



visit
TUOLUMNE
county
★CALIFORNIA★



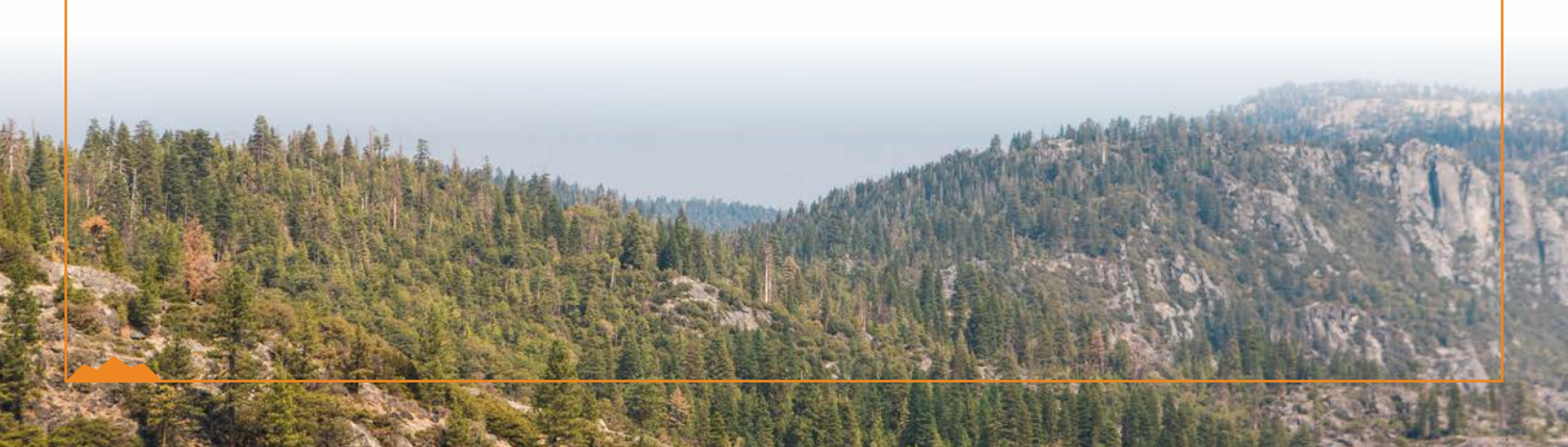
High Sierra Columns of the Giants
Credit: Local Freshies-High Sierra Visitors Council

2025 / 2026

Annual Report



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Executive Summary

Dear Visit Tuolumne County Partners, Stakeholders, and Elected Officials,

This past year has reminded us just how dynamic the travel and tourism industry can be. From broader economic and political uncertainty to changing travel patterns and ongoing questions around visitation to Yosemite National Park, many of the factors influencing travel were beyond our direct control. Yet through these fluctuations, Tuolumne County's tourism economy continued to show resilience.

That resilience is strengthened by the foresight and flexibility of Visit Tuolumne County and our partners. When conditions shift, we pivot toward new opportunities while placing greater emphasis on proven markets, including domestic and drive-market audiences that remain essential to keeping travel thriving throughout our communities.

Looking ahead to 2026–2027, we are optimistic about the opportunities before us. We will continue to focus on strong domestic visitation while also watching positive signs in key international markets, including Mexico, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. As always, we will monitor the direction of Visit California and align our efforts and leverage funds where appropriate to maximize our reach and impact. This year, we are placing greater emphasis on outreach to the film industry, recognizing its potential to spur production activity, generate local spending, and create broader economic benefits for Tuolumne County. We are building a new film website, hosting location managers in market, getting more involved in the industry on a statewide level, and promoting previous film locations to encourage visitation throughout the County.

With continued collaboration, adaptability, and shared commitment, we are well positioned for a strong year ahead!

None of this work would be possible without the incredible Visit Tuolumne County team. Their hard work, passion, creativity, and unwavering commitment to Tuolumne County are at the heart of everything we do. I am deeply grateful for their dedication and proud of the role they play in helping our destination, our communities, and our local economy thrive.

A special thanks also goes to the all-volunteer VTC Board for their continued input and support. We are also grateful to the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors and the Sonora City Council for their long-term partnership and ongoing commitment to supporting tourism as an important part of our local economy, providing jobs, and quality of life for the residents of Tuolumne County.

All the best,



Lisa Mayo

Lisa Mayo
President & CEO
Visit Tuolumne County

Celebrating Progress, Navigating Challenges and Looking Ahead

A Message from VTC Board Chair, Ryan Reis

The 2025–2026 tourism year was full of meaningful accomplishments, important milestones and continued resilience for Visit Tuolumne County. From recognizing the people and businesses that make our destination special with the inaugural Tourism Industry Awards to expanding marketing initiatives positioning the county's presence as a tourism destination, the year laid important groundwork for an exciting future.

The year brought significant professional recognition. Lisa Mayo, VTC President and CEO, received the F. Norman Clark Tourism Champion of the Year Award from CalTravel, California's leading organization for tourism advocacy, collaboration and education. The award is the highest honor in California tourism recognizing excellence in tourism leadership. Receiving this recognition is a tremendous honor—not only personally, but as a reflection of the work taking place in Tuolumne County's tourism industry.

The past year had its challenges. Like destinations across the country, Visit Tuolumne County continued to navigate fluctuations in international travel. Uncertainty surrounding Yosemite National Park's reservation system also created challenges well into the busy season. Insufficient snow shortened the season for many winter recreational activities having an impact on both travelers and local businesses.

Despite these challenges, Visit Tuolumne County continued to adapt, promote the destination and look for new opportunities to connect with visitors.

Currently marketing initiatives are focused on in-state travelers who are looking for mountain getaways, outdoor adventures, history and year-round experiences. VTC is also elevating Tuolumne County as a compelling film location through hosting film location managers in market, building a new film website, and more social media outreach for the Film Commission, which VTC also oversees.

With new marketing initiatives, major storytelling projects, expanded community outreach and a renewed focus on emerging opportunities, the year ahead promises to be an exciting chapter for Tuolumne County tourism.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Reis'.

Ryan Reis
VTC Board Chair
Recreation Director, Don Pedro Recreation Area

ABOUT VISIT TUOLUMNE COUNTY





Tuolumne County is one destination with three incredible regions that beckon visitors year-round. In Tuolumne County, visitors and residents can experience iconic Yosemite adventures, make golden discoveries in California's Gold Country and explore the high country on an exciting High Sierra trip. With its proximity to the San Francisco Bay Area and being just two hours from the Sacramento area, Tuolumne County is convenient, affordable and uniquely amazing -- providing unforgettable memories to its visitors.

Visit Tuolumne County (VTC) is the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Tuolumne County. As a private, mutual benefit non-profit 501(c)(6) corporation, VTC promotes tourism to Tuolumne County by inspiring visitors to choose Tuolumne County for their vacation and meetings destination. This is done through strategic marketing initiatives carried out on a variety of marketing and promotional platforms from traditional media to geo-targeted online advertising, influencer hosting and many programs in between.

VTC is an economic development organization that is currently funded through a portion of the transient occupancy tax (TOT) that visitors pay when they stay at lodging properties throughout Tuolumne County. We reinvest those dollars to further promote Tuolumne County to visitors which results in greater visitation, travel spending, sales tax and TOT. VTC received 16% of the TOT in 2025-2026 and approximately \$150,000 of the TOT collected in the City of Sonora.

VTC is a partnership organization. We invite businesses in the community, whether or not they are directly related to tourism, to be a part of Tuolumne County's number one private sector industry—tourism. Partnership rates start at just \$200 annually and that includes a business listing and link on our website, visittuolumne.com, brochure distribution at our Visitor Center, a listing in the annual Travel Guide and opportunities throughout the year for various promotional opportunities.

Visit Tuolumne County is proud to have received our Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) designation from Destinations International in 2019. This is the highest honor for a DMO in the industry. We maintain that designation through ongoing updates and renewals, most recently in 2025.

The Visit Tuolumne County Team

Full Time:

Lisa Mayo, President & CEO,
Certified Destination Marketing Executive

Myrka Morales, Marketing & Communications Manager

Amariah Richards, Business Development Manager

Part Time:

Jen Lopez, Marketing Specialist

Elaine Squaglia, Visitor Services Expert

Mark Truppner, Visitor Services Expert

Deni Avery, Operations Coordinator

Contracted Team:

Ginger Malatesta, Accounting

Tessi Daley, Social Media

Laurie Armstrong Gossy, Public Relations



Board of Directors

2025/2026

Executive Directors

Chair—Ryan Reis, Represents District 4 Lodging: Don Pedro Recreation Agency

Vice Chair—Joseph Mathiesen-Powell, Represents District 5 Lodging: Chicken Ranch Casino Resort

Secretary/Treasurer—Jan Verhage, At Large: Sierra Repertory Theatre

Directors

Launa Valente, Represents District 2 Lodging: Lazy Z Resort

Athena Low, Represents District 3 Lodging: Mi Wuk Village Inn

Luis Torres, Represents District 3 Lodging: Black Oak Casino Resort

Teri Marshall, Represents District 4 Lodging: First Light Resorts

Karen Mariano-Luckhardt, At Large: Inner Sanctum Cellars Winery and Tap Room at Basecamp

Sam Segerstrom, At Large: Coldwell Banker Segerstrom Real Estate

Jason Banks, At Large: Central Sierra Broadcasting

Advisory (Non-Voting)

Supervisor Steve Grier, Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors

Council Member Bess Levine, City of Sonoma City Council

Aaron James, Partnership & Outreach Coordinator, Stanislaus National Forest

Benjamin Cossel, Public Affairs Officer, Stanislaus National Forest

Len Otley, President, Tuolumne County Lodging Association

Scott Gediman, Assistant Superintendent for Public & Legislative Affairs, Yosemite National Park

Ron Kopf, Tuolumne County Business Council

VTC Marketing Committee

Jason Banks, Central Sierra Broadcasting

Katie Fromm, Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort

Gabriel Mann, Wild Yosemite

Teri Marshall, First Light Resorts

Ethan Sandberg, Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort

Luis Torres, Black Oak Casino Resort

Team Awards, Recognition, and Certifications

Lisa Mayo, President & CEO

F. Norman Clark Tourism Champion of the Year Award from the California Travel Association



"The F. Norman Clark Tourism Champion of the Year award recognizes excellence in California tourism leadership by a member individual, organization, or entity, for activities in a particular year or to acknowledge a body of work in tourism. The award recognizes activities which have contributed to building the image of California and for contributing to increasing visitor arrivals to the state."

- California Travel Association

State recognition for being awarded the F. Norman Clark Tourism Champion of the Year Award:



California Legislature Assembly Certificate of Recognition from Assemblyman David Tangipa.

Letter of Recognition from Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil

Laurie Armstrong Gossy, Public Relations Contractor

TravMedia Lifetime Achievement Award

Jen Lopez, Marketing Specialist

Professional Certificate in Sustainable Tourism from the Global Sustainable Tourism Council



Mission

To enhance economic growth by responsibly increasing tourism to Tuolumne County.

Vision

Visit Tuolumne County is the premiere authority for marketing Tuolumne County's tourism and is looked to for leadership in all areas of destination management.

Why Tourism Matters

An investment in Visit Tuolumne County fuels economic activity in our community. Destination promotion is a crucial step in growing our travel and hospitality sector, and is imperative for the economic development of the whole county.

Tourism benefits local economies, businesses and residents. The economic development of Tuolumne County depends on robust tourism marketing tactics, which ultimately generates more visitor spending and tax revenue.

Competition amongst destinations remains fierce, and we must continue to build on our proven tactics. There's a substantial opportunity to bring in more visitors during fall, winter and spring, and improve the quality of the trip for summer visitors. For meetings/groups and international travel, VTC is an imperative tool in reaching these audiences, encouraging them to stay longer and spend more across a wider range of products and services.

The benefits of destination promotion are not limited to the tourism industry. Destination marketing raises the profile of Tuolumne County and creates a positive brand that encourages businesses to locate here, attracts new residents, leads to real estate investments, contributes to our arts and cultural industries and makes our destination a better place to live. Destination promotion is for the benefit and wellbeing of every person in the community. It is an essential investment to develop opportunities and build quality of life to benefit all of our residents.

Strategic Marketing Objectives

The overall goal is to increase visitation, travel spending and overnight stays.

