

# Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau 2017-2018 Annual Report



August 2018

The Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau continues to strategically implement effective marketing programs that are increasing tourism and enhancing economic growth for our community. In addition to continuing to build on out-of-county marketing programs, this past year the TCVB also increased in-county marketing programs to engage residents and local businesses. This includes the newly refined Community Marketing Sponsorship program.

We have successful marketing initiatives that we will continue to grow and new initiatives that are already showing a strong return on investment. International representation in the UK and Ireland has opened many opportunities for public relations on a whole new level for Tuolumne County. A new incentive program has been put in place to encourage off-peak and midweek business opportunities with the meetings industry.

The TCVB Team is a hard-working and dedicated group of people, passionate about our community. Together we have been able to make some amazing things happen for Tuolumne County and there is much more to come! We are appreciative to our Board of Directors for their unending support of our ideas and faith in our abilities to carry them out. Thank you to our members for supporting our efforts and joining us at marketing meetings and other TCVB events. Thank you to the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors and Sonoma City Council for understanding the value of our work, the impact tourism has on our County and continuing to support our efforts.

Respectfully,

Lisa Mayo, Executive Director  
Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau

## 2017 Tuolumne County Overall Tourism Statistics

The preliminary 2017 Travel Impact Report by Dean Runyan Associates is produced annually for Visit California. In 2017 Tuolumne County saw an increase in visitor spending of 10% over 2016. California's state average was 4.8%. This is a great indicator of increased visitation to Tuolumne County.

Total Direct Travel Spending	\$253.3 million
Tourism Industry Employment	2,480
Government Revenue Generated by Tourism	
Local Sales Tax Receipts	\$8.7 million
State Sales Tax Receipts	\$10.4 million
Transient Occupancy Tax	\$4.5 million

\*These statistics do not include spending or job generation by either Black Oak Casino Resort or by Chicken Ranch Casino as they fall under Government. Casino employment estimated to be 1,300.

## Community Outreach and Marketing Sponsorships

### Tourism Summit Road Shows

During National Tourism Month in May we took our annual Tourism Summit on the road and held the summit in three different communities, Groveland, Mi-Wuk Village and Jamestown. Topics included the recently announced tourism numbers for 2017 and marketing, PR, film commission and social media updates. There was also time for open discussion and questions from attendees.

### Marketing Sponsorships

The TCVB is setting aside funding, up to \$75,000 annually, to be used by local groups for promotion of events or marketing campaigns that help drive tourism and overnight stays to Tuolumne County. This program has been advertised through social media, TCVB website, e-newsletters, radio and newspaper interviews and public meetings. In some cases, the TCVB has reached out directly to various groups to introduce the sponsorship program. The program officially rolled out in January 2018 and nearly \$50,000 in sponsorships and/or marketing funds was awarded to the following recipients:

- All Hallows Fantasy Faire
- Columbia College Foundation Columbia Wine Tasting Event
- Farms of Tuolumne County Farm and Ranch Tour
- Friends of Columbia
- Jamestown School District – Chinese Camp Brochures
- PBS – Walkin’ California
- Shop Local Campaign – includes all Chambers of Commerce
- Sonora Area Foundation – new Jamestown Museum
- Sonora Celtic Faire
- Sonora Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament
- Strawberry Music Festival
- Summerville Bears Quarterback Club – Westside Tribute Band and Brew Fest
- Summerville High School – Showing of local film “The Other Kids”
- Tuolumne County Airports – Father’s Day Fly In
- Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce
- Tuolumne County Economic Development
- Tuolumne County Sheriff’s Posse, Mother Lode Round-Up
- Tuolumne County Trails
- Twain Harte Chamber of Commerce – Concerts in the Park, Wine in the Pines, Oktoberfest
- Unruly Brew n Que Festival
- Yosemite Highway 120 Chamber of Commerce 49er Festival



In addition to the Community Marketing Sponsorship program, the TCVB continues to support the community in several ways including providing countless auction items for local fundraisers, highlighting non-profit events on-line and through social media channels and through selling tickets for various events.

## Community Involvement

- Executive Director serves on the following Boards: Tuolumne County Historical Society Board, Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce Board, Sonora Adventist Health Advisory Board, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo Experience Industry Management Advisory Board
- Marketing Manager serves on Leadership Tuolumne County Board
- Communications and Tourism Manager serves on Tuolumne County Habitat for Humanity Annual House Party Auction Committee
- Film Liaison serves on Access Tuolumne (formerly Cable 8) Board

## Strategic Planning

### DestinationNEXT Community Assessment for a Strategic Roadmap

The TCVB held a community-wide strategic planning exercise called DestinationNEXT created by Destinations International (DI). DI is the world's largest resource for destination marketing and management (DMMO) organizations. DestinationNEXT includes a survey and workshop to determine where a destination falls in terms of strength as a tourism destination and considers community support, infrastructure and tourism offerings. Results were presented at a workshop in March 2018 to TCVB partners, community leaders and government officials.

DestinationNEXT survey results put Tuolumne County's overall assessment at the "Voyager" level meaning that this is a destination with a tourism vision and a community mandate to get it done. There is room for growth in engaging the community and becoming a more established destination. Overall, there is positive support for tourism in the County as well as for increasing opportunities to drive more tourism including developing better transportation alternatives from BART and the Bay Area to Tuolumne County and establishing international hotel brands within the County. Tuolumne County scored above industry average in terms of destination strength which includes brand and the number of attractions and entertainment opportunities. Tuolumne County scored below industry average on items like communication/internet infrastructure and mobility/access.

