

2021/2022

# Annual Report





Message From President & CEO . . . . .	3
Message From Chair . . . . .	4
Overall Tourism Stats . . . . .	5
Marketing Highlights . . . . .	8
Marketing Programs . . . . .	14
Social Media . . . . .	28
Public Relations . . . . .	29
Marketing Partnerships . . . . .	35
Travel Industry Events . . . . .	39
Community . . . . .	43
Currently & Looking Ahead . . . . .	47
Management & Accountability . . . . .	49
Board of Directors . . . . .	49
Vendors List . . . . .	51
Glossary of Industry Terms . . . . .	52



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

This past fiscal year went by in the blink of an eye. Pandemic fears eased and people started traveling again. They found solace in visiting rural destinations like Tuolumne County. It was a great day when we were able to ramp up our marketing efforts once again. This is just one of many positives that came out of the 2021-2022 fiscal year for Tuolumne County's tourism industry. Transient Occupancy Taxes increased to record highs, new markets opened up and at Visit Tuolumne County (VTC), we were able to welcome back staff that we had to say goodbye to early on in 2020.

Additional highlights of the past year include expanding domestic markets to Seattle, Phoenix, Las Vegas and Houston. We continued to work with Black Diamond in the United Kingdom and reignited our partnership with Destination Counsellors International (DCI) in Canada. Late in the fiscal year we partnered up with Global Marketing & Sales (GMS) in Mexico, a brand-new market for us. As of March 2022, 106% of airlift from Mexico to California has recovered and we are in a great position to welcome these travelers to Tuolumne County. We continue to work with Augustine Agency who has been by our side as we navigate the ups and downs of the last couple of years.

One of our biggest initiatives we began to undertake last year and continue to focus on is growing off-peak visitation. This plan includes massive outreach in the meetings and groups sector and encouraging more group events like weddings and family reunions. The overall goal is more hotel bookings during the October – April timeframe.

We continue to dedicate funds to county events and destination development projects that further the mission of VTC by increasing visitation to our area. We are also supporting projects that lend to stewardship and sustainability of our natural resources. These initiatives benefit residents and visitors. This year we have partnered up with the Sonora Area Foundation to help us distribute the funds.

Finally, this past year we were thrilled to be a finalist for a Visit California Poppy Award in the Best Content Marketing category. While we didn't bring home a Poppy, it was truly an honor to be nominated and to be a finalist in the company of Visit Long Beach (winner) and San Diego Tourism.

The future of Tuolumne County's tourism industry continues to look bright. Thank you for being along with us on this ride!

Looking forward,



**Lisa Mayo, CDME**

President/CEO, Visit Tuolumne County



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

We are proud to present the 2021/2022 Visit Tuolumne County Annual Report.

Although our circumstances have changed drastically since the prior year, our incredible team is creating new initiatives and projects to serve our local tourism industry and to maneuver through new opportunities with confidence and creativity.

VTC continues to play a role in capturing the character of our destination in a genuine manner that not only resonates with the local community but also our visitors.

Moving forward we will continue to foster a positive symbiotic relationship with our local agencies, organizations, members and community in order to serve the needs of Tuolumne County residents and visitors.

As we look forward to celebrating VTC's 40th anniversary in 2023, we are well positioned to move full speed ahead to focus on our mission of enhancing Tuolumne County's tourism economy.

Best,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Katie Dunn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Katie Dunn**

**Visit Tuolumne County Board Chair**





## OVERALL TOURISM STATISTICS

Travel and tourism is one of California's most vital engines for economic growth. In 2021, the California travel economy was still recovering after the fall due to the pandemic. There was a strong demand for overnight accommodations and increased commodity prices led to large gains in visitor spending. Direct travel-related spending in California grew to \$100.2 billion in 2021, a 46.3% increase from the previous year. Compared to the peak of 2019, travel spending across the state was down 30.9% in 2021. California has accelerated tourism's recovery. Visitor spending, employment and visitor-generated tax revenue rose in 2021, and visitor spending totals in 2021 reached 69% of the pre-pandemic high in 2019. Full economic recovery is expected in 2023 – a year earlier than projected in 2021.

Tuolumne County specifically saw a 40% increase in travel spending compared to 2020, which generated an additional 200 jobs and an extra \$3.4 million in local sales tax receipts. Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) also increased by over \$3.5 million compared to 2020 - an increase of nearly 99%.

2021 Travel Spending and Tax Revenue	
Total Direct Travel Spending*	\$241.8 million
Tourism Industry Employment*	2,300
Government Revenue Generated by Tourism	
Local Sales Tax Receipts	\$10 million**
State Sales Tax Receipts	\$11 million
Transient Occupancy Tax	\$7.1 million
State and local tax revenue equivalency per Tuolumne County household	\$967

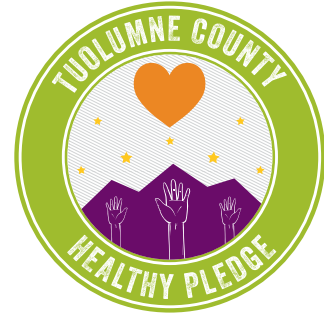
\*These statistics do not include spending or job generation by either Black Oak Casino Resort or by Chicken Ranch Casino as they fall under Government.

\*\*Includes Transient Occupancy Tax, \$7.1 million.

# MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS

## TUOLUMNE COUNTY HEALTHY PLEDGE

In June 2020, VTC introduced the “Tuolumne County Healthy Pledge” program, Tuolumne County’s local business commitment to creating and providing a clean, safe and healthy environment for residents and visitors as businesses and organizations reopened with COVID-19 restrictions. Research studies on traveler sentiment at the time showed that visitors would go where they had confidence that businesses within the destination were abiding by health and safety protocols brought on by the pandemic.



The Healthy Pledge was a voluntary and free awareness campaign for Tuolumne County businesses to showcase their commitment to clean and healthy standards for their guests and employees to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As a priority initiative to assist businesses with economic recovery, the VTC team consulted with Acting Tuolumne County Public Health Officer, Dr. Liza Ortiz and staff for input on the program and its components during its development.

Over 75 businesses participated in the pledge and those that were members of VTC had a Tuolumne County Healthy Pledge digital badge displayed on their business listing at VisitTuolumne.com. An additional webpage dedicated to Tuolumne County Healthy Pledge listed all participating businesses (all Tuolumne County businesses were welcome). Businesses were responsible for ensuring that they were abiding by all governmental and public health orders and directives. The program was discontinued in April 2022.





## TUOLUMNE COUNTY RESTAURANT WEEK

Tuolumne County Restaurant Week (TCRW) is an annual celebration of local cuisine, restaurants, bakeries, chefs, wine and cider makers, breweries, and food producers, and is a collaborative way to share the bounty of Tuolumne County. Restaurant Week, inspired by California Restaurant Month, promotes dining local during what is typically a slow time for businesses. Participation in Restaurant Week is open to VTC members and is free (besides any of the business' associated operational costs).

Fifteen businesses participated in the 2022 Tuolumne County Restaurant Week, January 21-30, and offered specials and deals throughout the week. Participating businesses were supplied a promotional window cling to display on their storefronts and were highlighted on the Restaurant Week Facebook page and promotional materials.





## ART WEEK

VTC hosted the 2nd Annual Tuolumne County Art Week during Arts, Culture and Creativity Month. Art Week stands as an annual event to promote and support the artists and creativity of Tuolumne County and highlight Tuolumne County as a destination for art lovers. There were over 37 individual artists/crafters registered and 76 artists/crafters represented through associations. These artists were highlighted through 20 venues/organizations.

VTC also worked with the City of Sonora to provide the Opera Hall for the entire week for the annual Mother Lode Art Association Show. After Art Week 2022 John Sharum, President, Mother Lode Art Association, said in a letter to VTC, "This has also translated into the most successful fund-raising event in our history."

To kick off Art Week in 2022, VTC did a variety of promotions which included posting across VTC social channels seven times, providing over 13,200 impressions. VTC also ran a video ad for two weeks with 437 link clicks, 34,884 impressions, and \$0.25 per click. VTC created a Localhood video that lived in a carousel of other videos on Visit California's homepage for two weeks and had a 7.14% CTR. A consumer email also went out on 4/8/22 to over 15k subscribers with a 33.3% open rate. Finally, 50 posters were created and placed around Tuolumne County and neighboring counties.





## TRAIL HEADS PROGRAM

According to research conducted on behalf of VTC by SMG Consulting, hiking is the #1 outdoor activity in Tuolumne County. Introduced in 2021, the "Trail Heads" program was created for trail enthusiasts of all kinds to easily find trails that are right for them out of the hundreds to choose from, while helping disperse visitors throughout the County, as part of VTC's sustainability efforts. Downloadable maps of the Top 12 Trails for fair-weather and winter months are available at [VisitTuolumne.com/trails](http://VisitTuolumne.com/trails), and copies are available at the Visitors Center in Sonora.

VTC also encouraged local businesses to download the maps to provide for their guests. A reward component of the program gives trail users the opportunity to receive a series of digital badges as they complete trails to show off on social media, meanwhile encouraging repeat visitation. The program also included tips for adventuring responsibly such as leaving no trace.



## WANDER FREELY

The Wander Freely campaign continued through 2021/2022 with much success. The goal of the campaign was to primarily inspire family, friends and solo travelers to getaway and enjoy the region's many outdoor experiences, wide-open spaces and charming towns.



Utilizing owned, earned and paid media channels, the campaign continued to target the nearby drive-market residents in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Greater Sacramento area. However, as COVID restrictions eased throughout the state and nationally, visitors were looking to travel farther than in the last year. With that development, VTC expanded its marketing efforts in 2022 to outside California including Las Vegas, Phoenix, Seattle and Houston.

The primary objective for creative was to increase visitation, travel spending and overnight stays. However, messaging shifted from recovery language due to COVID conditions and more into an enthusiasm for travel. Previously well-performing creative from FY20/21 continued with slight messaging updates incorporated. The new creative also included themes of towns/retail, camping, midweek visits, sustainability and new programs like the Trail Heads Program.

