

**RALEIGH, N.C.:** After 14 months of wariness and warnings attuned to the fight against COVID-19, [Visit North Carolina](#) extends a welcoming message to travelers who are eager to restore the joy of the journey. The new “Get Back to a Better Place” campaign responds to travelers’ desire to return to favorite places and a better state of mind in an improving health environment.

“The timing of the campaign aligns with traveler sentiment and the wisdom of state health officials, who plan to ease more restrictions based on vaccinations and improving trends with the pandemic,” said Visit NC Director Wit Tuttell. “The invitation to ‘get back to a better place’ reflects the power of travel to restore people’s spirits and also revive an economy built on the wondrous experiences that elevate North Carolina as one of the nation’s most desirable states to visit.”

The campaign’s [digital centerpiece](#) is a 30-second video that draws on advanced animation techniques to capture the spellbinding transformation of a father and son as they emerge from the confinements of COVID-19 and reconnect at sunrise on the Blue Ridge Parkway near Waynesville. With closing images of Chimney Rock, Lake Norman and Carolina Beach, the vignette addresses a longing to “re-engage with our better selves in the best of places,” Tuttell said.

Other elements highlight the pleasures of Piedmont cities and the immersive beauty of the coast. The campaign rolls out across a spectrum that includes Smart TVs and connected devices, social media, brand partnerships and print, all of which direct travelers to [VisitNC.com](#) for more information about trips that transform. Mountain cabins, city parks, ferry trips and trails are among the topics featured in fresh content designed to inspire vacations and getaways.

“Get Back to a Better Place” advances the message of “[Drive-Thru Vacations](#),” a promotion that guides travelers to the Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park in Wilson, Shangri-La Stone Village in Prospect Hill and other experiences that can be enjoyed from inside a car. Drive-Thru Vacations connects travelers to [Count On Me NC](#), a statewide initiative to provide safety training to hotels, restaurants and other businesses while calling on consumers to follow measures known to limit spread of the coronavirus. Count On Me NC’s [searchable database](#) will continue to provide guidance to travelers seeking a commitment to safety from hospitality providers.

“Guidance from state health officials has been the cornerstone of Visit NC’s message, which has focused on safety as travelers ventured out in 2020 and early 2021,” Tuttell said. “At the same time, we’re aware of the tremendous losses to the thousands of small businesses at the heart of the state’s tourism economy. We’re excited about the harmony between the improving health outlook and the sentiment among travelers eager to explore North Carolina.”

Visit NC, which is part of the [Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina](#), has tracked traveler sentiment since the pandemic’s early days. Data from May 3 show that 77 percent of Americans are ready to travel. The number rises to nearly 90 percent for those who have been vaccinated. The overall figure compares with 72 percent reporting readiness in mid-April 2021, 50 percent reporting readiness in late May 2020 and only 43 percent in mid-July 2020.

With more people receiving vaccines and with key metrics for North Carolina improving, Gov. Roy Cooper has expressed optimism that by June 1, the state might be able to modify the current mask mandate and lift other restrictions. Given the importance of summer travel to all 100 counties, Tuttell notes that sustained progress with vaccinations and other safety measures would come at a moment of opportunity that’s critical to an economic rebound for the state.

“Research shows that four in 10 U.S. travelers are interested in visiting North Carolina,” he said. “That interest is particularly high among millennials and affluent households. A strong summer for travel could help put thousands of people back to work in the leisure and hospitality industry, where employment losses account for 56 percent of the North Carolina jobs that were wiped out by the pandemic.

“Even the best summer ever will fall short of recouping all the losses since the arrival of COVID-19,” Tuttell added. “But we have reason to be optimistic about the message of our new campaign: It’s time to get back to a better place.”

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