The TCVB will use findings from the DestinationNEXT program to build our Strategic Plan and Tourism Master Plan. The complete DestinationNEXT Survey along with Tuolumne County's results can be viewed online at <http://www.visittuolumne.com/for-our-partners>.



## Leisure Marketing – Jen Lopez, Marketing Manager

Our destination marketing strategy is one rooted in amplifying our brand-Visit Tuolumne County: Yosemite Gold Country High Sierra, throughout California, the United States and in international markets. The marketing efforts stretch over strategic partnerships with consistent messaging over multi-channel platforms, print advertising in key travel-related magazines and newspapers sections, digital advertising in targeted markets, social media, promotions on radio and TV and more.

### Highlights of 2017-2018

- One section takeover of *Eat-Drink-Play* in Bay Area News Group newspapers featuring over 10 unique articles about Tuolumne County and partner advertisements
- Five *Studio 40 Live* segments on Fox 40, Sacramento
- Expanded viewing area for TCVB commercial to Fremont
- Tuolumne County featured on 30-Minute *Bay Area Life: Get Outta Town* TV show on ABC 7
- New video assets through Brand USA partnership, hiring an independently contracted videographer and ABC 7 TV production
- Created a condensed version of the vacation planner which is translated in five languages
- Established “Culture and Heritage of Tuolumne County” video series
- Virtual reality and 360° video productions

### In-House Marketing

#### TCVB Annual Vacation Planner

- Printed 110,000 copies (10,000 more than previous year)
  - Increased distribution in Bay Area: 80,000 at San Jose and Oakland International Airports, BART stations, Peet’s Coffee houses, Whole Foods stores, etc.
  - NEW distribution in the California Welcome Center at Pier 39 in San Francisco
  - 30,000 distributed at travel and trade shows, in visitors centers and to TCVB members for distribution, plus mailed to leads generated by publications in which we advertise
- Digital version available online



#### NEW Condensed Vacation Planner

- Created a generalized visitor guide with directions from airports, area attractions and things to do and lodging information
- Translated into German, French, French Canadian, Spanish and Mandarin (Simplified Chinese)

#### Website

- Traffic to website increased by 69% over 2016-2017 due to larger, more noticeable print ads, increased media exposure, larger investment in paid search engine optimization and search engine marketing and Facebook ads and increased digital presence in multi-platform advertising (below)
- Booking referral engine generated 2,732 referrals to Tuolumne County lodging properties (average 7.5 per day)

#### E-Newsletter

- Sent at least every other month
- 12% increase in leads from previous year

## International Marketing Partnership

Strategic partnerships allow us to take advantage of these organizations' much larger budgets, expertise and industry tested marketing programs, intentionally created for international markets. International visitors are important as they tend to stay longer and spend more money at the destination. The goal with international marketing is to focus in on two to three international markets that are attainable and prime to increase visitation.

- Brand USA Partnership: Visit California Road Trip
  - Total TCVB investment: \$64, 500
  - 30-second video creation and distribution; featuring Sonora Pass, Railtown 1897 State Historic Park, Groveland/Pine Mountain Lake Stables
  - National Geographic California Road Trip Co-Op
  - Expedia Strategy Promotion, Social, Display Ads = Hotel Gross Bookings: \$109,953; Room Nights: 385
  - Short editorial in the Inspiration Guide (Visit the USA travel guide distributed in 13 countries)
  - Thomas Cook: USA Everywhere Digital Campaign = Anticipated Customer Spend: \$47,000



## Multi-Channel Print and Digital Advertising

Most times print and digital advertising go hand-in-hand as we are able to participate in custom-made packages through our media partners, such as Sunset Magazine and My National Parks Trips (Yosemite Journal).

### In Annual Publications

- *Oh, Ranger!* Yosemite National Park Guide (Circulation 290,000, readers: 1.1 million)
  - Half-page print ad
- *San Francisco Travel Planner* (Circulation 225,000, readers: 535,000)
  - Half-page print ad
- *Yosemite Journal*
  - Full-page ad in annual print publication (Circulation 100,000)
  - Multiple Tuolumne County inclusive articles in the publication
  - Facebook posts
  - Digital ads on MyYosemitePark.com and in e-newsletters
  - California Road Trip Giveaway
- *California Visitors Guide* (the official California Visitors Guide produced by Visit California; circulation 500,000)
  - Half-page print ad in cooperation with OARS and Rush Creek and Evergreen Lodges
  - Cooperative ad with Gold Country Visitors Association
- *KGO On the Go Magazine*
  - Ad on back cover of KGO on the Go Magazine (annual)



- TCVB Logo on front cover of KGO on the Go Magazine
- Feature article on Tuolumne County
- Facebook posts
- Radio commercials and mentions: 250x
- Streaming commercials and mentions: 200x

