

Bob Gilbert (00:09):

Welcome to Tourism Heads and Their Tales. A podcast series that invites travel and tourism leaders and influencers to share their take on key industry issues. My name is Bob Gilbert and I'm the general manager for the tourism and destination marketing practice at the award-winning strategic marketing agency Eddy Alexander. My career spans over three decades in the travel and tourism industry where I've had the privilege of working with iconic brands and so many amazing colleagues who in their own ways are pushing the industry forward and using tourism to increase understanding, access and quality of life. For those who work in travel, those that love to travel, and the communities that benefit from travel. I'll be bringing you into the conversation with top professionals who are shaping the industry, all with their unique tales and perspectives that they're ready to share with you.

Bob Gilbert (01:06):

Welcome to Tourism Heads and Their Tales, and I am more than delighted to welcome Paula Twidale, Senior Vice President, AAA Travel. Paula provides the leadership and strategic direction for all of the association's travel services. She manages strategic alliances and guides the development of innovative solutions to support all of the AAA Club. So welcome Paula.

Paula Twidale (01:34):

Thank you so much. Thank you for having me.

Bob Gilbert (01:37):

Well, thank you. So I do have history with AAA. I do recall partnering with AAA whilst the Choice Hotels when I was at Disney, Best Western, which was a generation ago. But the impact value that AAA represents is even stronger. Can you provide our audience with a snapshot? How many members, how many clubs, how many travel offices? Just to kind of bring everybody up to date.

Paula Twidale (02:05):

Sure, I'm happy to, you know, we're excited and we're always proud to say that we're over 122 years old, so that's exciting. The legacy that we have, we're a trusted brand. We have 64 million members, you know, in terms of that trusted brand. We're AAA travel in and of itself on the travel portfolio business line with a second most recognizable brand according to the Morning Consult. So again, there's a lot of value and relevance in our brand for our legacy, and people trust us. You know, we have member benefits, we have a number of different clubs regionally throughout North America, throughout the United States and Canada and regionally we have about 27. We're down to like 27 clubs because they compass so many big regions and thousands of travel advisors are in those clubs. And travel auto counselors aside, because you know, keep in mind AAA not only travel and we're talking about travel today, but we have multiple business lines with automotive being the most recognizable with emergency road service, as well as finance and insurance, et cetera. So again, a big portfolio, a big footprint, recognizable servicing all demographics. We're probably a little bit more heavily weighted with the boomers who have known us for years, but we have all demographics represented because we create product that caters to all those demographics.

Bob Gilbert (03:24):

Could you explain the evolution of the national programs? How have they grown over the years? How have they been able to kind of stay ahead of the game, if you will, as time goes on, especially you know, with post pandemic travel and how that has altered some of the behaviors of the traveling public?

Paula Twidale (03:46):

Sure. You know, I'll give a snapshot and look at it this way. It's constantly evolving and I like to always say that we are intentionally selective in our preferred supplier agreements because we want to create value, a member benefit, a differentiated product. Of course, exceptional, consistent quality experiences. So that's critical, right? So we have different national programs and those programs vary, very heavily weighted, although we have lodging, cruise and tour and certainly attractions and things like that. The cruise and touring spaces really weighted heavily for us because about 60% of our business revenue comes from that because they're higher ticket items. But we do an enormous amount of bookings or sales in the lodging category. You know, we're with just about all the major entities and some of the ones you've mentioned already, cruise and touring. On the tour operator side, we have preferred agreements with over 20 tour operators that represent multiple brands.

Paula Twidale (04:43):

So really we have the globe, the entire seven continents represented in that portfolio as we do in cruising. You know, we've got 16 to 17 major cruise companies, again, with multiple brands, again with a portfolio that caters to adventure family, younger, older, et cetera. River cruising, ocean cruising, et cetera. So those things have evolved over the years and we're getting better and stronger because the market demands that. The market demands that differentiation. So it's pretty exciting to be able to cover the globe and doing it as effectively as AAA does it, and being a brand that people can trust, we're going to steer you in the right direction when it comes to all that. And you asked about post Covid, post pandemic, you know, there was a hiatus there, obviously people not traveling during the pandemic. And that pent up demand really has come through in the last couple years and it continues that momentum. Now think about, you know, the amount of money that people have amassed during the pandemic. There are figures from 1.4 to 2.4 trillion depending on the demographic you're looking at. So over 2 million, 2 trillion rather, amassed in discretionary income. because people weren't going anywhere. Well then everything came alive and now people are traveling. So we're seeing that in a big way. Our numbers have increased exponentially.