Objectives to meet these goals include:

- Utilize earned, owned and paid channels to inspire travel.
- Support shoulder seasons of fall, winter and spring when travel is at its lowest through travel trade, and meetings/group promotion.
- Communicate the authentic personality of the destination, emphasizing the key differentiators.
- Establish messaging and imagery that evoke emotion among target audiences.
- Through our strategic partnerships, marketing and public relations agencies and our own research, identify media placements that reach and influence our target audiences.

Brand Positioning/Pillars

Tuolumne County is a year-round destination offering three vacations in one. Here people can experience iconic Yosemite explorations, authentic California Gold Country discoveries and unforgettable High Sierra outdoor adventures. This positioning helps identify VTC's brand pillars, helping communicate what makes Tuolumne County different from other destinations.

- Diverse and scenic natural landscapes
- Uncrowded, open spaces
- Three vacations in one destination (Gold Country, High Sierra and Yosemite)
- Living history
- Accessible/proximity—is in drivable distances and within 2-3 hours of major local airports and population centers
- Value and affordability
- Unique/different/unexpected
- Wellness focus
- Responsible and sustainable travel

Research & Insights

Industry research and insights form the foundation of all Visit Tuolumne County's campaigns and marketing projects. Thus, ensuring that we are staying on top of trends and appealing to key markets.

Trends

Industry research including the latest trends, helps VTC create marketing programs and campaigns. How and why are people traveling? Here are some of the latest and ongoing trends we can leverage for promoting Tuolumne County:

- **Road Trips**—Travelers are seeking easy, drive-to getaways that offer freedom, spontaneity, and the ability to explore multiple experiences along the way.
- **Authentic & Meaningful Travel**—Travelers are seeking genuine, local experiences that reflect the true character of a destination —through its people, culture, history, and natural environment, including hands-on activities, storytelling, local interactions, and moments that feel unique, reflective, or emotionally impactful.
- **Wellness**—Travelers are prioritizing physical and mental well-being, seeking destinations that offer relaxation, nature, and opportunities to recharge.
- **Adventure Travel**—Travelers are looking for unique, active experiences that provide a sense of escape, exploration, and connection to the outdoors.
- **Affordability**—Value-driven travel continues to be important, especially for Millennials and Gen Z, who seek high-quality experiences at accessible price points.



Photo by Max Whittaker

- **Emotional Connection**—Travel is increasingly driven by emotion rather than just destination. Today's travelers are choosing places that make them feel something —nostalgia, inspiration, connection, relaxation, or a sense of belonging.
- **Farm Charm**—An emerging tourism trend centered around authentic rural experiences, slower travel, local connection, and nostalgic simplicity.

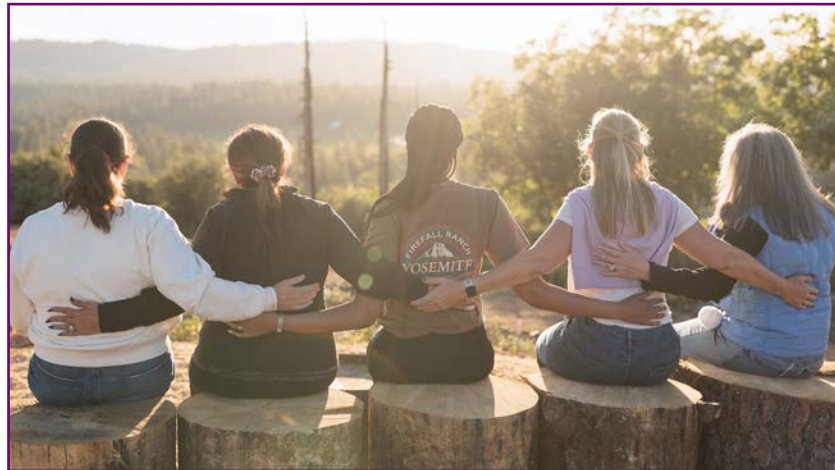


Photo by Max Whittaker

Target Audiences

Visit Tuolumne County reaches consumer audiences in eight key segments: Regional, Statewide, National, International, Groups and Meetings, Weddings, Media, and In-Market/Local Residents. Audiences within each are identified after doing thorough research, pulling in data from various resources including app location-powered visitation, website traffic, and flight patterns. We launch very specific initiatives to reach visitors and encourage them to extend their stay in Tuolumne County. And, to secure larger group and event travel for off-peak times, we continue our groups and meetings initiatives.

Marketing Tactics

As a marketing standard VTC markets to our target audiences, bearing in mind current trends, by utilizing three key strategies, paid media, owned media, and earned media through our strategic partnerships, social media and our marketing agency and in-house media buys.

- Paid media refers to external marketing efforts that involve a paid placement such as print ads, billboards, radio and TV spots and public relations outreach.
- Owned media is a set of communication channels/outlets where Visit Tuolumne County has complete control. These include our social media channels, website, annual travel guide, etc.
- Earned media refers to organic coverage or promotion of our brand. These include published tourism articles that include Tuolumne County, shared social media posts or social media mentions, influencer shout-outs, reviews and recommendations, etc.

TOURISM STATISTICS



Economic Impact

2025 TRAVEL SPENDING AND EMPLOYMENT*

Total Direct Travel Spending	\$304.2 MILLION
Tourism Industry Employment	2,640

History of Travel Spending in Tuolumne County Calendar Year



GOVERNMENT REVENUE GENERATED BY TOURISM*

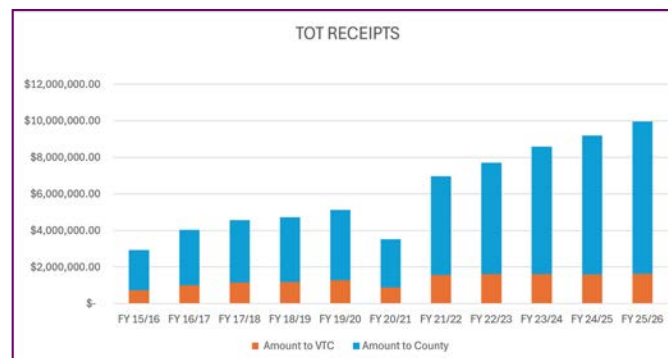
Local Sales Tax Receipts**	\$12.5 MILLION
State Sales Tax Receipt	\$12.7 MILLION
Transient Occupancy Tax (County)	\$9.8 MILLION
State and local tax revenue equivalency per Tuolumne County household	\$1,111

*These statistics do not include spending or job generation by either Black Oak Casino Resort or by Chicken Ranch Casino Resort as they fall under Government.

**Includes Transient Occupancy Tax for County of Tuolumne and City of Sonora.

This data is provided by Dean Runyan Associates and is preliminary as of May 2026.

History of Tuolumne County Transient Occupancy Tax Revenue Fiscal Year



Overnight Visitor Origins

REGIONS	STATE
Sacramento, Stockton, Modesto	Nevada
Fresno, Visalia	Texas
San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose	Utah
Reno	Arizona
Los Angeles	Washington

*Domestic visitors only. Data by Madden Voyage GPS/Azira

Welcome to the Tuolumne County Visitors Center

VTC operates one year-round Visitors Center in Downtown Sonora. The Visitor Center is open 7 days a week, Monday thru Friday 9 to 5 and weekends 9 to 2. Many of our visitors come from the Central Valley and Bay Area. Our international travelers have been steady, especially visitors from Germany who, historically, have traveled to our area for years.

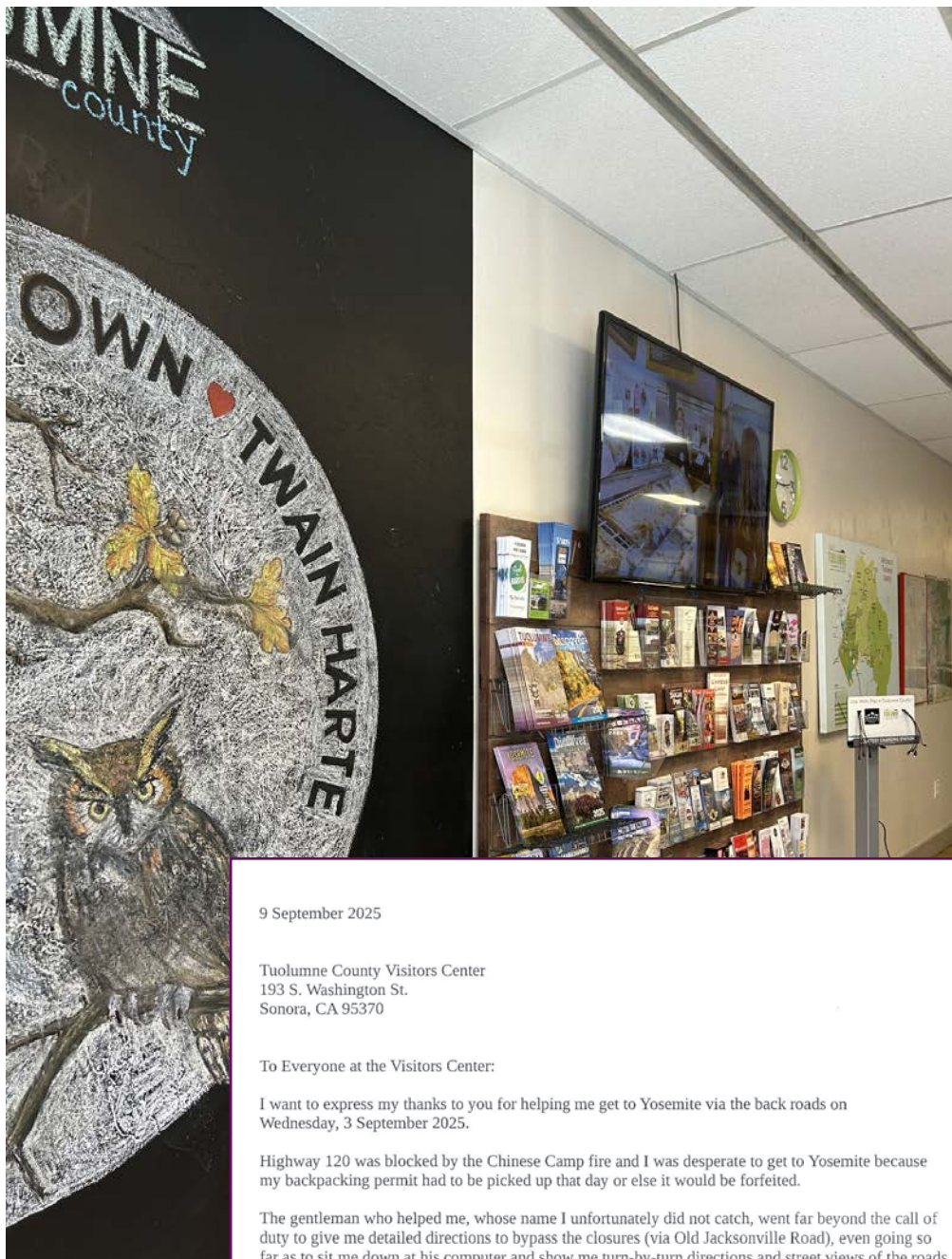
When visitors come into our Visitor Center, they are greeted by friendly and knowledgeable staff eager to share the many points of interest Tuolumne County has to offer. Questions range from where to stay, where to eat, and what to experience. Whether it's a Gold or High-Country experience, or a trip to Yosemite, we provide information, maps and local tips to help ensure they have the best experience possible!

We are here for our locals too! Many have lived here for a decade or more and have yet to see Yosemite. They are amazed to learn so much about Tuolumne County!

Top Origins of Visitors to the Visitor Center

CALIFORNIA	NATIONAL	INTERNATIONAL
San Jose	Texas	Germany
San Francisco	Washington	France
Fresno	Nevada	U.K.
Los Angeles	Oregon	Sweden

Tuolumne County Visitors Center



9 September 2025

Tuolumne County Visitors Center
193 S. Washington St.
Sonora, CA 95370

To Everyone at the Visitors Center:

I want to express my thanks to you for helping me get to Yosemite via the back roads on Wednesday, 3 September 2025.

Highway 120 was blocked by the Chinese Camp fire and I was desperate to get to Yosemite because my backpacking permit had to be picked up that day or else it would be forfeited.

The gentleman who helped me, whose name I unfortunately did not catch, went far beyond the call of duty to give me detailed directions to bypass the closures (via Old Jacksonville Road), even going so far as to sit me down at his computer and show me turn-by-turn directions and street views of the roads I needed to take.

Thanks to him, I was able to successfully navigate the back roads to Moccasin and get to Yosemite in time to pick up my backpacking permit. He saved my trip!

Everyone was helpful and gracious--I can't thank you all enough!