**In Periodicals and Other Internet Publications**

- Bay Area News Group, October 8, 2017 (Circulation: 1.8 million in *San Jose Mercury News*, *East Bay Times*, etc.)
  - TCVB Full-page ad
  - Articles are also online and shared on social media
  - Digital banner ads
  - Wide range of advertising opportunities available for partners
- *Sunset* Magazine (includes Northern and Southern California editions; circulation 665,000)
  - Larger ads and editorial spots this year
    - July, October, December 2017
    - May 2018
    - Resulted in 2,282 leads/vacation planner requests
  - Digital ads during May 2018 on [www.sunset.com/travel/national-parks](http://www.sunset.com/travel/national-parks)
  - Two E-Newsletter Sponsorships in May 2018 (425,800 total impressions, 1,260 clicks)
- *Adventure Outdoors* (Readers: 550,000)
  - Half-page ad: Fall 2017
- *San Francisco Chronicle* Full section Advertising Feature, March 11, 2018 (Circulation: 1.7 million)
  - Gold Country Road Trip: March 11, 2018 in partnership with Amador, El Dorado and Mariposa Counties
    - TCVB full-page ad
    - 12 members/partners mentioned in 11 stories
    - 6 Tuolumne County advertisers
    - Articles are also online
- *Southwest, The Magazine*, June 2018 (Readers 6.3 million)
  - Half-page ad with dual messaging= leisure and meetings
- *Where* Magazine, San Francisco Bay Area
  - Ad in hardcover in-room guest book (in 27,000 Bay Area 4 & 5 Star guest rooms)
  - Ads in monthly magazine (80,000 copies in 27,000 Bay area guest rooms):
    - September, October 2017
    - March, April, May 2018
  - TCVB online listing on [wheretraveler.com](http://wheretraveler.com)
  - Facebook posts
    - Visit Tuolumne County, August 5, 2017
    - Promoting Columbia Diggins, May 10, 2018



- VIA Magazine (Readers: 5.6 million)
  - Discovery Insert ad and editorial: Fall 2017
  - Print ad: Winter 2018
  - Resulted in 352 leads/vacation planner requests
- *Sierra Living* (Circulation: 18,000)
  - Full page ad: February-March, 2018
  - Full page ad in cooperation with TCEDA: April-May, 2018
- DogTrekker.com
  - Banner ads ran in May and June
  - E-newsletter sponsorship
    - Featured 4 new Tuolumne County articles
    - “Win a Dogcation” giveaway featuring Hotel Charlotte and Groveland Hotel

### Other Ads

- Digital display advertising at Sacramento International Airport
  - Potential Impressions: 26.9 million per year



### Regional Advertising

- Friends and Neighbors Magazine
- Sonora Chamber Magazine
- Columbia Firemen’s Muster program
- Sierra Repertory Theatre newsletters
- Mother Lode Round-Up Parade and Rodeo newspaper insert
- MyMotherLode.com (digital ads) for Holiday “Shop Local” and “Tourism Means Business, Tourism Means Jobs” campaigns
- Tuolumne County Transit bus

### Television

#### TV Coverage

- *Bay Area Life: Get Outta Town* on ABC 7 (San Francisco)
  - Tuolumne County featured on 30-Minute TV show, aired April 28 and June 17
- *Studio 40 Live* on Fox 40 (Sacramento)
  - 3 segments filmed on location: Dodge Ride, Sonora (live feed) and Groveland
  - 2 segments filmed in studio (1 live): Holiday events and winter recreation



#### TCVB Commercial

- Continued coverage in Sacramento and Tri-Valley (Pleasanton, Dublin, Livermore), and expanded to include Fremont
  - Sacramento Commercial Airs (1 million households):
    - Television: 981 spots aired
    - Digital TV In-Video Streams: 199,500
  - Tri Valley (81,800 households) and Fremont (59,040 households) Commercial Airs:
    - Television:
    - Digital TV In-Video Streams: 160,400

### Travel Show Presence

- International Sportsmen’s Expo – Sacramento, January 2018 (to promote Wild West Bass Trail Fishing Tournament)
- Bay Area Travel and Adventure Show, February 2018 (Attendees: 21,000+)
- Los Angeles Travel and Adventure Show, February 2018 (Attendees: 36,800+)



California State Fair – Anna Davies, Special Projects Coordinator  
The Tuolumne County exhibit at the 2017 California State Fair in Sacramento brought home a Gold Ribbon and won the award for Best Marketing Presentation. The theme was “Post Card Perfect Memories in the Making.” The interactive exhibit showcased the many amazing attributes that make Tuolumne County the perfect memory making vacation destination. The exhibit featured giant postcards, a postcard coloring station, beautifully displayed local products and whimsical animated characters. For more than 20 years, the TCVB has supported and coordinated the design, development and volunteer staffing of the exhibit providing us the opportunity to reach out to thousands of potential visitors each year.



### Social Media & Digital Content – Mackenzie Rodgers, Digital Content Coordinator

By utilizing the successful combination of original based content and user generated testimonials, the TCVB has been able to increase an active following with credibility and premium content that is in tune with current travel trends. The efforts of the TCVB, for this fiscal year, is demonstrated in our daily social media posts for partners and followers to see. Social media has driven the Visitors Bureau’s marketing efforts to continuously be a trustworthy source for visitors and potential visitors to get reliable real-time updates, view a variety of our inspiring members and to illustrate the beauty of Tuolumne County.

- Facebook: 15.5% increase in followers. 25,177+
- Instagram: 40.6% increase in followers. 3,772+
- Twitter: 16% increase in followers. 1,239+



### Social Media Campaigns

- Culture & Heritage Video Series is a successful, new and continuing campaign that showcases the depth of Tuolumne County’s historic foundings and current, unique cultures that are a draw to the Gold Country-Yosemite-High Sierra.

- *#MyTuolumneCounty is an on-brand, on-going campaign that encourages visitors and locals to share their Tuolumne County experience with us and their followers.*
- *#MyTuolumneDog is a campaign the Visitors Bureau has utilized to promote the Year of the Dog and the dog-friendly places and activities that are available in Tuolumne County. It has allowed us to target specific messaging to dog lovers everywhere. Visitors and locals are also encouraged to get involved and share their dog travel photos and experiences with us and their followers.*

#### Digital Content - Blogs

Utilizing original blog articles within social media posts to drive potential visitors to VisitTuolumne.com has been a successful way to increase the reach of our marketing efforts. This detailed content has been a significant platform to feature and refer a variety of members in itineraries and travel-inspiring articles.