Bob Gilbert (05:59):

You know, it's interesting, I think the cruise line industry was holding its breath during Covid, but in the last six months, the number of new ships that have been launched just amazing. And I think that it can be bewildering for AAA member or a consumer to try and, you know, figure out the best solution for a cruise. I do support the travel counselors, travel agents. I used to be one and I'm actually a CTC, so I vested interest. There has been long standing. But you have to be able to use an expert to guide you through all of the various idiosyncrasies of booking. You know, booking a cabin. And I think that leads right into a leisure travel agency. Is that something that you are seeing is really helping kind of generate that impetus for increased cruise bookings?

Paula Twidale (06:58):

Yeah, absolutely. You make such a great point and something that I emphasize quite often when I'm asked, you know, in different media realms. First of all, if you're looking at results of a pandemic cruise tour and international travel, including luxury travel has really going farther, people are going farther out, they're spending more money now when you're talking about cruising and all the inventory and you are right on, you know, cruising. They were the last, no one pun intended, they were the last to get going, last to go in the water because that part of the industry was suppressed even when the rest of the industry was coming back. And clearly international came back later because of when the borders

opened finally in June of 2022 where we didn't have to do the testing anymore. It took off at the end of the year and then it's 23 and again, 24 is strong.

Paula Twidale (07:43):

So when you look at cruising, there is a plethora of choices out there. You know, do, if you're taking an ocean cruise or you're taking a river cruise, you want to know the differences. You know, there's so many out there and that's why we have discerning tastes in individuals. But we have really knowledgeable travel advisors. And the expression I frankly use a lot is that we know because we go, we have so many seasoned travel advisors in our groups around the country, around North America for AAA. And we get skilled people who have been there, they've done that. They're specialists in these areas. They can kind of cut through the weeds for you to kind of cater the experience to what you want. If you have children, maybe you're going to take Icon of the Seas with, Royal Caribbean, you know, that new ship with the fun things to do.

Paula Twidale (08:30):

And you know, we've seen a 60% increase in cruise departing from South Florida because of that. But if you know you're a boomer or you don't want to be around children or you want to have a little laid-back experience, you're going to look for another experience and maybe another cruise line or another type of experience or destination. So we're cutting through the clutter because we are knowledge based and we stay abreast. We have a lot of training going on in the clubs. Our agents are skilled. We also do train the trainer. So to keep that in mind, we make it easy, we make it hassle-free. A lot of folks think they can book things on their own and you certainly can do that, right? You know, you're intelligent, you can do all that. But we do a couple of things. We cut through the clutter, we look at the experience, it's great for you, our member benefits give you added value that you're not getting on your own. And lastly, if something does go wrong with this trip interruption, our travel advisors are there to help you. You're not left in lurch to try to navigate that on your own. So it's really important to use a travel advisor. It doesn't cost you anything to do that as a member really. You're getting the best of both worlds there.

Bob Gilbert (09:33):

Yeah, I always saw that as a huge benefit in terms of say trip interruption or whatever the challenge may be. If you booked it yourself, who are you going to call?

Paula Twidale (09:43):

Ghostbusters...

Bob Gilbert (09:46):

Right and so when you have a trusted agent, they're the ones who can make things happen. I was reading an article actually, which is related and it's about changing habits or patterns for spring break. And are there shifts in spring break destinations and the kinds of experiences that are being sought by what is traditionally understood as a spring breaker?