Sincerely,

Steve P.

Steve Peterson
Redwood City, CA

MARKETING PROGRAMS



Official Tuolumne County Travel Guide



Visit Tuolumne County creates and distributes the official Tuolumne County Travel Guide, which, along with the VTC website, forms the foundation of our marketing efforts.

In 2025, 75,000 copies of the guide were printed and distributed to high-visibility locations throughout the Bay Area, including Caltrain stations, Starbucks, Trader Joe's, Stanford University, and San Jose and Oakland International Airports. This year, distribution expanded into more than 200 locations across the Central Valley—from Lodi to Fresno—complementing our increased digital advertising efforts in the region.

They are also distributed at the Tuolumne County Visitors Center, mailed to advertising leads, individual requests, at media events, travel shows, and at local businesses. Local realtors also use the guides to inspire potential home buyers.

The development, printing, and distribution of the Travel Guide is a significant financial investment, but it yields immense value by providing a high-quality, comprehensive resource that inspires visitation to Tuolumne County. Although the Travel Guide includes a listing of all VTC partners, partners have the opportunity to place full-color advertisements in the guide for an additional cost.

Website: VisitTuolumne.com

Visit Tuolumne County's website serves as a digital gateway for inspiring and encouraging travel to Tuolumne County. The website functions as an essential resource, providing detailed information on VTC's partners, accommodations, events, itineraries, and travel tips, ensuring visitors can plan well-informed trips.

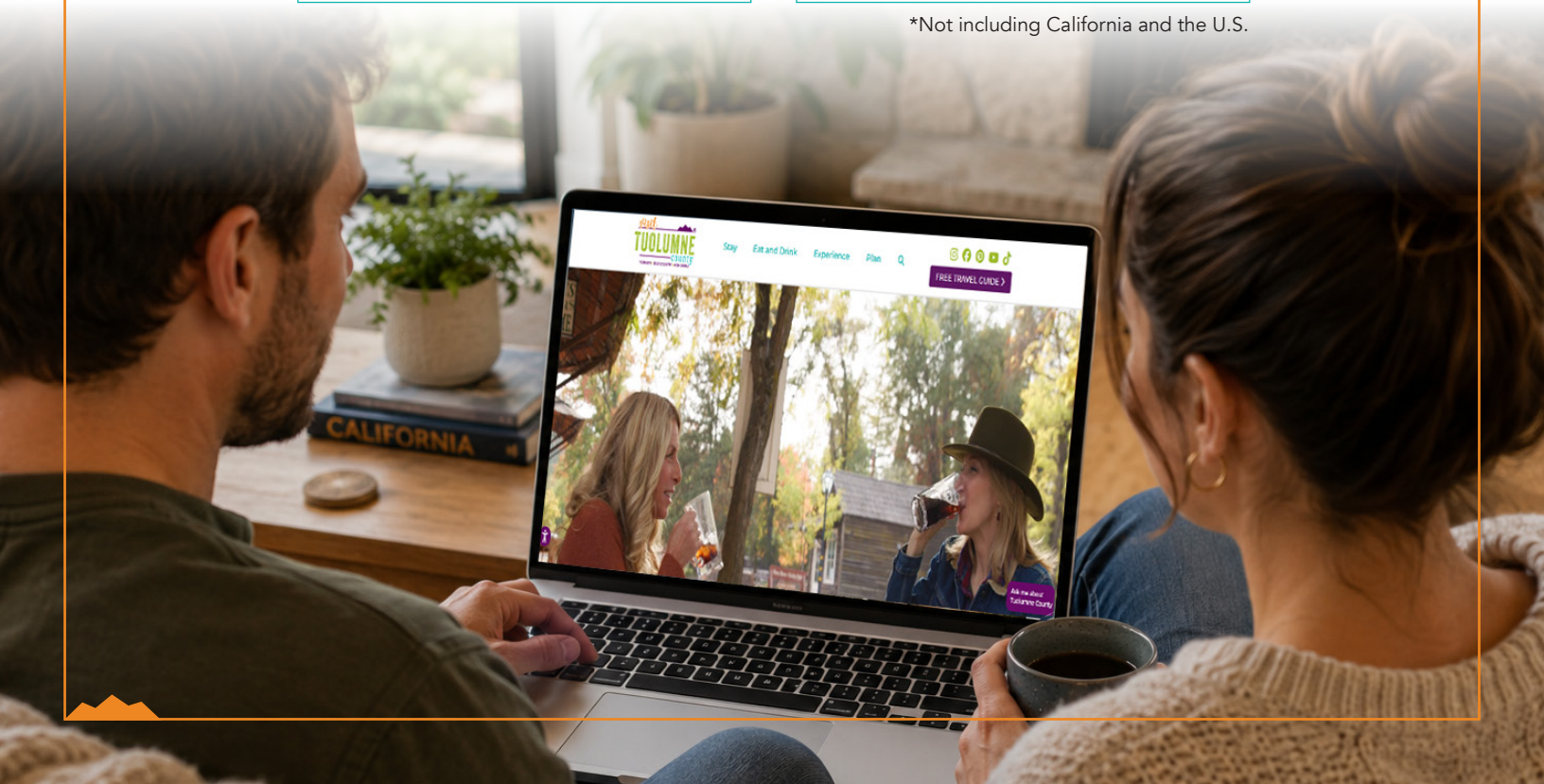
OVERALL SITE PERFORMANCE (JULY 1, 2025 - JUNE 30, 2026)	
Sessions:	437.9K
Pageviews:	833.3K

Top Five Domestic and International User Origins*

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

DOMESTIC	INTERNATIONAL
Texas	Germany
Washington	U.K.
New York	India
Oregon	Canada
Florida	Mexico

*Not including California and the U.S.

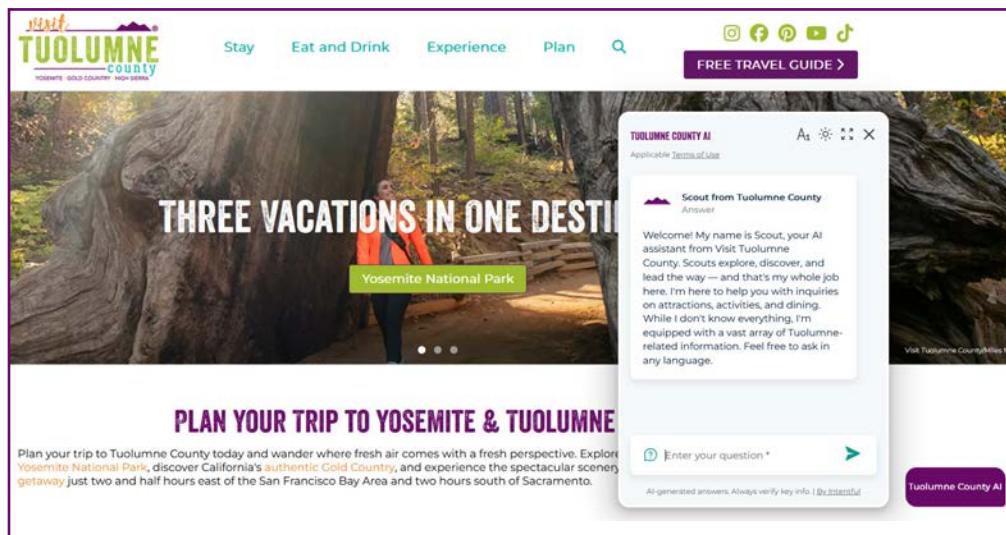


Meet Scout! Intentful Chatbot

The Intentful chatbot, Scout, is a powerful tool that enhances the Visit Tuolumne County website experience. It provides 24/7 visitor assistance in over 90 languages, instantly answering common questions about lodging, directions, attractions, and seasonal events. By pulling information directly from the VTC website, it ensures accuracy and consistency across all responses.

Scout also improves trip planning by helping users navigate the site and discover experiences tailored to their interests. Scout captures valuable data on visitor behavior and frequently asked questions, offering insights to guide future marketing and partner strategies and website updates.

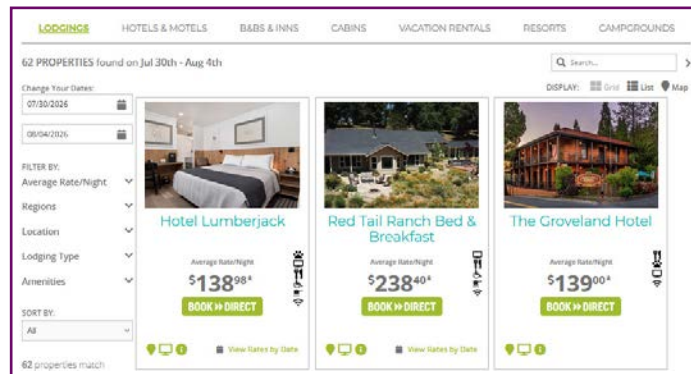
Overall, it increases engagement, enhances accessibility, and strengthens the county's digital presence.



Simpleview Booking Referral Platform

Simpleview Booking Referral Platform "Book Direct" is a booking referral engine featured on VTC's website. This platform leads visitors directly to a property's website or preferred booking platform. During the year, visitors conducted 17,738 searches on the platform, resulting in an estimated 161 bookings and an estimated total booking revenue of \$169,115, not to mention the travel spend and sales tax revenue generated by those stays.

VTC invests \$6,800 annually into this program and provides this service at no extra cost to our lodging partners. The impressive return on investment emphasizes the platform's effectiveness and value.



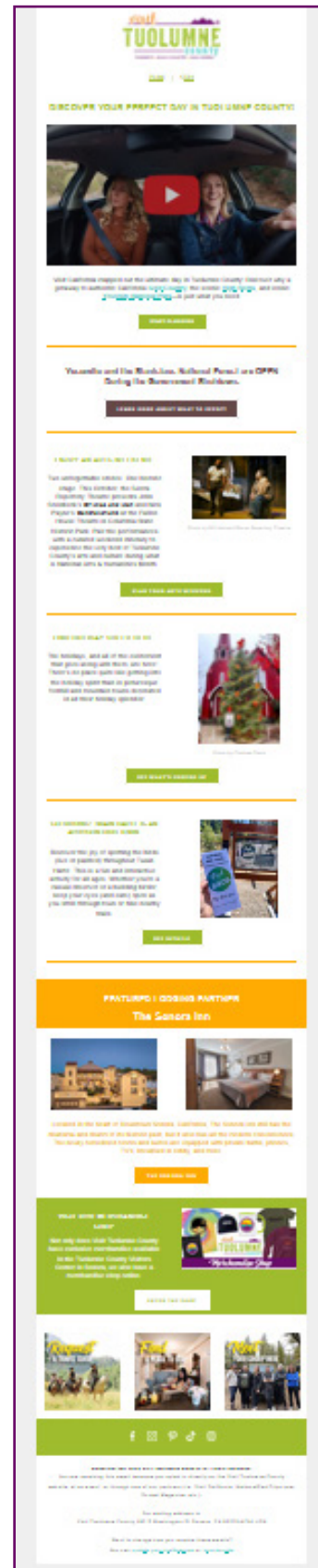
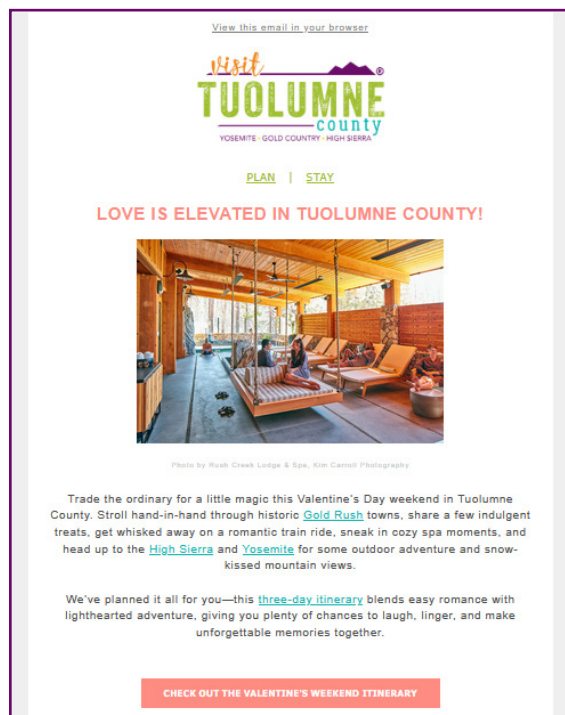
Consumer Emails

Visit Tuolumne County sends consumer emails to over 15,500 subscribers monthly. They feature engaging content, including highlights of seasonal attractions, upcoming events, and exclusive travel tips. Important and timely travel information and lodging partner (Wednesday Winner) features are also included.