- Blog articles published: 17
- Member mentions: 125
- Reads: 3,745

#### Virtual Reality 360 Video and Virtual Tours

- In coordination with Yosemite Gateways partners, a 360 video of Yosemite was created that includes Wapama Falls at Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, the Tuolumne Grove of Giant Sequoias and Tuolumne Meadows.
- A virtual tour and 360° video were created for Columbia State Historic Park
- The 360° videos are shown on virtual goggles at travel shows and other events

## Public Relations - Katie Kirkland, Communications and Tourism Manager

### Regional and State Efforts

To increase Tuolumne County's media coverage to our regional market the TCVB attended media receptions, partner marketing briefs and meetings, hosted regional and domestic journalists, and participated in regional advertising opportunities.

#### **Travel Trade**

- Placed an ad in Courier magazine highlighting Tuolumne County as a destination for group tourism. Courier is the official publication for the National Tour Association and has an 89% action response rate.

#### **Media**

- Attended Visit California's LA Media Reception with one on one table side meetings with key LA media. Resulting in meeting with 15 key media who expressed great interest in Tuolumne County.
- Attended SF Travel Marketing brief for an educational session on how to utilize our strategic partnership as well as meeting with key account representatives.
- Gold Country Visitors Association (GCVA) partnership- Attended bi-monthly meetings, co-hosted media and FAM (familiarization) trips, and submitted media relations content to Visit California on behalf of GCVA.
- Hosted a variety of domestic journalists in Tuolumne County- Eric the Travel Guy/PBS, Christine Sarkis/Smarter Traveler, Diana Lambdin-Meyer/Mojo Traveler and AAA, Sucheta Rawal/One Travel, Will and Heather Balogh/REI Blog, Backpacker Magazine and Just a Colorado Girl Blog.
- Hosted Visit California's Domestic Public Relations Manager in Hetch Hetchy, Sonora, and Columbia. Giving the Visit California team content and firsthand experience to promoting Tuolumne County.

### International Efforts

To increase Tuolumne County's media coverage to international markets the TCVB attended media receptions and hosted several international journalists and tour operators.

#### **Travel Trade**

- Hosted Netherlands EurAm FAM with 11 tour operators; a dinner for the group was hosted by the TCVB at The Standard Pour. Supervisor Randy Hanvelt attended the dinner and joined in promoting TCVB to this market. Because of this FAM, Tuolumne County is now on the tour itinerary offerings.
- Hosted Visit California's France EurAm FAM with nine tour operators from several travel groups across France.

- Hosted dinner event at Rush Creek Lodge for Lusso Travel, a luxury operator that operates business to business only. This trip resulted in Tuolumne County being added to their brochure and product offering for next year.
- SF Travel and Hong Kong Airlines FAM Tour- To promote Hong Kong Airlines new direct flight to San Francisco International Airport, SF Travel and Hong Kong Airlines invited ten media representatives, tour operators, and an airline representative to discover areas outside of San Francisco. The group spent 1.5 days exploring Tuolumne County.



### **Media**

- Attended TravMedia’s International Media Marketplace event in New York- Appointments with more than 25 international and domestic journalists. As a memorable gift each journalist we met received a live giant sequoia tree seedling.
- Hosted six journalists from India Culinary and outdoors FAM through Visit California.
- Attended the International Pow Wow in Denver- Appointments with 50 plus international and domestic media representatives.
- Hosted Visit California’s International Public Relations Manager in Hetch Hetchy, Sonora, and Columbia. Giving the Visit California team content and firsthand experience to promoting Tuolumne County. She had previously visited Tuolumne County’s High Country on Highway 108.
- SF Travel partnered with TCVB to host Hylink, China’s largest independent digital and advertising agency, in Tuolumne County. The Hylink and SF Travel team spent 2 Days exploring Rush Creek Lodge, Jamestown and Sonora. The livestream took place at Rush Creek with a special event with Inner Sanctum Cellars and Brush and Cork. Resulting in nearly 160,000 livestream views and over 400 comments. To date this is Hylink’s largest and most responsive livestream out-pacing other areas like Napa Valley.
- Hosted many international media- UK: Alice Jarvis/ES Magazine, Claire Hodgson/Cosmopolitan, Emma Ledger/ The Independent, Gabriella Minchella/ Red Magazine, and Stan Cullimore/Daily Mail. Canada: Suzanne Morphet/Vancouver Sun.

### **Strategic Partnerships**

The TCVB partners with regional and international Destination Marketing Organizations to assist in capturing additional markets and increase Tuolumne County exposure to both regional and international markets. By working with those partners, we are able to leverage funding and have a greater impact.

- Visit California- Our strategic partnership with Visit California gave Tuolumne County exposure at the LA Media Reception, increased online publications, and further opportunity to participate for FAM and media tours.
- San Francisco Travel- Our strategic partnership with San Francisco Travel launched Tuolumne County further into the Chinese market with FAM trips and a Hylink partnership opportunity. San Francisco Travel has also exposed Tuolumne County to their market as an add-on destination to San

Francisco. As part of this partnership the TCVB has a dedicated page on San Francisco Travel's website to encourage visitors to explore beyond San Francisco.

