

visit  
**TUOLUMNE**  
county  
★CALIFORNIA★

2022/2023

# Annual Report





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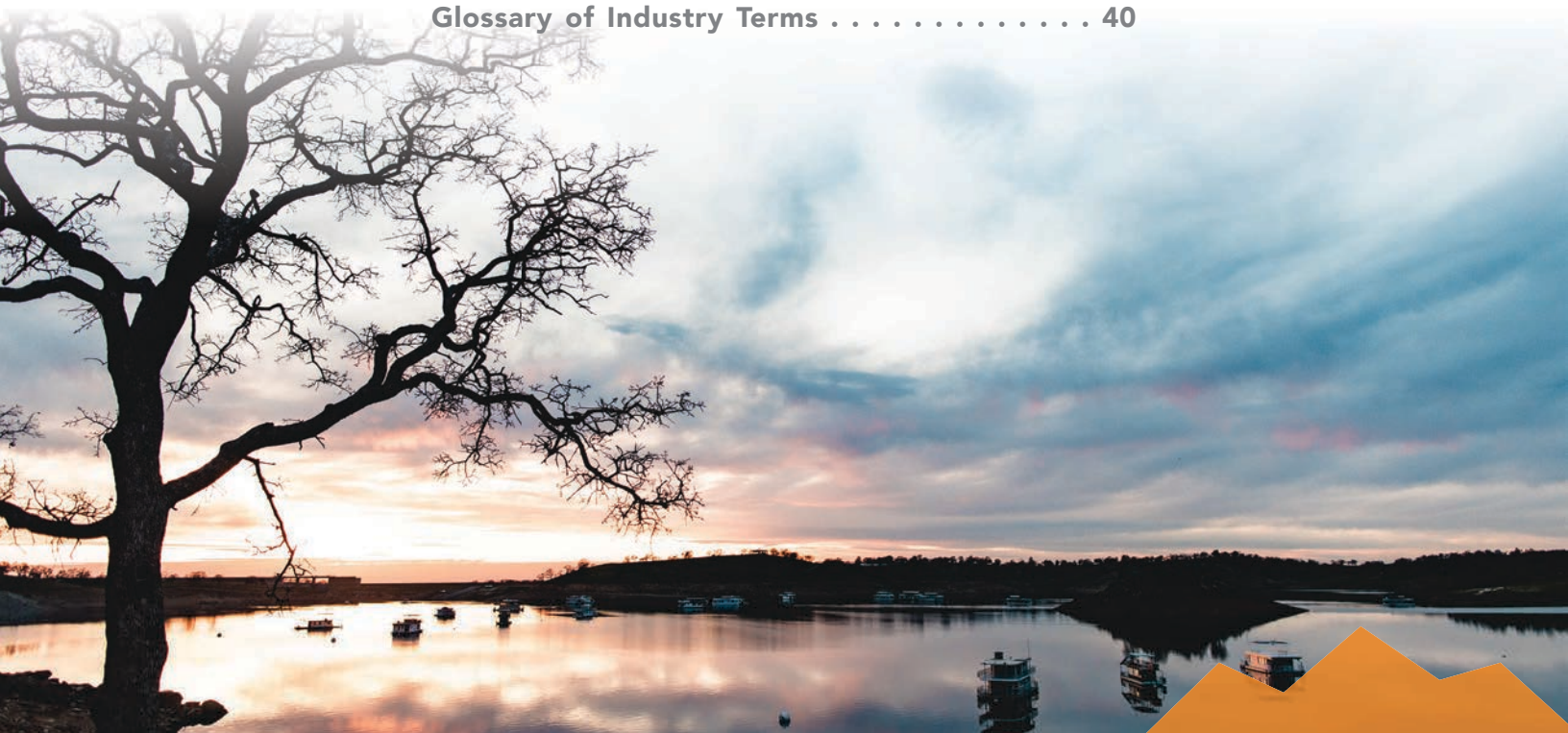
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## A MESSAGE FROM VISIT TUOLUMNE COUNTY PRESIDENT & CEO, LISA MAYO

The 2022-2023 fiscal year was both rewarding and challenging. Despite many roadblocks (literal and figurative) tourism remained a key economic driver for Tuolumne County. Visit Tuolumne County's dedication to stimulating the visitor economy through strategic marketing initiatives has remained strong throughout the year as this Annual Report will show.

I'd like to personally thank all of you who supported Visit Tuolumne County as we worked toward securing our funding so that we can continue to be an effective destination marketing organization for Tuolumne County's tourism industry. Your letters, emails and conversations were inspiring on every level and more encouraging than you will ever know!

Thank you to the VTC Board for volunteering your time in meetings and providing guidance. Your leadership was integral to the outcomes of this past year and is so important as we look to the future.

A very special thank you to my exceptional VTC team who has hung in there through a year that was filled with so many unknowns. We navigated the waters together and have much to be proud of and grateful for moving forward.

Thank you to the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors and to the Sonora City Council for your continued support of Visit Tuolumne County and through your support acknowledging the critical role that tourism and tourism promotion play in our County's economic vitality.

As we look to celebrating our 40th Anniversary in November of this year, we'll continue to reflect on our history with our eyes on the future. New initiatives and ways of doing things will always evolve, but at our core, we exist to bring prosperity and a better community to Tuolumne County, and as long as I am fortunate enough to steer this ship, that is what we will forever strive for.

All the best,



**Lisa Mayo, CDME**

President/CEO, Visit Tuolumne County





## MESSAGE FROM VISIT TUOLUMNE COUNTY BOARD CHAIR, KATIE DUNN

This past year brought some significant challenges to Visit Tuolumne County but, in the end, VTC can continue doing what they do best and that is inspiring visitation to Tuolumne County and building our visitor economy. I would like to thank the VTC Board and the VTC Government Committee for their diligence, guidance, and support during contract negotiations with the County.

For the first time in its 40-year history VTC's funding contract with the City of Sonora is independent of the County's contract. This will promise to be an exciting new relationship with the City and will be beneficial to all involved.

It is a pleasure to be the Chair for Visit Tuolumne County as we continue to see growth and synergy in Tuolumne County's tourism industry. If you are a lodging partner with Visit Tuolumne County, I also encourage you to get involved with the Tuolumne County Lodging Association ([www.tcla.us](http://www.tcla.us)). The Tourism Marketing District (TMD) is a huge project that VTC is undertaking, and they will be working with TCLA to communicate and educate our lodging industry more about it.

Thank you to all VTC Partners for your support this past year and as we move into a new era of promoting Tuolumne County.

Best,



**Katie Dunn**

Visit Tuolumne County Board Chair





# OVERALL TOURISM STATISTICS FOR TUOLUMNE COUNTY

Tourism is Tuolumne County’s #1 private sector economic driver. Although it has not yet ascended to the 2019 record level, direct travel-related spending continues to increase since the 2020 decline due to the pandemic.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS:

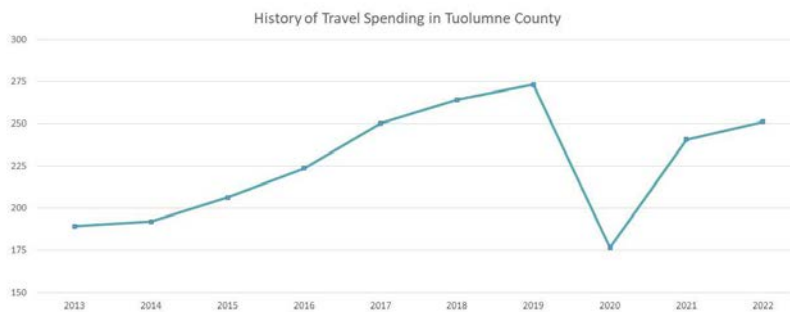
- In 2022, travel spending in Tuolumne County grew to \$251.2 million, a 42% increase from 2020 and a 4% increase from 2021. Since the record travel spending year, 2019, travel spending is down by 8%, but is continuing to recover.
- The County’s travel industry supported approximately 2,550\* jobs in 2022, 250 more than the previous year, an 11% increase.
- Industry employee earnings: \$97 million.
- Transient Occupancy Tax for Tuolumne County: \$7.7 million, and City of Sonora: \$560,000.

2022 Travel Spending and Tax Revenue	
Total Direct Travel Spending	\$251.2 million
Tourism Industry Employment*	2,550
Government Revenue Generated by Tourism	
Local Sales Tax Receipts**	\$10.5 million
State Sales Tax Receipts	\$10.8 million
Transient Occupancy Tax	\$7.7 million
State and local tax revenue equivalency per Tuolumne County household	\$954

\*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.

\*\*Includes Transient Occupancy Tax for County of Tuolumne and City of Sonora, \$7.7 million.

This data is provided by Dean Runyan Associates and is preliminary as of May 5, 2023.





# MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS

## SPECIAL PROMOTIONS

Tuolumne County Art Week and Tuolumne County Restaurant Week are two special programs that VTC facilitates and promotes annually. For Restaurant Week VTC promoted our local restaurants with ads on MyMotherLode.com and Clarke Broadcasting radio stations, social media posts, dedicated Restaurant Week Facebook page, and by announcing the launch of our Tuolumne County Craft Burger Trail.



This year marked VTC’s 3rd Annual Art Week promotion. VTC welcomed 25 artists and 13 venues that participated in VTC Art Week. The City of Sonora partnered with VTC for Art Week by donating the Sonora Opera Hall to house the Mother Lode Art Association for their Annual Art Show Exhibition. Art Week was promoted through local and regional media outlets like MyMotherLode.com, the Union Democrat, Clarke Broadcasting radio stations, Diablo Magazine, and Diablo Insiders Club. VTC covered Art Week through social media channels and posted every participating artist and event throughout the week.





