



Michael Sharps

visit
TUOLUMNE
county
★ CALIFORNIA ★

2024 / 2025

Annual Report

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Executive Summary

As the President & CEO of Visit Tuolumne County, it is my honor to present our 2024-2025 Annual Report—a celebration of our achievements amid a landscape of constant change, challenges and successes. The tourism industry in Tuolumne County continues to demonstrate remarkable adaptability, unity, and ingenuity and we celebrate all of that and more in this report.

This year, 2025, Tuolumne County celebrates its 175th Anniversary. The story of Tuolumne County is one of discovery: a place where the grandeur of Yosemite meets the rugged beauty of the Sierra Nevada, where gold rush history meets the newness of entrepreneurship, and where visitors and residents alike are welcomed with authentic hospitality. Over the last year, the Visit Tuolumne County team, alongside our partners in business, government, and the broader community, have worked to showcase the best our region has to offer.

Our mission is to inspire travelers to experience, cherish, and return to Tuolumne County. This past year, we embarked on new initiatives to enhance our destination's appeal, foster sustainable growth, and ensure that the unique character of our communities remains at the forefront of everything we do. Our commitment to storytelling—through innovative marketing, social media, and strategic partnerships—has set Tuolumne County apart as a premier rural destination in California and beyond.

We have navigated an evolving tourism landscape shaped by global events, changing traveler preferences (e.g. hesitation of international travelers to the US), and the ongoing requirement for maintaining resiliency. Our response was proactive as we leveraged our partnerships with Visit California as well as our international agencies. We hosted international media and travel trade to illustrate how wonderful it is to travel to California and to Tuolumne County. We continued our domestic reach into tried-and-true markets, focusing on the San Francisco East Bay Area, the Central Valley and Sacramento.

We launched targeted marketing efforts, applying the power of social media, influencer partnerships, and content-rich storytelling to share Tuolumne County's story with a diverse audience. From the serene lakes and magical forests, to the charming streets of Sonora and the lively events across the region, our campaigns captured the spirit of fun, adventure, and peacefulness that defines our county.

Critical to our success has been our focus on collaboration. By growing strong relationships with local businesses, hospitality providers, cultural organizations, and neighboring tourism bureaus, we have been able to pool resources, share insights, and amplify our collective impact. This collaborative spirit is visible in our cooperative promotional efforts and outreach.

This year, we are proud to report significant progress across our key goals:

- **Visitor Spending Growth:** Tuolumne County welcomed guests with a record travel spend of over \$300 million for 2024. This spending contributes robustly to our local economy and supports jobs across various sectors.
- **Community Engagement and Advocacy:** Our team brought back the Tuolumne County Tourism Summit featuring speakers from a number of platforms across the tourism industry, attended advocacy workshops and meetings working to improve roads, access to Yosemite and address overtourism.

Looking Ahead: Vision for 2025 and Beyond

Our vision remains clear: to position Tuolumne County as a year-round destination where visitors create lasting memories and local businesses flourish. Our strategic plan for the coming year is anchored in three pillars:

- **Stewardship:** We will double down on efforts to protect and celebrate the natural assets that make our county unique, from the oak tree dotted foothills to the quaint historic towns to the magnificent granite cliffs. Stewardship is at the heart of sustainability, and we believe our most valuable resource is the land itself.
- **Innovation:** The tourism landscape is constantly evolving, and we must remain nimble. By investing in and embracing new technology, creative partnerships, and forward-thinking marketing, we will keep Tuolumne County on the cutting edge of destination development.
- **Collaboration:** We will continue to recognize and engage in opportunities for partnerships where we can leverage funding with Brand USA, Visit California and our regional partners to elevate the awareness of Tuolumne County and its many wonders. Our goal is to also create and provide similar opportunities to our partners to further advance their business goals.

Appreciation for Our Partners

None of this progress would be possible without the dedication and passion of our partners. To the business owners who greet guests with a smile, the rangers who safeguard our parks, the artists who enliven our streets, the volunteers who make so many events happen and the countless individuals who contribute to the fabric of daily life in Tuolumne County—thank you. Your commitment inspires our work and makes our county shine.

I would also like to recognize the efforts of our team at Visit Tuolumne County, whose professionalism, creativity, and resilience have been the driving force behind our success. Together, we have weathered uncertainty and seized opportunities while keeping a keen eye on the future. To our Board of Directors—thank you for your support and guidance throughout the year. To the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors and the Sonora City Council, we thank you for your continued support for not just VTC, but for Tuolumne County's entire tourism and hospitality industry.

As we reflect on the achievements of the past year and look ahead to exciting new ventures, I invite you—whether you are a resident, partner, or visitor—to experience Tuolumne County with fresh eyes. There is always something new to discover, from the trails less traveled in our national forests to the stories being written every day in our communities.

Let's continue to build on our shared strengths, nurture our connections, and strive for excellence in all that we do. Together, we can ensure that Tuolumne County remains a place where adventure begins, memories are made, and the spirit of discovery knows no bounds.



