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Hawai'i Virtual Reality Experience to Debut at Tourism Conference, Sept. 26-30

HONOLULU – In a first for promoting travel to the Hawaiian Islands, the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) is introducing a virtual reality tour experience highlighted by 360-degree live-action footage using breathtaking imagery that instantly drops “visitors” into Hawai'i from anywhere worldwide.

The virtual tour experience, Hawai'i VR, will debut at the 2016 Hawai'i Tourism Conference, Sept. 26-30, at the Hawai'i Convention Center (www.hawaiiitourismconference.com).

Hawai'i's new VR tour experience will be addressed in the general session, Virtual Reality: The Undiscovered Territory in Tourism Marketing, on Sept. 29, from 1:45-2:45 p.m. In addition, VR demo stations will be placed in the conference Tech Hub of the Village Square for attendees to try out.

The conference theme of Transforming Tourism Together describes perfectly how Hawai'i VR will allow anyone anywhere in the world to experience anytime up-close all around them the welcoming culture, natural beauty, sunny weather and undeniable appeal of the Hawaiian Islands.

Leslie Dance, HTA vice president of marketing and product development, said, “Anyone who loves Hawai'i or dreams about coming here is going to be amazed at how they can suddenly be in the islands whenever they want and capture the magic of being here. This virtual reality tour is a new platform for showcasing Hawai'i's culture and natural environment, the two pillars of our global appeal.”

Four islands, O'ahu, Maui, Kaua'i and the island of Hawai'i, are featured in the Hawai'i VR experience. The virtual tour begins with the user floating as a paraglider through clear blue skies above the islands. The user selects an island to explore, then gently descends into the midst of a tour experience highlighting that island's particular allure, environment and attractions. An island-based resident narrates as the tour guide, providing a personal perspective and advice on what to enjoy.

Hawai'i VR combines cinematic virtual interactivity with live-action footage, a unique differentiation in virtual reality content, especially for promoting destination travel. Virtual sightseeing of spectacular landscapes, including coastlines, waterfalls and rainforests, is coupled with enticing activities, such as hula, surfing and catamaran sailing.

“This VR experience will be an educational tool for travelers, as well as travel trade professionals, about the diversity of the Hawaiian Islands and help inspire the booking of vacations,” said Dance.

Hawai'i VR is customized for mobile and tethered platforms. The gaze of a user's eyes controls selections from a mobile device, while the tethered experience is operated with Vive controllers, as the user holds them in the same way as the handles of a paraglider.

Hawai'i VR is being launched with virtual tours of O'ahu and the island of Hawai'i on HTC Vive and iPhone. On Sept. 26, it can be downloaded for HTC Vive on Steam (<http://store.steampowered.com/>) and on the iOS App Store for iPhone using the search: Hawaii VR.

A version for Oculus Rift and Android smartphones will be introduced later this year and will coincide with the launch of virtual tour experiences for all four islands on all platforms.

In support of HTA's vision for an immersive virtual reality experience, Hawai'i VR was conceived by OMD's Zero Code in collaboration with creative direction from Hawai'i-based agency MVNP and visual effects shop Framestore, which also provided the VR and 360 live-action production.

In addition to new global marketing initiatives like Hawai'i VR, the Hawai'i Tourism Conference will feature 60 sessions addressing a wide variety of topics, including Hawaiian culture, ecological sustainability, international travel, and quality of the visitor experience.

For more information and to register for the conference, visit www.hawaiiitourismconference.com. Discounts are available for groups, educators and students. Free validated parking is available to registered attendees throughout the week of the conference.

Registered attendees can pick up their badge and conference materials in advance at the Hawai'i Convention Center on Monday, Sept. 26, from 12:30–5:00 p.m. On-site registration for the conference will also be accepted at that time.

About the Hawai'i Tourism Authority

The [Hawai'i Tourism Authority](http://www.hawaiiitourismauthority.org) is responsible for strategically managing the State of Hawai'i's marketing initiatives to support tourism. HTA's goal is to optimize tourism's benefits for Hawai'i, while being attentive to the interests of travelers, the community and visitor industry. Established in 1998 to support Hawai'i's leading industry and largest employer, HTA continually strives to help ensure the sustainability of tourism's success. For more information about HTA, please visit www.hawaiiitourismauthority.org. Follow updates about HTA on Facebook, Twitter (@HawaiiHTA) and its YouTube Channel.

About OMD's Zero Code

With over 60 awards to date OMD's Zero Code is the world's most celebrated specialty group focusing on gaming and virtual reality. The team develops A to Z campaigns that leverage the interactive entertainment ecosystem from videogames to esports, virtual reality and everything in between.

About Framestore

Framestore is an Oscar-winning creative studio, home to a collection of artists and visionaries who use innovative talent and technology to create high-end images for every platform. Framestore partners with clients ranging from Hollywood studios to advertisers, ad agencies and production companies to video game developers. In addition to being recognized for its globally celebrated visual effects, Framestore has more recently made its name as an innovator in the digital space, focusing on the immersive engagement potential of interactive visual effects.

About MVNP

MVNP (formerly Milici Valenti Ng Pack) is an integrated advertising agency based in Honolulu, and an Affiliate Agency of DDB Worldwide. Our focus is converting customers to fans and building brands that people love. We do it with smart thinking, solid creative and more cups of coffee than we care to admit. MVNP has become Hawai'i's leading integrated advertising agency, specializing in destination marketing, airlines, hotels and resorts, financial institutions, health care, land development, ocean transportation, fast food restaurants and shopping centers.

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