- Black Diamond- The TCVB initiated their first international partnership in the UK with the marketing and travel trade agency Black Diamond. The partnership launched in January 2018 and has proven to be largely successful with media trips, press coverage, and tour operator FAM trips:
  - **Public Relations**
    - Media features published: 11
    - Media trips undertaken: 5 (1 Visit California)
    - Total EAV (equivalent advertising value): \$5,649
    - Total reach: 350,780
    - Media liaison: 16 proactive pitches
    - Partnerships and Promotions: 1 creative partnership opportunity with luxury pajama brand Desmond & Dempsey
  - **Travel Trade**
    - UK Travel Trade meetings: 21
    - Operators with Product Increase: 3
    - Agents Trained: 36
    - Agents Visited Yosemite's Tuolumne County: 8
    - Product Inventory Report Delivered
- Tour Operator Land- Produced by North American Journeys, Tour Operator Land markets incoming tourism to and within North America through a variety of specialized events and publishing projects. TCVB has a dedicated page on their site that highlights restaurants, transportation, itineraries, attractions, and events. Our dedicated page also provides clientele with photos, video and links to the TCVB website and partner websites, and social media links. We are able to include translated materials as well.

## Press Releases

Along with being distributed through media related platforms such as TravMedia and Cision all press releases are posted in the Press Room under Content Marketing on the VisitTuolumne.com website.

- *Get in on the Best Kept Secret of Northern California's High Sierra Passes*
- *New Story Ideas Help Journalists Feature Northern California's Gold Country and Yosemite National Park in New Ways*
- *Avoid Crowds and Enjoy the Best of America's National Parks- Yosemite—by Reinventing your Weekend*
- *Tis the Season for the Reason to Visit Tuolumne County's Yosemite for Nearly 30 Days of Christmas*
- *Columbia State Historic Park Celebrates 168 Years in Tuolumne County's Yosemite*
- *All-Season Wellness in Northern California: Here's to a Revived You this Year in Yosemite's Tuolumne County*
- *Northern California's Yosemite Gateway, Tuolumne County adds new PR Staff and UK Trade Representation*
- *Winter is Closer, and Finer Thank You Think- All This, Three Hours away From the San Francisco Bay Area, at Yosemite's Door.*

## Unique Pitches to Media

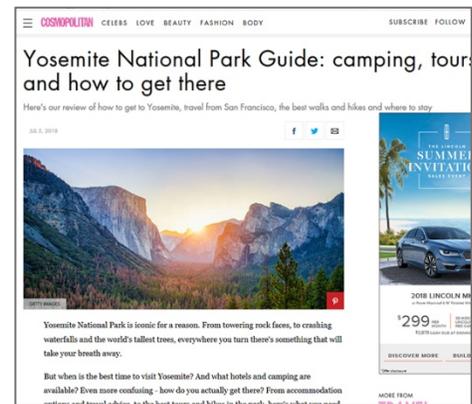
When traveling to media shows or proactively reaching out to media, the TCVB takes different angles to pitch Tuolumne County as a top travel destination. Here are some of the approaches used to inspire media to explore, blog, write, and share Tuolumne County with their audience:

- Visit the Under-loved part of Yosemite- Hetch Hetchy and Tuolumne Grove of Giant Sequoias.
- High Sierra Loop- Highway 108 and Highway 120.
- Holiday Travel- Visit for nearly 30 Days of Christmas
- Mid-week travel- Visit during the week for better rates and fun events
- Millennial travel- Tuolumne County named a top millennial destination
- Stargazing- No city lights makes for the best star stargazing opportunities.
- All-Season Wellness- Wellness destination with outdoor and indoor wellness opportunities.

## Tuolumne County Coverage

Tuolumne County press coverage is tracked and uploaded to the Press Room under In the News on the VisitTuolumne.com website.

- Yosemite National Park Guide: camping, tours, and how to get there  
*Journalist:* Clare Hodson  
*Media Outlet:* Cosmopolitan.co.uk  
*Link:* <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/entertainment/travel/a21246979/yosemite-national-park-camping-tours-san-francisco/>
- Tuolumne County Summer Season Opens  
*Journalist:* Mark Bibby Jackson  
*Media Outlet:* Travel Begins at 40  
*Link:* <https://www.travelbeginsat40.com/news/tuolumne-county-summer-season-opens/>
- 5 of the Best States for Fishing in the USA  
*Journalist:* Emma Forrest  
*Media Outlet:* VisitUSA.org.uk  
*Link:* <https://www.visitusa.org.uk/blogs/article.aspx?pname=5-of-the-best-states-for-fishing-in-the-USA&blogid=140>
- On the Footsteps of Hollywood's Epic Western Stars. Explore Yosemite's Tuolumne County  
*Journalist:* Christian Stan  
*Media Outlet:* Travel for Senses  
*Link:* <https://www.travelforsenses.com/hollywood-western-stars-yosemite-tuolumne-country/>
- This Is How to Do Your Weekend Getaway at Yosemite  
*Journalist:* Sucheta Rawal  
*Media Outlet:* One Travel  
*Link:* <https://www.onetravel.com/going-places/this-is-how-to-do-your-weekend-getaway-at-yosemite/>.
- Tuolumne Bucket List: 12 Unique and Unusual Things to Do  
*Journalist:* Maria Angelova  
*Media Outlet:* 203challenges.com  
*Link:* <https://www.203challenges.com/tuolumne-bucket-list-12-unique-and-unusual-things-to-do/>
- Avoid the Crowds at Yosemite  
*Journalist:* Not Available



*Media Outlet:* Taste California Travel

*Link:* <https://www.tastecaliforniatravel.com/visit/drives-and-destinations/item/2116-avoid-yosemite-crowds>

- Family Weekend Guide: Yosemite and Tuolumne- Smarter Travel

*Journalist:* Christine Sarkis

*Media Outlet:* smartertravel.com

*Link:* <https://www.smartertravel.com/2018/05/14/family-weekend-guide-yosemite-tuolumne/>

- Drunk on Beauty

*Journalist:* Suzanne Morphet

*Media Outlet:* Vancouver Sun

*Link:* [http://epaper.vancouversun.com/@Marshall\\_Dahl/csb\\_hioE6XVVJusBFv4paWsOZh6BlvuJUCTZ4rCMHJ\\_pSQ](http://epaper.vancouversun.com/@Marshall_Dahl/csb_hioE6XVVJusBFv4paWsOZh6BlvuJUCTZ4rCMHJ_pSQ)

- A Weekend Escape to Sonora, Calif., Where the Charm of the Old West Remains.