Paula Twidale (10:11):

You know, I don't know. I think that's a little subjective sometimes when that's asked because it depends on who's traveling during spring break. Are these repeat spring breakers? Are they newbies to the educational level and they're going on their first spring break? Florida is a popular destination. Miami is crazy. South Florida is crazy and I live in South Florida, so it is crazy with spring break a lot of young

people are going to the Dominican, they're going to the Caribbean, they're going to Mexico. Some of them are also shifting, you know, from an educational standpoint, the touring, they're going to Europe, you know. So we're seeing a lot of booking still steady. We have an increase during this time March and April, we've had a 20% increase international flight bookings in a higher increase in hotels. So we're seeing international travel, peak. European travel is having a strong year in general in places like London, Paris, Rome, Dublin, Amsterdam, those are the hot destinations.

Paula Twidale (11:05):

So we are seeing some of that during spring break. But again, people book further out so there's a higher propensity of people who travel those destinations. I think you're always going to get a mixed bag during spring break. You're going to get the ones that come to Florida, then there's Mexico and the Caribbean. And then you know, people are going to venture out. Depends on disposable income frankly. And where they are in their break. If they're college kids and they're at the end of their college duration, they are probably going to go to an international destination further out than someone who's younger. That's in their first couple of years.

Bob Gilbert (11:37):

You mentioned a few destinations within Europe, London, you know, the usual suspects. I say the usual suspects, they seem to be the same kinds of destinations that folks were traveling to pre-Covid. Are there any new international destinations that are not surprised but are different to what traditionally used to be the go-to European destinations?

Paula Twidale (12:01):

Well, we always look at volume, right? But I can tell you from certainly my decades of experience in the industry and what we're seeing still here, you still see a lot of people. Like for instance, it's not a new destination, but it's coming back post-Covid Asia travel is coming back, particularly Japan. Japan is now booming again where it was prior to the pandemic and it's booming again now. So we're excited about that. We're excited about destinations like you know, south America, we're just excited about the Galapagos it adventure type of travel and luxury travel, frankly those types of travel. Also indications as to where people are going to go. Europe will always be the most popular. I was a, worked for a tour operator for many, many years. Over 50% of the business always was Europe.

Bob Gilbert (12:45):

You were with Collette if I recall.

Paula Twidale (12:46):

Yes, I was, yeah, many, many years. Great company and you know, over 50% of the traffic always goes to Europe. They sold seven continents and did well on the seven continents. But in Australia and South Pacific was a very big too. So we see that. But I think there's also that strength in Europe that's also going to continue because listen, if you're going for language based, if you're English speaking, you're going to go to London first and you're going to go to English speaking countries, then you're going to broaden out to countries that are multilingual but also speak English. You know? That's why Italy, Ireland, Iceland are always the most popular because Italy just is always on fire. Ireland's a great destination. Iceland, it still has a stronghold regardless of volcanic activity and things like that, you know? Right. So we're excited about seeing those numbers stay as high as they are, but we're also seeing them peppered in with other regions in the world. There are a lot of great places to go. Really

domestic, because domestic areas in the United States were on fire because people stayed within the continent because of the fact they couldn't leave, you know, or had a test. But were surprisingly enough, domestic is still strong in places like the national parks and you know, world heritage sites within our own country.

Bob Gilbert (14:01):

So couple of questions here and I was going to ask you about road trips. Obviously, the connection between AAA and road trips is a natural, but are road trips still as popular? Have they evolved? Are they long haul regional? Does it follow the tried and trusted national parks? You know, is there a change? Is there a pursuit of sustainable travel that I hear a lot about when I talk to DMO? But are road trips still as popular?

Paula Twidale (14:33):

I'll take that kind of question in two pieces if you will. First of all, yeah. Road trips. Are they popular? Yes, they certainly are. Particularly for families and those older individuals with discretionary time to stop and smell the roses, right? You want to take that time, that leisure time and go someplace. I think there was a resurgence of interest, if you will, in our country during Covid or post Covid. People say, oh gee, now I have a chance. I had a taste of seeing these places. I want to go to other places. National parks are still very popular with families and individuals renewed interest in the great outdoors after, during Covid. So it's still appealing and the cost of air has gone up exponentially. So even with higher gas prices, it's really more economical to drive to many of the destinations, especially if they're within like 12 hours driving.