## PRINT ADS

**YOUR BACKYARD JUST GOT A Lot Bigger**

Discover the beauty of road tripping through Tuolumne County - an easy getaway, 2.5 hours east of the San Francisco Bay Area, with miles of fresh air, outdoor adventure and charming historic towns. From hiking and kayaking to strolling unique shops and enjoying local cuisine, there's plenty to explore throughout the High Sierra, Gold Country and Yosemite. Wander freely, and plan your trip today. [VisitTCToday.com/AdventureSports](https://VisitTCToday.com/AdventureSports)

**MCCAFFREY HOUSE B&B**  
Pure Elegance in a Wilderness Setting. The McCaffrey House has created an experience of comfort and culinary excellence in a setting that is social and intimate just for you. [mccaffreyhouse.com](https://mccaffreyhouse.com)

**RUSH CREEK LODGE & SPA**  
Located in the Highway 120 West entrance to Yosemite, Rush Creek Lodge & Spa includes a restaurant, tennis pool, daily activities, guided hikes throughout Yosemite, and now a brand new indoor/outdoor spa. [rushcreeklodge.com](https://rushcreeklodge.com)

**HOTEL LUMBERJACK**  
Located in downtown Sonoma, Hotel Lumberjack offers all the comfort from home. Book your stay before heading to Yosemite or anywhere else in the area. Complimentary WiFi, free breakfast, free parking. [hotellumberjack.com](https://hotellumberjack.com)

**SEE AND BE Scenic**

Tuolumne County is a breathtaking place to stay and play. Adventure and road trip-lovers can enjoy three of Mother Nature's most inspirational sites in one destination. Yosemite is a one-of-a-kind experience that's surrounded by towering trees and some of nature's best sights. Historic Gold Country awaits with opportunities to pan for gold or partake in shopping, live performances and more. Plus, adventure awaits through hiking, biking or horseback riding in the unforgettable High Sierra. [VisitTCToday.com/RoadTrips](https://VisitTCToday.com/RoadTrips)

**TUOLUMNE COUNTY**  
CALIFORNIA

**ROAD TRIP**  
Discover the beauty of road tripping through Tuolumne County - an easy getaway, 2.5 hours east of the San Francisco Bay Area, with miles of fresh air, outdoor adventure and charming historic towns. From hiking and kayaking to strolling unique shops and enjoying local cuisine, there's plenty to explore throughout the High Sierra, Gold Country and Yosemite. Wander freely, and plan your trip today. [VisitTCToday.com/RoadTrips](https://VisitTCToday.com/RoadTrips)



## WANDER LOCALLY

As COVID conditions lifted throughout the latter half of 2021 and 2022, the VTC Wander Locally in-market campaign shifted focus. Previously in FY20/21, the messaging was a bit more restricted in following COVID protocol for the county and state. This new creative continued to focus support for local businesses and attractions, but also helped in promoting new programs such as the Trail Heads program and the Craft Beverage Trail. The messaging emphasized participating in activities “right here,” showcasing different locations throughout the county. The campaign featured a mix of digital and traditional elements including digital display, video and social media ads along with radio and print ads.



## MEET FREELY

Slowly but surely, group and business travel started to return to the travel industry at large in late 2021 and early 2022. With the desire for this kind of travel, VTC promoted the Meet Freely campaign to targeted audiences. The creative reflected the three regions of Tuolumne County (Gold Country, High Sierra and Yosemite) along with ways for teams and groups to connect outside of the board room through outdoor exploration. Tactically, the campaign relied on digital display and social ads as well as on business channels like LinkedIn and CVENT.



## POSTCARD



## SUSTAINABILITY

VTC has continued this year to promote sustainability travel from blog articles, media pitches, social media posts and more to encourage locals and visitors to leave no trace and help preserve Tuolumne County and its beautiful nature for years to come. VTC has been talking to international organizations and other destinations on the best approaches to sustainability in Tuolumne County. In addition, various paid media placements ran to support responsible travel, including billboards encouraging people to leave no trace while hiking and paid ads promoting fire safety messaging. VTC also planned a clean-up day that will be happening in July 2022.



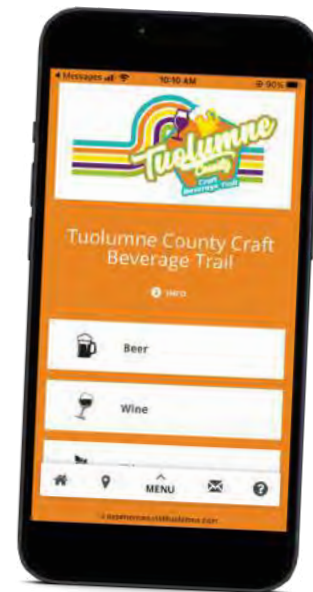


## NEW FOR 2021/2022

### TUOLUMNE COUNTY CRAFT BEVERAGE TRAIL

In January 2022, VTC signed on with the digital pass builder Bandwango to create the Tuolumne County Craft Beverage Trail. The pass launched in late March. This includes all nine of the breweries, wineries and cider distillery in Tuolumne County, and was free to participate in. The premise was to encourage people to disperse across the county safely. Also based on Bandwango's own research, participants in a beverage trail were more likely to visit other businesses as well.

Over the first couple months VTC saw 223 sign ups and 213 check-ins to these businesses. VTC also had an average conversion rate of 86% for people who signed up for the pass and those who checked in, substantially surpassing the around 30% average rate other destinations trails receive. VTC also created fun promotional items like sunglasses to give out at the West Side Brewfest and a physical map of all the trail locations. VTC tested out text marketing to promote the trail as well.



### MEETING PLANNER GUIDE

In the 2021/2022 fiscal year VTC continued its meetings, groups and conferences initiatives with the creation of a Meeting Planner Guide. A tool to promote meetings and groups to meeting planners, VTC utilizes the Meeting Planner Guide when attending industry conferences, in meeting planner follow-up and answering meeting inquiries. The Meeting Planner Guide is full of useful resources such as meeting locations, services, travel and transportation, and local vendors.



# MARKETING PROGRAMS

## ANNUAL TRAVEL GUIDE

VTC creates and distributes an annual Travel Guide to inspire travelers to plan a trip to Tuolumne County. 75,000 copies were printed and distributed at various Bay Area locations such as the Pier 39 California Welcome Center, Caltrain stations, Starbucks, Trader Joe's, Stanford University, and San Jose and Oakland International Airports to name a few. They're also distributed at the VTC Visitors' Centers, through advertising leads, individual requests, at media events, travel shows and at local businesses. This year VTC included a walking map of Sonora, a kids activity page and map of the county broken up by region.

In 2020/2021 VTC 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 research. Through the 265 responses received, the study concluded that visitor guides remain relevant to those researching destinations and planning trips. The study results revealed that:

- 93% of survey respondents said that the Tuolumne County Visitors Guide helped them make a decision 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

The website outperformed last year for number of sessions by 48.45%. VTC always strives to drive more potential visitors to the website to learn about Tuolumne County, plan their future trip and book their stay. The top sessions by city were San Francisco then Sacramento which are two key markets and aligned with paid media efforts.

This year VTC started a website refresh. This was largely focused on making it more mobile friendly with over 70% of users now visiting the website on their phone. It also focused on making the site more inspiring, modern and user friendly. The project will be completed in fall 2022.

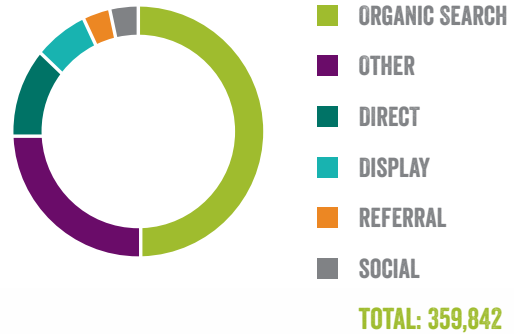
### OVERALL SITE PERFORMANCE

JULY 1, 2021 - JUN 30, 2022

SESSIONS <b>+48.45%</b>	NEW SESSIONS <b>+0.09%</b>	PAGES / SESSIONS <b>-7.65%</b>
BOUNCE RATE <b>+8.24%</b>	AVG. SESSION DURATION <b>-11.81%</b>	GOAL COMPLETIONS <b>+38.98%</b>

### TOP TRAFFIC CHANNELS BY SESSIONS

JULY 1, 2021 - JUN 30, 2022





## 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 20,280 searches, resulting in 11,519 total referrals to lodging websites and 292 bookings. The estimated total bookings revenue was nearly \$100K, providing a staggering 1710% ROI.

### Performance Summary

A breakdown of search, referral and conversion data for the given timeframe.

INSIGHT DIRECT

Avg. Cost Per Referral	\$0.48
Avg. Referrals Per Booking	39.40
Referral to Booking CVR	2.54%
Est Avg Cost Per Booking	\$18.82
Est Avg Booking Amount	\$340.04
Cost Per Reservation	5.5%
Searches	20,280
Search to Referral Ratio	56.79%
Total Referrals	11,516
Est Bookings	292
Est Total Spend	\$5,500
Est Booking Revenue	\$99,292.29
Est ROI	17.1 1710%
Avg Advance Stay in Days	Searches: 56.75 Referrals: 48.94
Avg. Length of Stay in Days	3.49 3.04
Avg. Daily Rate	\$167.24 \$111.85

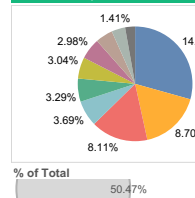
Start Date  
7/1/2021

End Date  
6/30/2022

Site  
visittuolumne.com

Lodging Categories  
All

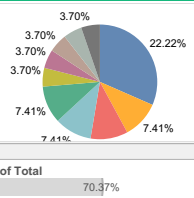
#### Top Referral US Cities



#### Site Id - City

- 1348 - Sonora
- 1348 - Sacramento
- 1348 - San Francisco
- 1348 - Stockton
- 1348 - San Jose
- 1348 - Los Angeles
- 1348 - Roseville
- 1348 - Columbia
- 1348 - Arnold
- 1348 - Modesto

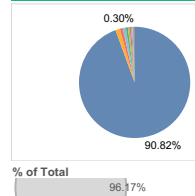
#### Top 10 Referral Canadian Cities



#### Site Id - City

- 1348 - Thompson
- 1348 - Langley Towns..
- 1348 - Montreal
- 1348 - Quesnel
- 1348 - Saskatoon
- 1348 - Calgary
- 1348 - Courtenay
- 1348 - Hamilton
- 1348 - Kamloops
- 1348 - North Battleford

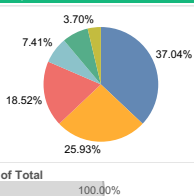
#### Top 10 Referral US States



#### Site Id - US State

- 1348 - California
- 1348 - Texas
- 1348 - Nevada
- 1348 - Utah
- 1348 - Kansas
- 1348 - Ohio
- 1348 - Virginia
- 1348 - Washington
- 1348 - Florida
- 1348 - New York

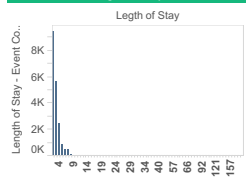
#### Top 10 Referral Canadian Provinces



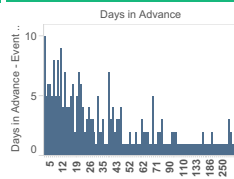
#### Site Id - Province

- 1348 - British Colum..
- 1348 - Manitoba
- 1348 - Saskatchewan
- 1348 - Alberta
- 1348 - Quebec
- 1348 - Ontario

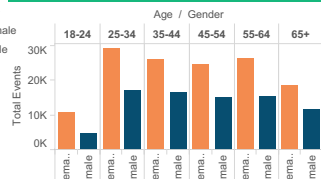
#### Length of Stay



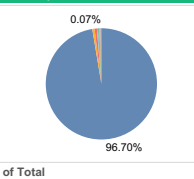
#### Days in Advance



#### Gender and Age



#### Top 10 Referral Countries



#### Site Id - Country

- 1348 - United States
- 1348 - Canada
- 1348 - India
- 1348 - Mexico
- 1348 - Spain
- 1348 - United Kingdom
- 1348 - Switzerland
- 1348 - France
- 1348 - United Arab Em..
- 1348 - Croatia

Of the 61 properties that are listed and have live rates and availability, 2 of the total properties listed have conversion tracking.