*Journalist:* Mike Morris

*Media Outlet:* latimes.com

*Link:* <http://www.latimes.com/travel/la-tr-escape-sonora-20180415-story.html>

- The Spring Clean Dozen Outdoor Activities

*Journalist:* Mark Bibby Jackson

*Media Outlet:* Travel Begins at 40

*Link:* <https://www.travelbeginsat40.com/news/the-spring-clean-dozen-outdoor-activities/>

- State Historic Park Marks 168 Years

*Journalist:* Not Available

*Media Outlet:* Taste California Travel

*Link:* <https://www.tastecaliforniatravel.com/visit/drives-and-destinations/item/2095-columbia-state-historic-park-marks-168-years>

- 12 of the Best Stargazing Spots in the USA

*Journalist:* Emily Georgiou

*Media Outlet:* Hero-and-leander.com

*Link:* <http://hero-and-leander.com/12-best-stargazing-spots-usa>

- 12 of the Best Stargazing Spots in the USA

*Journalist:* Laura Bartlett

*Media Outlet:* Houseofcoco.net

*Link:* <https://www.houseofcoco.net/12-of-the-best-stargazing-spots-in-the-usa/>

- Enjoy the Best 12 US Stargazing Spots

*Journalist:* Johan Smits

*Media Outlet:* Travel Begins at 40

*Link:* <https://www.travelbeginsat40.com/news/12-best-stargazing-spots-in-the-us/>

- Tuolumne County California: Not Just Yosemite

*Journalist:* Mark Bibby Jackson

*Media Outlet:* Travel Begins at 40

*Link:* <https://www.travelbeginsat40.com/2018/02/tuolumne-county-california-not-just-yosemite/>

- 2017 National Park Journal, Yosemite Edition

*Journalist:* Tori Peglar

*Media Outlet:* 2017 National Park Journal, Yosemite Edition



Link: [https://images.saymedia-content.com/.image/cs\\_srgb/MTQ4Nm5NTEzODczMjI4ODU1/roadtrip-sanfrancisco2017xx.pdf](https://images.saymedia-content.com/.image/cs_srgb/MTQ4Nm5NTEzODczMjI4ODU1/roadtrip-sanfrancisco2017xx.pdf)

- How to Get Wild in Yosemite Without the Crowds  
*Journalist:* Andera Guthmann  
*Media Outlet:* ChicagoParent.com  
*Link:* <https://www.chicagoparent.com/explore/travel/yosemite-family-travel-guide/>
- 10 Autumn Adventures: From Fall Foliage to Harvest Fests, the Spooky and Scrumptious to the Spectacular  
*Journalist:* Jackie Burrell  
*Media Outlet:* The Mercury News  
*Link:* <https://www.mercurynews.com/2017/10/08/10-gold-country-adventures-in-tuolumne/>
- The Yosemite Most People Never See: 10 Dazzling Hikes  
*Journalist:* Dino Vournas  
*Media Outlet:* The Mercury News  
*Link:* [https://www.mercurynews.com/2017/10/07/the-yosemite-most-people-never-see-10-dazzling-hikes/?utm\\_campaign=Echobox&utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Facebook](https://www.mercurynews.com/2017/10/07/the-yosemite-most-people-never-see-10-dazzling-hikes/?utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook)
- 4 Perfect Picnic Spots in the Sierra Foothills, from Sonora to Yosemite  
*Journalist:* Jackie Burrell  
*Media Outlet:* The Mercury News  
*Link:* <https://www.mercurynews.com/2017/09/30/4-perfect-picnic-spots-in-the-sierra-foothills-from-sonora-to-yosemite/>
- Trans-Sierra Ski Trek: “The Mountains Let Us Through”  
*Journalist:* Matt Johanson  
*Media Outlet:* SierraSplendor.com  
*Link:* <http://sierrasplendor.com/2016/12/30/trans-sierra-ski-trek-the-mountains-let-us-through/>

## Meetings

- *Meet Me in Tuolumne-* To increase off-peak and mid-week occupancy, the TCVB amped up marketing efforts in promoting Tuolumne County’s meeting and events space with the “Meet Me in Tuolumne” promotion. The promotion was launched in February with a video highlighting meeting and event venues in the area and incentive plan to promote companies to bring their meetings to the area. The TCVB continued their Meet Me in Tuolumne promotion with a sponsored social media post, resulting in a reach of 33,496 users, 612 link clicks, and 214 post likes.
- The TCVB attended a Connect California event in March where we met with nearly 30 meeting planners to pitch Tuolumne County as a meeting destination. Also, the TCVB attended the All Things Meetings event in April giving us a chance to introduce Tuolumne County as a meeting destination to a key target area, San Francisco. Here we had the opportunity to talk with over 20 meeting planners.



## Regional Partnerships

- Gold Country Visitors Association (GCVA) – In January 2018, the GCVA placed a new focus on the western Canadian market after Air Canada announced new direct lift from Vancouver to Sacramento making way for an easy getaway to the Gold Country. The GCVA engaged the help of Destination Counsellors International (DCI) in Toronto, and was able to secure two journalists on the inaugural direct flight. The GCVA hosted five media from Vancouver and is slated to continue to work with more media in the Vancouver market.