Paula Twidale (15:16):

So it's not taking you several days, but if you can do it in a day and make a stop, a lot of families are opting to drive, especially during the summer months, of course when you know you're not dealing with inclement weather all over the place. And as far as you know where they're going and what are they doing? Smoky Mountains, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, all the popular places and also New England fall foliage. So later in the year they'll either fly or drive up there. So road trips will continue to be popular, especially for the summer months and camping. We're doing a lot with camping. A lot of people would just want to have that freedom and flexibility and not be boxed in. And we've seen more of that. On the second part of your question, you started to talk about, you know, sustainability. We like to call it impact travel.

Paula Twidale (15:59):

And impact travel is really about those authentic cultural experience doing good. So you know, something sustainable, economical, environmentally favorable. And then lastly being aware of nature around you. So experience all those cultural components so impactful in all those ways. Sustainability is a piece of it. We don't just look at sustainability in, its all by itself, you know. So we look at it in more totality. In fact, AAA has some exclusive itineraries, and I'll quickly mention this because it's, it's important to know what it means, right? We work with the travel corporation and they, they're providing for us specific AAA itineraries, one Ireland and one over to Italy. Okay. And, and what it means in Ireland, those authentic experience are like dining local restaurants, visiting a working farm or storytelling or bread demonstration. So again, it's cultural immersion and in terms of the environmental side, you are walking through, uh, Wicklow National Park and learning how to protect nature.

Paula Twidale (17:02):

So there are elements that are doing good from that perspective. In Italy. Similarly, you're going to visit like an organic lemon house and dine with a specific local family and learn about local history, a farm to table meal. So again, it's giving back to nature. And of course scenic drives and boat trips and things like that. You have cultural immersion. The doing good part of it would be a guided tour with the farm to understand how thermal and renewable energy is impacted there and sustainable farming methods. So again, you've got sustainable components within an impactful itinerary. So we've put those on our docket, if you will, to offer out, because they're really special to people that have that interest.

Bob Gilbert (17:45):

I mean, I love those kinds of programs personally, just to immerse myself into a local community and try to get that inside look at what makes that particular community or regional country tick. Is there anything similar in the us? I was going to ask the question, do you work with DMOs? But I would imagine that it will be the tour companies that you partner with, that work with those destinations.

Paula Twidale (18:15):

Correct I look at my past history and it's certainly familiar with the DMOs, but we work with the tour operators and the tour operators that we work with as our preferred suppliers. And you know, member Choice Vacations was as operated by Collette, the Travel Corporation to Fargo and Talc. They, they own Alexander + Roberts. A lot of the different companies that we offer tour our product with. And the opportunity going through AAA is that we also offer member benefits. So it's a better opportunity to book with AAA because we're giving our members benefits on top of what they get. So it's costing them less and they're getting the, the experience of our advisor, et cetera. Things we've already talked about. But in saying that, a lot of them have sustainable components or impactful components baked into those products. So the short answer is yes, you'd have to look at itineraries to get very specific, but there are choices on tours, there's immersion, you know, I can remember even just myself, it's on the products to that, go to Jordan, go to Petra.

Paula Twidale (19:09):

There's cultural immersion and sustainability embedded in those products in Jordan, because we contributed and AAA contributes today from our content team and travel. We contributed to content for the meaningful map in Jordan. On those itineraries you can visit a woman's co-op where you're at the women's co-op and you're eating lunch. They've made the lunch. How they sustain themselves, they're making jewelry, they're making things, when you go to their store and buy things, it's self-sustainable. So you're giving back to local communities. And it's critical to have pieces of this in itineraries. The reason why I mentioned the two programs that I called Impactful Travel is because there's a larger number of components that are authentic, cultural, nature oriented, sustainable efforts, environmental efforts built into those itineraries in a bigger way. Not overly saturated, but in a bigger way. Because there might be an opportunity for someone that wants to take a tour to Italy and not necessarily take one of our other ones that have some of the components. They want more of that cultural immersion, more of that sustainability. So the short answer is we don't work directly with the DMOs, we work through the tour operators, but we build itineraries that are classic, that include all these types of choices, inclusions and opportunities to have cultural immersion.