With gratitude,

Lisa Mayo

Lisa Mayo
President & CEO
Visit Tuolumne County

Reflection, Recognition, and What's Next

A Message from VTC Board Chair, Ryan Reis

Another year in the books and what a great one it has been! The VTC Team has done an outstanding job and it shows. This year we renewed the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program which is a designation from Destinations International and the highest achievement of accreditation that a destination marketing organization can achieve. Amariah Richards, Business Development Manager, was appointed by the Board of Supervisors to serve on the Central Sierra Economic Development District Board of Directors, Jen Lopez, Marketing Manager, will be receiving her Global Sustainable Tourism Council Certification this coming December, and our VTC President, Lisa Mayo, will be receiving the F. Norman Clark Tourism Champion Award from CalTravel. These are all great accomplishments, and we are so lucky and proud to see the dedication and passion from our VTC Team.

The VTC Board had to make the difficult decision this past year to put the Tourism Marketing District initiative on hold. Our devoted staff hosted workshops and made efforts on their outreach, but in the end, were not able to receive a majority vote to move forward at this time.

As we move forward into the next year, VTC will be working with a new marketing agency on a new creative campaign; reach returning visitors, positioning Tuolumne County as an affordable, fun, and authentic destination; shift from some of our international markets to domestic; expand our stewardship efforts; and provide more for our partners and provide more collaboration opportunities. It is going to be an exciting year, and I can't wait to see how it all turns out.



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

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

ABOUT VISIT TUOLUMNE COUNTY





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

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

VTC is an economic development organization that is currently funded through a portion of the transient occupancy tax (TOT) that visitors pay when they stay at lodging properties throughout Tuolumne County. We reinvest those dollars to further promote Tuolumne County to visitors which results in greater visitation, travel spending, sales tax and TOT. VTC received 17% of the TOT in 2024-2025 and approximately \$110,000 of the TOT collected in the City of Sonora.

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

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

The Visit Tuolumne County Team

Full Time:

Lisa Mayo, President & CEO,
Certified Destination Marketing Executive

Jen Lopez, Marketing Manager

Amariah Richards, Business Development Manager

Part Time:

Elaine Squaglia, Visitor Services Expert

Mark Truppner, Visitor Services Expert

Deni Avery, Operations Coordinator

Contracted Team:

Ginger Malatesta, Accounting

Tessi Daley, Social Media



Board of Directors

2024/2025

Executive Directors

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

Vice Chair—Hanna Craig, Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort/Dodge Ridge Campgrounds

Secretary/Treasurer—Stephanie McCaffrey, Represents District 3 Lodging: McCaffrey House Bed & Breakfast

Directors

Ginger McKinsey, Represents District 1 Lodging: Heritage Inn Yosemite/Sonora

Launa Valente, Represents District 2 Lodging: Lazy Z Resort

Casie Schornick, Represents District 3 Lodging: Century 21 Wildwood Properties

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

Teri Marshall, Represents District 4 Lodging: Rush Creek Lodge/Evergreen Lodge

Todd DeRemer, Represents District 5 Lodging: Chicken Ranch Casino Resort

Zac Broxham, Represents Restaurant/Retail: Local Collective

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

Jan Verhage, At Large: Sierra Repertory Theatre

Sam Segerstrom, At Large: Coldwell Banker Segerstrom



Mission

To enhance economic growth by increasing tourism to Tuolumne County.

Vision

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

Why Tourism Matters

An investment in Visit Tuolumne County fuels economic activity in our community. Destination promotion is a crucial step in growing our travel and hospitality sector, and is imperative for the economic development of the whole county. Tourism benefits local economies, businesses and residents. The economic development of Tuolumne County depends on robust tourism marketing tactics, which ultimately generates more visitor spending and tax revenue.

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

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

FY25-26 Strategic Marketing Objectives

The overall goal is to increase visitation, travel spending and overnight stays. Objectives to meet these goals include:

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

Brand Positioning/Pillars

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

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

In the upcoming year, Visit Tuolumne County will work with our new marketing agency, Madden Media, to develop a refreshed umbrella campaign that will redefine how we tell the story of Tuolumne County. This new campaign will reflect our region's distinct character, highlighting the diverse landscapes, rich history, and unique experiences that set us apart. It will serve as the foundation for all paid, earned, and organic media efforts, creating consistency in messaging while allowing for flexibility across different audiences and platforms. The updated campaign will guide the creative direction for digital ads, video production, social media content, and printed collateral, helping to elevate Tuolumne County's visibility and appeal in an increasingly competitive travel market.

Research & Insights

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

Trends

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

- **Authenticity**—The genuine, uncontrived experience that travelers seek when exploring a destination. It involves engaging with local culture, traditions, and people in a way that is true to the destination's identity, rather than experiencing a commercialized version of it. Authentic travel experiences usually involve interacting with locals, participating in cultural activities, and exploring off-the-beaten-path locations, allowing travelers to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the destination's uniqueness. This is an ongoing trend that VTC has been able to leverage in the past, the present and will for the future.
- **Wellness**—This applies to both a physical and mental perspective. People want to take better care of themselves and prioritize wellness when traveling.
- **Adventure Travel**—People are looking to escape in big ways that tie to the prioritization of wellness and are seeking more adventurous and unique travel destinations.

- **Affordability**—This is particularly important to the Millennials and Gen Z travelers who often prioritize budget-friendly travel options due to limited disposable income or financial obligations. These generations seek affordable accommodations, transportation, and activities that offer value for the money without compromising on the quality of their travel experience.
- **Set-Jetting**—Also known as film tourism or movie tourism, refers to the phenomenon where people travel to locations that have been featured in movies, TV shows or other forms of media. It involves visiting places that have gained popularity or significance because of their appearance in popular entertainment. Set-jetting enthusiasts seek to experience firsthand the settings and landmarks that they have seen on screen, often re-creating scenes or simply immersing themselves in the atmosphere of their favorite films or shows. This type of tourism can boost local economies, as businesses capitalize on the increased interest in their area due to its association with popular media.

