NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA's Focus On U.K. & Ireland Leads the Recovery Conversation in Preparation for the Return of International Travel

April 26, 2021

LONDON (April 26, 2021)—Focus On U.K. & Ireland—a virtual event providing relevant insights on the transatlantic travel landscape as well as updates on the U.S. tourism industry with the U.K. & Irish travel trade community—took place at an opportune time, as conversations are being held to add the United States to the United Kingdom's "green" travel corridor list. For two days (April 20-21), the Brand USA Global Marketplace platform welcomed upwards of 200 U.S. partners as well as British and Irish travel agents and tour operators for panel discussions hosted by industry experts, networking, and a special USA training session.

"This event was a fantastic opportunity to reunite more than 225 U.K. and Irish travel agents and tour operators, and show that the U.S is ready to welcome friends and visitors back with open arms. It was uplifting to hear that the U.S. tops the list for U.K. and Irish travelers and that in the post-COVID-19 era, travelers are eager to return to their favorite U.S. destinations as well as explore more of what our country has to offer," said Chris Thompson, president and CEO of Brand USA.

Key learnings from Focus On the U.K. & Ireland include:

- The U.S is one of the earliest long-haul destinations to bounce back, and interest exploded following the successful roll-out the U.S.'s vaccination program *(The Telegraph)*
- Given higher-than-average savings coupled with pent-up demand and the desire to experience bucket-list holidays in 2021 and beyond, U.K. and Irish travelers will return stronger and better than ever before
- As borders reopen, the Visiting Friends and Relatives market will be one the first to return, resulting in a surge in travel as friends and relatives are finally able reunite
- Flexible booking policies, reassurances on health and safety, as well as the financial stability of the company will be key considerations for consumers when booking holidays
- U.K. and Irish travelers are spending more on holidays and staying for longer, opening beyond the gateway cities and creating demand for lesser-known destinations

Accelerated Media Trends

During a live media panel, editors from the Irish Independent, National Geographic Traveller, and Travel Weekly discussed key trends emerging from the pandemic such as **wilderness and the great outdoors, sustainability, experiential travel, and the desire to take epic trips in 2021**. From the conversation, it is clear that while COVID-19 was a disruptor for media, it is also a trend accelerator, and the U.S. is poised to take advantage of new-found opportunities that appeal to all types of travelers.

The Booking Trifecta: Flexible Booking Policies, Safety, and Financial Stability

Sharing hope and optimism for the future of travel, three of the U.K. and Ireland's leading tour operators, British Airways Holidays, Contiki, and dnata, joined a panel focusing on the return of U.S. inbound travel, addressing what consumers want, and what type of trips consumers are booking. The panel noted that **higher than average bank deposits and savings means that British and Irish travelers have more money—approximately £180 billion worth of savings in addition to what they normally would have saved during the pandemic, according to Lisa McAuley, managing director at dnata—to spend on leisure trips**. Before leisure, the first

segment to return will be Visiting Friends and Relatives. Adam Armstrong, CEO at Contiki, continued to provide insight on booking trends, saying that ultimately bookings will “Come down to availability and accessibility of getting into the country in the first place. That’s where the United States have got the advantage over many parts of the world.”

Transatlantic Aviation Charts a New Course

As travelers take flight, airlines will respond to changes in consumer behavior to ensure that aviation returns at the right level, at the right time, and the right speed. Joined by representatives of Airport Strategy & Marketing, Aer Lingus, and Virgin Atlantic, Bob Schumacher, director of the U.K. & Ireland at United Airlines stated the importance of **examining aviation through a refreshed lens**. “We’re not going back to what we did before. We’re going back to something new, and we need to be able to adapt to what that new is,” commented Schumacher.

Confidence is Key

Trust is the key currency between consumers and tour operators and there is a renewed confidence and vigor to book with a reputable travel agent. Carolyn Stead, continental destination manager for North America, at *Trailfinders* reinforced this sentiment saying, “As the confidence has built a bit in the last few weeks, we have seen a slight swing back to 2021 (from 2022) with 60 percent of business for 2021 and 40 percent for 2022.” Clarity and transparency are going to be paramount to consumers as they want to fully understand what their travel experience will entail from logistical questions to emotional motivations, including immersive and transformative experiences that allow them to connect to the destination.

Digital Continues to Soar

Over the last 12 months, viewership of Brand USA’s Samsung TV Plus doubled as people look to escape from the comfort of their homes as they wait for travel to return. The platform gives viewers a much wider choice of content, channels and recognizable programs.

Reconnecting with U.K. & Irish Travel Agents and Tour Operators

The USA Training Day marked the first-ever event for U.K. and Irish travel agents on the Brand USA Global Marketplace platform, providing an opportunity to connect directly with many of the U.S. destination and attraction partners to help align recovery campaigns and messaging. USA Training Day featured panel discussions, informing, updating, and educating agents and tour operators on the wonders of the great outdoors, gateway cities, and beyond.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation’s destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

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