Bob Gilbert (20:26):

You know, one of the hallmarks of AAA over the years has been the Diamond Program. Could you explain the Diamond Program and how that program works today and how you ensure consistency in classifications and reviews from your hotel inspectors?

Paula Twidale (20:47):

I love the question because it's sometimes it's a misconception. You know, a hotel, a property has a star rating, then they have a diamond rating. First of all, a star rating is very subjective. You know, it's, you may rate a property very different than how I would rate it, or the next person, the next person. A family may love a property because it has a pool and all these fun things to do with their kids. But if I'm going on business, maybe that's not important to me. So star ratings are very subjective, they're very important, but they're subjective. The diamond rating, we really take pride in the diamond rating. The diamond rating is very objective because we have independent inspectors who are employees that go unannounced to these properties and they inspect the properties on. I won't go through the plethora of levels, but it's quite extensive, right?

Paula Twidale (21:29):

They're looking at the quality of the property, the inclusions in the property based on the elements. A quality property could be a three-diamond property or a five-diamond property, but the difference would be types of inclusions, big, better amenities and so forth. So they're rated on that. Again, it's objective because they have to pass these criteria. And then additionally, they are rated on cleanliness. We've baked that in the last two years. We've baked that component in as part of passing the diamond inspection. You can't pass the diamond inspection without passing this. The cleanliness inspection, which we call ATP, the Adenosine Triphosphate swabbing. So we actually take swabs of public areas and you know, elevators and railings and in the room and different places in the room, there's a set of criteria we have and we put them in a machine and they have to pass a threshold of cleanliness to be able to pass.

Paula Twidale (22:25):

So you might have this great property and not pass the cleanliness inspection. So generally that doesn't happen. It's pretty synonymous with the quality of the property, but it is more arduous to do. But in the end, it's a great story to tell because consumers became much more cleanliness conscious, certainly during the pandemic and post pandemic. So we pride ourselves there and additionally we have what we call official appointments. Properties can actually market, they work with our sales team to be able to have the ability to market the fact that they've received a diamond rating and then they're able to advertise hot deals and things and special offers and advertise on their own sites. Not just AAA, but advertise on their own that they're a diamond rated property, they have bragging rights and that really goes a long way. And our hotel partners have felt that that is a very, very important component to their success, even on their own direct websites.

Bob Gilbert (23:22):

Yeah, and I think that the Diamond Program and the association with that huge trust factor plays very well within the more discerning traveler today. Is there a difference in the Diamond Program how one would, I'll use the word, measure a hotel in say Mexico versus one in Las Vegas as an example?

Paula Twidale (23:47):

Yes and no. And I know where you're going with this and I could tell you as an example, we had this when we, we opened up Costa Rica, great properties. You go into Guanacaste and the Pacific side of Costa Rica, fabulous five-diamond properties. But they, they might have missed a five-diamond rating because our criteria requires double locks on sliding doors, you know, something like that. So it could be as something as benign as that. That might be one lock but not two. So we're, we're assessing those things that may be regional or changes in the sign of the times of what consumers want. We don't want to ding a property because they have a steamer in the room instead of an iron. You know, those kind of things. So it could be geographical, it could be the sign of the times. Our team is constantly assessing that. We're not giving any property a pass by any means, saying, well, you know, it's in this area that's more suppressed, so we're going to kind of like lower the standard. We're not doing that at all. But there are some things that really don't impact the rating, but maybe on paper they would have. So we're starting to look at that this time around coming in this year.

Bob Gilbert (24:49):

One of the things that I guess is on everybody's lips these days, AI, and I have to say I've looked at Trip Canvas and I love it. And I think that that ability to dream and to plan and to book is part, you know, that dreaming process and the exploration, to me that's all part of the experience. And I think that Trip Canvas is really that experience driven platform that, I love it. I've not seen it before, but could you explain the genesis of Trip Canvas and how it works?