The GCVA hired DCI in January 2018 and the investment was \$25,000. As of June 30<sup>th</sup>, the total media impressions were 7.43 million (a majority of those on-line) and \$106,325 in value. The funding for the GCVA comes from a Visit California grant that is applied for each year. TCVB Executive Director is currently President of the GCVA and is the grant writer.

- High Sierra Visitors Council (HSVC) – The HSVC has recently taken advantage of a new Visit California program called California STAR. California STAR is a training platform for the travel trade and gives them greater insight into destinations through interactive sales components ultimately creating expert brand ambassadors for the destination. The HSVC also continues to build its outreach to the French market, both on a travel trade and media level. Many destinations with High Sierra, including Tuolumne County, have cited an increase in French visitors since beginning this representation nearly four years ago.
- Yosemite Gateways (not to be confused with Yosemite Gateway Partners) – The Yosemite Gateways is made up of the Destination Management/Marketing organizations from Madera, Mono, Mariposa and Tuolumne counties. Funding for marketing projects comes from Yosemite National Park. The group is charged with creating marketing to promote visiting Yosemite in off-peak times and using alternative transportation. This past year marketing has included hosting a social media influencer, Scott Kranz and working with Sparkloft Media, a social media company that creates very focused social media campaigns. The group also felt that it would be good for YARTS (Yosemite Area Regional Transportation) to have a presence at International Pow Wow (IPW) and that proved to be of huge benefit.



The Scott Kranz project had excellent results. Analytics (as of June 20, 2018) showed that the blog had 836,044 total reach:

- Instagram Posts (Total Reach): 339,196
- Instagram Posts (Total Engagement, including Likes, Comments, Saves): 49,468
- Instagram Stories (Total Reach): 496,848

The blog can be read at: <https://www.scott-kranz.com/blog/2018/7/exploring-yosemites-high-country>

Results of the Sparkloft Media campaign are yet to be reported.

## Visitors and Membership – Debbe Pallante, Office and Membership Manager

Staff in three Tuolumne County Visitors Centers, in Sonora, Chinese Camp and Groveland (seasonal), offer maps, directions, area brochures, trip ideas, lodging referrals and local perspectives, providing personalized service to visitors for a positive travel experience.

### **New Visitor Center Partnership**

The TCVB has partnered with the Yosemite Gateway Museum in Groveland to operate a seasonal visitor center within the museum location. The partnership commenced on Memorial Day weekend and will end on Columbus Day weekend. The month of June 2018 saw nearly double the visitors as June 2017 and a significant increase in donations to the museum. The TCVB also worked with Yosemite National Park to secure a ranger presence at the new location. This is a huge asset for all to have the rangers as part of this partnership.

### **Visitor Center Statistics (Sonora and Chinese Camp)**

- Top 5 International Visitors to Visitors Centers
  1. Germany
  2. United Kingdom
  3. Australia/New Zealand
  4. Canada
  5. Netherlands and France
- Top 5 US Visitors to Visitors Centers (other than California)
  1. Central States (AR, IA, IL, IN, KY, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI)
  2. Northeastern Seaboard (CT, MA, ND, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)
  3. Northwestern States (ID, MT, OR, WA)
  4. Midwestern States (CO, KS, ND, NE, OK, SD, TX, WY)
  5. Southeastern Seaboard (DC, DE, FL, NC, SC, CA, WV)
- Top 5 California Visitors to Visitors Centers
  1. Southern California
  2. East Bay Area
  3. North Bay Area
  4. Sacramento Area
  5. South Bay Area

### **Yosemite Visitors Who Entered at Big Oak Flat Entrance**

July 2017 – June 2018: 459,024

### **Membership Statistics**

- Total members as of June 30, 2018: 270
- New members in 2017-2018: 31

### Film Commission – Bethany Wilkinson, Film Liaison

The film commission officially launched the website redesign which features a new locations tab, a permit page with information needed to film in the area, and an events tab with an emphasis on film events happening in the area. There were a total of 15 permitted filming days that occurred in various parts of the County, including filming from ABC and Travel Channel. In December, the film commission was represented at the California On Location Awards in Beverly Hills, and then in February, the Tuolumne County Film Commission, alongside other film commissions met with the head of production at LucasFilm to encourage filming in California. Earlier in the year, Bethany Wilkinson became the official film liaison to represent Tuolumne County in the Film Liaisons in California Statewide.



### Notable Projects Underway and Upcoming

- Tuolumne Adventure Trolley, in partnership with Tuolumne County Transit, runs for free, every Saturday through September. Route includes shopping, events and attractions in Sonora, Columbia and Jamestown.
- Friends and Relatives campaign encourages local residents to be tourism ambassadors by sending special “Wish You Were Here” postcards to out-of-town friends and family.
- Brand USA Global Co-Op multi-platform campaign will focus on promoting visitation from UK and Canada.
- Sunset Magazine giveaway featuring overnight stays at Rush Creek Lodge, Lazy Z Resort and Red Tail Ranch.
- Visit California UK SuperFAM (familiarization tour), October 2018. Journalists and tour operators will visit parts of Gold Country and Yosemite National Park.
- San Francisco Travel Strategic Partnership will take a new focus of promoting meetings in Tuolumne County to increase off-peak season and mid-week business.