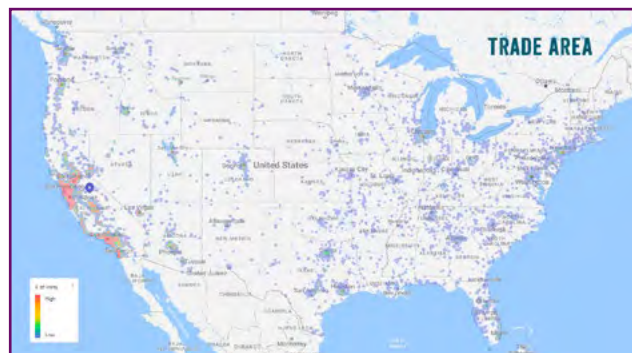
Target Audiences

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

Marketing Tactics

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

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



Heat map of visitor origins throughout the U.S.

TOURISM STATISTICS



Economic Impact

2024 TRAVEL SPENDING AND EMPLOYMENT*

CALENDAR YEAR

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Total Direct Travel Spending | \$307.8 MILLION |
| Tourism Industry Employment | 2,700 |

GOVERNMENT REVENUE GENERATED BY TOURISM*

CALENDAR YEAR

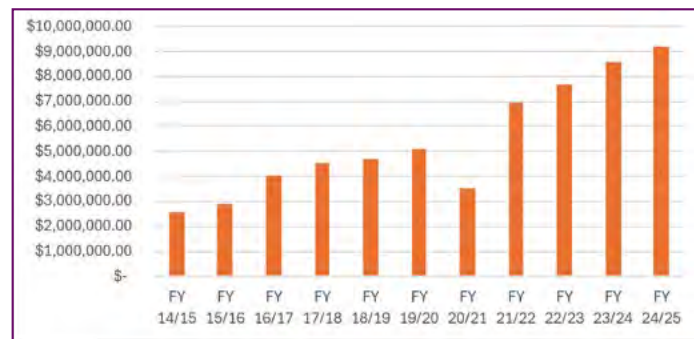
| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Local Sales Tax Receipts** | \$11.9 MILLION |
| State Sales Tax Receipt | \$12.2 MILLION |
| Transient Occupancy Tax | \$9.65 MILLION |
| State and local tax revenue equivalency per Tuolumne County household | \$1,058 |

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

**Includes Transient Occupancy Tax for County of Tuolumne and City of Sonora. This data is provided by Dean Runyan Associates and is preliminary as of May 2025.

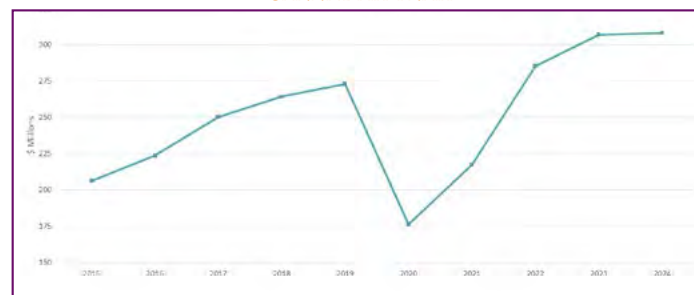
HISTORY OF TUOLUMNE COUNTY TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX REVENUE

FISCAL YEAR



HISTORY OF TRAVEL SPENDING IN TUOLUMNE COUNTY

CALENDAR YEAR



Visitation

| DAY AND OVERNIGHT VISITORS TO TUOLUMNE COUNTY* |
|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1.6 MILLION unique visitors |
| 6 MILLION visits |

*Domestic visitors whose home is more than 50 miles away. Data by Placer.ai.

Overnight Visitor Origins

| REGIONS | STATE |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley | California (88%) |
| San Jose, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara | Nevada |
| Sacramento, Roseville, Folsom | Oregon |
| Stockton | Texas |
| Modesto | Washington |
| Santa Cruz, Watsonville | Arizona |
| Merced | Florida |

*Domestic visitors only. Data by Placer.ai.

Visit Tuolumne County operates one year-round Visitors Center in Sonora, which is staffed seven days a week with friendly, knowledgeable staff who can help plan visits to the area.

Top Origins of Visitors to the Visitor Center

| STATES (besides California) | COUNTRIES (besides U.S.) |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Arizona | France |
| Colorado | Germany |
| Nevada | Switzerland |

MARKETING PROGRAMS



Official Tuolumne County Travel Guide



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

In 2024, 75,000 copies of the guide 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 are also distributed at the Tuolumne County Visitors Center, mailed to advertising leads, individual requests, at media events, travel shows, and at local businesses. Local realtors also use the guides to inspire potential home buyers.

The development, printing, and distribution of the Travel Guide represent VTC's largest single annual marketing expense, but the investment yields immense value by providing a high-quality, comprehensive resource that effectively promotes Tuolumne County as a travel destination.

Although the Travel Guide includes a listing of all VTC partners, partners have the opportunity to run full-color advertisements in the guide for an additional cost.