Paula Twidale (25:34):

Sure. In fact, we're constantly improving it. So over time you're going to see many more improvements. We're trying to synthesize some of the avenues that we have and products that we have for our members and consumers in general. It allows you as a consumer, regardless of where you live, to explore Trip Canvas. Not necessarily just in your region, where a lot of things are regionally done with AAA. So Trip Canvas is just that. It is really the dreaming and planning and that vacation life cycle starts with that. You need to be inspired. People say, are you traveling? The first thing they ask is, you know, we have favorite destination. Oh, where do you want to go? You have a dream about where you want to go. So you can start researching that. You can start tagging different things that we have on Trip Canvas. It's kind of like a Pinterest type board to inspire you. There's content, there are hotels, there are restaurants and different things. And we're constantly, continually to build out more content. So it's going to get better over time. And we just launched it this past year.

Bob Gilbert (26:26):

I'm a AAA member and I like to play around with these kinds of tools. Does it build on my profile? Is there a machine learning piece to this or you become familiar with the kinds of things I'm looking for from an experience perspective? Or is it engineered a little differently?

Paula Twidale (26:44):

It's engineered a little differently, but I'm going to say the honest answer is it's not yet. The goal of the profile and really for you to be able to dream and plan is so that you can save things, you can go back and there's an ability for you to book. You can book one or two items, or if you have everything on your board and you want to book them, it goes over to our reservation and operating system. So we're trying to streamline the business part of our omnichannel solution to streamline on the, the business so that our agents can also go in and see that you book something, if you end up going to your local AAA because you've done your dreaming and planning, you actually made a booking, but you need some



help on something or you want to further build out more of your trip and you stop by your local AAA or you call up your agent or however you want to contact your agent.

Paula Twidale (27:23):

We want to have that vision for omnichannel. So we're getting there. The real goal is to, in a, in a life cycle of travel that streaming and planning then is booking, then there's an anticipatory stage. Before you travel. Now at some point would we make recommendations to you to say, "hey, you're traveling over to Italy, it's an overnight flight. Did you think about business class on that overnight flight?" We might serve you up something. You probably say, "oh gee, I never thought about that. Or maybe one way I'll do it on the way back. It's a day flight or when I get there I can do something else." Kind of like when you're on Amazon and other people look at these different things or things are often grouped together at some point in time in the future, we'll probably be there to do that on the anticipatory stage. Then you're going to take the experience, you're going to take that tour or cruise or vacation experience and then there's a reminisce part. We want to be able to incorporate our voice of the member through the our FIFO reviews into the vacation experience so that if you're writing your review and it's posted someplace that you've reviewed Italy and other people are aspiring to go there, they're going to see your reviews. And a member is more likely to book if they see another member's review. So it's a big process. It's ever evolving.

Bob Gilbert (28:33):

I really love that the process of inspiration, you know, that dreaming, you know, to wherever it may be the next state or another country, but you know, looking at all the different aspects. I'm a firm believer, at least from a leisure trip, it's about the experience that somebody is looking for that makes them make a purchase decision. I mean it isn't just that but you know, what is it that you are looking for? You know, is it a romantic vacation? Is it a family trip? You know, is it educational? Is it food and wine? There's an experience that people want and they follow that. I'll use the word dream to be able to plan it and to explore it. When I was growing up in the UK and I would travel to Europe, part of the adventure was planning the trip. It was in the days of where you had a map. So you'd be looking at a paper map and

Bob Gilbert (29:31):

Different things that you want to, you want to see. But to me that's all part of that whole experience, which is more emotional than sentiment.

Paula Twidale (29:40):

You didn't have that GPS to help navigate. My husband's from England so I spent a lot of time over in England and Europe. So you didn't have, in those days have all the bells and whistles we have today to find your way out of where you're going and make those mistakes. But you had your map, it was excitement. I can appreciate that. It was a lot of excitement doing that.