## SUSTAINABILITY

VTC has continued to promote sustainable travel through blog articles, media pitches, and social media posts. VTC launched clean-up days and a Meaningful Travel webpage. The first clean-up day took place at Pinecrest Lake, where the VTC team and local volunteers cleaned up the beach area and extracted many microplastics. VTC's second clean-up day was executed on a much larger scale. VTC joined forces with the Yosemite Climbing Association and local businesses Rush Creek Lodge and Spa, Evergreen Lodge, Echo Adventure Cooperative, and Around the Horn Brewing Company to host the first Groveland and Hetch Hetchy Facelift. This is an extension of the annual Yosemite Facelift. The Groveland and Hetch Hetchy Facelift events attracted nearly 40 volunteers that collected over 2,000lbs of trash.

In keeping up with travel trends, VTC added a Meaningful Travel page to its suite of webpages. Many travelers look for volunteer work while traveling. They want to make a difference or positive impact in the communities they are visiting. The VTC Meaningful Travel page hosts volunteer, donation, and cultural discovery opportunities.





## TUOLUMNE COUNTY CRAFT BEVERAGE TRAIL

Launched in January 2022, VTC continued to run the Tuolumne County Craft Beverage Trail with a grand prize drawing in November. A relaunch of the trail in May added three new partners to the Craft Beverage Trail. The Tuolumne County Craft Beverage Trail has 68 passholders. As a result of this program many of the participating businesses saw an increase in customers in their off-peak business hours. Although the passholder number seems relatively low, check-ins were high with 410 annual check-ins. Further promotion of the Tuolumne County Craft Beverage Trail brought a lot of attention to the participating businesses. This trail was promoted at the visitor's center, through media placements, and at the Westside Brewfest to further highlight and promote the participating businesses. As a direct result of these promotions the Tuolumne County Craft Beverage Trail was published in several articles including a cover story in 209 Magazine, Redlands Community News, Porterville Recorder, and Sunset Magazine. The media coverage had a reach of 108,430 unique monthly visitors and an estimated value of \$433,710.





## TUOLUMNE COUNTY CRAFT BURGER TRAIL

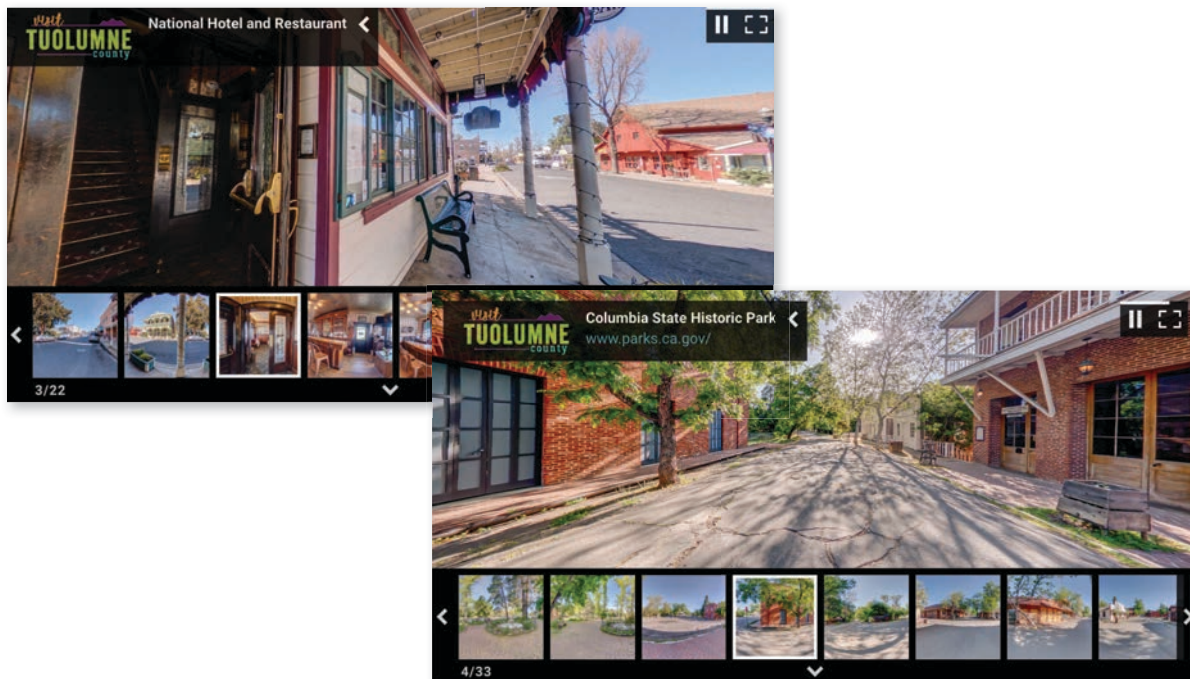
With the success of the Tuolumne County Craft Beverage Trail, VTC launched a food themed trail. In looking at industry trends, food trails are some of the best performing trails. While many destinations feature taco trails VTC wanted to be original and launched a burger trail in March 2023. This trail was opened to all restaurants in Tuolumne County, and it was not limited to VTC members. With that, VTC received 10 participating restaurants, three of which had never before participated in VTC marketing programs. The Tuolumne County Craft Burger Trail has 148 passholders. VTC promoted the Tuolumne County Craft Burger Trail through social media, a press release, their website, and ad placements. These promotions resulted in media placements in TravelMole, Gourmet on the Road, and Taste California with a reach of 70,229 unique monthly visitors and an estimated value of \$210,690. Social posts of the Tuolumne County Craft Burger Trail reached 19,643 people and total post likes were 812.





## MEETING PLANNER GUIDE AND 360-DEGREE VIDEO

To align with meeting planner trends and demands, VTC refreshed the meeting planner guide. VTC added new information, new venues, services, and team building activities. This guide serves as a source to help planners arrange the best meeting or getaway for their group. Another tool that meeting planners utilize is 360-degree video. This is used to show venue space so planners can visualize the setup of their event in the space. VTC works with a local video professional to capture 360-degree video of meeting space in Tuolumne County.





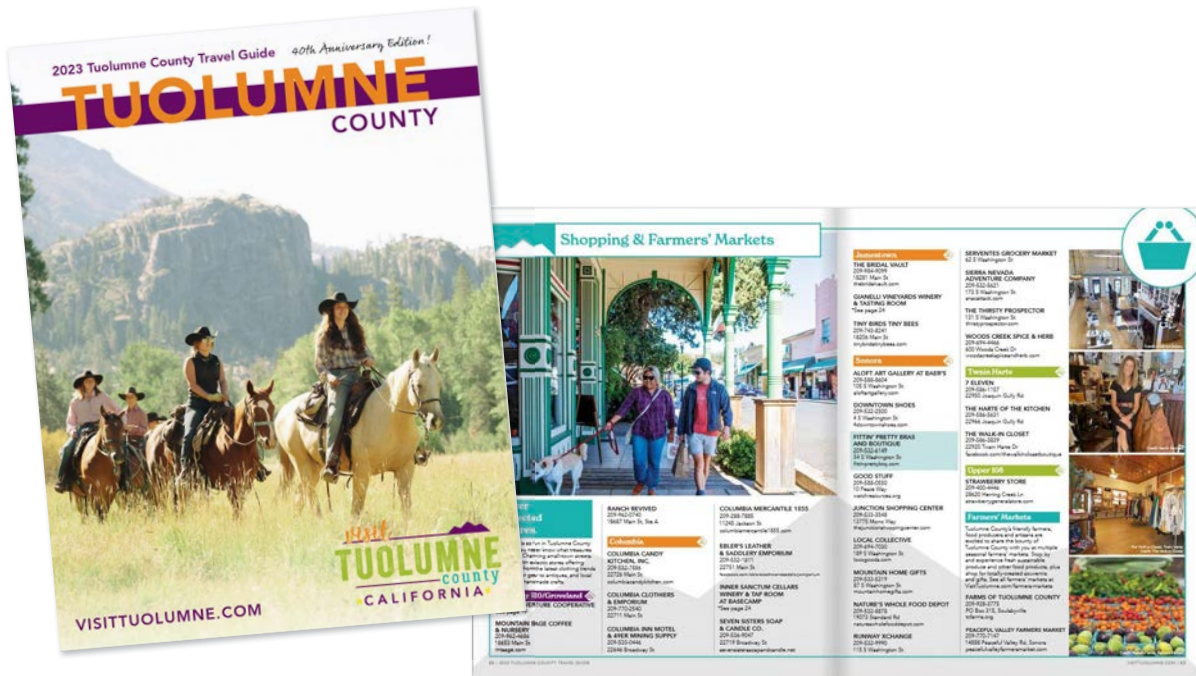
# MARKETING PROGRAMS

## ANNUAL TRAVEL GUIDE

Visit Tuolumne County creates and distributes an annual Tuolumne County Travel Guide to inspire travelers to plan a trip to Tuolumne County. In 2022, 75,000 copies were printed and distributed at various Bay Area locations such as the Pier 39 and Fairfield (Jelly Belly Factory), California Welcome Centers, Caltrain stations, Starbucks, Trader Joe’s, Stanford University, and San Jose and Oakland International Airports and in Southern California at the John Wayne Airport in Orange County to name a few. They’re also distributed at the Tuolumne County Visitors Center, through advertising leads, individual requests, at media events, travel shows, and at local businesses.

Development, printing, and distribution of the Travel Guide is VTC’s largest single annual marketing expense, but there is immense value in creating a high-quality, well-appointed guide. In 2020/2021 Visit Tuolumne County participated in the “DMO Visitor Guide Readership and Conversion Study,” conducted by DMA West Education & Research Foundation and Destination Analysts. Over the course of the study, those who requested the Tuolumne County Travel Guide through the VTC website were invited to participate in the study. Through the 265 responses received, the study concluded that visitors guides remain relevant to those researching destinations and planning trips.

- 93% of survey respondents said that the Tuolumne County Visitors Guide helped them decide to visit Tuolumne County.
- Out of all of the participating destinations, Tuolumne County had the largest proportion of visitors who were potentially convertible.
- Attractions, recreation, and maps are at the top of the list of content sought by readers.





## WEBSITE

Website performance decreased slightly from the previous year, however time spent on site increased. We also saw some variation in location of users. Latin American and Dutch (Netherlands) usage increased drastically, 8,000% and 811% respectively.

A website refresh was completed in fall of 2022. In large part, the focus of the refresh was to make the site more mobile friendly as more than double of users are using mobile versus desktop.