Website

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

| OVERALL SITE PERFORMANCE (JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025) | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sessions: | 685,440 (vs. 481,445 in 23/24) |
| Pageviews: | 972,877 (vs. 767,619 in 23/24) |

Top Five Domestic and International User Origins*

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

| DOMESTIC | INTERNATIONAL |
|--------------|---------------|
| Washington** | Mexico** |
| Oregon** | Germany*** |
| Nevada** | Australia** |
| Virginia | Canada** |
| Texas** | UK** |

*Not including California and the U.S.
**Locations where VTC ran advertising.
***New market in 24/25

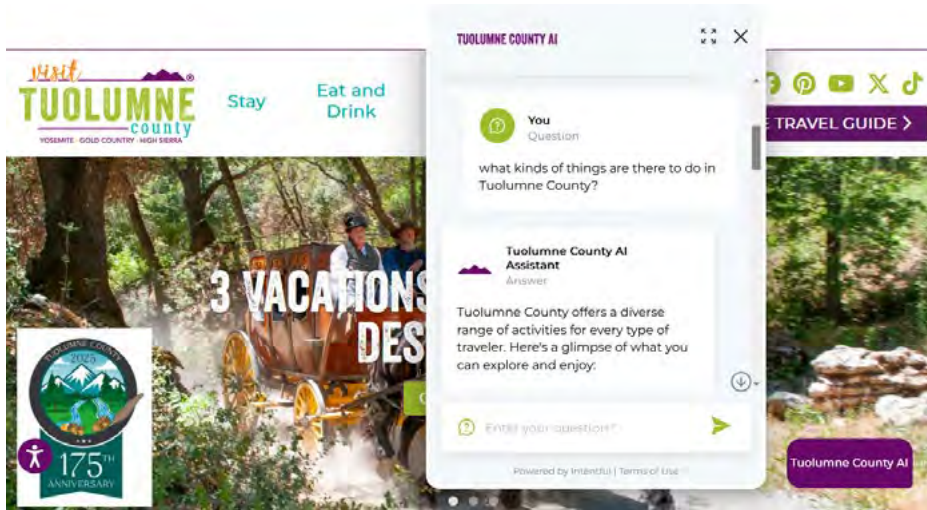


NEW! Intentful Chatbot

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

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

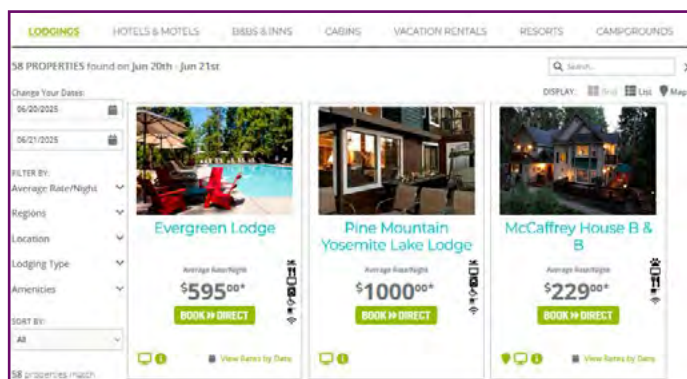
Overall, it increases engagement, enhances accessibility, and strengthens the county's digital presence.



Simpleview Booking Referral Platform

"Book Direct" is a booking referral engine featured on VTC's website. This platform leads visitors directly to a property's website or preferred booking platform. During the year, visitors conducted 23,820 searches on the platform, resulting in 189 bookings and an estimated total booking revenue of \$153,901.

VTC invests \$6,000 annually into this program and provided at no extra cost to our lodging partners. The impressive return on investment of approximately 2,400% emphasizes the platform's effectiveness and value.



Consumer Emails

Visit Tuolumne County sends consumer emails to over 15,500 subscribers monthly. They feature engaging content, including highlights of seasonal attractions, upcoming events, and exclusive travel tips. The average open rate for the emails in 2024-2025 was 38% and the click-through rate was 1.1%.

“What’s Up Wednesday” Emails

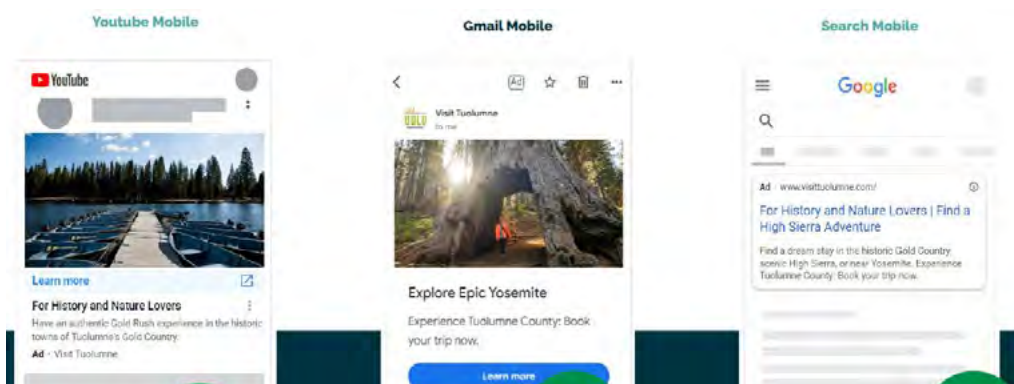
“What’s Up Wednesday” emails are weekly updates from Visit Tuolumne County, designed for front-line lodging staff. These emails provide valuable information that can be shared with guests, including the weather forecast, upcoming events, and important travel-related details. They also offer a platform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