Bob Gilbert (29:58):

It was fun. The planning piece was part of that experience. Talking about planning and what has happened to Triptych. Is that still around or is that it

Paula Twidale (30:07):

Is still around. It's funny you should ask that because it is around, we have Triptych and that's for the road trips and we've built a lot out on that. We have gas stations and marked on that. You can look at

hotels along the journey. We added EV stops for charging on those. So Triptych is alive and well. We are looking at ways to incorporate through AAA that you can access Trip Canvas, Triptychs or even the tour book. You know, we had our hard copy tour book but now they're all digital. So realistically, if I'm dreaming and planning through Trip Canvas and suddenly I want to take a road trip and I see a hotel on Trip Canvas or destination, I may pop over to Triptychs and be able to plan my journey. But I still have Trip Canvas looking for other things. I'm looking for restaurants and fun things to do.

Paula Twidale (30:46):

And by the way, if I'm in the destination, I'm in the Smoky Mountains, maybe I hit the digital tour book to drill down even deeper as to maybe things that I'd like to experience. So my team, my team, my travel team, they're feverishly working on all of these things to make them better, more integrated, easy to work with and intuitive to cater to what people are looking for when they're thinking about traveling. They don't necessarily want content. That's a lot of advertisement when you get there. You want to be told like, gee, this would be really cool for you to try out. And suddenly you get these great ideas and we want to be all things to all people. So we've got a road ahead of us, no pun intended, but we're working on it.

Bob Gilbert (31:26):

You know, you took my next question right out of my mouth. What do you see as the road ahead? What is your thought on the future? Let's just look at the remainder of this year for travel through the lens of AAA. What? What do you see?

Paula Twidale (31:43):

I see a very strong year because it's already strong year out of the gate. You know, people plan ahead of time when it's the bigger the trip is, they plan ahead. So we know that fingers crossed the world stay stable and we can continue to travel to do what we want to do. Europe will continue to be strong. You are looking at the top destinations and I've already mentioned some in Europe, but you know, even places like Mexico, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Lisbon, Portugal, Netherlands, those are all strong international destinations. Domestically, certainly big Florida destinations, Orlando, Lauderdale, Miami, then you got Honolulu, Hawaii, places like New York and Boston, California due to Disneyland being in Anaheim and others and then Arizona as well. So you've got a plethora of different destinations that are still remain popular. Other little trending things, you know, I would say solo travel.

Paula Twidale (32:29):

A lot of people are not waiting to say, I need a roommate to be able to go on traveling. We're seeing more consumers embracing passion for traveling on their own and they want to have those experience and they don't want to have to wait for somebody to go with them. So they want to experience a destination culture, gastronomy, et cetera. Solo travel by cruise and tours, they have a lot of opportunities because safety and group and numbers without the hassle. They're engaging with like-minded people and, and lastly a lot of our travel partners are tour and cruise operators are making it more affordable and lessening the burden of a single supplement. So I think you're seeing those kind of trends, but we're going to have a strong year cruising and touring is up. Those are all inclusive for a lot of products and I think people can start to see areas of the world that perhaps they may not want to do on their own because a lot of driving not know where they're going. But we also, we are also a provider. We are the state department's provider for IDPs, International Driving Permits and the numbers keep going up. So that tells me more people going to international destinations and they're going to be driving and

exploring while they're out there. So all of that being said, I think it's going to be a very, very good year. Fingers crossed as I say because it's an election year and you don't, you don't know what happens in the world, so.

Bob Gilbert (33:43):

All bets are off. Yeah.

Paula Twidale (33:44):

Yeah, all bets are off. But all good.

Bob Gilbert (33:46):

Fantastic. You know, Paula, you've been a fantastic guest.

Bob Gilbert (33:50):

Really appreciate the time and your insights and wisdom and I wish you continued success. Thank you so much.

Paula Twidale (33:59):

Thanks for having me. Appreciate it.

Bob Gilbert (34:03):

Thanks for listening to part one of this episode. Tune in next time for part two. Please like, subscribe and leave a review. You can also visit to learn more about our tourism marketing case.