### OVERALL SITE PERFORMANCE

JULY 1, 2022 - JUN 30, 2023

SESSIONS

**306,510** (vs 359,842 IN 21/22)

PAGES PER SESSION

**1.78** (vs 1.78 IN 21/22)

PAGEVIEWS

**545,544** (vs 639,620 IN 21/22)

### TOP FIVE DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL USERS

JULY 1, 2022 - JUN 30, 2023

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1. WASHINGTON**</b> | <b>1. MEXICO**</b>    |
| <b>2. NEVADA**</b>     | <b>2. UK**</b>        |
| <b>3. OREGON</b>       | <b>3. NETHERLANDS</b> |
| <b>4. VIRGINIA</b>     | <b>4. CHINA</b>       |
| <b>5. FLORIDA</b>      | <b>5. CANADA**</b>    |

\*Not including California

\*\*Indicates locations that VTC ran advertising.



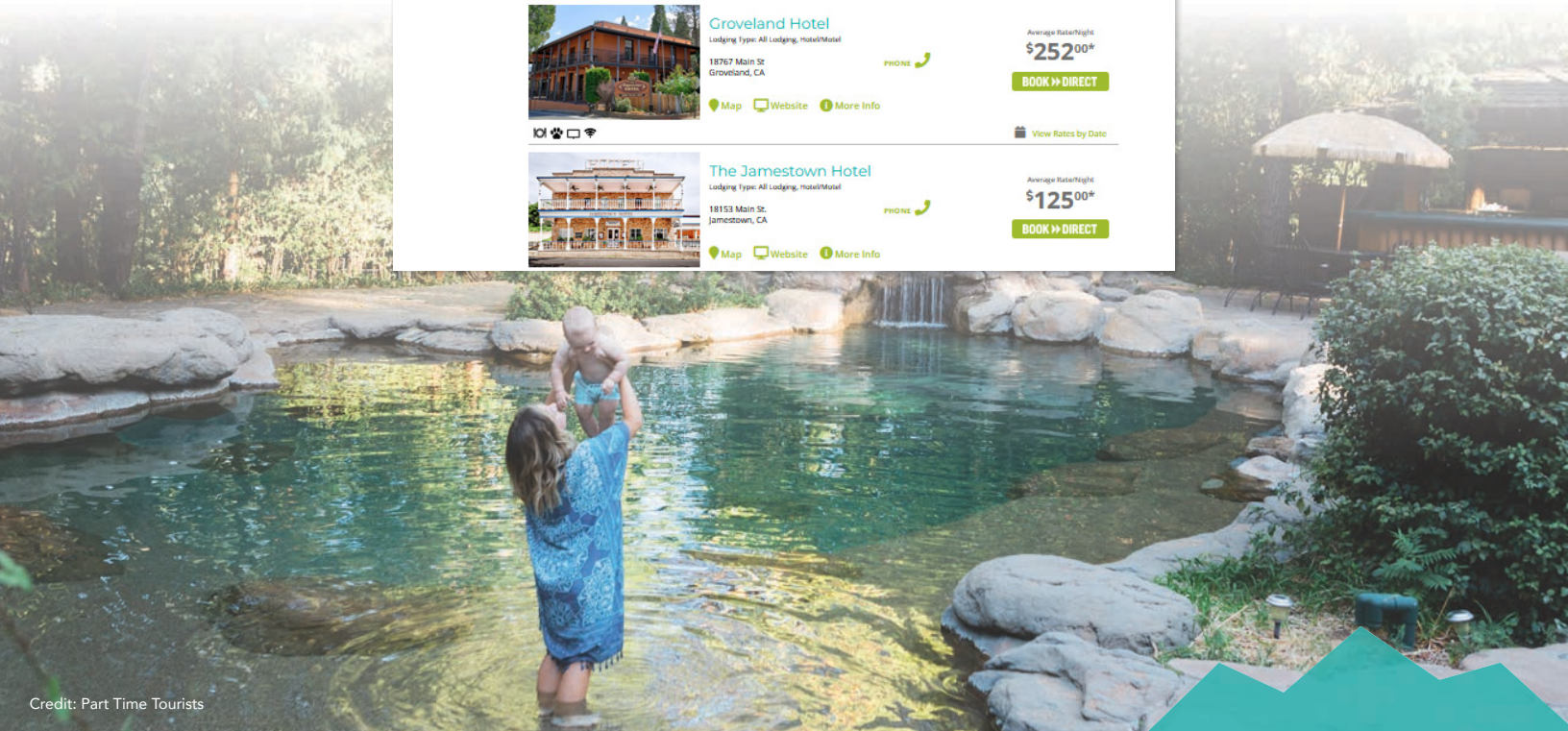


## JACKRABBIT/SIMPLEVIEW BOOKING REFERRAL PLATFORM

VTC covers the cost of a booking referral engine, Book Direct powered by Simpleview, to send visitors who want to book lodging directly to the property’s website or booking platform of their choice. On the platform, visitors completed a total of 9,372 searches, resulting in 149 bookings. VTC invests \$5,500 annually into this program and the estimated total bookings revenue was nearly \$17,941, providing a 326% return on investment for this program.

The screenshot displays a search results page on the Simpleview platform. At the top, navigation tabs include LODGINGS, HOTELS & MOTELS, B&B & INNS, CABINS, VACATION RENTALS, RESORTS, and CAMPGROUNDS. The search criteria are set for '16 PROPERTIES found on Oct 10th - Oct 12th'. The left sidebar contains filters for 'Change Your Dates' (10/10/2023 to 10/12/2023), 'FILTER BY: Average Rate/Night', 'Regions', 'Location', 'Lodging Type' (Hotel/Motel, B&B/Inn, Cabins, Vacation Rentals, Resort, Campground), 'Amenities', and 'SORT BY: All'. The main content area lists six properties with their respective photos, names, addresses, phone numbers, and average rates per night. Each listing includes a 'BOOK >> DIRECT' button and a 'View Rates by Date' link.

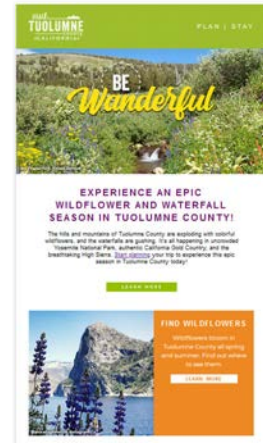
Property Name	Address	Average Rate/Night
Best Western Plus Sonora Oaks	19531 Hess Ave, Sonora, CA 95370	\$135.99*
Hotel At Black Oak Casino Resort	19398 Tuolumne Rd, Tuolumne, CA	\$139.00*
1859 National Hotel & Restaurant	18183 Main St, Jamestown, CA	\$160.00*
Hotel Lumberjack	128 S Green St, Sonora, CA 95370	\$133.20*
Groveland Hotel	18767 Main St, Groveland, CA	\$252.00*
The Jamestown Hotel	18153 Main St, Jamestown, CA	\$125.00*





## CONSUMER EMAILS

VTC sends out consumer emails once per month and occasionally for special promotions to a database of 14,100 subscribers. The open rate for emails in the 2022-2023 year was 37%, which is 8% higher than the previous year and the click-thru rate was 1.26%. VTC stayed consistent with industry average of 39% open rates and exceeded the industry average of .96% for click rates.



## PARTNER TESTIMONIAL/QUOTES

“ We’re so grateful to Lisa Mayo and team at Visit Tuolumne County for not only growing tourism as an economic engine for the county, but also for stepping into the role of destination management with such poise. Hard work is just the beginning when competing directly with big-budget destinations; VTC has worked smart to leverage industry programs that stretch our dollars and attract the high-value visitors we need to grow a healthy economy county-wide. The proof is in our early post-pandemic recovery with international visitors, who stay longer and spend more, and off-peak travelers who will support our local economy during the time we have the most opportunity and need to grow. -Teri Marshall, Rush Creek Lodge and Spa and Evergreen Lodge ”

“ I have been so fortunate to have the help of Visit Tuolumne County in so many ways. At the Heritage Inn Yosemite/Sonora and the Country Inn Jamestown/Sonora, we have 332 rooms in Tuolumne County. Whenever I need anything, I just call Visit Tuolumne County. They have helped connect me to online media to gain business. The Visit Tuolumne County staff have been helping all our hotels to get familiar with of the international travelers that may visit our area. They have opened all our eyes to the highlights of our area that our guests would love. The staff is always friendly, and they all strive to greet and assist all the guests we send to them. I could not be as ready for my guests if it wasn't for the support of VTC. - Ginger McKinsey, General Manager, Heritage Inn Yosemite/Sonora and Country Inn Jamestown/Sonora ”

“ As content creators who have been doing this professionally and full-time for a decade, it's always a pleasure to find destinations like the team at Visit Tuolumne County who not only are easy to work with but are eager to build long term relationships not only with us but our audience of followers and readers. Through our multiple partnerships we were able to build a lasting rapport that's turned into trips planned to Tuolumne County. Through carefully curated itineraries, our content from Tuolumne County shined, and we have been able to provide so much value to our audience with great feedback from our readers. -Megan Indoe, Bobo & Chichi Media ”

“ Partnering with Visit Tuolumne County has been a huge benefit for the Blue Zones Project. Tuolumne County is a great place to visit, vacation, live and be healthy. VTC highlights and calls attention to many of the important aspects of a healthy lifestyle, getting out into nature, hiking, biking, walking, connecting with friends and family and creating memories that last a lifetime. The Blue Zones Project appreciates the partnership, creativity and thoughtfulness our local destination marketing organization has shown to us and by extension the visitors and residents of this community. -Tyler Summersett, Blue Zones Project - Tuolumne County ”



## WANDERFULLY TUOLUMNE COUNTY CAMPAIGN

Visit Tuolumne County has been running the Wander Freely campaign since 2021. This year VTC gave it a refresh and introduced the Wanderfully Tuolumne County campaign. Changing up taglines and ad creative has helped capture the attention of new audiences and recapture existing audiences. This consumer campaign targeted five markets based on available flights to nearby airports, visitation data, and website analytics. Markets for the campaign included Seattle, Las Vegas, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The integrated campaign spanned across traditional and digital tactics and reached Millennial families and Boomer audiences.