Email engagement remained strong in 2025–2026, with an average open rate of 38%, placing Visit Tuolumne County solidly within the healthy industry benchmark of 30%–40%. The 1% click-through rate was slightly below the 1.5% industry benchmark, highlighting an opportunity to build on strong audience interest and further increase engagement with email content and calls to action.

“What’s Up Wednesday” Emails

“What’s Up Wednesday” emails are weekly updates from Visit Tuolumne County, designed for front-line lodging staff. These emails provide valuable information that can be shared with guests, including the weather forecast, upcoming events, and important travel-related details. They also offer a platform for lodging partners to share their upcoming availability, which VTC can then communicate to visitors seeking last-minute accommodations. VTC incentivizes partners (as Wednesday Winners) to share their availability with an opportunity to be featured in our consumer emails.



Print Ads

Placing print ads in major travel and lifestyle publications is a key component of Visit Tuolumne County's marketing strategy. These ads effectively reach a wide and targeted audience, including potential tourists who are passionate about travel, outdoor adventures, culture, and unique experiences. By placing ads in well-known publications, Visit Tuolumne County leverages the credibility and broad readership of these outlets to enhance its visibility and appeal. In the 25/26 year, our ads were featured in a variety of regional, statewide, and national publications.

Print Ad Placements 25/26:

- *California Visitors Guide* (annual)
- *California Road Trips* (annual)
- *Sunset Magazine* (fall 2025 and spring 2026)
- *Oh' Ranger*, Yosemite National Park edition (annual)
- *Yosemite Journal* (annual)
- *AAA Westways* (summer 2026)
- *Local Getaways* (summer 2026 NY Times LA edition insert)
- *Local Getaways Express* (summer 2026)
- *Adventure Sports Journal* (fall 2025)
- *209 Magazine* (Sonora-specific, fall 2025)
- *San Joaquin Magazine* (holiday 2025)



Gateway Billboards

VTC utilized digital billboards on Highway 120 in Manteca and on Highway 108 in Riverbank over the course of the year. The flexibility of digital billboards allows VTC to not only promote seasonal campaigns, but also swiftly update messaging, making them an effective tool for crisis communications, event promotions, and other timely information along gateway routes. Combined, the two billboards reach 17,254 daily impressions and 6,297,710 impressions over the year.



Special Promotions

Visiting Friends & Relatives: January - March 2026

Launched January 12th to increase overnight stays during the slower season.

- Encouraged residents to invite friends and family to visit — with lodging options beyond staying in their homes.
- Participating lodging properties offered special discounts and deals.
- Promotion included:
 - Organic and paid Facebook and Instagram ads
 - Banner ads on MyMotherLode.com (Jan. 12- Feb. 12)
 - Radio spots on two Central Sierra Broadcasting stations (78 spots; Jan. 12- Feb. 12)
 - Billboards on Highway 108 in Riverbank) and Highway 120 in Manteca (17,000 daily impressions)
- Messaging tailored by audience:
 - Local audience: invite your friends and family.
 - Regional audience for Billboards and Facebook and Instagram ads): “Visit your friends and family in Tuolumne County.”
- All traffic directed to VisitTuolumne.com/share:
 - Dedicated landing page
 - Highlights participating lodging properties and includes direct links to property websites
 - Links to blog featuring visitor activities and experiences



Immersive Experiences

NEW in 2025-2026: Tuolumne County Veterans Memorial Trail

The Tuolumne County Veterans Memorial Trail is a self-guided, mobile passport experience that pays tribute to local heroes throughout Tuolumne County. This trail leads participants to various memorials, monuments, and points of remembrance—each stop along the way sharing stories of courage, sacrifice, and service by veterans from the community.



The trail is designed to be both educational and meaningful, making it perfect for families, history enthusiasts, or anyone interested in paying tribute to veterans. This trail and several of its locations was featured on Good Day Sacramento's Cody's Caravan on Veterans Day in November 2025.

Tuolumne County Craft Beverage and Craft Burger Trails

The Tuolumne County Craft Beverage and Craft Burger Trails offer unique and delightful experiences for both locals and visitors. The Craft Beverage Trail showcases some of the County's breweries and wineries, each offering distinct and locally produced drinks. The Craft Burger Trail features a variety of restaurants and eateries that serve up delicious and innovative burgers. Many of the participating businesses offer discounts for pass users, and users also earn points toward eligibility to win grand prizes as they use the passes. Both trails highlight Tuolumne County's commitment to supporting local businesses and providing unforgettable culinary adventures.



Sonora Selfie Trail

Launched in late 2023, the Sonora Selfie Trail invites visitors to explore nearly 30 curated locations throughout downtown Sonora—ranging from historic Gold Rush landmarks and vibrant murals to natural vistas and one-of-a-kind public art installations. Participants sign up for a mobile pass, check in on site, and snap selfies at each spot to earn points. With a shareable feature using #SonoraSelfieTrail, the experience not only offers a fun, interactive way to uncover Sonora's rich cultural tapestry—but also amplifies community pride and promotes local businesses through social media buzz. This innovative mobile trail combines historic exploration, creative engagement, and digital storytelling to enhance visitor experience and support downtown vibrancy.



Tuolumne County Art Week

Tuolumne County Art Week is a celebration of local creativity and culture, showcasing the diverse artistic talents that thrive in our County. This week-long event (in its 6th year) invites both residents and visitors to explore a wide array of artistic expressions, from visual arts and crafts to performing arts and interactive workshops. Local galleries, studios, and public spaces open their doors for exhibitions, demonstrations, and collaborative projects, offering a unique opportunity to engage with the artistic community.



“The Story Studio”

partnership with KCRA (Ch. 3, Sacramento)

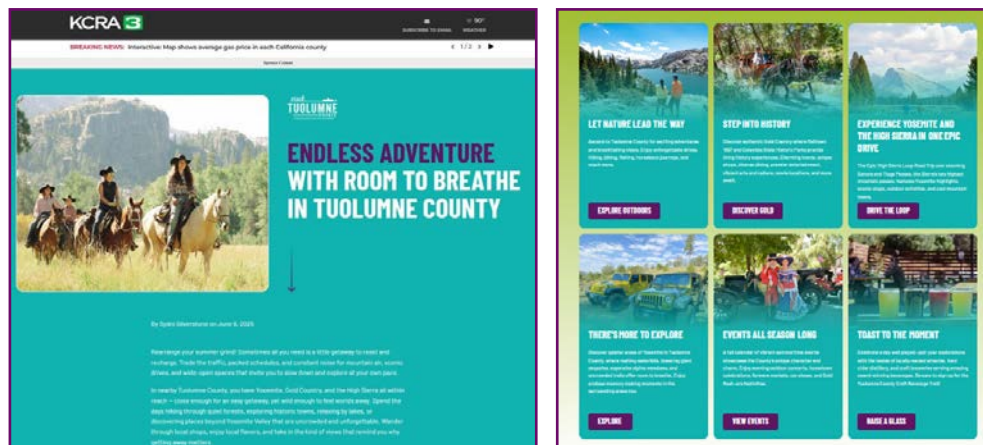
Targeted digital ads placed on popular and appropriate media sites in the Bay Area and Sacramento area directed to a microsite that includes sections on upcoming events, places to stay, what’s new, road trip ideas, etc.

Results (4-Week Run, June 2026)

Impressions: **560,000**

Engagements/Reads: **4,600**

Avg. Session Duration: **4 minutes, 51 seconds**



San Francisco Bay Ferries Digital Ads

A synchronized network of 94 screens across the entire fleet, with up to 6 screens per vessel, positioned in high-dwell seating areas.

The 7-second video featured a snapshot of each of Tuolumne County’s three regions and includes a QR code directing to the VTC “Plan” webpage—perfect positioning for a captive audience with their devices in-hand.

Run time: **4 weeks**

2 million plays

32,000 daily impressions

900,000 total impressions

QR Code Scans: **57**



Sacramento River Cats Digital Ads

Digital ads displayed on screens on the concourse of Sutter Health Park during River Cats games. This partnership also included opportunities for tabling at games.

Concourse displays:

48 games

Approx. **190k fans** in attendance

Boards rotate every **15 seconds**, and average about **17 minutes** of total run time per event.

Tabling: **3 games**



Local Advertising

Visit Tuolumne County actively advertises on local media outlets, including with Central Sierra Broadcasting radio, MyMotherLode.com, and the Union Democrat, to promote a wide range of activities and initiatives to an in-market audience. Our advertising campaigns highlight key events like Tuolumne County Art Week and promote the mobile passport trails. Additionally, we use these platforms to engage with the local business community for partnership recruiting.



Consumer Travel Show Presence

Visit Tuolumne County's presence at consumer travel shows boosts brand visibility, allows for one-on-one engagement with hundreds of show attendees in our target audiences, and inspires trip planning on the spot. These events provide valuable insights into traveler interests, promote off-season visitation, and showcase local businesses—ultimately helping drive tourism to the region.

We attended:

Sacramento International Sportsmen's Expo

January 2026, 30,000+ attendees

Bay Area Travel & Adventure Show

(partnered with Black Oak Casino Resort) March 2026, 9,900 attendees



National Travel And Tourism Week and California Tourism Month

May 3-9, 2026 was National Travel and Tourism Week and each May is California Tourism Month.



Established in 1983, National Travel and Tourism Week (NTTW) is an annual tradition to celebrate the U.S. travel community and travel's essential role in stimulating economic growth, cultivating vibrant communities, creating quality job opportunities, inspiring new businesses and elevating the quality of life for Americans every day.

-U.S. Travel Association

In 2016, the California Legislature passed a bipartisan resolution declaring May California Tourism Month, spotlighting tourism's role as a key economic driver for the state and local communities. Travel is ingrained in the state's very identity, and its economic and cultural benefits are undeniable.

-Visit California

City of Sonora Proclamation recognizing National Travel and Tourism Week and California Tourism Month - May 4, 2026

County of Tuolumne Resolution recognizing National Travel and Tourism Week and California Tourism Month - May 12, 2026

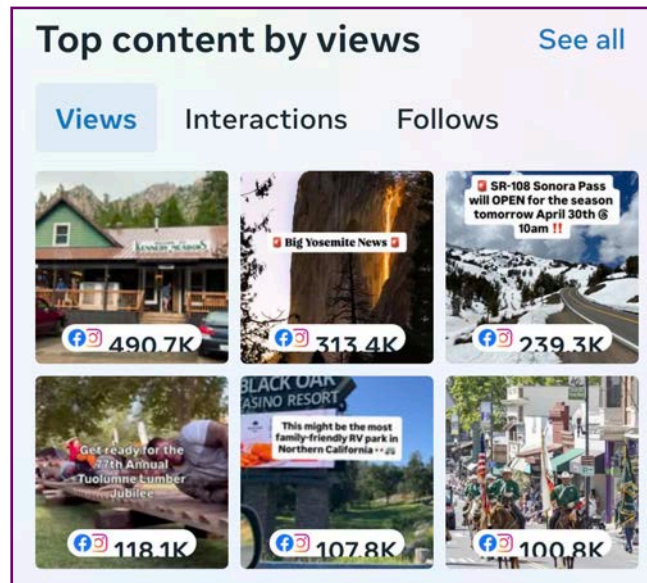
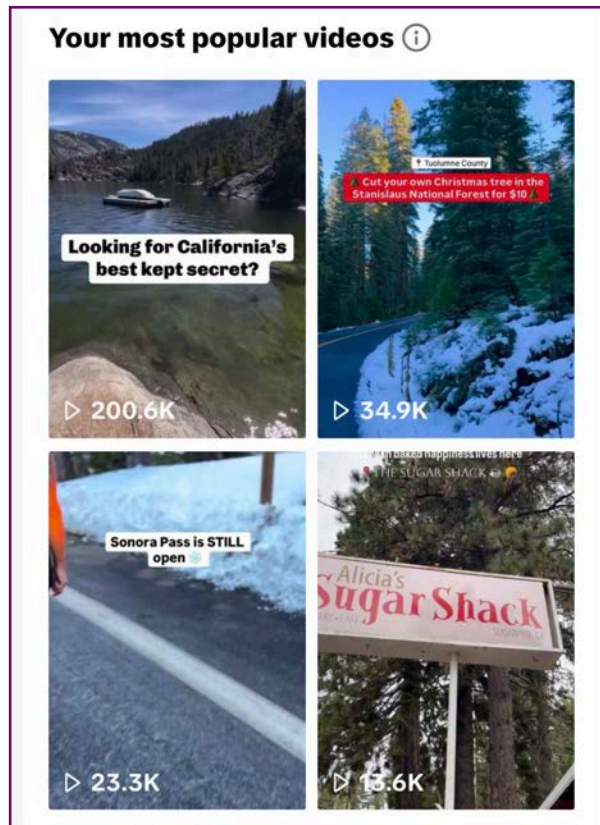


Social Media

Visit Tuolumne County experienced strong year-over-year growth across all major social media platforms, generating **more than 17.8 million total content views/impressions** while continuing to expand audience reach, engagement, and community growth.