Google Max Campaign

In May 2024 we heard from lodging partners that bookings were down compared to previous years. VTC took action, and partnered with Madden Media to implement a Google Max campaign specifically geared toward increasing bookings for the summer months. Google Max uses AI technology to reach the customers most likely to buy wherever they’re browsing—on Search, YouTube, Gmail, Maps, Display, and Discovery. The campaign ended in October 2024 and the results were impressive.

| RESULTS (\$25,000 investment) | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Sessions: | 25,165 |
| Conversions: | 7,401 |
| Bookings (approximate): | 592 |
| Click-through rate: | 5.08% (5x the industry benchmark) |
| Conservative Estimated ROI*: | \$330,000 |

* Calculation: Bookings x Average length of stay x Average daily rate



Print Ads

Placing print ads in major travel and lifestyle publications is a key component of Visit Tuolumne County's marketing strategy. These ads effectively reach a wide and targeted audience, including potential tourists who are passionate about travel, outdoor adventures, culture, and unique experiences. By placing ads in well-known publications, Visit Tuolumne County leverages the credibility and broad readership of these outlets to enhance its visibility and appeal. In the 24/25 year, our ads were featured in a variety of regional, statewide, and national publications.

Print Ad Placements 24/25:

- Official California Visitors Guide
- Visit California Road Trips Guide
- Sunset Magazine
- Conde Nast Traveler
- Yosemite Journal (National Parks Trips)
- Food & Travel Magazine
- Adventure Sports Journal
- Northstar Meetings Group



Billboards

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



Special Promotions

“Fuel Your Journey”

In January 2024, VTC launched the “Fuel Your Journey” promotion aimed at boosting overnight stays during what is typically a slower time of year by offering free gas cards to visitors who stayed at least two nights at a VTC partner hotel, RV park, or campground in Tuolumne County in January and February. A total of \$750 in gas cards were distributed to qualifying participants. Eleven stays met the promotion’s criteria, though many more were submitted but did not qualify.

“Snap and Savor”

Coinciding with California Restaurant Month in January, a statewide initiative designed to stimulate business during the traditionally slower winter season, VTC introduced the “Snap and Savor” promotion. The campaign aimed to encourage both locals and visitors to dine out and support local restaurants through an engaging social media photo contest. Participants were invited to share photos of their dining experiences at Tuolumne County eateries, using a dedicated hashtag for a chance to win prizes. While initial participation was modest, the promotion served as a valuable pilot that laid the groundwork for future campaigns.



Tuolumne County Craft Beverage and Craft Burger Trails

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

Sonora Selfie Trail

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

Tuolumne County Art Week

Tuolumne County Art Week is a celebration of local creativity and culture, showcasing the diverse artistic talents that thrive in our County. This week-long event (in its 5th year) invites both residents and visitors to explore a wide array of artistic expressions, from visual arts and crafts to performing arts and interactive workshops. Local galleries, studios, and public spaces open their doors for exhibitions, demonstrations, and collaborative projects, offering a unique opportunity to engage with the artistic community. Over 20 artists and venues participated, and Visit Tuolumne County proudly sponsored the Mother Lode Art Association Annual Fine Art Show and Exhibit and the InFocus Photography Competition, Exhibition, and Sale—both of which took place over the duration of Art Week.

Digital Media Activations



National Parks Trips (Yosemite Journal)

VTC has partnered with National Park Trips for over eight years. Besides a significant digital activation, the partnership includes a full-page ad and custom content in the print and digital version of the Yosemite Journal.

MYYOSEMITEPARK.COM: AD AND CUSTOM CONTENT

Banner Ad Impressions: **223,678**

Click-through rate: **.06%**

Tuolumne's Top 5 on the Edge of Yosemite Pageviews: **1,535**

San Francisco to Yosemite Road Trip Pageviews: **6,183**

National Park Trips Newsletter:

Featured on March 2nd: **62 clicks**

Featured on May 11th: **32 clicks**

National Park Trips Facebook:

Post on March 3rd: **18,387** impressions / **840** engagements / **760** clicks

Post on June 15th: **16,519** impressions / **2,271** engagements / **134** clicks

Leads received: **1,499**

(Every lead is added to VTC's consumer email database, and is sent a Tuolumne County Travel Guide if the address is provided)

NEW! YARTS Advertising

In late winter/early spring 2025, VTC took advantage of new advertising opportunities on YARTS buses. These ads provided exposure along the High 140 route through Merced and Mariposa Counties to Yosemite Valley during the off-peak season. Ads were placed on two buses and featured images of Tuolumne County and the 175th Anniversary of Tuolumne County's logo.



Local Advertising

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

Consumer Travel Show Presence

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

We attended:

Sacramento Sportsmen's Expo

(partnered with Black Oak Casino Resort),
January 2025
30,000+ attendees



Bay Area Travel & Adventure Show

(partnered with First Light Resorts)
March 2025
13,000 attendees (of course we can't talk to them all)



National Travel And Tourism Week and California Tourism Month

May 4-10, 2025 was National Travel and Tourism Week and May is California Tourism Month.