## CONSUMER EMAILS

VTC sends out consumer emails to a list of subscribers, typically monthly. This year VTC created automated emails to new subscribers and previous travel guide recipients to see if they would like to request a new guide. VTC had an average open rate of 29.7% for monthly consumer emails, which is well above industry average.

## ADVERTISING PARTNERSHIPS

VTC has developed and established relationships with local and regional publications. As we continue our brand awareness in local and regional markets VTC works with these publications to amplify our presence. Some local and regional publications for the 2021/2022 fiscal year include: Local Getaways (Bay Area), Oh Ranger! (in partnership with Visit Oakdale), Discover 108 and Discover 120 and the Sonora Chamber of Commerce Magazine. VTC also joined many California Destinations alongside Visit California in the California edition of Meetings and Conventions Magazine, where we ran a full page ad accompanied with a full-page advertorial.





## “WALKIN’ WEST” ADVERTISING SPONSORSHIP

VTC continued sponsoring the PBS television show, “Walkin’ West” (formerly “Walkin’ California”) featuring local host, Steve Weldon. The show highlights the incredible landscapes of the West while encouraging visitors to experience those locations for themselves. Every episode also incorporates a stewardship message, which is an important initiative for VTC.

“Walkin’ West” is broadcast on PBS stations in 26 states and in top markets such as New York City, Los Angeles and San Francisco. The latest episode in which Tuolumne County is featured takes place at Relief Reservoir out of Kennedy Meadows and in the High Sierra.



## WANDER FREELY CONSUMER CAMPAIGN

The consumer campaign targeted six markets, strategically selected based on available flights to nearby airports, visitation data and website analytics. Markets for the campaign included Houston, Phoenix, Seattle, Las Vegas, Sacramento and San Francisco. The integrated campaign spanned across traditional and digital tactics and reached Millennial Family and Empty Nester audiences.



### DIGITAL

A variety of digital tactics were leveraged including paid search, paid social, display prospecting, retargeting and native display ads, in addition to an RV and campground-specific campaign. VTC also leveraged travel-targeted display partners such as TripAdvisor and Expedia. Digital campaigns performed as follows:

Tactic	Impressions	Clicks	CTR
Display	7,667,055	12,591	0.16%
Expedia	1,120,997	743	0.07%
TripAdvisor	2,249,375	1,990	0.09%
Vrbo Display	289,438	641	0.22%
Hotels.com Display	199,531	90	0.05%
Native Programmatic	3,231,034	2,983	0.09%
Paid Search	935,513	15,292	7.71%
Paid Social	4,326,157	117,457	2.72%
Video (FB, Instagram & Youtube)	604,540	7,283	1.20%
Streaming Audio	904,069	1,601	0.18%



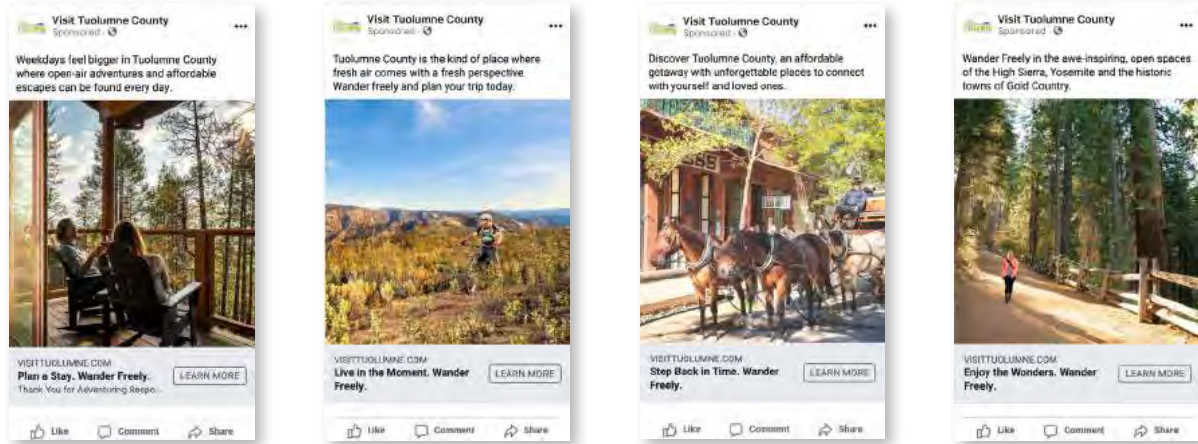
YOUTUBE



DISPLAY



## SOCIAL ADS



## PRINT ADS

VTC ran print ads in a variety of regional, statewide and national publications as listed below. Many placements also provided added value banner ads on the publication sites.

- Adventure Sports Journal
- Conde Nast
- Local Getaways
- Oh Ranger!
- Sacramento Magazine
- Sactown Magazine
- San Diego Magazine
- San Francisco Chronicle
- Sunset Magazine
- Yosemite Journal



## TELEVISION

To increase brand awareness, VTC ran promotions with KRON4 and ABC 10, each of which included a variety of tactics in addition to broadcast segments.

### KRON4

- Live! In the Bay 28x :30/:60-sec segments on the 6-10a and 8-11p news filmed on-site in NLT
- 15x :15-sec promos
- 1x Live interview 3-5 mins
- 2x billboard
- 20x promos
- 250,000 display banner impressions
- 50,000 DRON ON impressions
- KRON 4 Facebook tag



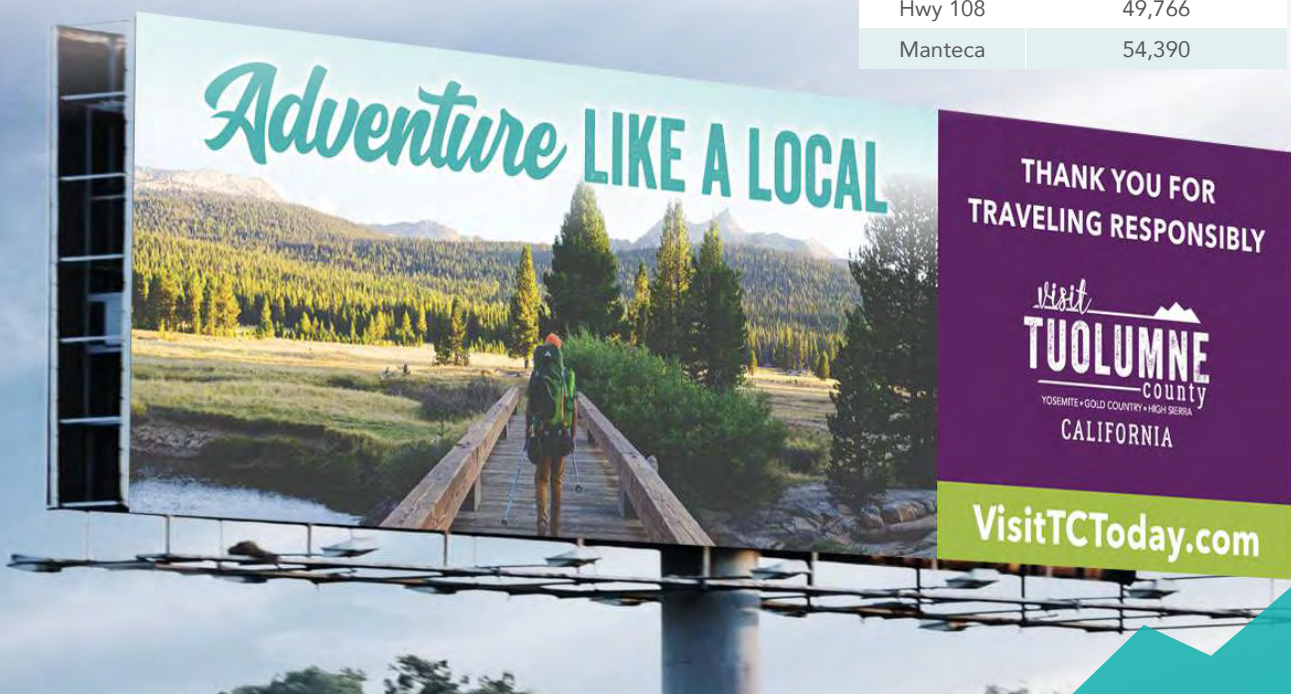
### ABC 10

- Your California Life Segment
- ABC10.com: Banner ads on Bartell's Backroads website page
- ABC 10 Social: one post on ABC 10 Facebook page
- Premium live streaming of VTC commercial targeting outdoor adventure audience.
- Markets: Sacramento County, Roseville, Rocklin, Lincoln, El Dorado Hills, East Bay - Contra Costa and Alameda Counties

## BILLBOARDS

Two billboards ran throughout the fiscal year, both focusing on sustainability messaging. One was just west of Oakdale off Highway 108, which had continued from the previous fiscal year, and the other was in Manteca, which went up in March 2022.

Location	Weekly Impressions
Hwy 108	49,766
Manteca	54,390





## WANDER LOCALLY IN-MARKET CAMPAIGN

Wander Locally campaigns ran in-market on a flighted cadence with the first flight running prior to the 2021 holiday season. The campaign targeted locals only as COVID travel restrictions were still in place. Tactics included print, radio, paid social and display ads which encouraged residents to support local businesses by shopping and dining locally. An organic social contest also ran offering locals only a chance to win a gift card to a local business, purchased by VTC for the promotion. Additional owned channels such as emails were used to support the campaign efforts.