CHANNEL	RESULTS (AS OF 6/30/26)
Facebook	Views: 14.6M (up 38%) New Followers: 6.1K Content Interactions: 88.9K Link Clicks: 183.1K
Instagram	Views: 2.4M Reached 786.5K Accounts New Followers: 6K Content Interactions: 88K Link Clicks: 24K
TikTok	Views: 445,589 Reached 286.5K Accounts New Followers: 704 Likes: 79.8K Profile Views: 4,657
Pinterest	Impressions: 459.4K Audience Reach: 251.5K Generated Engagements: 3.5K Outbound Clicks: 3.4K

Top Performing posts



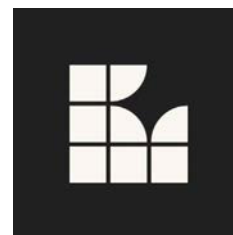
The Tuolumne County Film Commission is also represented on social media—Facebook and Instagram. There are currently a total of 2,200 followers across both channels. Highlighting our gorgeous film locations on social media platforms presents the possibility of hosting more film productions in the future.

MARKETING PARTNERSHIPS



Partnership with KHM

Visit Tuolumne County partners with KHM (formerly Madden Media), an award-winning destination marketing agency that specializes in travel and tourism. With their expertise and resources, engaging stories, targeted marketing, and creative advertising, the partnership is designed to inspire more people to visit, stay longer, and support local businesses across the County.



Beyond managing strategic advertising placements, the KHM team provided creative and strategic support with:

- New creative development
- Agile crisis management: The KHM team was able to pause applicable digital advertising within just a couple of hours of the September Complex fires ignition, and they also provided a comprehensive communication framework
- Maintained a consistent physical presence in destination, delivering presentations to stakeholders and familiarizing themselves with Tuolumne County

In 25/26, KHM's strategic direction was optimizing a multi-faceted approach to reach target markets of leisure travelers, local residents and in-market travelers and groups and meetings professionals.

MARKET	IMPRESSIONS	PAID CLICKS	AVG. PAID CLICK-THRU
Leisure	24M	306K+	1.23%
Local	3.5M	60K+	1.71%
Groups & Meetings	512K	8.2K	1.61%

Expedia Co-op with Visit California showed a strong capacity to successfully convert travel interest into actual visitation.

VTC Investment **\$24,000**
 Visit California match (25%)
 Expedia Match 1:1



Expedia



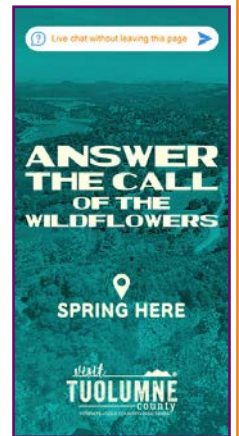
Revenue: **\$124K over 22 properties**

Room Nights: **559**

Plus, travel spend and sales tax revenue generated by those stays.

KHM Year-Over-Year Summary

- **Display:** A deliberate shift away from low-intent placements reduced total users, but improved the **engagement rate (+1,028%)** and **engaged sessions (+189%)**.
- **Paid Social:** Solidified its position as the destination's primary traffic engine with total **users up 108%**, while quality scaled alongside volume with a **150% jump in engaged sessions** and an **18% in engagement rate**.
- **Paid Search:** Optimized traffic intent caused a decrease in traffic but **propelled the engagement rate up by 32%**.
- **Cross-Network:** PMax scaled efficiently with a 49% user increase and successfully expanded our digital footprint while **maintaining quality with engaged sessions (+48%)** and **engagement rates (+3%) improving**.



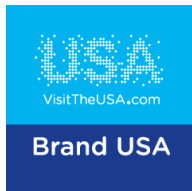
Full-Funnel Paid Strategy Boosts Visitation

- **Drive Market Growth:** Localized ad campaigns captured regional interest, sparking visitor spikes from key drive markets like Fresno, Reno and Los Angeles.
- **Attracting Out-of-State Visitors:** National ad campaigns successfully brought in long-distance travelers, leading to a 23.5% increase in out-of-state visitors and a 22.6% jump in how long guests stayed.
- **Securing More Overnight Stays:** Targeted booking promotions on platforms like Expedia locked in 336 hotel room nights, contributing to a boost in total share of overnight visitors by 4.8%.



Marketing Partnerships For Regional, State, National & International Representation

Through these partnerships we are able to identify target markets and leverage our marketing dollars to enhance the value of every dollar invested in tourism. These organizations are critical to building our brand awareness in California, the U.S. and international markets.



Brand USA:

The Destination Marketing Organization for the United States Visit Tuolumne County's longstanding partnership with Brand USA helps us reach travelers from around the world and shine a spotlight on what makes our destination special. VTC opted into one partnership campaign with Brand USA for the 25/26 fiscal year, and provided VTC the opportunity to affordably market to international markets.

Global Inspiration Program Results:

Visit the USA Travel Guide

Article and image inclusion in the Visit the USA Travel Guide

Print: 150,000 copies distributed in 10 countries

Digital: available in 93 countries. 7,400 page views



Visit California:

The destination marketing organization for the State of California.

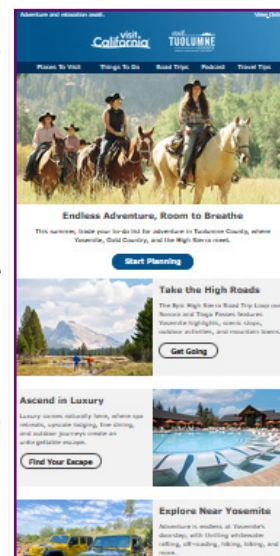
Visit California's primary role is to promote tourism to and within California, both domestically and internationally. Visit California works to enhance the state's economy by developing and executing marketing campaigns and strategies that highlight California as a premier travel destination.

In addition to marketing campaigns, Visit California engages in public relations, media relations, and partnerships with travel trade organizations. It also conducts research and provides valuable insights into tourism trends and data, which help guide the state's tourism strategy and initiatives.

As a partner of Visit California, Tuolumne County is highlighted in several areas on VCA's website. We contribute content for public relations initiatives, event calendars, and participate in familiarization tours and other events. Our representation extends to various committees, with the President and CEO of Visit Tuolumne County currently serving as the Chair of Visit California's Rural Committee and as a member of the Marketing Advisory Committee.

VTC participates in numerous VCA cooperative marketing campaigns:

Full-page ad in the Official California Visitors Guide (which includes VTC partners)



California Visitors Guide: 500,000 printed circulation
Leads: 586

Half-page ad in VCA's Road Trips Guide: California Road Trips, 1 million printed circulation

Leads: 624

All leads received a Tuolumne County Travel Guide and were added to VTC's consumer email database if an email address was provided.

Two E-newsletters

February 2026 Sponsored Investment: \$3,000	
Open Rate	37.6%
Click to Open Rate	3.4%
June 2026 Dedicated Investment: \$7,500.	
Open Rate	34.4%
Click to Open Rate	2.75%

Additionally, VTC attended VCA's annual industry conference, Outlook Forum, to stay updated on the latest destination marketing trends and for networking opportunities.

Hopper/World Cup Campaign (June 2026)
Targeted digital campaign in Canada, Mexico, and U.S. to those looking for side trips during the World Cup consisted of digital ads, push notifications, destination tile on branded landing page, and Hopper-listed properties features. VTC investment \$5,000; value \$55,000.

Destination Tile

Impressions: 211,240

Clicks: 3,840

CTR: 1.8% (1% is the benchmark)

Push Notifications (targeted text messages)

Impressions: 101,048

Clicks: 905

CTR: 0.9% (1% is the benchmark)

Results:

40 hotel bookings worth \$21,028

Traveling to Levi's Stadium? Yosemite-Tuolumne County is just 2.5 hours away

Welcome to Yosemite's uncrowded side in Tuolumne County! Embark on a day or extend your stay where you can visit the iconic national park and immerse yourself in authentic California Gold Rush history and enchanting High Sierra adventures. Bring your friends and family for an unforgettable journey just a 2.5-hour drive from World Cup action in Santa Clara.



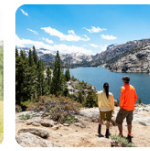
Yosemite Awaits

Explore Yosemite's quieter side. Revel among giant sequoias and explore picturesque Tuolumne Meadows, and Hetch Hetchy Reservoir. Experience thrilling whitewater rafting, off-roading, and endless adventures in the nearby national forest.



High Sierra Adventures

Ascend to Tuolumne County's High Sierra for fresh mountain air and breathtaking views. Enjoy unforgettable drives, alpine lakes, hiking, horseback journeys, and more recreational aspirations.



Sierra-Yosemite Loop

Experience Yosemite and High Sierra in one epic trip. The High Sierra Loop Road Trip over Sonora Pass and Tioga Pass features Yosemite highlights, scenic stops, outdoor activities, and mountain towns.



Toast the Moment

Celebrate a day well played—pair your Yosemite, Gold Country, and High Sierra explorations with the tastes of locally-owned wineries, hard cider distillery, and craft breweries serving award-winning beverages.



Step Into History

Discover authentic Gold Country where Railtown 1897 and Columbia State Historic Parks provide living history experiences. Charming towns, unique shops, diverse dining, premier entertainment, movie locations, and more await.



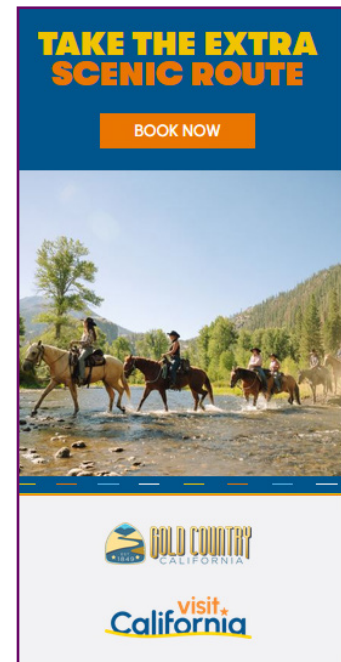


Gold Country Visitors Association:

Visit California divides the state into 12 marketing regions of which eight are rural. Visit California provides matching funds up to \$60K for GCVA to engage in marketing programs that elevate the marketing power of each region. VTC is in the Gold Country and the High Sierra regions. VTC's President and CEO is the current Chair of Visit California's Rural Committee.

GCVA's marketing focuses on road tripping under which the following pillars have been identified: multigenerational family travel, culinary, wine and craft beverages, history and outdoor adventure. Each pillar reinforces VTC's own marketing efforts. To reach our identified audience the GCVA uses tactics that include:

- A renewed website that includes new multi-day and multi-county itineraries
- Dedicated Visit California e-newsletters that goes to over 240k subscribers who are actively planning travel
- A public relations strategist to vet and provide opportunities for regional fam trips, submit news on behalf of GCVA, and update the press kit.
- A social media manager who equally promotes the entire Gold Country region and
- Participation in US Travel's IPW
- Branded participation in the Bay Area Travel and Adventure Show
- Advertising in Visit California's Road Trips Guide
- A leveraged co-op program through Sojern, an AI powered digital advertising company that meets visitors where they are to encourage destination visitation and hotel bookings
- Membership and participation in the International Inbound Tour Association which provides GCVA partners opportunities to engage with US based inbound tour operators who work with international markets



This year we participated in a leveraged co-op digital ad with GCVA:

Impressions: **602,773**

Clicks: **962**

Click Through Rate: **16%** (goal .08%)



High Sierra Visitors Council:

In addition to the Gold Country region, VTC is also part of the High Sierra region, represented by the High Sierra Visitors Council (HSVC). Similar to the GCVA, HSVC receives matching funds from Visit California for the purpose of leveraging membership funds for marketing purposes. The HSVC collaborates with Local Freshies, a regional digital marketing team, for domestic social media promotion and website services. Internationally, the HSVC focuses on France, and partners with Blossom Travel Marketing a French marketing and public relations agency, to promote the region through marketing, social media, and public relations initiatives.