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

-U.S. Travel Association

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

-Visit California

Augustine Agency Report

Out-Of-Market (OOM)

In the 24/25 fiscal year, Augustine Agency executed VTC's out-of-market digital campaign with a robust, multi-channel media strategy targeting potential travelers beyond California. The campaign leveraged dynamic creative across SEM, display banners, pre-roll video, social media, Connected TV (CTV/OTT) and mobile-first placements. Behavioral targeting allowed the campaign to reach users showing both general interest and specific California travel intent. Assets were tailored to audience behaviors and delivered through mobile display, video, device ID targeting and retargeting. High-impact dynamic creatives and social ads on Facebook and Instagram helped strengthen engagement, while cTV provided premium video visibility.

The campaign delivered measurable impact, averaging **621 monthly in-market visits** to Tuolumne County from out-of-state audiences, with **130 of those visits directed to lodging properties**. These results highlight the effectiveness of combining interest and intent-based targeting with diversified media placements. Strong performance across formats, particularly SEM, social, and high-impact retargeting, supported a high return on ad spend (ROAS) and confirmed the campaign's ability to drive both awareness and physical visitation. Overall, the campaign successfully expanded Tuolumne County's reach, reinforcing its appeal to targeted audiences beyond California.

Augustine Agency Report

Out-Of-Market:

Out-of-Market - Overview

The OOM tactics served over 38M impressions and delivered more than 408K clicks to the site, maintaining an overall 1.07% CTR.

The Dynamic Display ads delivered the most impressions, followed by social.

Social was the top producer of clicks while Search achieved the highest CTR.

All tactics continue to exceed industry benchmarks.

| Impressions | Clicks | CTR |
|-------------|---------|-------|
| 38,079,374 | 408,806 | 1.07% |

| Tactic | Impressions | Clicks | CTR/ EUR/ VCR | Benchmark |
|-----------------|-------------|---------|---------------|-----------|
| Social | 5,029,118 | 101,279 | 2.01% | 1% |
| SEM | 499,569 | 23,249 | 4.65% | 3% |
| Display | 4,150,238 | 12,815 | 0.31% | 0.09% |
| Dynamic Display | 5,734,627 | 21,883 | 0.38% | 0.02% |
| Video | 1,046,753 | 1,420 | 68.27% | 60% |
| CTV | 169,896 | 33 | 99.05% | 95% |

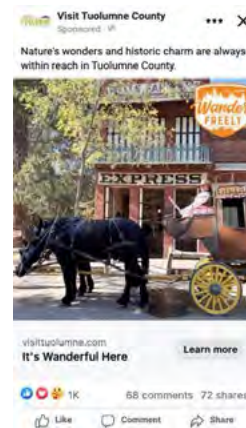
Top Creatives



Single Image - Boomer Outdoor
Impressions: 1,388,247
Clicks: 28,029
CTR: 2.02%



Boomer (Towns & Outdoors) Carousel
Impressions: 1,080,287
Clicks: 16,979
CTR: 1.57%



Single Image 2 - Wonderful 2025
Impressions: 514,475
Clicks: 16,460
CTR: 3.20%

Augustine Agency Report

In-State (California Market)

In the 24/25 fiscal year, Augustine Agency executed VTC's California-focused digital campaign using a comprehensive and highly targeted media mix to engage in-state travelers. The campaign featured SEM, dynamic creative display banners, pre-roll video, high-impact retargeting, and mobile-first executions, all powered by xLVR behavioral and interest-based targeting. Mobile device ID targeting was used to deliver display and video assets directly to likely travelers, while premium Connected TV (cTV) and OTT placements extended reach with high-quality video inventory. Creative was dynamically tailored across desktop, mobile, and social platforms including Facebook and Instagram, ensuring consistent brand messaging and relevance at every stage of the user journey.



The campaign drove substantial results within California, generating an average of **5,037 monthly in-market visits** to Tuolumne County, including **4,908 monthly lodging property visits**. These numbers reflect not only high awareness but a strong conversion rate from interest to action. Tactics like SEM and mobile retargeting proved highly effective in capturing travel intent and driving site engagement, while cTV and social placements elevated brand perception and consideration. With such a high proportion of lodging-related traffic, the campaign demonstrated strong alignment between media targeting, message delivery, and traveler behavior, solidifying Tuolumne County's standing as an attractive and accessible in-state getaway.



Augustine Agency Report

In-State:

In-State (California) - Overview

The California market served over 23.4M impressions and delivered more than 329K clicks to the site, maintaining a 1.40% overall CTR.

Social served the most impressions and delivered the most clicks to the site.

Search achieved the highest CTR of all tactics.

All tactics exceeded industry benchmarks.

| Impressions | Clicks | CTR |
|-------------|---------|-------|
| 23,418,895 | 329,018 | 1.40% |

| Tactic | Impressions | Clicks | CTR/ EUR/ VCR | Benchmark |
|-----------------|-------------|---------|---------------|-----------|
| Social | 9,014,314 | 203,505 | 2.26% | 1% |
| SEM | 647,154 | 29,496 | 4.56% | 3% |
| Display | 4,879,704 | 12,717 | 0.26% | 0.09% |
| Dynamic Display | 7,066,583 | 27,786 | 0.39% | 0.02% |
| Video | 1,124,949 | 1,178 | 69.36% | 60% |
| CTV | 686,191 | 70 | 99.20% | 95% |

Top Creatives



Single Image - Boomer Outdoor
 Impressions: 2,538,797
 Clicks: 57,178
 CTR: 2.25%