The second flight kicked off with new creative at the end of the 21/22 fiscal year and will continue through the summer of the FY22/23 fiscal year, allowing the campaign to reach an optimal number of people during the peak season. The campaign focused on driving attention to local businesses and attractions, as well as promoting new programs such as the Trail Heads Program and the Craft Beverage Trail. The audience for this campaign was targeted to residents and visitors within Tuolumne County and Yosemite National Park.

### RADIO & AUDIO ADS

The campaign featured three audio spots (0:15, 0:30 and 0:60) with the message of engaging in local activities. The 0:15 and 0:60 were also featured on local radio stations KZSQ and KKBN.

Audio Type	Impressions / Number of Spots	Clicks	CTR	Completion Rate	Best Performing
Streaming	12,396 Impressions	46	0.37% (BM: 0.06%)	0.82%	0:30 (1.98% CTR)
Broadcast	265 spots ran	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

### DIGITAL ADS

Four ad sets featuring local dining and shopping as well as the Trail Heads Program and Craft Beverage Trail ran as digital display ads.



Tactic	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Best Performing
Programmatic	2,148,863	6,265	0.29% (BM: 0.47%)	Shop Right Here (1.18% CTR)
MyMotherLode.com	94,630	56	0.06%	n/a

### VIDEO ADS

Two video ads (0:15 and 0:30) ran with tailored Wander Locally messaging for the in-market campaign.

Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Completion Rate	Best Performing
276,639	1,536	0.56% (BM: 0.65%)	51.8%	0:15 (2.8% CTR)



### SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (SEM) ADS

The search campaign featured keywords pertaining to local activities, attractions and businesses. The campaign, so far, has performed incredibly with a high CTR.

Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Best Performing
5,986	836	13.97% (BM: 4.68%)	Yosemite Hikes Map (19.5%)





## PRINT ADS

In addition to digital ads, the Wander Locally campaign also featured traditional advertising in local newspaper publications including *The Union Democrat*, plus 209 Magazine, *Discover 108* and 120 magazines.



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media ads were also created for the in-market campaign featuring similar themes of the digital display ads.

Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Best Performing
130,073	1,209	2.73% (BM: 0.77%)	Fall Open Spaces Timeline Ad (5.92%)



VTC also ran a holiday campaign in 2021 to give small businesses more exposure on social media and to inspire locals to shop local at these stores or at others for the holiday season. The aim of these was to give back to the community as gift certificates were purchased by VTC.

- Campaign Run: November 10th, 2021-January 3rd, 2022
- VTC Cost: \$140 (not including 2 donated giveaways)
- Along with positive sentiment gained from business owners and locals, VTC also gained 76 additional Instagram followers directly from these posts.

## MEET FREELY MEETINGS CAMPAIGN

New to FY21/22, VTC ran a meetings campaign targeting meeting and event planners across the nation. The goal of the campaign was to encourage planners to reach out to VTC to plan their next event. The campaign built off the successful consumer campaign sharing a Meet Freely message. The campaign was primarily digital, but also included some print placements.

### DIGITAL ADS

Digital ads included display ads through Meeting Professionals International, which is an organization VTC joined at the beginning of the fiscal year. Paid search ran three targeted campaigns around “Meetings,” “Planning” and “Retreat” keywords and phrases, and provided 31% of all impressions and earned 16% of total campaign clicks. Paid social also ran throughout the year across LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook.



Tactic	Impressions	Clicks	CTR
Display	255,911	1,193	0.47%
Paid Search	415,600	2,590	0.62%
Facebook/Instagram	278,267	9,880	3.55%
LinkedIn	376,702	1,840	0.49%

### PAID EMAILS

Using targeted purchased email lists, four custom emails were developed and were deployed in November, January, February and April. Emails earned a total of 6,817 impressions with an average 1.11% click-to-open rate and 76 clicks.

Month Sent	Sends	# Opened	Open Rate	# Clicked	Clicks
November	6,083	458	7.53%	8	0.13%
January	6,148	631	10.26%	30	4.8%
February	6,148	584	9.5%	20	0.33%
April	6,256	669	10.7%	56	0.89%





## CVENT

This platform is widely used by meeting planners to submit requests for proposals (RFPs) for future events. In order for a listing to appear higher in search results, a paid package must be secured. VTC worked directly with CVENT and with the assistance of Augustine, updated the destination profile page, adding imagery, new messaging and uploading collateral. Since launching the paid package in August 2021, the VTC page as received six RFPs for events that would secure 936 room nights providing an average value of \$372K.

## LEAD GEN PROGRAM

This program through Meetings Today started in February 2022 and used a team of lead generation specialists who called prospective meeting planners to provide qualified leads to VTC. Through an approved script, the organization contacted 1,800 individuals and provided VTC 11 qualified prospects ready to plan their meeting, 32 verified prospects who wanted more information for potential future events and 53 prospects requesting more information via email. In all, 96 organizations showed interest in planning an upcoming meeting in Tuolumne County, providing a potential of 5,232 room nights and \$654,000 in revenue.

## PRINT

At the end of the fiscal year, VTC ran meetings-focused print ads with the Destination Marketing Association of the West (DMA West), which also included advertorial content, and Northstar Meetings Group in cooperation with Visit California.



## DIGITAL ACTIVATIONS

This year we launched the Tuolumne County Craft Beverage Trail to help visitors disperse throughout the county, expanded our use of user generated photos with galleries throughout the VTC website, continued to create Localhood Travel Stories which surface on Google, and submitted hundreds of photos for individual business listings on Google to help boost their presence. Staying ahead of the digital space helps VTC to be nimbler and places Tuolumne County where visitors are looking to plan their trips, encouraging extended stays once in Tuolumne County.

### PHOTOSHOOTS

VTC hired three professional photographers this year to capture fall, spring and events images. Full rights for these photos were secured, which is very important as it allows VTC to use across owned and paid channels and share with agencies and media.

### CROWDRIFF

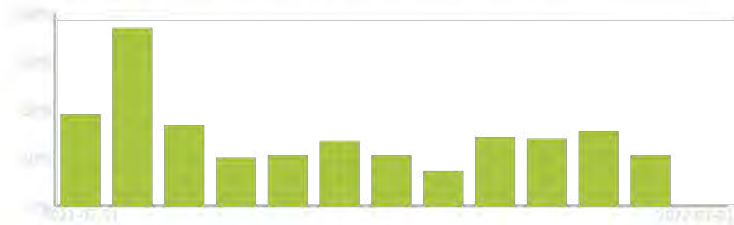
This platform helps VTC acquire and store rights to photos and videos that are user generated. VTC acquired 678 rights to photos since March 2021, and in May 2022, changed our plan to be able to create website galleries. To date, 32 galleries with 31K views and 17K interactions were generated.

### LOCALHOOD

A component of CrowdRiff, Localhood is a platform that allows VTC to develop videos and slides into 'stories' that can live on websites, surface on Google and be downloaded for use on social channels. VTC created 22 Travel Stories which had over 806,629 Google impressions. Along with the galleries that live on VTC's website, a gallery was created that lives on Gold Country Visitor Associations website with all of the Gold Country destinations.

For the selected date range your galleries had a **53.5% engagement rate**.

Your engagement rate is calculated from **17k interactions** and **31k views**.



### PODCAST

VTC released a couple more episodes of the Follow Me in Tuolumne Podcast. Across the four episodes there were 196 downloads.

### GOOGLE OPTIMIZATION

This year VTC participated in a beta program with Visit California and Miles Partnership to update the Google Business Listings in Tuolumne County to ensure the information was correct. Because of the education offered by this program, VTC was able to add over 300 photos to businesses across the county to help boost their presence on Google. VTC has also worked to correct information for businesses which might have incorrect information (ex. phone numbers or hours).



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Organic social media is at the core of marketing organizations and one of the more personal ways to reach audiences. VTC aims for social media to be an active mouthpiece to draw people to visit Tuolumne County. Social media should encourage visitation and reflect VTC's initiatives while acting as standalone informative outlets.

VTC continued with sharing "Wander Wednesdays" and sharing about the new businesses and hidden gems of Tuolumne County. This also transitioned into sharing more and more video content across platforms. VTC works hard to accurately showcase the conditions, events and businesses of Tuolumne County. This year VTC focused on growing our best performing platforms and scaling back on platforms that were not performing as well to make way for new ones like TikTok. And, VTC hosted a social media workshop to help beginners learn how to optimize social media for their business.

VTC also started a new technique learned at the DMA West Tech Summit in March 2022, that encouraged slightly less posting than we had done before as well as putting some funds behind organic style posts. While this is still in the testing stages, VTC has seen a high rate of success in these posts.

All channels saw growth with Instagram growing by 19% and Pinterest almost doubling the number of followers. Twitter saw the lowest growth, but it is a platform that VTC is no longer actively trying to grow. In all, VTC has 54,923 followers, which accounts for an 8% growth throughout 2021/2022 (not including removed MeetMe accounts).

Channel	Followers as of 6/30/22	CTR
Instagram	14,268	2,326
Facebook	36,454	494
Pinterest	578	223
TikTok	1,073	996
Twitter	1,727	71
*New* LinkedIn	116	n/a
Restaurant Week Facebook	707	109



# PUBLIC RELATIONS

## SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

VTC hosted five influencers throughout the fiscal year. Some were in partnership with organizations like Visit California and some were sourced directly by VTC. Specific demographics were targeted and diverse content creators were selected to bring Tuolumne County to a broader audience. Influencers included:

- Paulina Dao
- The Mom Trotter
- Part Time Tourist
- Let's Nom Nom
- Bridges and Balloons





## OUTDOOR WRITERS OF CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE

VTC hosted the Fall 2021 Outdoor Writers of California Conference (OWAC) November 14-17, which was attended by 23 outdoor travel writers and 10 guests who were able to experience Tuolumne County over the course of the conference.