### DIGITAL

VTC leveraged a variety of digital tactics to target audiences. These included paid search, paid social, retargeting ads, and native display ads. Digital ad campaigns performed as follows:

LA Times: 550K impressions

Sojern: 639 confirmed travelers to Tuolumne County with 22 room nights booked and a visitor spend of \$103K. The return on ad spend for this campaign was 3.29:1USD.

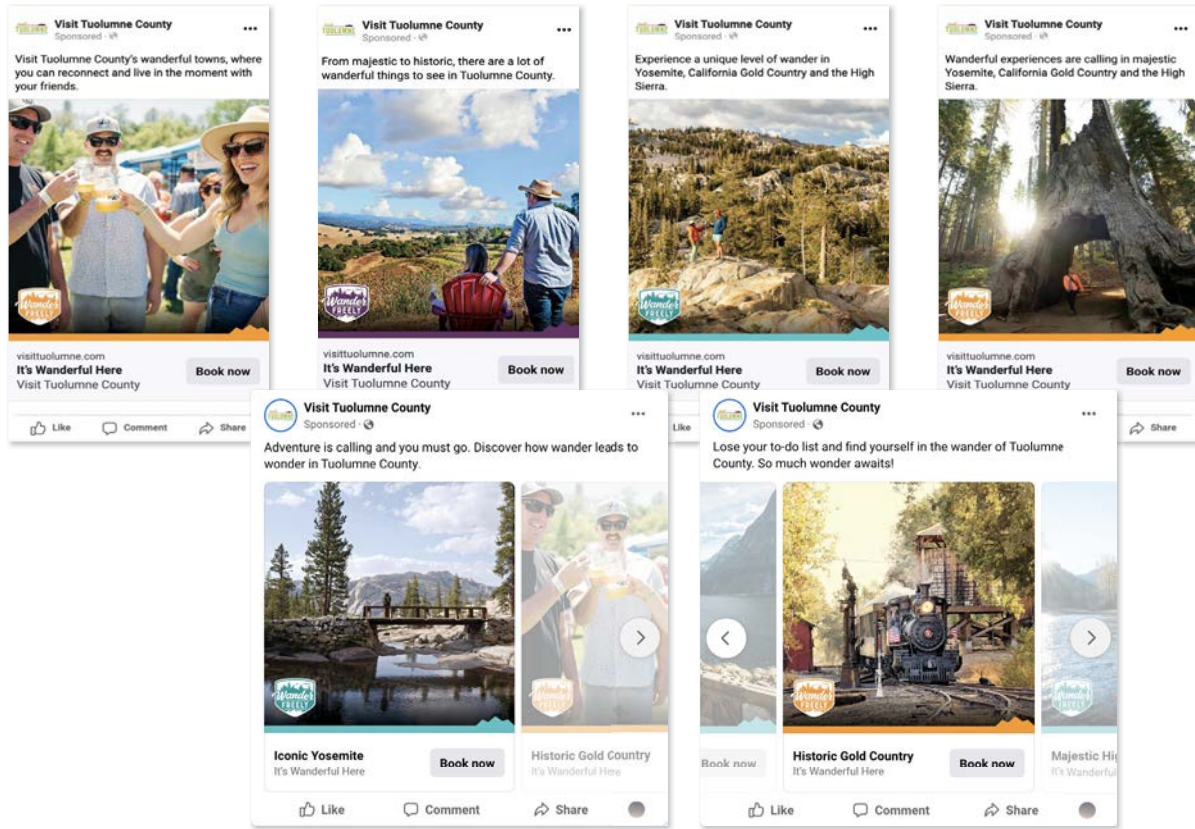
Tactic	Impressions	Clicks	CTR
Display	487,186	559	0.12%
Sunset Display	197,091	291	0.15%
Sunset Eblasts	147,085	1,479	2.13%
Paid Search	31,520	2,770	8.79%
Paid Social	848,811	13,724	1.62%
Streaming Audio	652,291	31	0.0%
TV	9,739,665	n/a	n/a
Radio	4,582,900	n/a	n/a
Print	59,436	n/a	n/a

### BANNER ADS (Radio Bonus banner ads)





## SOCIAL ADS



## SUNSET DIGITAL ADS

Banners



Emails



## PRINT ADS

VTC continues to utilize traditional media placements like print ads. For the 22/23 year ads were placed in an array of regional, statewide, and national publications as listed below.

- Adventure Sports Journal
- Conde Nast Traveler
- Diablo Magazine
- Highway 108 Magazine
- Highway 120 Magazine
- Local Getaways
- Oh Ranger!
- SacTown Magazine
- San Diego Magazine
- Sonora Chamber Magazine
- Sunset Magazine
- Union Democrat
- Weekender
- Yosemite Journal



## TELEVISION

VTC continues to tap into key audiences through special promotions, traditional TV placements, and streaming TV placements. Along with special promotions on select channels, VTC ran their commercial statewide and nationally. TV spots and promotions are as follows:

- Sacramento: Effectv/Comcast, October-December and February-April, impressions 830K
- East Bay: Effectv/Comcast, October-December and February-April, impressions 2M
- Los Angeles: Effectv Streaming, March- April, impressions 639K

**KOMO** (Seattle) and **KVVU** (Las Vegas). Each station ran a variety of tactics in addition to broadcast segments.

### KVVU

- 470 spots
- Added Value: Four :15s spots/week and two :30s spots/week

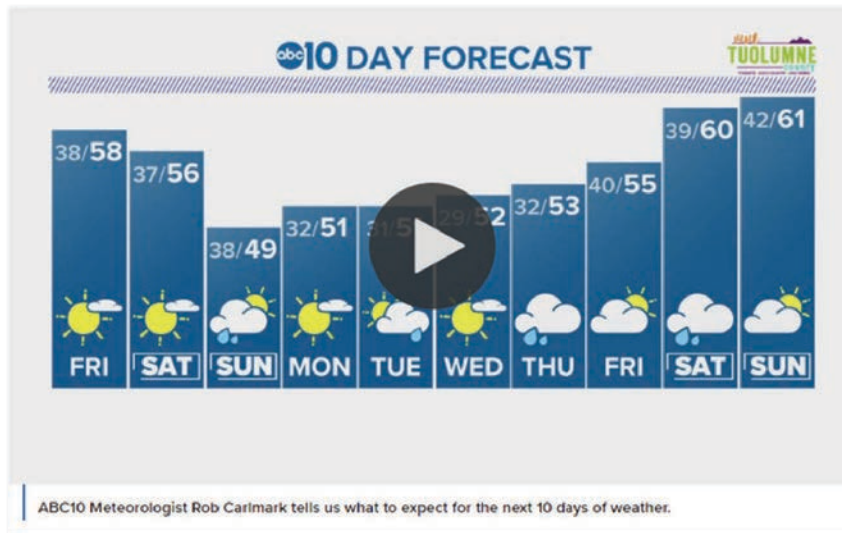
### KOMO

- 300 spots
- A dominant Seattle station that hits all age ranges
- Added Value: Five :05s spots/week



**ABC 10**

PM Weather sponsorship- VTC was the official sponsor for ABC 10's nightly 10-day weather forecast for the month of January. With the epic winter weather in January there was a record number of people tuning in to watch the forecast. The sponsorship included the VTC logo placed on the evening forecast, and on the online weather forecast with a direct link to the VTC website.



**RADIO**

In-state radio ads ran in the East Bay Area on KOIT, NOW, KBLX, and KFOX

- Ads ran November and December
- 218 spots
- 2.8M weekly listeners

**KJEB/KZOK**

National radio segments and added value ran on KJEB/KZOK in Seattle and on KMXB/KXNT in Las Vegas. The #2 & #3 rated radio stations in Seattle and offer the most competitive package. KJEB Adult Hits – Classic Hits 70s-80s and KZOK Rock – Classic Rock 80s core.

- Added value: Multiple :15s per week
- 1.07M impressions

**KMXB/KXNT**

- This 2-station combo reaches both Millennial and Boomer audiences, with KXNT being the primary Boomer buy.
- KLUC added value on CBS Radio sports programming (400 spots)
- 1.22M impressions

**BILLBOARDS**

VTC ran traditional billboards for the first half of the year before switching to VTC digital billboards. Digital billboards allow VTC to quickly change messaging, to help with crisis communications, event promotions, and seasonal promotions.

**Traditional Billboards:**

Two billboards ran throughout the fiscal year, both focusing on sustainability messaging. Both ran in Manteca, one on Hwy 120 close to Austin Road and the other on the same Highway off Ideal Parkway.

Manteca

- Ran Sept 22 – Jan 23
- 224k Weekly Impressions

Manteca

- Ran July 22 – Sept 22
- 217k Weekly Impressions

**Digital Billboards:**

Highway 108/Riverbank:

Ran December 2023- Present

Daily Impressions: 68,808

Highway 120/Manteca:

Ran December 2023-Present

Daily Impressions: 12,115





## MEET FREELY MEETINGS CAMPAIGN

Continuing the momentum on the Meet Freely campaign, VTC continued to target meeting and event planners. VTC ran print ads, digital ads, attended conferences to meet with planners, and invested in the technology platform CVENT to receive and distribute requests for proposals to host meetings throughout the county.



### PRINT AND DIGITAL ADVERTISEMENTS

VTC worked with various national and statewide outlets to run traditional print ads and digital ads that appeal to meeting and event planners. The print and digital ad placements are as follows.

- Diablo Magazine—Print and Digital
- Meetings and Conventions—Print
- Meetings Professional—Print
- Northstar Meetings Group—Digital
- SacTown Magazine—Print
- Sierra Repertory Theatre Play Bills—Print
- Visit California Travel Guide—Print

**Meet Freely**

**Gather Your Group in Tuolumne County**  
Yosemite | Gold Country | High Sierra

Book your first meeting or group event through Visit Tuolumne County and receive a sponsored meal!