## TCVB Leadership and Staff

### **2017-2018 Board of Directors:**

Shirley Sarno, Chair Person, Sonora Chamber of Commerce  
Margaret Davis – Vice-Chair Person, Junction Shopping Center  
Mark Truppner - Treasurer, Clarke Broadcasting  
Katie Fromm – Secretary, Dodge Ridge Ski Resort  
Amelia Harrison –Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce  
Stephen Willey, The National Hotel & Restaurant  
Ron Patel, Black Oak Casino Resort  
Chris Link, Best Western Plus Sonora Oaks Hotel & Conference Center  
Betsy Hurst Younger, Twain Harte Business Association  
Teri Marshall, Rush Creek Lodge/Evergreen Lodge  
Katie Dunn, The Carriage House on Barretta  
Launa Valente, Lazy Z Resort  
Stephanie McCaffrey, McCaffrey Bed & Breakfast

### **Staff:**

#### Full Time:

Lisa Mayo, Executive Director  
Jennifer Lopez, Marketing Manager  
Katie Kirkland, Communications and Tourism Manager  
Debbe Pallante, Office and Membership Manager

#### Part Time:

Anna Davies, Special Programs Coordinator  
Bethany Wilkinson, Film Liaison  
Mackenzie Rodgers, Digital Content Coordinator  
Ginger Malatesta, Bookkeeper

#### Visitor Services:

Diane Rock  
Richard Haratani  
Dave Grookin  
Kate Greene  
Jim O'Neal

## Current Ferguson and Donnell Fires Communications

The TCVB is actively communicating current conditions, area closures and openings, etc. to the public, media partners and members via social media platforms, our website, e-newsletters and in-person contacts in our visitors centers.

Below is a testimonial from two of many guests who we were able to assist during their recent visit to our area. We look forward to presenting a full report on TCVB Ferguson and Donnell Fires communications in the near future.

### Testimonial from A Visitor

August 10, 2018

Thanks for giving us the opportunity to express our appreciation to you and your office for all of your help during these past two weeks.

Some background. Cindy and I live in Tampa, Florida. Last year we retired from our work as private investigators and hit the road with our truck and travel trailer. Last year we traveled for several months, mostly in the Rocky Mountains and Canada, hiking and sightseeing in beautiful places. We had such a great time we planned our trip this year to the Southwest US. Subsequently, during the last three months we have camped in Mesa Vista, Canyonlands, The Arches, Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park, Sequoia National Park, and now, we were headed for Yosemite.

Cindy is a terrific planner and thoroughly researched each trip and every stop. She told me that Yosemite was her primary goal for this trip and was deeply disappointed with the smoky conditions and the closure of the park. Even our scheduled campsite in El Portal was closed. We rescheduled to 49'er RV Ranch in Columbia who provided us with your Visit Tuolumne County guide, then our first day in Columbia we went straight to the Visitors Bureau, hoping to get some idea of what was going on with the fires, the smoke and what we might be able to do to fill our time.

At the Visitors Center we met with Anna, who spent a lot of time helping us to understand the extent of the fire and smoke. Anna was a lot of help and made us feel very welcome. After we met with Anna we knew we might not get into Yosemite. Cindy was very disappointed, but asked me to review the Visitors Guide and see what we might be able to do. I spent a good hour reviewing the brochure and found it to be extremely well written and very helpful. I was able to use the fold out map of the county where I made notes from the articles and advertisements that helped us to come up with a game plan.

Though we were really limited by the smoke, we had a great time over the last ten days. We explored historic Columbia, touring the blacksmith shop, the bowling alley, had ice cream cones at the Fallon House Ice Cream Parlor, marveling at the beautiful theatre setting very similar to the Tampa Theatre we have at home. We spent a lot of time in Sonora, shopping and sightseeing. Using the guide we found Aspen Meadow Pack Station in Pinecrest and had a fantastic full day horseback ride. We have ridden horses for years, in many places, and found the horses to be terrific, well trained and well cared for, and the guides were great.

We also saw in the guide about Magic of the Night in Sonora, which we attended and had a very good time. We are planning on returning to Sonora this weekend for 2nd Saturday.

We love white water rafting and the Guide led us to Angels Camp and O.A.R.S. We were not able to plan a river trip due to the smoke, but found the O.A.R.S. personnel were able to help us to plan a trip later out of Tahoe to the Middle American River.

The Guide also led us to the Black Oak Casino, which we visited three times during our stay. Over the years we have visited a number of casinos, in Tampa, S. Florida, Las Vegas and on several cruise ships and we found that the Black Oak was able to uniquely combine a professional casino with a "neighborly" atmosphere. The staff was very helpful and friendly, knew many of the patrons by name, and made us feel very much at home. We also had the pleasure of having a birthday dinner for Cindy at Seven Sisters. We first read of the casino and restaurant in your guide, but several people we met during the week mentioned how good the restaurant is, so we decided to celebrate her birthday at Seven Sisters. We were not disappointed. The food was excellent and the staff could not have been more friendly.

As the days went by and the smoke did not seem to be ending we visited Anna again at the Visitors Center. She was very helpful in pulling up the computer views of the fires and smoke. Anna was knowledgeable of the situation at Yosemite, and helped us to make our decision to move onto our next destination and try to get to Yosemite at a later date.

Due to the dangerous conditions we almost left Columbia in the first days we arrived, but with Anna's help, and the usefulness of the guide, we found several things we could enjoy in the area and ended up staying for 12 days. We normally do a lot of hiking and other outdoor activities, and were initially so disappointed that we could not do that, but we had a great time getting to know Columbia, Sonora, Pinecrest, Tuolumne and Angels Camp. We found good restaurants and met a lot of really nice people. It was especially touching that people were worried about us losing part of our vacation to the fires, when their friends and family were fighting those same fires and in at least one instance, a storekeeper's cabin was in direct danger in Dardanelle.

Thanks for all your help. I'm glad we got to know this community like we did.

George and Cindy  
Tampa, Florida (but still wandering)

Thank You.