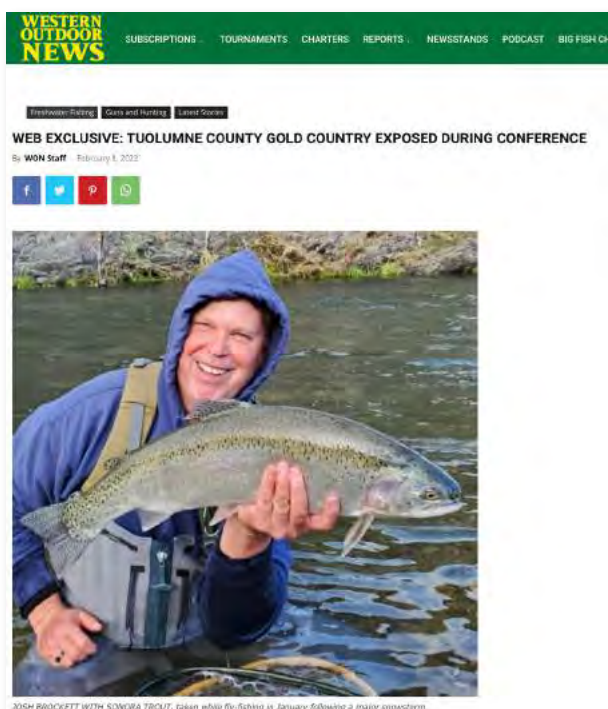
The first day's agenda included Craft Improvement Sessions at the Sonora Opera Hall, a reception at Local Collective hosted by the Sonora Chamber of Commerce and then dinner at Teleli Golf Club. On day two, the attendees were able to choose from and go out on specialty outings created by the VTC team to highlight different areas, businesses and activities throughout the County.

The day concluded with a closing dinner at Hurst Ranch where conference attendees were able to share their adventures from earlier that day, plus enjoy local wine and craft beer. The main conference days were book-ended by pre- and post-conference activities and an OWAC board meeting.

The VTC team thanks Tuolumne County Supervisor Kathleen Haff, Sonora City Council Member Ann Segerstrom, VTC Board Members, and participating business owners and representatives for attending the closing dinner. Thank you also to all 47 businesses and organizations that contributed to the conference as a whole.

Some articles that came out of the conference:

- Inga's Adventures
- Western Outdoor News
- OWAC



## MEDIA RELATIONS

In FY21/22, the outdoor spaces of Tuolumne County drew interest for publications. Specifically, Yosemite National Park and Hetch Hetchy were two major attractions for media promotion. The Augustine PR team focused on itinerary creation for the region as a whole, showcasing all there is to do in the county's three regions. Sustainability efforts were also a main focus for media promotion, especially in 2022. Crisis communication was used earlier in the year in relation to wildfires, with talking points and guidance about responsible travel tips.

To assist with media relations and pitching efforts, Augustine developed a new digital media kit. This comprehensive document includes facts about the county, details on getting to the destination from various airports, specifics on public transportation, information on each principal town, details on accommodations and meeting capabilities, plus story ideas.



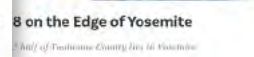
## KEY RESULTS

- Secured Clips: 97
- Potential Reach: 1.74B
- Potential Coverage Views: 2.18M

## PITCHING THEMES

Pitching themes focused on outdoor exploration as well as events and unique activities to the region.

- Best places to fish
- Movie sites
- Best places to ski
- Best wildflower blooms
- Team building retreats
- Outdoor spaces
- No reservation guide to Yosemite
- Sustainability
- Art Week
- Family fun near Yosemite
- National Tourism Month
- Dodge Ridge renovations
- 3 vacations in 1
- Best places to watch the 2024 solar eclipse
- Wine, cider and beer tasting in Tuolumne County
- Road trips
- Mountain biking
- Haunted hotels
- Best fall foliage drives
- Last minute holiday shopping
- Best places to exercise





## PRESS RELEASES

Press releases similarly highlighted outdoor adventures along with new activities and businesses.

- What's New in Tuolumne County this Spring April 2022
- No Reservation Guide to Yosemite March 2022
- What's New in Tuolumne County this Winter Dec 2021
- CEO Lisa Elected to DMA Board Nov 2021
- Reasons to Visit Tuolumne County this Fall Aug 2021

## INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

### BLACK DIAMOND

Black Diamond is VTC's agency of record for the UK and Ireland. With California being the UK's top-selling destination, having representation on the ground is helpful as Black Diamond understands the UK audience and knows how to navigate the media market. It allows VTC to remain visible and top of mind with both travel trade and media.

The Black Diamond travel trade team looked after all aspects of sales and marketing to the UK and Ireland trade market. This included 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 (FAM) trips, which became imperative in post-COVID recovery.

On the public relations side, Black Diamond worked on proactive and reactive media pitches to secure coverage in top publications and keep VTC at the top of the media agendas. Additionally, the team recruited and vetted media for familiarization trips as well as helped organize the trips.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS:

- Total placements: 86
- Total circulation: 32,916,408
- Total EAV: \$369,800
- Total media hosted: 2 individual trips

### TRADE:

- Total trade meetings: 63
- Total co-op campaigns: 3 (SF Travel, Purely Travel and Bon Voyage).
  - Bon Voyage co-op invoiced in 21/22, but activity will run 22/23
- Total trade hosted FAMs: 1 group FAM with three partners represented; Virgin Atlantic Holidays, Flight Centre and Travel-pa (part of Sunset Faraway Holidays).

## DEVELOPMENT COUNSELLORS INTERNATIONAL

Development Counsellors International (DCI) is a public relations and travel trade agency that represents VTC in Canada. VTC saw a huge success contracting with DCI pre-pandemic. During the pandemic VTC ended their contract with DCI, but as the borders reopened and Canadians began to travel again, VTC began working with DCI for the months of May and June to rebuild our brand in the Canadian market.

Focusing solely on public relations, DCI secured a sponsorship of Travel Media Association of Canada's largest media convention, which included social posts, banner ads, logo placements on TMAC collateral, and nearly 20 appointments with top tiered Canadian media. Next, DCI was able to place a full-page print ad, digital editorial, and digital banner and social ads in *Hello! Canada*, one of Canada's top publications.

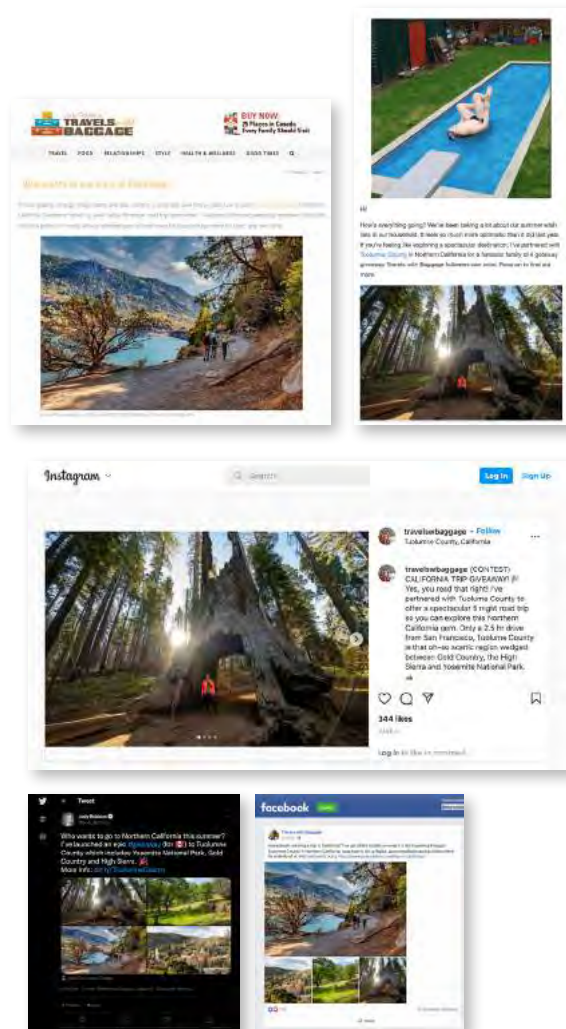
As another part of VTC's partnership with DCI, Tuolumne County was featured on Global News Calgary with family travel writer Jody Robbins. In addition to the broadcast segment, VTC partnered with Robinson to do a vacation giveaway through her travel platform including blog, newsletter and social channels. Some highlights from Canada include:

### Global News Calgary

- Broadcast: 128,000
- Online: 220,000
- Total ad value: \$25,035

### Jody Robbins Tuolumne County Vacation Giveaway:

- Blog
  - Ad value: \$1,500
- Newsletter
  - Sent: 872
  - Open: 40.5%
  - Clicks: 15.7%
- Instagram
  - Reach: 5,038 (65% from ad)
  - Impressions: 7,260
  - Interactions: 1,956
  - Profile Activity: 416
  - Ad Taps: 191
- Facebook
  - Reach: 3,635
  - Impressions: 5,392
- Twitter
  - Reach: 5,038 (65% from ad)
  - Impressions: 7,260
  - Engagement: 56





**Hello! Canada**

- Print
  - Impressions: 733,000
  - Ad Value: \$30,000
- Digital
  - Impressions: 1,297,000
  - Ad Value: \$10,701
  - Pages per View: 688
  - Time Spent: 1 min 36 sec
- Facebook & Instagram
  - Impressions: 269,000
  - Clicks: 1,597
  - CTR: 0.39%

**GLOBAL MARKETING AND SALES**

VTC partnered with Global Marketing and Sales (GMS) in April of 2022 to reach the Mexico market. GMS is the public relations and travel trade agency of record for Visit California and is a strongly vetted agency. Travel projections show that Mexico is an emerging market and there is a magnitude of opportunity to increase Mexican visitation to Tuolumne County.

As this is VTC's first exposure to the Mexican market, the GMS and VTC team spent time outlining a plan to introduce and grow Tuolumne County's presence. VTC and GMS developed a travel trade training deck that was translated to Spanish, a translated Spanish website and ran social ads to direct traffic to the Spanish website.

VTC also hosted a sponsored dinner that included GMS staff along with five key tour operators at IPW in Orlando. Through this dinner VTC was able to educate tour operators and GMS staff on the destination along with location, accommodations, regions and activities available in Tuolumne County. Furthermore, GMS began to identify and vet media visit opportunities for VTC and conducted nearly 200 trainings with travel trade representatives on Tuolumne County.



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

## BRAND USA

VTC continued its long-standing partnership with Brand USA to produce and distribute international content through various programs. In 2019, VTC agreed to participate in the Global Road Trips campaign in partnership with VCA, the Destination at a Glance Video Series and the Multi-Channel Canada Digital campaign. Unfortunately, all programs were placed on hold due to the pandemic pausing international travel, and the programs were finally able to begin in fall 2021.