\$500 for 10-24 room nights
\$750 for 25-49 room nights
\$1,000 for 50-100 room nights

Contact Visit Tuolumne County at 209-533-4420 or visit [VisitTuolumne.com/Groups-and-Meetings](http://VisitTuolumne.com/Groups-and-Meetings) to learn more!

**visit TUOLUMNE county**  
YOSEMITE • GOLD COUNTRY • HIGH SIERRA

**MEET Wanderfully**

TUOLUMNE MEADOWS, YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

**visit TUOLUMNE county**  
• CALIFORNIA •

The towering beauty of Yosemite, authentic history of California Gold Country and endless adventure of the High Sierra beckon you to let nature lead the way for your business retreat or meeting. Expect the unexpected, and be inspired by the wonders of Tuolumne County! Meeting incentives are available. [VisitTCToday.com/ME](http://VisitTCToday.com/ME)

**HIGH SIERRA ••••• GOLD COUNTRY ••••• YOSEMITE**

Photo credit: Damian Riley

## DIGITAL ACTIVATIONS

Year over year VTC continues to expand our digital presence. Along with social media we work to stay cutting edge on up-and-coming platforms and put forward initiatives that will support our mission. This year VTC launched the Tuolumne County Craft Burger Trail and refreshed the Craft Beverage Trail to help visitors disperse throughout the County. VTC also expanded our use of user generated photos with galleries throughout the VTC website. Staying ahead of the digital space helps VTC to be more strategic, promoting Tuolumne County everywhere visitors are looking to plan their trips and stay longer once in Tuolumne County. It also encourages visitors to extend their stays.

### PHOTO/VIDEO SHOOT

VTC worked with Augustine Agency on a photo shoot to capture seasonal content to include fall and winter. The content captured will appeal to family and Latin American travelers. Locations for the shoot included Don Pedro Lake, Twain Harte, Leland High Sierra Snowplay, and Pinecrest.

### CROWDRIFF

VTC continued their partnership with CrowdRiff which is a platform that helps VTC acquire and store rights to photos and videos that are user generated. To date, VTC has acquired 33K assets. Forty-eight galleries are integrated into the VTC website and received 135K views and 51K interactions.





# MARKETING PARTNERSHIPS FOR REGIONAL, STATE, NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION

## BRAND USA

The Destination Marketing Organization for the United States, Brand USA, works in close partnership with the travel industry to maximize the economic and social benefits of travel. These benefits include fostering understanding between people and cultures and creating jobs essential to the economy. VTC has established a longstanding relationship with Brand USA and continues to take part in their partnership campaigns to distribute content to international travelers to inspire travel to Tuolumne County. VTC opted into two partnerships with Brand USA for the 22/23 fiscal year, one being the Global Inspiration Program and the other the 2023 Brand USA Influencer Program. Both these programs launched Tuolumne County into the eyes of millions of international travelers.

### Global Inspiration Program

- As part of the Global Inspiration Program, VTC received a Media Campaign Ad with a call to action sending consumers to a Digital Content Hub with dedicated Tuolumne County content. Tuolumne County was also included in the official Global Inspiration print guide. VTC received 4M impressions across three international markets including Canada, Mexico, and the UK.



### 2023 Influencer Program

- VTC hosted six influencers from Canada, Germany, and the UK.
- The influencers ran organic content from April 1 to May 30, 2023, and paid content May 10-30, 2023.
- The campaign resulted in 88 organic publications with 9.5M impressions, and an additional 1.9M impressions from paid media content.

Influencer Program Overall Results (April 1, 2023 - May 30, 2023)					
Organic Traffic Results					
Influencers	Publications	Impressions	Reach	Engagement Rate	Interactions
6	88	9.5M	1.9M	0.73%	86.3K
Paid Media Results (May 10, 2023 - May 30, 2023)					
Impressions	Clicks	Click Through Rate			
1,854,479	2,690	0.15%			

## VISIT CALIFORNIA

Visit California (VCA) is the official destination marketing and management organization for the State of California. VTC utilizes industry partners like VCA to leverage our marketing dollars and efforts. This past year VTC partnered with VCA in the field of Public Relations by submitting story idea content and hosting media including journalists and influencers. Additionally, VTC participated in many VCA cooperative marketing campaigns such as two dedicated e-newsletters, a full-page ad placement in the California State Travel Guide, a half-page ad in VCA's Road Trips Guide, and the Visit California Leveraged Co-op Digital Ad program. Furthermore, VTC attended VCA's annual industry convention, Outlook Forum, to learn about 2023 destination marketing trends, industry related education and industry networking.

### VCA Leveraged Co-op Digital Ad Program

- VTC invested \$25K into the program and VCA matched 25% with an added \$6.25K for a total investment of \$31.25K.
- VTC worked with the advertising company to run the co-op across their digital channels including Condé Nast Traveler, Travel & Leisure, LATimes.com, USA Today, and Trip Savvy just to name a few.
- The campaign ran from February 1-May 30, 2023, resulting in 639 confirmed travelers to Tuolumne County with 22 room nights booked and a visitor spend of \$103K.
- The return on ad spend for this campaign was 3.29:1USD.



### VCA Dedicated E-Newsletters

- Visit Tuolumne County ran two dedicated eblasts with VCA; one in October and one in April.
- Each eblast was distributed to VCA's database of over 200K subscribers. Both eblasts performed well with 50% open rates, which surpasses industry rates of 39.15, but performed slightly under VCA's average of 54%.
- The click rates outpaced VCAs average rates of 1.33% with October's CTRs at 2.67% and April's at 3.29%.

## SAN FRANCISCO TRAVEL

For the 22/23 fiscal year VTC took a new approach with our partnership with San Francisco Travel. As we both work with the Canadian Travel Trade and Public Relations agency, Development Counsellors International, VTC and SF Travel decided to partner on familiarization trips to help increase the awareness of the California road trip from San Francisco to Tuolumne County. According to Development Counsellors International's industry research, most Canadian travelers will visit more than one Destination when traveling to California. Furthermore, flight frequency into San Francisco International Airport from Canadian destinations is high. Based on consumer patterns of travel, San Francisco and Tuolumne County are complementary destinations and VTC benefits from partnering up on familiarization tours. Through this partnership VTC and SF Travel hosted two Development Counsellors International reps, four journalists and two travel trade reps. Results from these shared media and travel trade trips can be viewed on page 27.



## GOLD COUNTRY VISITORS ASSOCIATION

The Gold Country Visitors Association is a strong partner with Visit Tuolumne County. For the GCVA and other regional marketing groups, Visit California provides matching funds (up to \$60K for 2022-23). The GCVA has a strong marketing focus on several pillars including multigenerational family travel, culinary and wine, history, and outdoor adventure. Working with a Public Relations strategist has proven to be a valuable endeavor for GCVA as she is able to bring media to our region and provide journalists with information on the entire region. Keeping a social media presence for GCVA has also been a great way to promote the entire region. GCVA also attends IPW and that helps further VTC’s messaging at this important industry event. VTC President & CEO continues as President for the GCVA.

## HIGH SIERRA VISITORS COUNCIL

VTC falls into the Visit California dedicated High Sierra Region of the state. This region is represented as the High Sierra Visitors Council (HSVC). For the HSVC and other regional marketing groups, Visit California provides matching funds (up to \$60K for 2022-23). The matching funds leverage membership funds and help smaller destinations be able to participate in large scale marketing efforts, and larger destinations to expand their reach. With these matching funds the HSVC focused on the French traveler and partnered with mN’Organisation, the French Public Relations and Travel Trade agency. For this fiscal year VTC participated in two cooperative media and travel trade trips. One being a French influencer trip, with On Met Les Voiles who has an Instagram following of nearly 100K. The traveling French family visited the High Sierra region including Tuolumne County in the Fall. Their dedicated Tuolumne County Instagram post had nearly 4.5K likes and over 200 comments. Following that, VTC participated in a twelve-person luxury travel trade familiarization tour. VTC welcomed some of the top tour operators in France, including Mon Prochain Voyagem Pitch & Go, Terres Lointaines, Nomades Aventures, Air Tahiti Nui and more. The group experienced Rush Creek Lodge and Spa, Evergreen Lodge, Hetch Hetchy and Groveland during their time in Tuolumne County.



## FILM TUOLUMNE COUNTY

Visit Tuolumne County continues to promote Tuolumne County as a film location destination. Filmtuolumne.org provides users with inspirational location photos and guides users to an easy-to-understand film permit process. For the 22/23 fiscal year, VTC worked to ensure that film industry organizations and partners were up to date on the filmtuolumne.org information and contact information for film inquiries. VTC also worked to update the film permit contacts for Tuolumne County and the City of Sonora. Furthermore, VTC worked to answer filming location inquiries and assist in the film permit process.



## 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 DMA West 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 and it provides 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 product that includes Tuolumne County on their itineraries.

In the 22/23 year, VTC continued to subscribe to and partner with organizations that we have lasting strong relationships.