Single Image - Family Walking
 Impressions: 1,203,885
 Clicks: 37,174
 CTR: 3.09%



Carousel 1 - Wanderful 2025
 Impressions: 1,372,671
 Clicks: 25,511
 CTR: 1.86%

Radio

- Audacy Radio Campaign
 - Stations: KITS, KLLC, KRBB (Bay Area), plus Sacramento, Stockton, and Modesto DMA
 - Fall Flight: August 12 - September 13
 - Spring Flight: February 5 - March 11
 - Three giveaway flights: August, October, March (Sacramento, Stockton, and Modesto DMA)
- Bonneville Campaign
 - Region: Sacramento only
 - Fall Flight: August 26 - September 8
 - Spring Flight: March 24 - April 6



Email Marketing

SF Travel Dedicated Email

| AUGUST 22 | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Delivered: | 144,112 |
| Opens: | 36,169 |
| Clicks: | 827 |
| Click-through rate (CTR): | 2.29% |



Conde Nast Dedicated Emails*

| SEPTEMBER | |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Delivered: | 50,000 |
| Views: | 10,900 |
| View Rate: | 22% |
| Click-through rate (CTR): | 2.62% |

| MARCH | |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Delivered: | 50,000 |
| Views: | 7,300 |
| View Rate: | 14.6% |
| Click-through rate (CTR): | 2.15% |

* Benchmarks: CTR=2%; View Rate=15%

Print Advertising

Bay Area Audience Reach via National/Regional Publications

Placements Include:

- Food & Travel (article and ad)
- Conde Nast Traveler
- Adventure Sports Journal
- Sunset Magazine

Note: These placements target a broad domestic audience with a significant overlap in the Bay Area market.



Meetings and Groups Advertising

- California Meetings + Events: Digital and article package; February - May
- Northstar Meetings Group: Full page ad
- American Society of Association Executives (ASAE): Digital package



Social Media

Visit Tuolumne County maintained a strong and consistent social media presence throughout the year, using platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and YouTube to inspire travel and engage visitors. Our content strategy focused on showcasing the region's seasonal beauty, local businesses, events, and hidden gems through vibrant imagery, reels, and stories. Additionally, we collaborated with several influencers and content creators to expand reach and generate authentic user-driven content. Overall, our social media efforts supported destination awareness, overnight stays, and economic impact by keeping Tuolumne County top of mind for travelers.

Social Media Followers and Analytics

All channels saw an increase in followers, and in all VTC has 63,526 followers, which accounts for a nearly 10% growth over the previous year.

| CHANNEL | FOLLOWERS (AS OF 6/30/25) | RESULTS |
|-----------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Facebook | 40,600 | Reach: 5.6 MILLION |
| Instagram | 22,800 | Reach: 638,743 |
| TikTok | 5,758 | Video Views: 1.8 MILLION (+823%) Engagement Rate: 11% |
| X | 1,646 | Not available |
| Pinterest | 698 | Impressions: 42,000 |
| LinkedIn | 260 | Impressions: 326,218 |

Top Performing Posts



FACEBOOK

Collaboration with Visit California

| | |
|--------------|--------|
| Reach | 71,300 |
| Impressions | 57,785 |
| Interactions | 1,162 |
| Reactions | 945 |

| <h3>INSTAGRAM</h3> <p>Collaboration with CheyChey From the Bay and Chicken Ranch Casino Resort</p> | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Views | 168,325 |
| Impressions | 69,034 |
| Interactions | 10,879 |
| Likes | 4,100 |



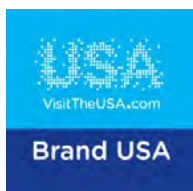
The Tuolumne County Film Commission is also represented on social media—Facebook and Instagram. There are currently a total of 2,200 followers across both channels. Highlighting our gorgeous film locations on social media platforms presents the possibility of hosting more film productions in the future.

MARKETING PARTNERSHIPS



Marketing Partnerships For Regional, State, National & International Representation

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



Brand USA:

The Destination Marketing Organization for the United States Visit Tuolumne County's longstanding partnership with Brand USA helps us reach travelers from around the world and shine a spotlight on what makes our destination special. VTC opted into two partnership campaigns with Brand USA for the 24/25 fiscal year, and both campaigns provide VTC the opportunity to affordably market to international markets.

Global Inspiration Program Results:



Visit the USA Travel Guide

Two article inclusions and two images in print copies: 150,000 copies distributed in 10 countries.



Leveraged Digital Media Campaign:
Ran in Australia to coincide with the airing of Rush Creek Lodge's feature on a popular reality travel TV show, "Travel Guides."

Impressions: **626,328**

Clicks **744**



GIP DIGITAL AD UNITS

Impressions **6.7 MILLION**

Clicks **7,485**

VTC-specific Clicks **1,974**

Carousel Ad Impressions **189.6 MILLION**

Carousel Ad Clicks **29,270**

Visit California:

The destination marketing organization for the State of California.



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

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

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

VTC participates in numerous VCA cooperative marketing campaigns:

Full-page ad in the Official California Visitors Guide (which includes VTC partners) California Visitors Guide: 500,000 printed copies

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

*We received 1,530 unique leads in 2024 due to placed ads, all of which received a Tuolumne County Travel Guide and were added to VTC's consumer email database if an email address was provided.

