of this experience personally as I am currently testing out the first iteration of the route with my colleagues and members of the Jamaica Cycling Association. This local event will serve as a pilot for a consumer cycling experience to debut in Spring 2021, fulfilling anticipated traveller interest in programs that combine the natural beauty of the landscape with an even greater focus on overall wellness and physical activity.

COVID has undoubtedly accelerated the development of new technologies. Globally, these advances are re-contouring our industry and we expect they will remain a crucial component for recovery and rebuilding. Next month, we will gather for JAPEX, which will be virtual for the first time. We have seen a number of other industry events go virtual over the past six months, from ILTM, to CruiseWorld, to WTM. In that short time span, the

technology has evolved considerably, creating opportunities for real-time and scheduled interaction truly reflective of an in-person event.

These highly advanced virtual platforms are changing the way we meet and do business, and also the way we experience places and large-scale events like concerts and festivals. Enhanced digital integrations lay the groundwork for a hybrid future, extending the reach of in-person programming and connecting those on the ground with those tuning in from afar.

Virtual platforms and new technologies that were novelties just a few months ago are now necessities in our foreseeable future, and are all a part of our consideration set as we explore how to make our travel experiences even more seamless for travellers. As with virtual events, artificial intelligence in tourism is taking a massive leap forward and transforming the industry. We are seeing Covid-19 Pass Cards, similar to virtual passports, being developed in Israel to deliver updated testing requirements to travellers based on departure and arrival cities as a solution to quickly changing travel policies. They will also hold critical information such as personal medical profiles and immunization records in

cases of emergencies. A prototype of temperature-reading glasses is in the works by researchers in Beijing and San Francisco. In Tokyo, multilingual "chat bots" or virtual tour guides are helping to pair travellers with local operators at the destination.

Closer to home, our robust programming and integrated marketing will continue to showcase the Heartbeat of the World, and entice would-be- visitors with a taste of what is waiting for them, inspire travel, and achieve the tourism growth we know we are capable of as the leading Caribbean destination.

It is without a doubt that the landscape of our tourist industry has changed. What remains unchanged is Jamaica's unwavering commitment to exemplary leadership in tourism, and our ability to remain nimble and innovative as we live and travel in a COVID world. As a nation of strength, optimism and resilience, Jamaica knows better than anyone else that with crisis comes a golden opportunity for innovation and a recovery that makes us stronger than ever.

Thank you again for being with us today. I look forward to continuing working with you all towards a better and stronger Jamaica.

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