- California Film Commission
- CalTravel Association
- Destinations International
- DMA West - VTC President and CEO serves on the Board of Directors
- Meeting Planners International
- National Tour Association - VTC Sales & Marketing Director serves on the Board of Directors
- Public Relations Society of America
- US Travel Association
- Visit the USA – UK and Ireland





# INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

## BLACK DIAMOND

VTC has been working with Black Diamond, a public relations and travel trade agency in the UK and Ireland, for five years. Black Diamond is also Visit California's agency of record. California continues to be the UK's top selling destination and is projected to continue to increase in visitation with longer stays and higher spend, making it extremely important to have a presence in the market. Over the past five years VTC and Black Diamond have built a brand in the UK, and we are receiving high brand awareness with both industry professionals and consumers recognizing the VTC brand. Our Black Diamond travel trade team looks after all aspects of sales and marketing to the UK and Ireland trade market. This includes managing tour operator relationships, helping VTC plan sales activities and initiatives throughout the year, executing co-op campaigns, tour operator and travel agent training and assisting in organizing and facilitating familiarization trips. On the public relations side Black Diamond works on proactive and reactive media pitches to keep Tuolumne County in the UK and Ireland media. They also recruit and vet media for familiarization trips to Tuolumne County. Annual highlights from the UK travel trade and public relations include:

### Public Relations:

- 64 coverage placements
- 25.9M reach
- \$373,367 EAV equivalent
- One individual press trip with National Geographic Traveller (May 2023)
- One group press trip (September 2022) with journalists from: Reach PLC, Travel Weekly, and Stylist
- National Geographic Traveller media partnership-investment £25,000
  - One double page print insertion
  - One online digital feature
  - Traffic-driving banners
  - Roadblocked banners
  - Social media campaign on Facebook
  - Two newsletter spotlight mentions

### Travel Trade:

- 421 agents trained (combination of tour operator sales staff, travel agents, and homeworkers at in-person training events)
- 52 sales calls with key tour operator partners
- Two members of Audley Travel's team hosted (May 2023)
- One group fam trip (September 2022) with key tour operators: Bon Voyage, American Sky, Travel Counsellors, Purely America
- Three co-op campaigns:
  - Purely Travel co-op campaign (Jul-Sep)
  - Joint co-op campaign with America As You Like It (partnering destinations: Sonoma and Lake Tahoe)
  - Co-op partnership with Travel Counsellors (part of a wider Visit California campaign)

## DEVELOPMENT COUNSELLORS INTERNATIONAL (DCI)

As one of the top Canadian public relations and travel trade agencies specializing in tourism, Visit Tuolumne County continued its partnership with DCI. As the previous agency of record for Visit California, Gold Country Visitors Association, and pre-pandemic representation for VTC, DCI has extensive knowledge of California travel trends, our regional area, and our brand. As we continued our relationship with DCI in the 22/23 fiscal year, we focused on outdoor and family travel, relaunching our brand in Canada, and partnering with SF Travel Association to develop a California road trip promotion. Some highlights from Canada include:

### Public Relations:

- 38 media placements
- 48,523,448 impressions
- 2,870 qualitative score
- One group press trip (November 2022) with journalists from: Foodie Flashpacker, OttawaRoadTrips.com, Dreamscapes Magazine, Notable Life & Refined Society, VITA Magazine, and The Vancouver Sun

### Travel Trade:

- One travel trade trip with representatives from: Travel Savors
- Coverage in Travel Savors

## GLOBAL MARKETING AND SALES (GMS)

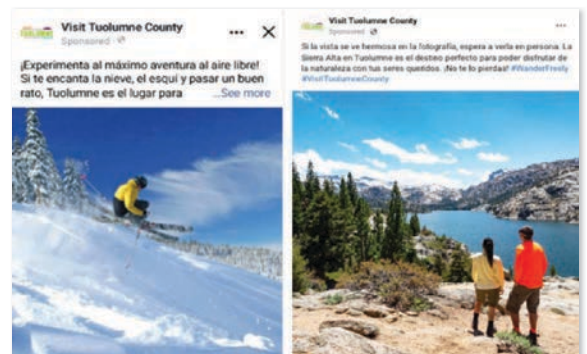
Mexico is currently one of the top travel markets into California. To align with this travel trend, VTC continued their partnership with Global Marketing Sales. GMS is the public relations and travel trade agency of record for Visit California and is a strongly vetted agency. VTC worked with GMS to continue to launch and build our brand in Mexico. VTC continued to host their Spanish language website, visitatuolumne.com, and grew website traffic by over 9,000%. GMS continues to grow the VTC brand in Mexico and some top wins for the 22/23 year include:

### Public Relations

- 21 social posts: 3.8M reach, 6.3M impressions, and 140K total clicks
- One group influencer trip: 50 posts, 358K reach, 18K interactions

### Travel Trade

- 81 training seminars and sales calls
- 390 travel agents and tour operators reached
- One group travel trade trip with representatives from: Operadora Concierge, American Express, Imacop, Mundo Viajes y Cruceros



  
**+81**  
 Training  
 Seminars &  
 Sales Calls

  
**+390**  
 Travel Agents and  
 Tour Operators  
 Reached



# SOCIAL MEDIA

Visit Tuolumne County continues to be very active on its six social media accounts, sharing strategically planned inspirational and motivational posts to encourage visitation. Social media is also a valuable tool for us to distribute important, timely information as necessary to the visiting public and locals alike, notably as we saw recurring changes in road conditions throughout the year.

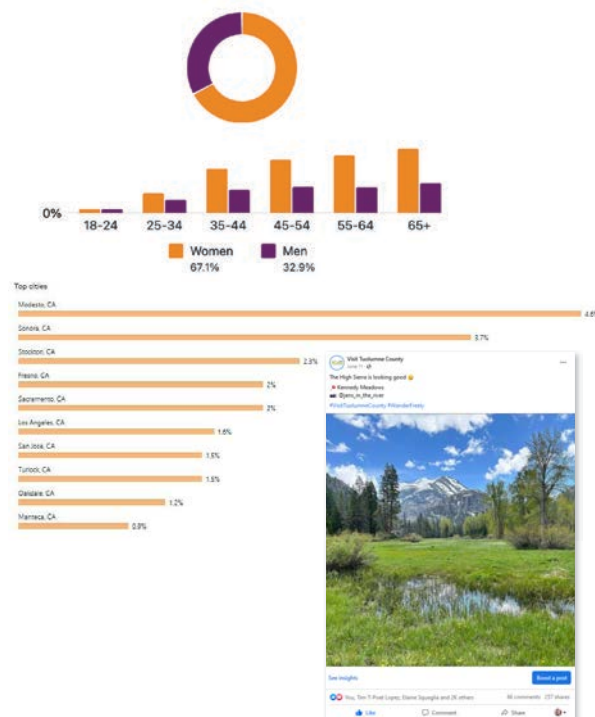
All channels saw growth, with the exception of Twitter, and in all VTC has 57,886 followers, which accounts for 5% growth throughout 2022/2023. In February VTC went out to RFP for a social media agency. A local company, Diamond Digital Co. won the contract. VTC is excited to use a local company that is familiar with the destination, our organization, and can capture content in the field to engage our audiences and grow our social media organically.

## SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS AND ANALYTICS FY 2022-2023

Channel	Followers as of 6/30/23	Results
Facebook	38,212	Reach 7.8 million (348% over FY 2021-2022)
Instagram	15,614	Reach 1.7 million (484% over FY 2021-2022)
TikTok	1,498	Plays 25,683
Twitter	1,690	Impressions: 3,647
Pinterest	682	Impressions 689,000
Linkedin	170	Impressions 1,551

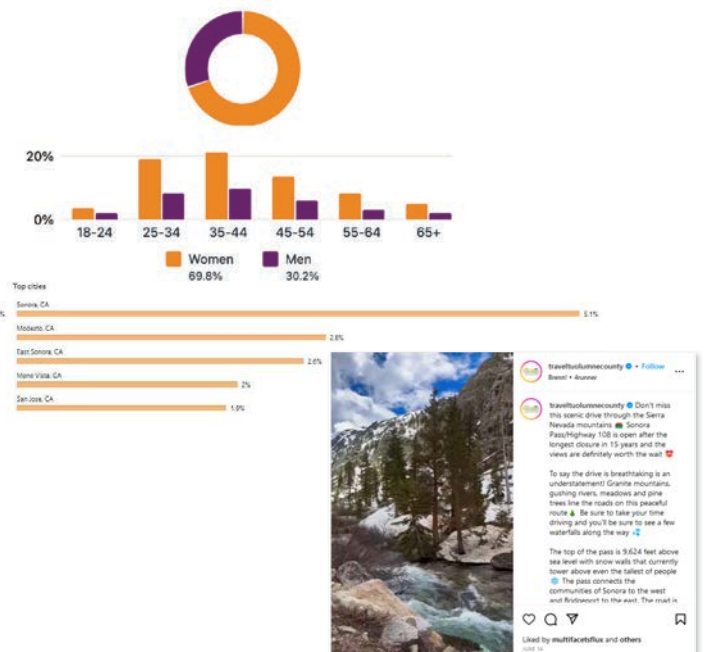
### FACEBOOK: 38,212 FOLLOWERS

Age & gender



### INSTAGRAM: 15,614 FOLLOWERS

Age & gender



# PUBLIC RELATIONS

## EARNED MEDIA

Through both media pitches and visits VTC secured 157 articles that were placed throughout the US. The total reach across all articles was nearly 829 million unique monthly visitors. Meaning that nearly 829 million people saw these articles. The estimated ad value on all the article placements was \$7.65 million. Estimated ad value is calculated based on the size of the article, outlet it is placed in, and the cost to advertise in that outlet. If VTC were to place an article in all 157 outlets, the cost of advertising would equate to \$7.65 million.

## HOSTED MEDIA

VTC hosted seven traditional media familiarization tours with a total of 12 journalists in Tuolumne County for the 22/23 fiscal year. These journalists were immersed in Tuolumne County with adventures in all regions of the county including Gold Country, the High Sierra, and Yosemite National Park. These hosted media efforts resulted in publications placed across the world in top outlets including National Geographic UK, Matador Network, and the Vancouver Sun just to name a few.

## SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

For the 22/23 fiscal year VTC hosted seven influencers. Four of the influencers were solo Tuolumne County trips with two being international from Mexico and three were in partnership with Visit California. Through these influencers VTC was able to reach and engage new statewide, national, and international audiences.