- VCA Global Road Trips is an itinerary-based series highlighting multiple stops and captures fun and memorable road trip ideas throughout California.
  - Market: Canada
  - Run Dates: October 10-November 11, 2021
  - Pre-Roll video media garnered 1.3 million impressions and the CTR exceeded the industry benchmark
- Destination at a Glance is a video series including short, energetic and candid vignettes, each focusing on a single experience of Tuolumne County (hiking in the Tuolumne Grove of Giant Sequoias, fly-fishing at Kennedy Meadows and glamping throughout Tuolumne County). Videos were completed in January 2021.
  - Main Market: Canada
  - Run Dates: November 1-November 30, 2021
  - Videos garnered 391,254 total impressions
  - Videos Completed: 307,856 (exceeded the contracted amount by 6%)
- Digital Media Campaign targeted for Western Canada includes a custom article on VisttheUSA.com hub, digital impressions, Facebook ads and an Expedia activation.
  - Market: Canada
  - Run Dates: October 21-December 18, 2021
  - Total campaign garnered 5.25 million impressions
  - Expedia activation generated \$14,900 in hotel revenue with 46 room nights booked





## 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 stretch our marketing dollars and efforts. This past year VTC partnered with VCA in the field of Public Relations by submitting story idea content, hosting media including journalists and influencers.

VTC also participated in many VCA cooperative marketing campaigns such as a full-page ad placement in the *California State Travel Guide*, a full-page ad and editorial in VCA's *Road Trips Guide*, banner ads on VCA's website and a sponsored VCA newsletter. The dedicated newsletter utilized the VCA template to implore their trusted voice to their audiences and deployed in April to nearly 205K people and provided an astounding 48.9% open rate with a 3.29% CTR. VTC also worked with VCA to update existing and add new experience pages on their site to promote additional key towns within the county.

## SAN FRANCISCO TRAVEL

This past year VTC once again partnered with San Francisco Travel on an international campaign welcoming travelers back to the region. This pan-European campaign included target audiences of the UK, France and Germany. This campaign cost \$50,000 including a match of \$10,000 from Brand USA.

The campaign secured product development for Tuolumne County in the UK, Germany and France with fly-drive tours being developed with large travel companies including Trailfinders, CANUSA and Premium Travel (Back Roads). Trailfinders added three Tuolumne County lodging properties to their program. CANUSA developed motorhome tours featuring Tuolumne County and a local resort and Premium Travel developed three new tour itineraries that included Tuolumne County.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Total Room Nights Booked: 149 which is an estimated \$72,532.76 (including TOT)
- Total Impressions: 57,608,062 (159% KPI)
- Total Arrivals: 123,853 (227% KPI)
- Average Arrival Rate: 0.22%
- Total Completed Video Views: 1,314,595
- Total Sessions on Microsite: 24,639
- Gender: Skewed toward Male - 58% Male & 42% Female
- Highest engagements: From audiences aged between 35-44
- Users tend to engage fairly evenly across mobile and desktop
- Campaign engagers over-index across the following interests: Family Vacationers, Luxury Travelers, Family Movie Fans
- Re-targeting drove the highest arrival rates (0.45%, 13,847 clicks)

In addition, VTC sponsored a dedicated newsletter, which used the San Francisco Travel email template, but featured content only about Tuolumne County. The email went out on 3/31/22 and was delivered to 123,328 people, receiving a 26.52% open rate and a .45% CTR.

## GOLD COUNTRY VISITORS ASSOCIATION AND HIGH SIERRA VISITORS COUNCIL

For marketing purposes, Visit California divides the state into 12 regional marketing groups. Tuolumne County falls under two of those: The Gold Country Visitors Association (GCVA) and the High Sierra Visitors Council (HSVC). Our VTC President and CEO is the current President of the GCVA.

The GCVA has a focus on road trippers looking for history, outdoor adventure, culinary delights, craft brews and wine, and multi-generational family adventure. GCVA has a strong social media presence and in the past year hired a public relations strategist to help the nine counties of Gold Country form cohesive messaging and to help with FAM trips. The HSVC has brought back their international focus to the French travelers while also cooperatively hosting journalists and influencers. Visit California provided matching funds (up to \$30k for 2021-22, up to \$60k for 2022-23), which leveraged membership funds and helped smaller destinations participate in large scale marketing efforts. Visit California also assisted larger destinations with expanding their reach.

## YOSEMITE GATEWAYS

The Yosemite Gateways, not to be confused with Yosemite Gateway Partners, is made up of one representative from each of the Destination Marketing Organizations from Yosemite National Park's four gateways: Tuolumne, Mono, Madera and Mariposa counties. In the past the group has collaborated in efforts to control over tourism in Yosemite with messaging that included how to visit Yosemite and how to travel responsibly.

This past year, while Yosemite Gateways was not tasked with a specific project, the group was able to initiate calls as needed with the Yosemite National Park Leadership Team, including Superintendent Cicely Muldoon, to enhance communication channels between the gateway counties and the park during COVID-19 and the Park Reservation System implementation.

## FILM TUOLUMNE COUNTY

VTC continues to promote the 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.





## 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 21/22 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 Board of Directors
- Meeting Planners International
- National Tour Association
- Public Relations Society of America
- TravMedia
- US Travel Association
- Visit the USA – UK and Ireland



# TRAVEL INDUSTRY EVENTS



## INDUSTRY EDUCATION EVENTS



### DMA WEST TECH SUMMIT

Each spring the DMA West hosts a Tech Summit to share the latest trends in travel and technology. VTC attends annually and this year was able to learn from industry leaders on new ways to promote Tuolumne County through advancements like non-fungible tokens (NFTs), text marketing and new lead generation tools. The conference ensures VTC maintains a cutting-edge presence in the tourism industry.

### DMA WEST EDUCATION SUMMIT

The DMA West Annual Education Summit is a place for peers to share their successes and struggles in the travel industry and learn from one another. VTC attends annually in the fall and is able to gain a greater understanding of how other destinations are tackling hard issues and gain tips and tricks for marketing Tuolumne County. This year some big takeaways were how to help with destination management and creating a sustainable future, and the best ways to execute a Bandwango Pass. This helped VTC launch the Tuolumne County Craft Beverage Trail this spring with information learned at the summit.

### DMA WEST LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

After being on hiatus for two years, the very popular DMA West Leadership Summit returned. This summit is a gathering of DMMO CEO's from across the western states. Relevant tourism industry topics from human resources to evolving DMMO roles to stewardship and accessibility are discussed in a safe and confidential environment. Each year the peer-to-peer networking at this event is perhaps the most valuable asset attendees take away, as they share issues and solutions and new ways for going about our industry business.

### VISIT CALIFORNIA OUTLOOK FORUM

In February 2022 members of VTC and partners from Rush Creek Lodge and Spa attended VCA's annual industry convention, Outlook Forum, to learn about 2022 destination marketing trends, industry related education and industry networking. Every other year VCA holds the Poppy Awards, celebrating the best in California tourism. One highlight of the year was being a top three finalist in Best Content Marketing category, competing against Long Beach Convention and Tourism Bureau and San Diego Tourism Authority. This is a huge honor, and while we did not win, we were honored to make it as a finalist across such amazing organizations. Our work was presented at the Visit California Outlook Forum on February 15, 2022.

### CALTRAVEL SUMMIT

In September 2021, VTC President & CEO, Lisa Mayo, VTC Board Chair, Katie Dunn, and Marketing Manager, Jen Lopez attended the annual CalTravel Summit in Southern California. CalTravel is the advocating voice and educational organization for the state's travel and tourism industry. The summit included various seminars and panels focusing on the current top issues facing the tourism industry such as pandemic recovery, homelessness, governmental policies and sustainability. Lisa Mayo was a panelist on the "Small Destination Management Organization (DMO) Recovery Workshop" along with several small DMO leaders from throughout California. The topics discussed in the session were changing roles of DMOs in recent years, stakeholder partnerships, advocacy challenges, successful programs during the pandemic and internal organizational changes to name a few. The important information and innovative ideas were brought back to build upon our own organization's efforts and partnerships to share with local stakeholders and VTC members.



## TRAVEL TRADE EVENTS

### GO WEST SUMMIT

This particular summit, held February 14-17, 2022, was a productive one for VTC. There were 30 appointments scheduled and 12 additional appointments added. Unfortunately, when COVID surged again, six scheduled appointments were cancelled. A total of 36 connections were made over two days with domestic and international tour operators, plus one educational day. To put Tuolumne County in the best light, VTC highlighted the Trail Heads Program, Gold Country discoveries, High Sierra adventures, Yosemite National Park, historic state parks, film locations, stargazing, hiking, lodging, eateries and other major attractions. An interest in luxury travel was unique to this event, so properties like Rush Creek drew particular attention. Follow ups were completed the first week of March with many contacts expressing an interest in learning more about the region.

### IPW

For the first time since the pandemic, VTC attended IPW, the largest media and travel trade show on US soil. This year IPW was held in Orlando, FL. VTC shared a booth with hotel partner Rush Creek. Over the 3-day event VTC and Rush Creek met with nearly 50 national and international travel trade representatives. For the first time people recognized VTC's brand and sought out appointments with us. It became very evident at IPW 2022, that VTC had grown its brand awareness. VTC and Rush Creek collaborated their appointment summaries and leads and shared them out to VTC hotel members.

## MEETINGS EVENTS

### CVENT CONNECT

In April 2022, CVENT hosted their annual Connect Conference with educational sessions, one-on-one meeting opportunities and networking opportunities. VTC attended this event and met with several meeting planners that were thrilled to learn about the opportunities Tuolumne County has for hosting meetings. Additionally, VTC learned about market trends like smaller destinations, budget-friendly destinations and unique offerings.

### SMALL MARKET MEETINGS SUMMIT

In May 2022, VTC and partner Chicken Ranch Casino attended the Small Market Meetings Summit. The directors of this summit invited 25 destinations and 25 meeting planners who source destinations to host small meetings. VTC and Chicken Ranch Casino were the only California destinations that attended and were able to meet with all 25 meeting planners. As a result of the Small Market Meetings Summit, VTC received RFPs to host meetings in Tuolumne County and is planning a FAM tour with meeting planners.

### MPI WORLD EDUCATION CONGRESS

Meeting Planners International (MPI) held their annual World Education Congress, which offered professional education sessions and networking with industry professionals. VTC attended the education sessions and co-hosted a chapter dinner with fellow Sacramento/Sierra Nevada Chapter members, meeting planners and a representative from CVENT, the industry's leading meeting planner software.

## MEDIA EVENTS

### VISIT CALIFORNIA'S FALL MEDIA EVENT

This one-day event held on October 28, 2021, was a great opportunity for VTC to meet a variety of industry experts. VTC met with approximately 16 freelance journalists, editors and social influencers. We engaged with several media outlets including Bravo TV, California Meetings + Events, Lonely Planet, *Los Angeles Times*, NBC - California Live, *San Diego Family Magazine*, Thrillist, Palm Springs Life, *Travel + Leisure* and *TravelAge West*. To encourage a continued conversation with attendees, VTC distributed branded carabiners and flash drives loaded with the new digital media kit. Conversation highlights included the Trail Heads Program, Gold Country discoveries, High Sierra adventures, Yosemite National Park, lodging, eateries, the meeting guide planner and other major attractions during media conversations. Follow ups were completed the first week of November.