Industry Associations

VTC belongs to several industry associations, all of which are of great benefit to Tuolumne County's tourism industry. Organizations such as Destinations International and One West Tourism Alliance each deliver different benefits and provide helpful insights into the travel industry, offering educational resources and, thereby, benefiting the tourism efforts VTC implores in Tuolumne County.

CalTravel Association is another key organization providing opportunities for advocacy and education. The National Tour Association gives VTC access to thousands of tour operators across the country who can learn about Tuolumne County and develop products that include Tuolumne County on their itineraries.

In the 25/26 year, VTC continued to subscribe to and partner with organizations that we have lasting, strong relationships.

- California Film Commission
- CalTravel Association
- Destinations International
- One West Tourism Alliance—
VTC President & CEO serves on Board of Directors
- Meeting Planners International
- National Tour Association
- Public Relations Society of America
- US Travel Association
- Visit the USA—UK and Ireland



**CALIFORNIA
TRAVEL
ASSOCIATION**



**DESTINATIONS
INTERNATIONAL**



NATIONAL TOUR ASSOCIATION



**U.S. TRAVEL
ASSOCIATION®**



INTERNATIONAL MARKETING



International Travel

This past year saw several fluctuations within international markets but overall Visit California notes that California's international tourism is rebounding in 2026 with visitation up 2.4% and spending projected to grow 5.8% led by strong growth in Mexico where visitation increased 2.8% after a 7.5% jump in 2025. A modest 2.6% growth was seen in the Canada market, however the prior year it dropped 20.1%. Other markets that are currently seeing growth are India and Japan. The 2026 FIFA World Cup is said to be helping with recovery.

United Kingdom, Ireland

For seven years, VTC has partnered with Black Diamond to represent Tuolumne County in the UK and Ireland markets, delivering success through both public relations outreach and travel trade promotion.



Throughout the year, Black Diamond secured national and regional media coverage worth an estimated \$180,925 in ad value, reaching close to 5.7 million readers, which nearly double last year's results. The standout coverage followed an Irish familiarization trip VTC host in partnership with Black Diamond, which led to a feature in the Irish Daily Mail, the year's highest-value placement. On the travel trade side, Black Diamond kept UK and Irish tour operators engaged through regular meetings, newsletters, and industry events, and an audit of the market's leading operators found that all currently sell Yosemite National Park, with roughly half already featuring Tuolumne County directly.



While broader uncertainty around U.S. travel weighed on international sentiment this year, the UK and Ireland market proved resilient, with the UK remaining one of the U.S.'s top-performing overseas markets throughout.

Looking ahead, VTC will continue to work with Black Diamond for the fiscal year 2026-2027 to focus on both travel trade and public relations activity, to continue driving visitation and measurable results.



Mexico

Mexico is California's strongest and most resilient international inbound market. This is driven by several factors including geographic proximity and expanded non-stop air routes to Northern California. Mexican carriers like Volaris and Viva Aerobus have increased direct routes, spreading travelers past Southern California and into Northern California hubs, some just two hours from Tuolumne County. Tuolumne County provides what many Mexican visitors are looking for: multi-generational trips, opportunities for adventure and winter activities. In February of 2026, VTC President and CEO was part of the Visit California's delegation to Merida, Mexico on the Yucatan Peninsula. This opportunity provided two days of meeting with Mexican tour operators, all of whom were looking for something new for their clients. Tuolumne County easily fit the bill.

IPW

In 2026, Visit Tuolumne County brought the destination to IPW in Greater Fort Lauderdale, where Lisa and Amariah held over 60 appointments with international and domestic travel trade and media, connecting with contacts from Japan, China, Taiwan, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Belgium, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Romania, Spain, Jordan, El Salvador, and Australia. A clear thread ran through the week: appointment after appointment centered on luxury travel, from receptive operators built around five-star itineraries to tour operators specializing in premium, tailor-made trips. That theme lined up perfectly with VTC's own direction for the year "Luxury is a state of mind" the luxury of connection and disconnection, of fresh air and the outdoors, of whatever luxury means to you, all found right here in Tuolumne County.



Since returning home, VTC has followed up with every new contact, sharing resources and information to keep Tuolumne County top of mind as these operators and journalists build their next itineraries and stories.

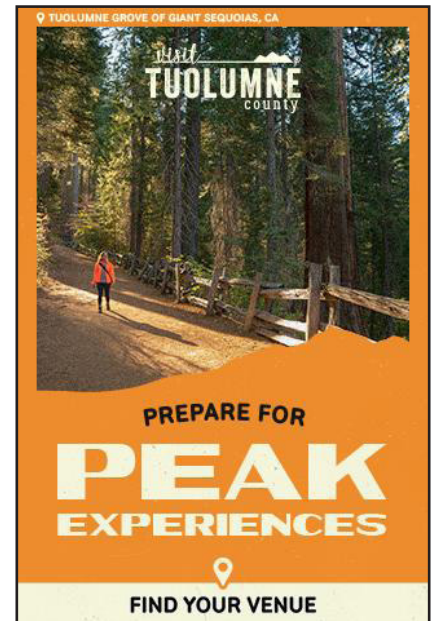
IPW is a significant investment for VTC each year, and we're thrilled to have once again partnered with First Light Resorts to help make our presence there possible.

MEETINGS & GROUPS

Visit Tuolumne County continues to grow the group and meetings segment of the business, a key driver of midweek and off-season visitation. This year, VTC's marketing agency, Madden Media, ran a dedicated meetings and groups campaign that generated 512,000 impressions and more than 8,200 clicks at a 1.61% average click-through rate. High-intent search campaigns captured over 1,600 planners actively researching event space, who spent an average of two-plus minutes on the site once they arrived, a strong signal that Tuolumne County's group-focused content resonates. A dedicated eblast built around VTC's "Meet Bold. Stay Beautiful" messaging reached professional coordinators through the Meetings Today newsletter program, landing a 34.5% open rate, while B2B display advertising extended that awareness further with 250,000 impressions delivered to meeting planners nationwide.

VTC also expanded its print and earned media presence in this space. In partnership with Madden Media, VTC placed a half-page ad in California Meetings+Events' Fall 2026/Winter 2027 issue, along with a year-long sponsored content placement on CaliforniaMeetingsMags.com. The magazine carries the largest circulation to meeting planners in the state, mailed to 10,000 California meetings, event, and corporate planners. That investment paid off in earned coverage, too: Lisa Mayo was profiled in the magazine's Spring/Summer 2026 issue in a feature titled "High Sierra Flair," which also earned Tuolumne County a cover tease line.

VTC did not attend an in-person group-sales trade show this year and discontinued its Cvent membership after determining the subscription cost outpaced the pace of qualified leads it generated. Looking ahead, VTC plans to revisit an in-person presence at a West-focused Connect Marketplace event in the year ahead.



High Sierra Flair

A longtime resident and tourism champion, Lisa Mayo of Visit Tuolumne County takes pride in her home community

BY LINDEN M. BAYLISS

Lisa Mayo, Visit Tuolumne County's president and CEO and the winner of last year's prestigious F. Norman Clark Tourism Champion of the Year award from the California Travel Association, got her first taste of the tourism industry when she was just 15 years old. She worked at the Fallon House Ice Cream Parlor at Columbia State Historic Park in the Sierra Nevada foothills. "It sounds crazy, but the lines of people out the door in the summer months were international travel," she remembers. "I remember at the time being a little person, but here, how they found little things, and what made them come here."

Mayo's family moved to Tuolumne County when she was 18, and after graduating from Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo, she returned home and began working at the local golf courses. It was then that she met on the board for the neighboring Calaveras Big Trees State Park. "She pegged me for the job and asked me to interview," says Mayo. "I was exactly what I was getting into."

Nonetheless, Mayo got the job, and in Calaveras County, working alongside former Tuolumne County Executive Director, Mayo offered Mayo a position in her home county and began working at the local golf courses. It was then that she met on the board for the neighboring Calaveras Big Trees State Park. "She pegged me for the job and asked me to interview," says Mayo. "I was exactly what I was getting into."

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PUBLIC RELATIONS



TOP MEDIA COVERAGE FROM 2025-2026

Total Unique Visitors/Month (Insights by Similarweb)	4,394,979,006
Links	372
Total Engagement	2,667
Average Engagement	7
Total Journalist Reach	97,971

Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) Annual Convention Marketplace

Met with seven travel media during Marketplace at the SATW Annual Convention in Detroit, MI. Networked with 90 media attendees throughout the convention, September 10-14, 2025.

Visit California San Francisco Media Event

Attended event with 65 local, regional, and international travel media and content creators on September 25, 2025. Individual follow up on relevant interactions.

International Media Marketplace (IMM)

Met with 19 travel media at the International Media Marketplace in New York on January 22, 2026. Individual follow up was conducted.

Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) Virtual Marketplace

Had virtual meetings with 16 travel media at the SATW Virtual Marketplace on June 30, 2026. Individual follow up was conducted and outreach is ongoing.



Press Releases and Quarterly What's New/Story Idea Pitches

July 2025: Seven new ways to explore Tuolumne County, California

August 2025: VTC CEO named CalTravel Tourism Champion

August 2025: Twain Harte is now an Audubon Bird Town

August 2025: Groveland Facelift 2025

September 2025: Veterans Memorial Trail debuts

October 2025: 2025 VTC Tourism Award Winners

October 2025: Sonora Becomes "Christmas Town" Again for the Holiday Season

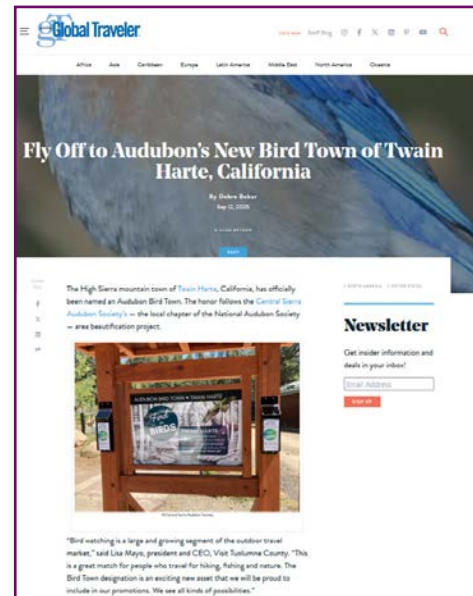
November 2025: Cozy winter on Highway 108

January 2026: 10 Sweet Spots in Tuolumne County

March 2026: Yosemite: No reservations-less crowded

March 2026: Art Week 2026

April 2026: Signs of Spring



Visit California Story Idea Submissions

Each month, Visit California puts out a call for story ideas that they use for media pitching and sharing internally for consideration across Visit California's owned channels. Armstrong Gossy PR identifies relevant topics, develops content for each, and submits them using Visit California's online portal.

In 2025-2026, 43 story ideas were submitted. All were accepted by Visit California. To date, 15 have been published as California Story Ideas.



Spend a day in the 1850s at Columbia State Historic Park

Columbia State Historic Park [📍](#) delivers a lively Gold Rush atmosphere with shops, exhibits and streets that feel straight from the 1850s. Visitors can shop for boots and leather goods at **Ebler's Leather** [📍](#), grab a meal or overnight stay at **Columbia City Hotel** [📍](#) and **What Cheer Saloon** [📍](#), pose for a portrait at **Kamice's Photographic Establishment** [📍](#) and stock up on homemade goods at **Columbia Mercantile 1855** [📍](#).

Tuolumne County trades comfort for cowboy life in the High Sierra

Tuolumne County offers a true backcountry cowboy experience with pack trips at **Kennedy Meadows Resort and Packstation** [📍](#) and **Aspen Meadow Pack Station** [📍](#). These outings bring visitors into the High Sierra for hiking, fishing and swimming with trout-filled lakes and streams. For shorter rides, **Pine Mountain Lake Equestrian Center** [📍](#) and **Firefall Ranch** [📍](#) make it easier to get into the saddle without committing to the full pack trip route.