## METRICS FOR VTC PUBLIC RELATIONS

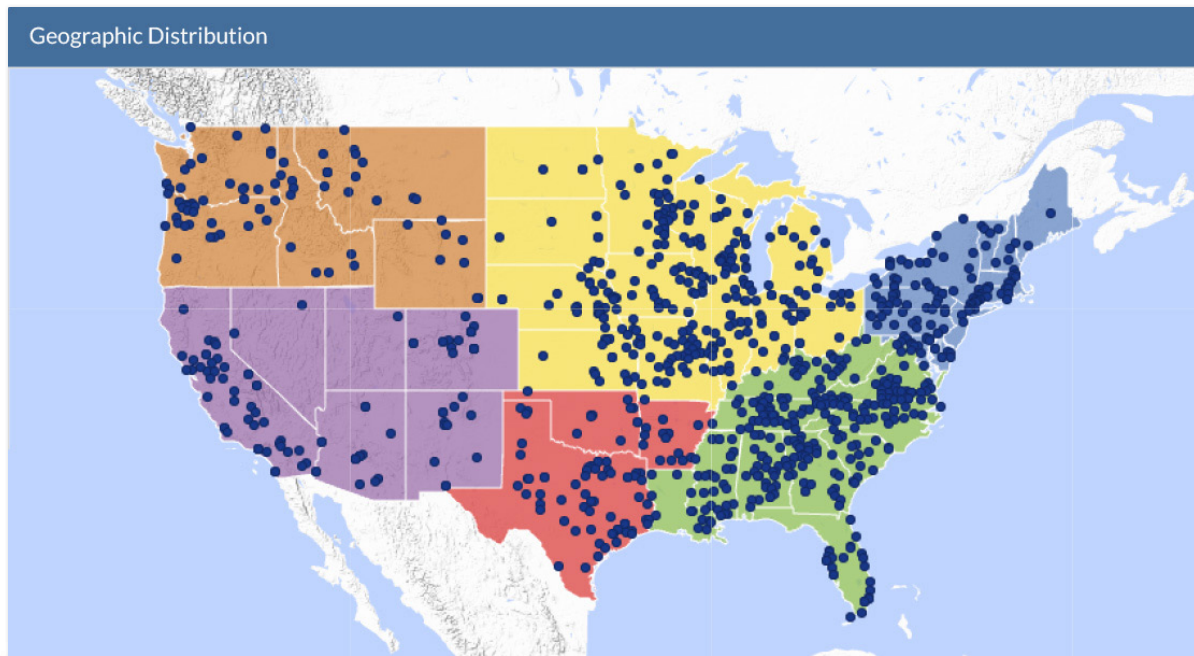
Overview metrics including the article total, social engagement, unique visitors per month (UVM) and journalist reach.

<b>157</b> Total Articles	<b>1.62M</b> Journalist Reach
<b>7,225</b> Total Engagement	<b>5.38M</b> Average UVM
<b>46</b> Average Engagement	<b>828.95M</b> Total UVM
<b>31</b> Journalist Shares	<b>\$7.65M</b> Estimated Ad Value



## MAT RELEASE

In February VTC worked with Brandpoint HUB on a MAT release. This type of release is a mix of a press release and advertorial article. The article included coverage of the High Sierra, Gold Country, and Yosemite National Park. The reach on the MAT release was 165 million with 1,120 placements across the US, as seen on the geographic distribution map below. VTC invested \$4,555 in this placement and the total estimated value for the release was \$419,588, resulting in a 92 to 1 return on investment.



# TRAVEL INDUSTRY EVENTS

## EDUCATION EVENTS

### DESTINATION MARKETING ASSOCIATION OF THE WEST (DMA) TECH SUMMIT

The DMA West Tech Summit is the perfect place to learn about the newest technologies that apply to the travel and tourism industry. This year's hot topic was ChatGPT and how it can be used to assist Destination Marketing and Management Organizations with common tasks like creating itineraries and blogs. It is incredible technology but it's not perfect. We will look at incorporating it into our marketing moving ahead but will be sure to keep an eye on its accuracy.

### DMA WEST EDUCATION SUMMIT

The DMA West Annual Education Summit is a place for peers to share their successes and challenges in the travel industry. It provides an excellent opportunity for learning and growing. Understanding how other destinations handle certain issues and gaining tips and tricks for marketing Tuolumne County are just some of the outcomes of this annual conference. Over the years we've come away from this conference with many ideas that we've implemented like the mobile visitor center, the Craft Burger Trail, the Craft Beverage Trail and more!

### DMA WEST LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

This is one of the most popular conferences for DMMO CEOs each year. It is an intimate gathering where CEOs can freely share their greatest moments and their biggest challenges. During part of this conference the group breaks out into various sessions to have more in-depth conversations on specific topics whether it be event management, human resources, or destination planning. This year it was great to have destination guru, Bill Geist with DMOProz, in attendance throughout the conference and have the opportunity to speak with him one on one about destination strategy and planning. This is especially important for Tuolumne County at this transitional point in time.

### VISIT CALIFORNIA OUTLOOK FORUM

This year's VCA Outlook Forum was held in Sacramento. Each year attendees hear from a variety of industry leaders including airline CEOs, US Travel Association, Brand USA and more. One of the most interesting sessions each year is hearing from VCA's international markets and learning about the latest trends from those countries. This includes considerations like destination spend in California, visitation forecasts, and airlift information. View the VCA International Market Profiles: <https://industry.visitcalifornia.com/research/global-market-profiles-landing>

### CALTRAVEL SUMMIT

As CalTravel is the advocacy association for California's tourism industry, this conference focuses on the hot topics of the day in the DMMO world including pressing advocacy issues. It also covers topics that are very close to the tourism industry including economics, politics, stewardship and sustainability, funding models, homelessness, visa entry wait times, and much 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.





## TRAVEL TRADE EVENTS

### NATIONAL TOUR ASSOCIATION, TRAVEL EXCHANGE

A mix of education and dedicated meetings, Travel Exchange brings tour operators and suppliers from across the US and world together. This year's Travel Exchange took place in Reno. Due to the proximity, VTC hosted a pre-fam tour and sponsored the inaugural National Parks Pavilion. Through these two initiatives VTC was able to gain some pre-show coverage, and many show attendees were aware of Tuolumne County and its offerings, setting the stage for Tuolumne County's participation. VTC was joined by hotel partner, The Sonora Inn, and Hotel Lumberjack, making the Tuolumne County product stand out at the convention. Furthermore, VTC's Sales and Marketing Director was elected on to the National Tour Association's Board of Directors at the 2022 Travel Exchange event.

### NATIONAL TOUR ASSOCIATION, CONTACT

For the first time ever, VTC attended the National Tour Association's Contact event. This event is exclusive to tour operators and the only way a DMO can attend is by sponsoring the convention. VTC was one of less than a dozen DMOs, and had quality time networking and building relationships with tour operators, other DMOs, and tour suppliers.

### IPW

VTC attended IPW in partnership with Rush Creek and Evergreen Lodges and The Sonora Inn and Hotel Lumberjack. Set in San Antonio this year, VTC along with partners, met with over fifty tour operators and thirty journalists from around the world. It was important to make an impact at this IPW and set the tone for next year as IPW makes its way back to California. IPW 2024 will take place in Los Angeles, and VTC plans to host pre and post FAMs. Furthermore, VTC opted for a larger booth in order to open up the opportunity for more partners to attend the show. As VTC continues to build a recognizable international brand it is imperative that VTC keeps establishing and nurturing relationships with tour operators, and IPW is a great place to do this.

### VISIT CALIFORNIA UK SALES MISSION

As VTC continues to establish their international brand, we joined the Visit California delegation in the UK to meet with top tour operators. Over a four-day event VTC met with over eighty tour operators. As a result, VTC was featured in new itineraries, secured a tour operator FAM with Audley Travel, and participated in a Visit California UK co-op campaign with Travel Counsellors. As VTC was on UK soil, many tour operators and industry partners were familiar with the VTC brand, making it apparent that VTC's brand is well established in the UK.

## MEETINGS EVENTS

### NORTHSTAR MEETINGS GROUP DESTINATION CALIFORNIA

Designed for meeting planners who are interested in booking California based meetings, VTC attended this event that took place in Monterey. At this event VTC met and networked with over forty meeting planners. VTC was able to choose appointments that targeted meeting planners that were interested in small to midsize meeting venues. This event is in partnership with VCA which gives additional opportunities for meetings industry exposure. At this event VTC received leads for familiarization tours and site visits and raised destination awareness.



### MEETING PLANNERS INTERNATIONAL (MPI) NETWORKING EVENT

VTC belongs to the Sierra Nevada Chapter of MPI. Throughout the year VTC attended networking events put on by MPI. At these events VTC was able to establish and build relationships with other destinations and meeting planners while establishing Tuolumne County as a meetings destination.

## MEDIA EVENTS

### VISIT CALIFORNIA'S SAN FRANCISCO MEDIA RECEPTION

VTC attended Visit California's San Francisco media event to network with over fifty San Francisco based media. At this event VTC was able to nurture new relationships and rekindle old ones. As a result of this show VTC met Bay Area influencer Chelsea Davis, Chey Chey from the Bay. VTC now works with Chelsea for special promotions.

### INTERNATIONAL MEDIA MARKETPLACE

Located in New York, VTC attended the International Media Marketplace and met with over twenty international journalists and influencers. As a result of the show VTC hosted two influencer groups and placed several stories in various outlets. Additionally, as part of the Visit California delegation, VTC was included in the Visit California New York media mission and met with media the following day. More information on the media trips and article placements can be found on page 29. VTC donated an overnight destination package to the event which was won by an editor from Travel + Leisure.



### IPW INTERNATIONAL MEDIA MARKETPLACE

Visit Tuolumne County attended IPW, the largest media and travel trade show on US soil. This year IPW was held in San Antonio, Texas. VTC participated in the one day media marketplace, booking 20 one-on-one appointments with top tier national and international media representatives. Many media were knowledgeable about Tuolumne County and were excited to learn about new offerings, accommodations, restaurants, and activities in Tuolumne County, while other media had no prior knowledge and were delightfully surprised about all the offerings Tuolumne County has to offer. In following up with the media, Visit Tuolumne County has shared many story ideas and secured media trips to Tuolumne County.





## COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

For many years Visit Tuolumne County has supported local non-profit organizations to provide sponsorship, destination development, beautification, and public arts support. Last year, VTC joined forces with the Sonora Area Foundation to try to leverage available funds, reach more non-profits, and educate more organizations on the financial assistance VTC can provide. To see the criteria for receiving funds, please visit [visittuolumne.com/vtc-community-investment-program-saf.pdf](http://visittuolumne.com/vtc-community-investment-program-saf.pdf).