### TRAVMEDIA'S IMM

On January 27, 2022, VTC attended the International Media Marketplace with a full schedule that included 24 scheduled appointments plus seven additional appointments held before and after the event, and during breaks. A total of 31 connections were made with influencers, freelance journalists and journalists writing for outlets such as Lonely Planet, Thrillist, *Los Angeles Times*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Tripsavvy*, *National Geographic* and more. VTC developed custom table signage with quick facts about Tuolumne County and distributed branded neck cowl and masks. In conversations, VTC highlighted the Trail Heads Program, Gold Country discoveries, High Sierra adventures, Yosemite National Park, historic state parks, film locations, stargazing, hiking lodging, eateries and other major attractions. Follow ups were completed the first week of February with many interested in visiting and learning more about the region.



### IPW INTERNATIONAL MEDIA MARKETPLACE

For the first time since the pandemic VTC attended IPW, the largest media and travel trade show on US soil. This year IPW was held in Orlando, FL. VTC participated in the one-day media marketplace and held 20 media appointments with top tier national and international media representatives. Many media representatives were knowledgeable about Tuolumne County and were excited to learn about new offerings, accommodations, restaurants and activities in Tuolumne County. Those who had no prior knowledge were delightfully surprised about all the experiences Tuolumne County has to offer. In following up with the media, VTC shared many story ideas and secured media trips to Tuolumne County.

## COMMUNITY

### SUPPORT FOR FIREFIGHTERS

Following the Washington Fire in August, the VTC team felt compelled to show thanks to the firefighters who put their lives on the line to not only protect Sonora that week, but every day they do their dangerous jobs. Banners were created to show gratitude and were distributed to several downtown businesses. AMOS Screen Printing graciously offered to print banners at a reduced cost for those who wanted one for their business.



### COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIPS, DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AND STEWARDSHIP

Each year VTC dedicates funds specifically for supporting various events or projects that enhance tourism. This year funds were spent benefitting the following non-profits:

- Columbia College: Provided bandanas created by local artist to give away at out of county Girls Volleyball Championship Tournament
- Jamestown Promotion Club: Street Banners and Rods to Rails Event Sponsor
- Mother Lode Art Association: 67th Annual Mother Lode Art Association Art Show & Exhibit
- RAD Card Program through County of Tuolumne
- Sierra Repertory Theatre: Benefactor Sponsorship
- Sonora Chamber of Commerce: Golf Tournament, Christmas Town Support, 2nd Saturdays Sponsor
- Southern Tuolumne County Historical Society: Winetasting Cruise Sponsorship
- Summerville Bears: Brew Fest Sponsorship
- Tuolumne County Sheriff's: Posse, Mother Lode Round-Up
- Twain Harte Area Chamber of Commerce: Concert in the Pines Sponsor
- Yosemite Highway 120 Chamber of Commerce: 49er Festival and Chili & Salsa Cook Off Stage and Platinum Sponsor, Beautification Sponsor





## HOMELESS TOOLKIT

VTC met with City of Sonoma officials to discuss ways to help businesses handle various homeless interactions as several businesses, including VTC, were experiencing negative encounters. Out of this *The Business Toolkit for Homeless Interactions* was created. This piece was created by the City of Sonoma Police Chief and VTC designed and distributed it. It is a fluid document and can be updated as situations evolve.



## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH RECRUITMENT

VTC was approached by Tuolumne County's Environmental Health Department to help create a recruitment flyer and cover letter creative for an open position. This was a great way to collaborate with the county and share our resources and branding prowess to entice new recruits.



## WILDFIRE TOOLKIT

A wildfire toolkit was developed in response to the recent onset of wildfires, especially in the summer-fall time period. The goal of the toolkit was to bring awareness to available wildfire resources for partners in Tuolumne County, as well as provide crisis communication talking points. The toolkit includes:

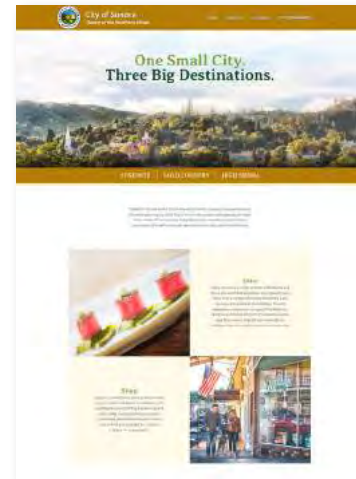
- Infographic featuring wildfire best practices, safety information and resources
- Crisis communication plan and talking points
- Responsible travel tips
- Contact information for resources in Tuolumne County



## CITY OF SONORA SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

The City of Sonora was awarded American Recovery Funds and they allocated a portion for marketing efforts to drive visitation to support local small businesses. VTC supported the city's initiatives by donating to the campaign and offering marketing expertise. Augustine provided strategic council and leveraged the existing City of Sonora brand to establish an organic social presence, design various sets of creative for paid social ads, develop an email template for partner communications and manage social media channels.

The campaign ran on Facebook October 2021 – March 2022 through paid ads and boosted organic posts. Augustine also developed content calendars for Facebook and managed channel engagement (comments, posts, etc.). Overall, the paid campaign served over 4 million impressions, providing a 1.12% CTR (BM: 0.9%) and nearly 48.5k site visits. Organic social efforts grew the amount of followers by 758 fans, which was an increase of 30%. In addition, over 14.5K engagements (likes, comments, post clicks and shares) were generated through organic social efforts.



## WHY TOURISM MATTERS

In January 2022, VTC launched the Why Tourism Matters Toolkit, a collection of resources for business and partners to share the importance of tourism and the value it brings to the county. It includes links to download an infographic, view video testimonials from local business who voiced why tourism matters to them and additional resources.

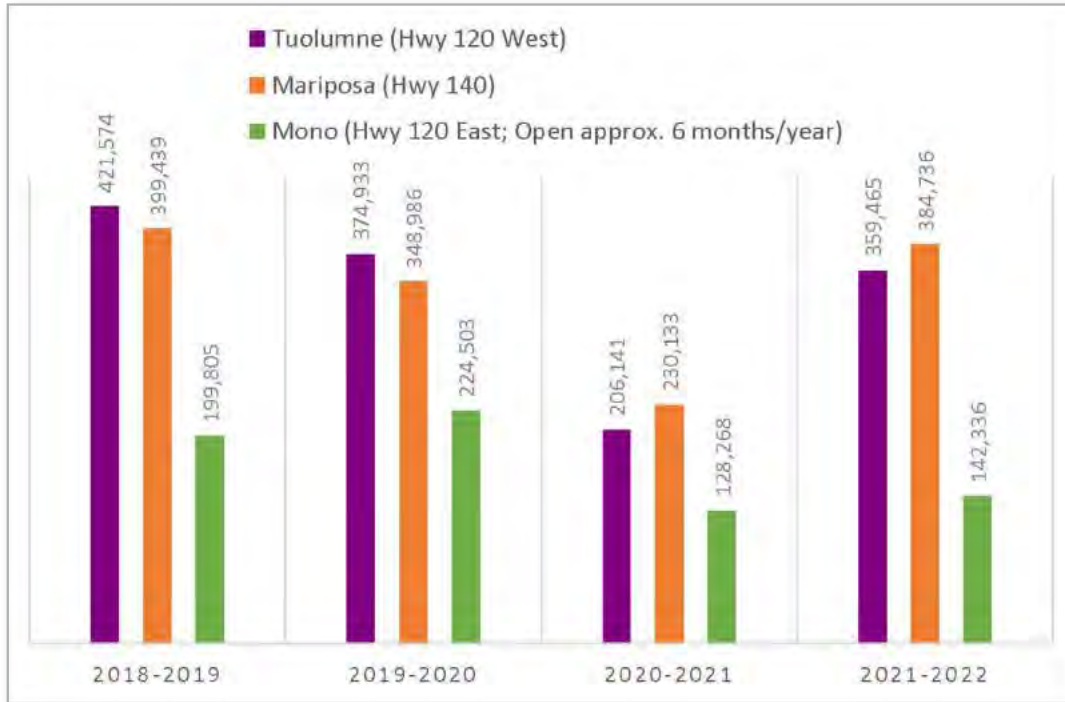
It also explains how VTC is more than just a marketing organization – it is a Destination Marketing and Management Organization (DMMO) that supports the community, encourages sustainable and responsible travel, develops resources to encourage fire safety and prevent wildfires and more. The toolkit also provides talking points to help businesses and partners share the value of tourism, along with templated letters to share with local media outlets how tourism positively impacts their business. To support education across the county, VTC developed a landing page including specific data proving the economic support tourism provides.

Then in May, to support US Travel's National Travel and Tourism Week (NTTW) and Visit California's California Tourism Month, VTC secured additional video testimonials and put together a video compilation highlighting the beginnings of the organization, the value tourism currently brings and the direction moving forward that will continue to support the county and help the local economy thrive. Organic social activations also provided bite-sized snippets sharing why tourism matters through quick, easy to digest posts.





## TRAFFIC ENTERING YOSEMITE



\*Madera County is not represented due to unclear data.

## MEMBER TESTIMONIAL/QUOTES

"I am a new board member and have been blown away by this organization. VTC does so much more than folks realize! Such a vital resource in our community and I am proud to be a part of it."

- Casie Schornick, Century 21 Wildwood Properties and VTC Board Member

"We had many changes in 2022 geared toward creating more opportunities for Recreation and Tourism at Don Pedro Recreation Agency. In an effort to get the word out, we invited Lisa, Katie and Sarah to hike our new trail and also promote dog-friendly content for VTC. Following the tour, there were social media posts and even a TikTok that gained a great deal of interest from customers who were not aware of our updated rules and amenities. Partnering with VTC has been considerably helpful in promoting Tuolumne County and all its offerings to our visitors and guests."

-Ryan Reis, CPRP, Recreation Director, Don Pedro Recreation Area and VTC Board Member

"This past May, I had the pleasure of attending the Small Market Meeting Seminar in Fort Worth, Texas as a guest of Visit Tuolumne with Katie Kirkland. During our time in Texas, Katie and I met with meeting planners. This was an excellent opportunity for Chicken Ranch Casino to showcase its new and upcoming resort and casino, along with the ample conference space it will bring in 2024. This opportunity proved extremely beneficial, and we are thrilled to be a part of making Tuolumne County a premier travel destination. Katie was an outstanding host/partner and has a passion for bringing business to Tuolumne County. Chicken Ranch Casino looks forward to continuing our partnership and attending more seminars/events like this in the future."