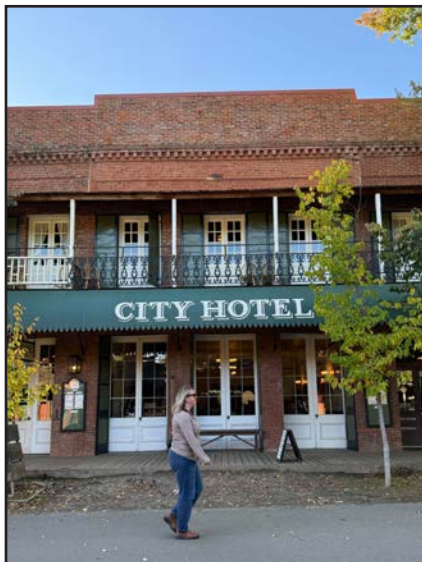
Hosting travel trade representatives, journalists, and content creators gives them firsthand experience of what Tuolumne County has to offer, whether they visit individually or as part of a group. VTC hosted 7 FAM trips during the 2025/2026 fiscal year, welcoming a total of 14 travel professionals and content creators.

The year's marquee trip was Race Across Cali, Visit California's first self-drive SuperFam, which brought five Irish tour operators to Tuolumne County in October in partnership with Aer Lingus, American Airlines, and British Airways. The group stayed a night at Hotel Lumberjack as part of a broader tour introducing top UK and Irish trade partners to Northern California's self-drive appeal.

VTC also hosted a steady stream of individual content creators throughout the year. Instagram creator Alex Suttman (@ThePicturesquePassport, 169K followers) featured Tuolumne County as part of a Visit California-backed campaign spanning

San Francisco, Tuolumne County, and Mammoth, with her Tuolumne-focused reel, calling the county the charming stretch of California hiding just outside Yosemite's gates, becoming one of the trip's top-performing posts. Other creators hosted this year included sibling duo Run the Atlas, food and travel writer Ron Stern with Real Food Travelers, and bloggers Modicum of Joy and Chantelle Kincy of Flannels or Flip Flops. Content creator Maddy Edmunds also joined VTC in October, first as a panelist at the Tourism Summit before staying on for additional content creation around the county.

VTC engages local lodging, dining, and activity partners to help host these trips, and since VTC covers most of the cost, many partners offer reduced rates or donated services in return. This collaborative approach strengthens local partnerships while making sure every FAM trip shows off the best of what Tuolumne County has to offer.

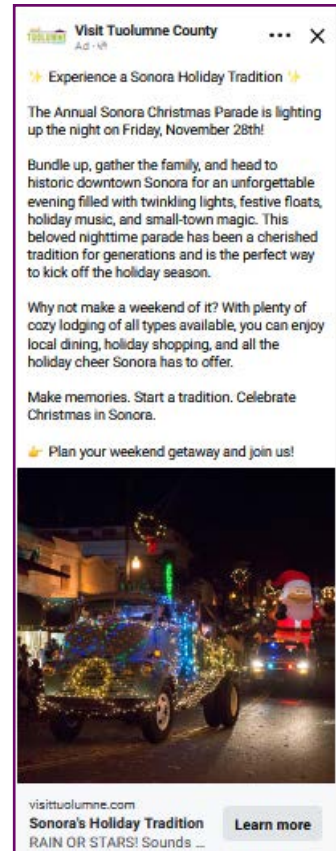


CITY OF SONORA SCOPE OF WORK

Through a dedicated marketing agreement with the City of Sonora, Visit Tuolumne County (VTC) delivers targeted destination marketing to increase visitation, overnight stays, and visitor spending within the city. During the year, VTC's scope of work included:

- Working with a local video company to create the "Step Into Sonora" city highlights video view the video at: youtu.be/vOE1ekL_IPg?si=mVJ2ML6ZCColuvrH
- Developing and managing social media advertising focused exclusively on Sonora and Sonora events.
- Digital billboard advertising for Sonora events.
- Incorporating Sonora into familiarization (FAM) trip itineraries for travel trade and media professionals.
- Promoting Sonora through consumer marketing campaigns, social media, email marketing, the annual Travel Guide, and VisitTuolumne.com.
- Representing Sonora at travel trade and consumer shows to expand awareness among leisure travelers, tour operators, and meeting planners.
- Maintaining and enhancing Sonora-specific web content and destination landing pages to inspire trip planning and convert interest into overnight visits.

This partnership reflects a shared commitment to strengthening Sonora's economic vitality, increasing overnight visitation, supporting local businesses, and enhancing community pride through destination marketing and tourism development.



TRAVEL INDUSTRY EVENTS

Educational Events

One West Tourism Alliance Leadership Summit:

Each year this is one of the most popular conferences for DMO CEOs who are located in the western side of the United States. It is an intimate gathering where CEOs can freely share their greatest moments and their biggest challenges. In addition to having inspirational keynotes, this conference also features breakout sessions where CEOs have more in-depth conversations on specific topics, whether it be anything from human resources to funding, or destination planning to board development.

Visit California Outlook Forum:

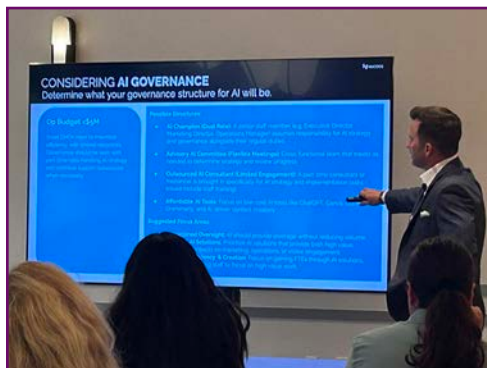
In March 2026, three members of the Visit Tuolumne County team attended the Visit California Outlook Forum in Los Angeles. This annual event brings together tourism professionals from across the state to explore the current landscape and future of California's travel industry. Attendees hear from top voices in the field, ranging from airline executives to representatives from Brand USA and the U.S. Travel Association. A standout session each year is the update from Visit California's international market representatives, who share valuable insights on global travel trends, visitor interests, lodging preferences, spending habits, and airlift projections that shape how international travelers experience California. View the VCA International Market

Profiles: industry.visitcalifornia.com/research/global-market-profiles-landing



CalTravel Summit:

CalTravel is the advocacy association for California's tourism industry. The Summit focuses on the hot topics and pressing advocacy issues facing travel and tourism. The summit offers several bite-sized sessions that included topics centered around



economics, politics, stewardship and sustainability, funding models, homelessness, visa entry wait times, and more. The conference also leaves ample time to encourage idea sharing and insights and lays the groundwork for building solid relationships amongst those in and related to the tourism industry. Additionally, Cal Travel has an award ceremony to celebrate industry leaders in various categories. Three VTC team members attended.

Visit El Dorado County Tourism Summit

Every year Visit El Dorado County hosts a one-day tourism summit. The content is always current and provides attendees with new understandings and ways of looking at things. This event is educational and another opportunity to network with people who are a part of the Gold Country's tourism and hospitality industry. It also provides the chance to reconnect with regional partners. VTC's President & CEO attends this event.

Visit California Board of Directors Meetings

Visit California has quarterly Board Meetings, and as a member of the VCA Marketing Advisory Committee, VTC President & CEO attends these when time allows. The Board Meetings provide in-depth insights into VCA marketing plans and budgeting, as well as research and travel and tourism trends. Often, attendees get a sneak peek at upcoming Visit California campaigns and promotions. This information often helps guide VTC's own planning and budgeting.

Travel Trade Events

Go West Summit

In late March, Visit Tuolumne County traveled to Las Vegas for Go West Summit, one of the country's longest-running travel trade marketplaces connecting international tour operators, suppliers, and media focused on the American West. VTC alternates its major trade show attendance each year between Go West Summit and other travel trade marketplaces like NTA Travel Exchange, allowing the team to build relationships across a broader set of buyers over time. Representing VTC, our Business Development Manager Amariah Richards held 40 one-on-one appointments with buyers from 18 countries, making the case for Tuolumne County as a destination worth building into their programs.



Conversations centered on the experiences that set our county apart: Yosemite's less crowded side like Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, the Gold Country and Highway 49 corridor, Columbia State Historic Park and Railtown 1897, alongside standout lodging partners like Under Canvas Yosemite, Rush Creek Lodge and Spa, Evergreen Lodge, Firefall Ranch Yosemite, and Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort. For many operators, these meetings were an introduction to just how much there is to experience just outside Yosemite's gates.

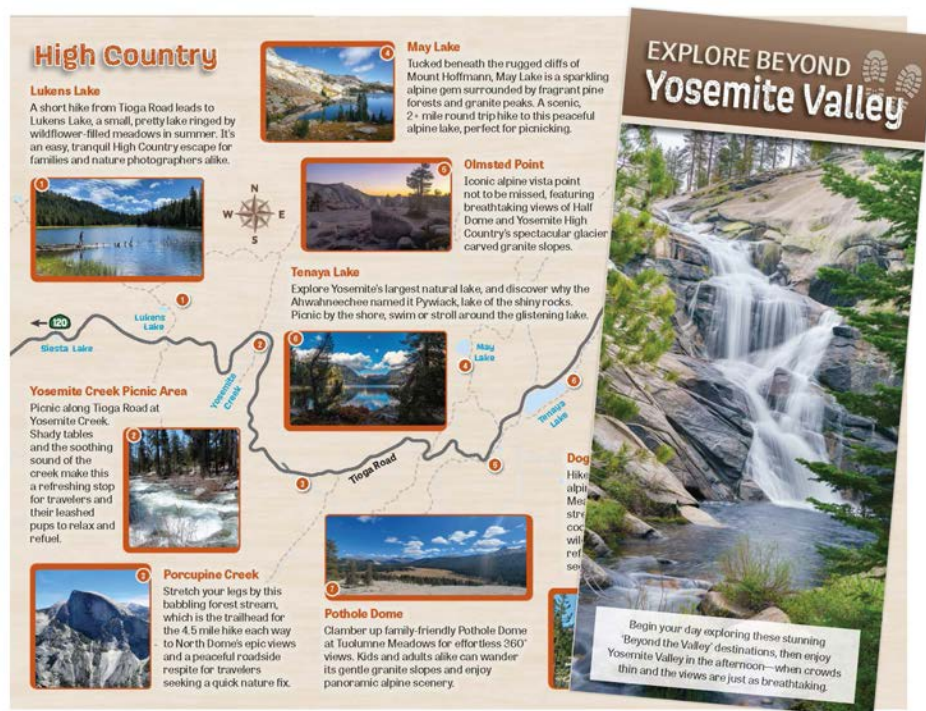
Since returning home, we've followed up with every contact, sharing tailored destination materials and building out a dedicated trade partner toolkit with itineraries, photography, and lodging resources operators can draw from as they build their programs. New contacts have been added to our trade partner database alongside existing relationships, and we're keeping an eye on which partners are best positioned for a future familiarization trip. We look forward to continuing to grow these relationships in the year ahead.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy

Visit Tuolumne County (VTC) advocates for sustainable tourism, infrastructure development, and policy support to enhance the region's economic vitality and quality of life. VTC is voice publicizing to the community and visitors regarding various destination projects that support both visitors and residents. On a larger scale, VTC partners and participates with organizations like Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS), US Travel, and CalTravel on various issues affecting the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries.

- This past year, along with regional partners, VTC advocated for the repair of Lumsden Road in Groveland. This road is critical access for whitewater rafting on the Tuolumne River. The road has now been repaired.
- VTC participates in regular springtime meetings with CalTrans and other Tuolumne County stakeholders to encourage the earliest possible opening of Sonora Pass to allow back and forth travel over the pass. When the pass is open, Tuolumne County's economy strengthens.
- VTC partnered with regional Destination Marketing Organizations to create a "Beyond the Yosemite Valley" brochure to encourage visitors to visit the other 95% of Yosemite during busy times.
- VTC contributed \$5000 to install wi-fi at the Big Oak Flat entry gate to Yosemite to encourage travelers to the Park to purchase digital passes saving time at the gate. The landing page also contains several helpful tips on how to visit Yosemite and have an enjoyable experience.



FILM COMMISSION



Tuolumne County Film Commission

Tuolumne County has a rich film history dating back to 1919. This history includes westerns like Dodge City, The Unforgiven, High Noon, and Pale Riders. Additional movies filmed here include Back to the Future 3 featuring Michael J. Fox and Bad Girls, starring Drew Barrymore.

Several television shows including Little House on the Prairie and Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, numerous commercials, and documentaries have also been filmed in Tuolumne County throughout the years.

Visit Tuolumne County serves as the county's Film Commission. VTC manages the Tuolumne County film website, filmtuolumne.org and social media channels. VTC is also the liaison for the film industry and various jurisdictions to obtain permitting. VTC provides resources for productions, caterers, extras, housing, casting calls, crew, and more.

This last year LuaSol Productions filmed an indie western series called "West of the Sun." The Laird sisters, owners of LuaSol Productions, brought their imagined town of Silver Rock to life by filming in Columbia State Historic Park. Many locals were involved in the production.