In 2022/2023 \$48,975 was distributed to the following organizations or projects:

- 5th Annual High Sierra Cup Disc Golf Tournament
- "Back to 1855" Event Sponsorship
- ConAMOR– Columbia's Cinco de Mayo Celebration
- Groveland Trailheads – Support for Ferretti Non-Motorized Trail System (Ferretti Trails)
- Groveland Trailheads – Groveland Grind
- Jamestown Promotion Club – Rods to Rails Car Show
- Mother Lode Art Association – 68th Annual Art Show and Exhibition
- Pioneer Park, Columbia - New Disc Golf Course
- Sierra Repertory Theatre – Performance Sponsor
- Sonora Chamber of Commerce - 2nd Saturday Sponsorship
- Sonora Chamber of Commerce - Christmas Town and Holiday Wagon
- Southern Tuolumne Historical Society - Wine Tasting Cruise Sponsor
- Summerville Bears Quarterback Club – Westside Brew Fest
- Tuolumne County Arts – InFocus
- Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce – Bronze Sponsorship
- Tuolumne County Sheriff's Posse – Mother Lode Round Up Sponsorship
- Tuolumne Park and Recreation District – New Pump Track
- Tuolumne Park and Recreation District – Seed Money for New Amphitheatre
- Twain Harte Area Chamber of Commerce – Concert in the Pines Sponsor
- Yosemite Highway 120 Chamber of Commerce – 49er Festival and Chili Cook-Off

In addition to financial sponsorships, VTC provides marketing support for several community-based non-profit events and activities. This includes outreach such as event listings on [visittuolumne.com](http://visittuolumne.com), special social media promotions, and media visits.



## CURRENTLY & LOOKING AHEAD

As we celebrate our 40th Anniversary this year, it has been a time to reflect on the successes of the past while getting excited for the future. The VTC Team is viewing 2023-2024 as a transitional year in many ways.

We have shifted to a Partnership model as opposed to a Membership model and so far, this has been well received. The partnership model gives partners even more opportunities for collaborating with VTC, and we are already seeing great results!

Going into 2023-2024, we also have two new funding contracts. For the first time in 40 years, VTC has a separate contract with the City and the County. The City of Sonora contract continues to reinvest 25% of the TOT (Transient Occupancy Tax) collected in the City into VTC for marketing purposes. The County contract continues to reinvest a percentage of TOT dollars into VTC through a decreasing percentage of funds received for the first three years. For 2023-2024 we will be funded at 18% of TOT, then 17%, then 16% for the remaining 10-year contract.

There is an important caveat to the County contract and that is that VTC has three years to put a Tourism Marketing District (TMD) in place. A TMD is an additional assessment that is collected on overnight stays in the County. In early 2023, we had a TMD Feasibility Study completed by Civitas that details what a TMD is and why many destinations are now implementing them. VTC will be hosting TMD workshops this fall to help lay the groundwork for forming a TMD and it will be so important to have input from all our lodging partners including campgrounds and short-term rentals.

We continue to focus national marketing in locations we already have success with like Seattle and Las Vegas. We will continually investigate new opportunities. We are working with Augustine Agency to expand our media buys in key national markets. By considering flight data, populations of targeted areas, and of course visitor demographics we are making informed decisions on where to spend precious advertising dollars.





New this year we are excited to be working with Placer.ai, a foot traffic analytics platform that will provide VTC with insights into the offline behavior of our visitors. This incredible technology will help VTC identify new marketing opportunities and the success of current marketing programs. We will be able to tell how visitors are visiting our area, where they are going from their point of entry and through their time here. This kind of data is extremely valuable and like none we've had before. VTC anticipates that this research will be very helpful for Tuolumne County beyond VTC's needs.

We'll also be taking a deeper dive into the world of ChatGPT to determine how best to incorporate this new technology into our marketing mix. In working with partners through DMA West we are learning more about how this tool can benefit our work whether through creating blogs, social media posts, content for the VTC travel guide, or even stakeholder engagement. It is sure to be interesting!

VTC has found much value in partnering with Visit California (VCA) on several projects, and we will continue to do so this year. This includes being very involved in VCA's regional marketing associations (Gold Country Visitors Association and the High Sierra Visitors Council), partnering on social media influencer visits, sponsoring consumer newsletters, advertising in the California Visitors Guide, and much more.

We are seeing great success in working with international offices. Global Sales and Marketing (GMS) in Mexico has been an exciting partner as we target the affluent Hispanic market. Black Diamond in the UK and Destination Counsellors International (DCI) in Canada remain excellent partners for outreach into those important markets. These three markets also coincide with Visit California's top international markets. We hope to expand into Germany in the near future.

Things are looking good for Tuolumne County's tourism industry now and in the future. With your partnership and involvement, we can take things even further. Be on the lookout for more cooperative opportunities. VTC will begin hosting regular Marketing Committee meetings again and we hope you will join us.



# MANAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES

VTC President and CEO, Lisa Mayo, retains her Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) status. 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.

In 2023, 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.

## VISIT TUOLUMNE COUNTY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE BOARD - 2022/2023

- **Chairperson - Katie Dunn**, Represents District 1 Lodging: Airbnbs of Tuolumne County
- **Vice Chairperson - Ryan Reis**, Don Pedro Recreation Agency
- **Secretary/Treasurer - Stephanie McCaffrey**, Represents District 3 Lodging: McCaffrey House Bed & Breakfast

### DIRECTORS

- **Launa Valente**, Represents District 2 Lodging: Lazy Z Resort
- **Casie Schornick**, Represents District 3 Lodging: Century 21 Wildwood Properties
- **Teri Marshall**, Represents District 4 Lodging: Rush Creek Lodge/Evergreen Lodge
- **Eric Barbaro**, Represents District 5 Lodging: Chicken Ranch Casino
- **Zac Broxham**, Local Collective
- **Michael Sher**, Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort/Dodge Ridge Campgrounds
- **Karen Mariano-Luckhardt**, Inner Sanctum Cellars Winery and Tap Room at Basecamp
- **Jan Verhage**, Sierra Repertory Theatre
- **Parkyre Zelinsky-Salcedo**, Royal Olive Manor



# VISIT TUOLUMNE COUNTY TEAM

## FULL TIME

- Lisa Mayo, CDME, President & CEO
- Katie Kirkland, Director of Sales & Marketing
- Jennifer Lopez, Marketing Coordinator

## PART TIME

- Ashley Padilla, Office Coordinator
- Monique Holcomb, Special Projects Coordinator
- Elaine Squaglia, Visitor Services
- Diane Rock, Visitor Services
- Richard Haratani, Visitor Services

## CONTRACT

- Ginger Malatesta, Bookkeeper



## COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT

The VTC Team is involved in many industry and community organizations which help to strengthen industry knowledge, build valuable relationships, and support the community.

### LISA MAYO:

- Destination Marketing Association of the West, Board Member
- Visit California's Rural Committee, Incoming Vice-Chair
- Gold Country Visitors Association, President
- Tuolumne County Historical Society, Board Member
- Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce, Board Member
- Sierra Repertory Theatre, Board Member
- Tuolumne County Business Council, Member
- Tuolumne County Economic Development Task Force, Member
- Yosemite Area Regional Transportation Advisory Council, Member

### KATIE KIRKLAND:

- National Tour Association, Board Member
- Blue Zones Project, Steering Committee Member
- Leadership Tuolumne County, Graduate

### JENNIFER LOPEZ:

- Sonora Chamber of Commerce, Board Member
- Facelift: Act Local Committee, Member
- Leadership Tuolumne County, Graduate

### ASHLEY PADILLA:

- Tuolumne Bears Youth Football and Cheer, Board Member

# VENDORS

## AGENCIES

### Augustine Agency

Augustine is an integrated marketing and communications agency that VTC hired as its Agency of Record in April 2020, initially to assist with COVID-19 recovery. In 2022-2023, we continued our contract with Augustine for the third year. Among accomplishments during the year were the reimagination and implementation of the Wander Freely campaign and a 2-day winter photo shoot was completed.

### Black Diamond

Black Diamond has represented VTC in the UK for four years by securing media coverage, educating travel agents, and training tour operators. It is very important to reach international travelers as they stay in destinations longer and therefore spend more money than domestic travelers.

### Development Counsellors International (DCI)

DCI is a public relations and travel trade agency that represents VTC in the Canadian market. California remains one of Canada's top-selling markets and having representation is important to ensure Tuolumne County is top of mind when booking California travel. DCI was the agency of record for Visit California for many years. As well, DCI was the agency of record for Gold Country Visitors Association and VTC pre-pandemic. DCI is familiar with VTC's brand and has been key in launching VTC's brand back into the Canadian market.

### Global Marketing Sales (GMS)

GMS is a public relations and travel agency that represents VTC in Mexico. They are also the agency of record for Visit California and come to VTC highly vetted. As travel projections suggested in the previous year, the Latin American market has grown in California. There is high demand for outdoor, family, and beyond the gateway decisions in the Mexican market. VTC's partnership with GMS to introduce our brand and destination to the Latin American market has proven to show increased interest and visitation to Tuolumne County by Mexican visitors.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Bandwango

Bandwango is changing the way that businesses connect with their community by creating mobile passes that drive consumers to businesses. VTC utilizes Bandwango to power the Tuolumne County Craft Burger and Beverage Trails.

### Drozian Webworks

Drozian has been VTC's web development agency since 2016. Besides the website, Drozian provides VTC's CRM (our membership database), the partner portal and also manages Search Engine Optimization, ensuring the VTC site garners the most organic traffic possible.

### Jack Rabbit/Simpleview

Provides a platform housed on the VTC website for visitors to search for and book directly with VTC partner lodging accommodations. This cost is fully absorbed by VTC and lodging partners pay no commissions on bookings.

### Mahk

A counterpart of Augustine Agency, Mahk is responsible for securing paid search, paid social, and other digital advertising.

### Madden Voyage

A destination intelligence platform that provides access to previously difficult to secure travel and tourism data. The platform provides VTC with marketing performance data, details on visitors including the points of interests they visit, competitor data and more.



# GLOSSARY

**DMMO**—Destination Marketing and Management 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.

# TOURISM REMAINS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER TO TUOLUMNE COUNTY.

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