- Melissa Constant, Marketing Project Coordinator

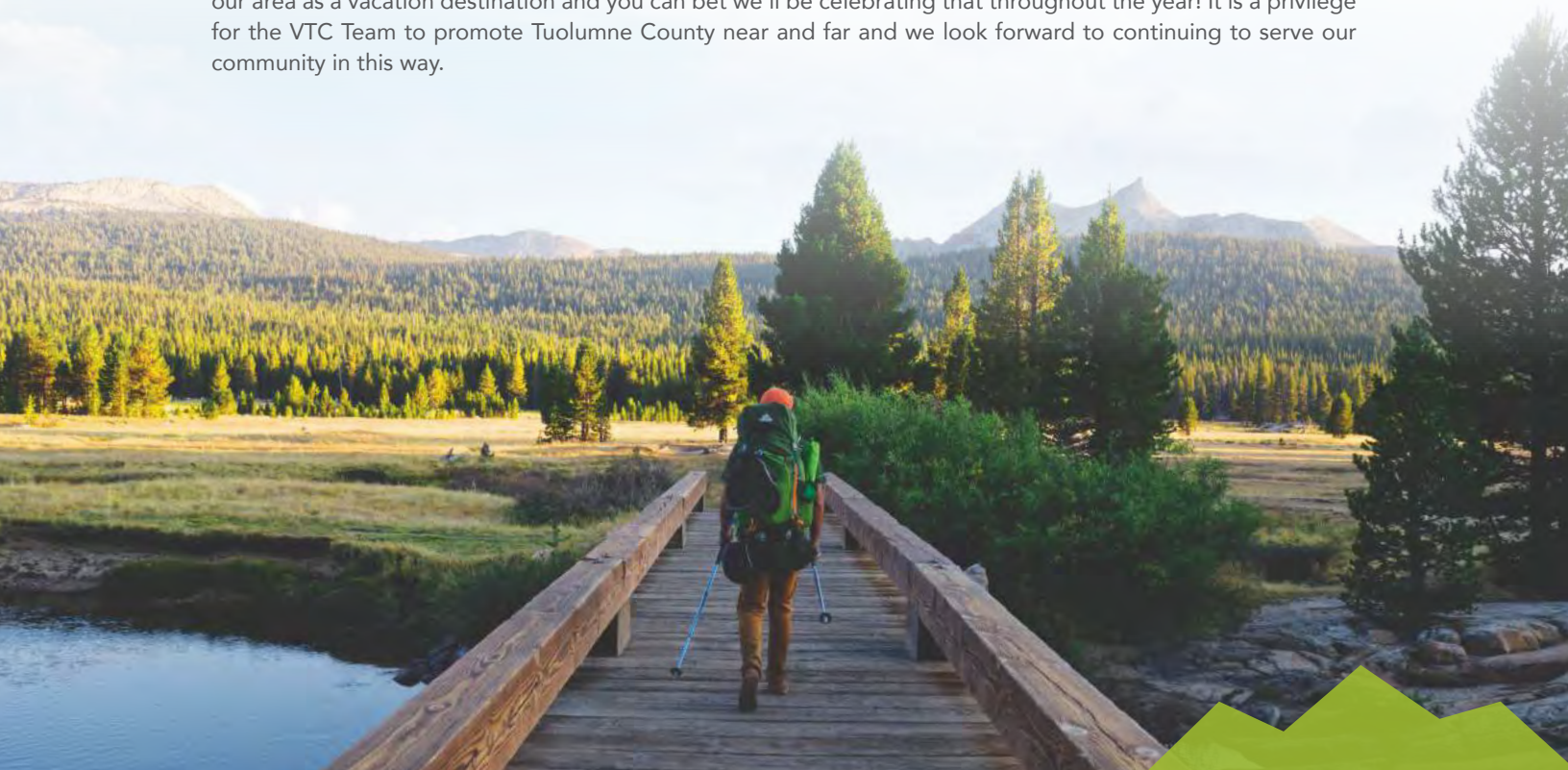
## CURRENTLY & LOOKING AHEAD

Going into the 2022/2023 fiscal year, VTC remains dedicated to engaging in relevant marketing programs to inspire travel to Tuolumne County. We continue to have a laser focus on the meetings market to increase business midweek and at off-peak times. The local, national and international leisure market remains very relevant and important. The meetings market and leisure market often overlap in destinations like ours and it's known as the "blended travel" market. This is a key market for us!

VTC is stepping up our sustainability and stewardship game as we look to develop new partnerships in this arena with the likes of Leave No Trace as well as tourism organizations like Visit California and CalTravel. We will continue to have VTC Clean-Up Days throughout the county and maintain our billboards in key locations to encourage stewardship. We will also be reaching out to our partners for insights on sustainability in their businesses. VTC President and CEO, Lisa Mayo, is now serving on the first ever CalTravel Stewardship and Sustainability Committee.

In this year's budget, the VTC Board of Directors has dedicated \$150,000 to support the sponsorship of local non-profit events and destination development projects. While we have had an organized community investment fund over the past few years (this was a provision in our funding contract with the city and county), this is the first time we have partnered with Sonora Area Foundation (SAF) to disperse these funds. One of the biggest opportunities in working with SAF is that the funds in the new Visit Tuolumne County Community Investment Fund can be matched by another donor, thereby leveraging our investment, and providing additional funds to the grantee. As part of these funds, VTC is working to develop a public art program and details are being developed.

2023 marks VTC's 40th Anniversary of working with the County of Tuolumne and the City of Sonora to promote our area as a vacation destination and you can bet we'll be celebrating that throughout the year! It is a privilege for the VTC Team to promote Tuolumne County near and far and we look forward to continuing to serve our community in this way.





## TRAVEL TRADE AND MEDIA TESTIMONIAL/QUOTES

*"I thought Tuolumne offered a really personal, neighborhood-feel experience. Everyone we met was so friendly and helpful and was genuinely really passionate about Tuolumne County and all it has to offer. I think this is a really welcoming experience for tourists compared to alternative destinations within the USA. I also think Tuolumne is a far more immersive experience than that of other USA destinations such as LA, Vegas, San Francisco, which are much more "tourist" focused and don't provide that real authentic all-American experience."*

*- Letitia Pybus, Travel Advisor for Virgin Atlantic Holidays*

*"I've been in the industry 26 years and visited lots of Countries on FAM trips, but this is in my top three."*

*- Dawn Nuttall, Travel Agent with Travel PA*

*"Great trip, amazing county, lovely people; really was a special trip and I will never hesitate to recommend Tuolumne to my customers."*

*- Chloe Ashton, Travel Consultant and Assistant Manager for Flight Centre*

*"Tuolumne CA is the perfect place for a family vacation. And it's now my number one recommendation for people who want to take a trip to California and get the most bang for their buck in about seven days or so."*

*- Victoria Watts, Brides and Balloons*





## 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 2019, 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. In addition, VTC has an independent financial audit review annually conducted by a Certified Public Accountant.

In the 2021/2022 fiscal year VTC partnered with Madden Media to utilize its leading-edge travel and tourism data analysis tool, Madden Voyage. Though the use of Madden Voyage, VTC can assess visitor data to make informed marketing decisions, discover new markets, travel trends and measure traveler impact.

## VISIT TUOLUMNE COUNTY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### DIRECTORS - 2021/2022

- Chair - Katie Dunn, Yosemite Gateway Getaways, Sonora Chamber of Commerce
- Vice Chair - Judy Grossman, Brush & Cork
- Secretary/Treasurer - Stephanie McCaffrey, District 3, McCaffrey House Bed & Breakfast
- District 2 - Launa Valente, Lazy Z Resort
- District 3 - Casie Schornick, Century 21 Wildwood Properties
- District 4 - Teri Marshall, Evergreen Lodge and Rush Creek Lodge and Spa
- District 4 - Kathy Hakl, Best Western PLUS Sonora Oaks Hotel and Conference Center
- District 5 - Rhiannon Montgomery, Central Valley District, California State Parks
- Zac Broxham, Local Collective
- Jeff Hauff, Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort/Dodge Ridge Campgrounds
- Ryan Reis, Don Pedro Recreation Agency
- Emily Gatesman, Sierra Repertory Theatre

# VISIT TUOLUMNE COUNTY TEAM

## FULL TIME

- Lisa Mayo, CDME, President & CEO
- Katie Kirkland, Director of Sales & Marketing
- Sarah Spoljaric, Creative Content & Social Media Manager
- Jennifer Lopez, Marketing Coordinator

## PART TIME

- Monique Holcomb, Membership and Community Liaison
- Anna Davies, Special Projects Coordinator
- Elaine Squaglia, Visitor Services
- Diane Rock, Visitor Services
- Richard Haratani, Visitor Services
- Dave Gookin, Visitor Services
- Kate Greene, Visitor Services

## CONTRACT

- Ginger Malatesta, Bookkeeper



# VENDORS

## 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. We are now in a yearly contract with Augustine and through this partnership campaigns such as Wander Freely and programs such as Trail Heads have come to fruition. Augustine represents other DMOs such as the City of Napa and North Lake Tahoe.

## MAHK

A counterpart of Augustine Agency, Mahk (formerly Richter 7) is responsible for securing paid search, paid social, and other digital advertising.

## BLACK DIAMOND

Having international representation is something that VTC has only recently been able to add to the scope of work. It is so important to reach international travelers. They stay in destinations longer and therefore spend more money than domestic travelers. Black Diamond has represented VTC in the UK for three years by securing media coverage, educating travel agents and training tour operators.

## DROZIAN WEBWORKS

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

## JACK RABBITY/SIMPLEVIEW

Provides a platform housed on the VTC website for visitors to search for and book directly with VTC member lodging accommodations.

## MADDEN VOYAGE

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

## 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 will be 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 the Mexican market. They are also the agency of record for Visit California and come to VTC highly vetted. Travel projections suggest that the Mexican market is expected to grow in California. There will be a high demand for outdoor, family and beyond the gateway decisions in the Mexican market. With that VTC decided to partner with GMS to introduce their brand and destination to the Mexican market to increase visitation from Mexico.



# GLOSSARY

**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.

**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 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 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.

**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.

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

**Visit California** – The mission of Visit California is to develop and maintain marketing programs – in partnership with the state's travel industry, such as VTC and other DMMOs – that inspire travel to, and within, California.





**TOURISM IS MORE IMPORTANT  
THAN EVER TO TUOLUMNE COUNTY.**

*Thank You for your continued support!*



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