This coming year VTC is placing a greater emphasis on promoting the county for filming by revamping the website, hosting a film familiarization tour in the fall featuring location managers, and becoming more involved with both the California Film Commission (CFC) and the Film Liaisons in California Statewide (FLICS).



COMMUNITY

Community Sponsorships and Destination Development

Visit Tuolumne County supports various county events through event sponsorships and destination development activities. As mentioned in last year's annual report, funding dedicated to this for fiscal year 2025-2026 has decreased due to a flat budget and rising costs. In spite of this we still contributed \$20,000 to help support tourism-centric events and activities in Tuolumne County including for Twain Harte's Audubon Bird Town, Twain Harte Chamber of Commerce, Pine Mountain Lake Association, Columbia Chamber of Commerce, ConAmor's Cinco de Mayo Celebration, Don Pedro Recreation Agency's 4th of July Fireworks Show, Groveland's Grade to Gate Foundation, Groveland Trail Heads, Highway 120 Chamber of Commerce, Sonora Chamber of Commerce, and Sierra Repertory Theatre.

Throughout the year VTC has also provided items for various auctions or other giveaways with the largest undertaking being the auction item representing Tuolumne County for the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) annual fundraiser.

VTC Team Leadership and Community Involvement

Lisa Mayo, President & CEO

- Visit California Rural Committee Chair 2025-2026
- Visit California Marketing Committee
- Visit California's Gold Country Visitors Association, Past President
- One West Tourism Alliance Association Board of Directors, Secretary/Treasurer 2025-2026
- One West Tourism Alliance Foundation Board of Trustees, Secretary/Treasurer 2025-2026
- YARTS Authority Advisory Committee, Chair 2025-2026
- Sierra Repertory Theatre Board of Directors 2019-present
- Columbia Community College Foundation Board 2026-2027

Amariah Richards, Business Development Manager

- Central Sierra Economic Development Board Member
- Tuolumne County Business Council
- Economic Development Collaborative Committee
- Volunteer: Board for Breast Cancer, Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort

Jen Lopez, Marketing Specialist

- Sonora Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
- Global Sustainable Tourism Council, Sustainable Tourism Council Certification, February 2026
- Volunteer: Sonora Christmas Parade staging
- High Sierra Visitors Council



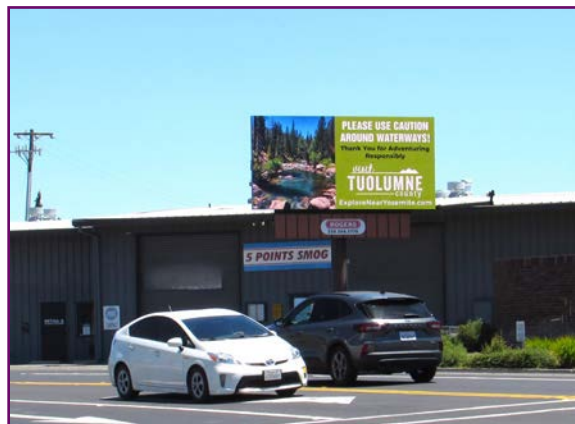
Community Event Presence

- Groveland Facelift, September 2025
- Groveland 49er Festival Taste of Tuolumne County, September 2025
- Dodge Ridge Boarding for Breast Cancer, January 2026
- Sonora Wedding Faire at Chicken Ranch Casino Resort, March 2026
- Stanislaus National Forest and Leave No Trace Trail Day on Ferretti Non-Motorized Trail Network, June 2026

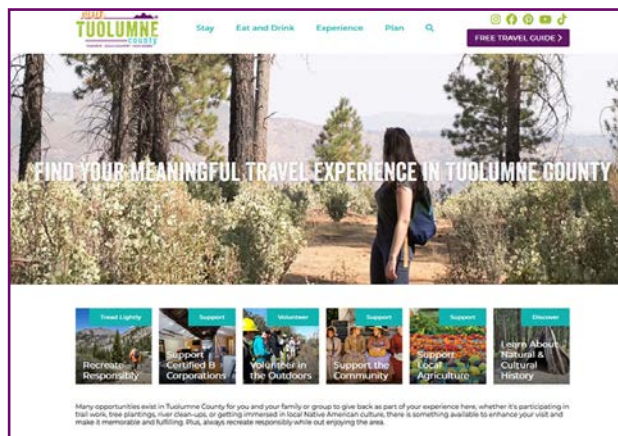


Sustainability and Stewardship

VTC encourages responsible travel through communicating Leave No Trace principles and 'Know Before You Go' messaging through social media posts, billboard impressions, and website content. Safety messaging covers winter conditions, wildfire awareness, water safety, etc.



VTC also maintains a "Travel with Meaning" webpage full of information to help travelers make their visit more sustainable with lists of upcoming stewardship events to participate in, local B-corp Corporations that they can support, and local organizations that offer volunteer opportunities.



Visit Tuolumne County Tourism Summit

Visit Tuolumne County hosted its annual Tourism Summit, Awards, and Partner Showcase on October 16, 2025, at Chicken Ranch Casino Resort, welcoming 85 attendees for a full day of insight, connection, and recognition. The group was welcomed by newly seated Tribal Chairman Joseph Mathiesen-Powell of the Chicken Ranch Rancheria Me-Wuk Indians of California Tribal Council, setting a warm tone for the day.

This year's agenda opened with a Public Relations panel moderated by Laurie Armstrong, pairing a traditional travel journalist with travel influencer Maddy Edmunds (@maddyjedmunds) to explore how the industry works with each. Lynn Carpenter, Senior Vice President of Marketing for Visit California, shared statewide trends and an update on VTC's partnership with the organization. Tamera Blankenship of the Tuolumne County Transportation Council presented an update on the Gold Rush Path, followed by a partner panel led by Amariah Richards featuring ECHO Adventure Cooperative, Motherlode Escape Rooms, Mi-Wuk Village Inn, and Sierra Mac River Trips. Madden Media, Clarity of Place, and Diamond Digital Marketing rounded out the day with updates on advertising, destination strategy, artificial intelligence, and digital marketing for local partners.



The highlight of the day was the presentation of VTC's inaugural Tourism Industry Awards. More than 40 nominations were submitted across three categories and reviewed by a panel of industry representatives, VTC Board members, and staff. Dwight Follien, CEO and Founding Member of the Groveland Trail Heads, received the Tourism Advocacy Award for his work building sustainable trail systems that draw visitors from across the state. Teresa Torbett, owner of Columbia Mercantile 1855, received the Spirit of Tuolumne County Award for her dedication to preserving local history and welcoming visitors into the community. The Front-Line Hospitality Champion Award went to two honorees, Cara Morotti of Chicken Ranch Casino Resort and Tim Lopez of Black Oak Casino Resort, both recognized for going above and beyond in service to visitors.

"Tuolumne County depends on the hospitality and tourism industry as a vital economic driver, and the force behind the industry is its people," said Visit Tuolumne County President and CEO Lisa Mayo. "It's important we recognize those who go above and beyond to create amazing experiences for both visitors and residents."

Community Holiday Mixer

In December, Visit Tuolumne County and the Sonora Chamber of Commerce co-hosted a festive Community Holiday Mixer at the historic Sonora Opera Hall, bringing together local businesses, nonprofits, and residents for an evening of networking, holiday cheer, and community celebration. Guests enjoyed light refreshments, seasonal treats, and a chance to win raffle and silent auction prizes, which raise funds for the annual Christmas Town Sonora.



Wildfire Toolkit for Partners

In 2021, Visit Tuolumne County produced a Wildfire Toolkit designed to support partners and stakeholders in times of wildfire risk. The toolkit is structured to help coordinate clear, informed communications quickly and effectively when needed—before, during, or after an incident. The toolkit is updated as needed and reviewed by CalFire and Tuolumne County OES.

The toolkit includes:

- A downloadable infographic that spells out key steps for visitors and residents to reduce wildfire risk (e.g. managing dragging chains, safe campfires, proper cigarette disposal)
- Talking points to educate visitors and customers on what they should know about wildfires and emergency procedures
 - Direct links to essential safety materials:
The Tuolumne County fire evacuation pamphlet (which VTC had translated in Spanish in 2025)
 - A “Go Bag” preparation video
 - Access to official information portals, including the Tuolumne County Fire Map for real-time updates on fires, evacuations, and road closures.



PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships

Visit Tuolumne County's network of local partners, from lodging and dining to retail, recreation, and beyond, is what makes destination marketing possible. This year reflected steady growth in that network, alongside two key tools VTC uses to keep partners informed and dollars circulating locally.

Partner Stats

VTC closed the 2025/2026 fiscal year with 204 active partners, up from 189 the year before, a nearly 8% increase. That growth came from 22 new partners joining throughout the year, an eclectic mix including Bigwood Brew Works, Southern Mines Brewing Co., Columbia College, and Mini Makers Market Sonora. VTC also retained 96% of its existing partner base, a strong sign that local businesses continue to see real value in membership.

Yiftee: The Local Love Card

VTC created the Local Love Card, a Yiftee-powered digital gift card program designed to keep spending locally. The program is promoted across local radio, the VTC website, and social media channels, encouraging residents and visitors alike to shop local businesses. This year, Madden Media set aside dedicated funds to give the Local Love Card additional promotional support heading into FY26/27.

Trail Mix Tuesday

Trail Mix Tuesday is VTC's weekly email newsletter for local partners, keeping the tourism community informed on news, events, and opportunities across the county. VTC sent 42 Trail Mix Tuesday emails over the fiscal year to a steady list of roughly 340 subscribers, holding a 99.7% delivery rate throughout. The newsletter maintained a strong 36.1% average open rate, with several issues climbing above 40%.



Photo by Sally Anne Fischer

MANAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

Management & Accountability

VTC President and CEO, Lisa Mayo, retains her Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) certification. This is the tourism industry's highest individual educational achievement. To achieve this designation a series of courses must be taken, and course papers written along with a final that dives deep into an area of destination management. The courses provide a broad knowledge base and provide a multi-disciplinary perspective to problem solving and destination management. CDME recertification takes place every four years.

In 2025, VTC renewed its Destination Management Accreditation Program (DMAP) designation through Destinations International. This program serves as a visible industry distinction that defines numerous quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management. To retain accreditation, VTC must gain recertification every three years, a process that includes internal review and updating accreditation documents and submitting them to Destinations International for approval.

In addition, VTC has an independent financial review annually conducted by a third-party Certified Public Accountant.



GLOSSARY OF INDUSTRY TERMS

DMO—Destination Marketing Organization; local tourism marketing companies involved in increasing tourism to a city, area or region and helping shape the destination as a visitor economy.

Drive Market—Potential travelers within driving distance of a city, port, or attraction.

Familiarization Tour (FAM)—A complimentary or reduced rate organized trip for tour operators, travel agents, travel writers, or other members of the travel trade for the purpose of educating and familiarizing them with the tourism destinations. By seeing the destinations where they are sending travelers, the travel trade is better prepared to answer customer questions and promote travel to the location.

'Free' or 'Foreign' Independent Travelers (FIT)—Individual travel in which a tour operator has previously arranged blocks of rooms at various destinations for use by individual travelers. These individuals travel independently, not in a group, usually by rental car or public transportation.

IPW—Formerly known as International POW WOW – the largest international travel marketplace held in the United States sponsored by the US Travel Association. **Leisure Travel**—Travel for recreation, educational, sightseeing, relaxing and other experiential purposes.

Press/Publicity Release—A news article or feature story written by the subject of the story for delivery and potential placement in the media.

Press Trips—Organized trips for travel writers and broadcasters for the purpose of assisting them in developing stories about tourism destinations. Often journalists travel independently, though with the assistance of a DMO.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM)—A method of promotion and advertising to help companies' content rank higher among search engine traffic.

Shoulder Season—Those periods between the peak and off season when destination demand is moderate.

Sustainable Tourism—Refers to a level of tourism activity that can be maintained over the long term because it results in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural, and cultural environments of the area in which it takes place.

Target Market—The group of customers who will be the focus of a company's marketing efforts.

Tour Operator—Develops, markets, and operates group travel programs that provide a complete travel experience for one price and includes transportation, accommodations, sightseeing, selected meals, and an escort. Tour operators market directly to the consumer (sometimes through travel agents) and are beginning to be listed on computerized reservation systems.

Travel Trade—Refers to tour operators, travel agents, receptive operators, and wholesalers. These professionals organize and contract to buy travel products to sell to groups or individuals.