Leveraged Co-op Digital Ad program

Impressions: **421,050**

Clicks: **571**

Two dedicated E-newsletters

October 2024 Investment: \$8,500.

Open Rate **49%** (Industry Avg. is 16%)

Click to Open Rate **3.35%**

March 2025 Investment: \$8,500.

Open Rate **50%**

Click to Open Rate **3%**



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



Gold Country Visitors Association:

Visit California breaks down the state into 12 marketing regions. Eight regions fall under the rural umbrella, and VTC falls under both the Gold Country and the High Sierra Regions. VTC President and CEO is currently the Vice-Chair of Visit California's Rural Committee.

Visit Tuolumne County continues to be a key participant in Visit California's regional marketing organization, the Gold Country Visitors Association (GCVA). Visit California provides matching funds (up to \$60K). The GCVA has a strong marketing focus on pillars that further reinforce VTC's own marketing efforts including multigenerational family travel, culinary and wine, history, and outdoor

adventure. The GCVA remains working with a Public Relations strategist to help organize the region when it comes to submitting news, organizing a FAM tour or reworking the GCVA press kit. This year there were two significant regional influencer visits including the Black Travel Alliance and Honey Trek.



The GCVA also has a social media manager who carefully and diligently promotes the entire Gold Country region. This last year we were able to shift some funding to social media advertising which helped bring in new followers and increased engagement and awareness of California's Gold Country. GCVA also attends US Travel's IPW which helps strengthen VTC's presence and messaging at this important industry event. VTC President & CEO continues as President for the GCVA.

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

Impressions: **64,515**

Clicks: **78**



High Sierra Visitors Council:

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

Industry Associations

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

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

In the 24/25 year, VTC continued to subscribe to and partner with organizations that we have lasting, strong relationships.

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



INTERNATIONAL MARKETING



International Travel

International travel is of paramount importance to Tuolumne County. With Yosemite National Park serving as an iconic destination for many international travelers, we find ourselves in competition with other gateway counties. It is vital for VTC to secure a significant market share in this arena. International visitors tend to stay longer and spend more, and once we attract them to Yosemite, we can encourage them to explore other areas of the County. This year, Visit Tuolumne County had international representation in six markets and had the privilege to engage directly with key members of the international travel space through various Visit California activities.

International Representation:

Black Diamond: United Kingdom/Ireland

We have contracted with Black Diamond for six years. Each year they deliver success through both the public relations outreach (see the incredible example below) and through travel trade promotions.

The PR highlight for 2025 is Nicola Brady's coverage in the Irish Independent. Following her familiarization trip to the area, she covered Tuolumne County in an online and in print feature, as well as including Tuolumne in her '25 blow-the-budget getaways for 2025' feature. All coverage clippings are available on our website. Here are the results to date of just this one article:

| TOTAL REACH | TOTAL EAV |
|-------------|-----------|
| 3,505,440 | \$91,155 |

On the travel trade side, Black Diamond proudly represented Tuolumne County at the Travel Counsellors conference, gaining exposure to over 2,000 Travel Counsellors. Their team also participated in the British Airways and Virgin Atlantic head-office training days, delivering valuable training to key staff. Engagement was kept strong throughout the year by distributing a quarterly trade newsletter to 1,700 California specialists and further amplified reach by joining the Visit California Pan Euro Mission, showcasing Tuolumne County to a wide European audience.



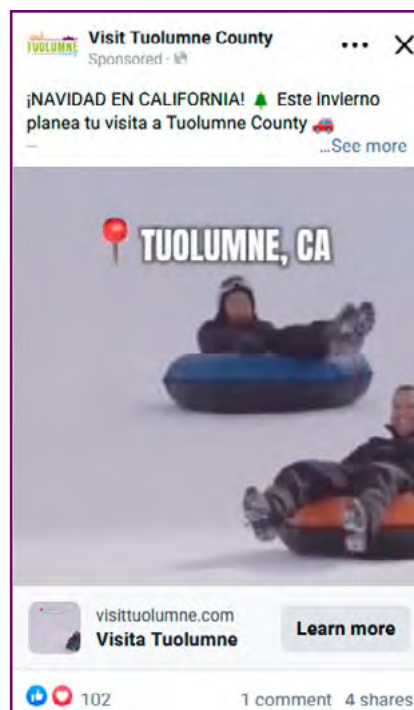
MSI: Germany/Austria/Switzerland

This is the first year we contracted with MSI. MSI provides many opportunities throughout the year for us to partner on regional promotions, mainly with other High Sierra destinations. Here are some of the accomplishments of this past year:

- Over \$300,000 in estimated ad value for media articles and mentions
- VTC was included in four trade newsletters that were sent out to 250 contacts
- Tuolumne County included in the German Visit the USA (VUSA) website
- VTC flyer distributed at various trade events
- Tuolumne County deco cube was added to the California Partners decoration and used at various events
- VTC represented at the VUSA roadshow
- VTC participated in the CANUSA co-op with other California partners (CANUSA is the largest tour operator in Germany)
- Represented at Halloween Event for travel agent training
- Included in VUSA day event for travel trade in Switzerland
- Represented at consumer show in Munich and the IBO show in Friedrichshafen
- Hosted German familiarization trip in May already resulting in new business for Tuolumne County resorts

GMS: Mexico

This was our second year working with GMS to promote Tuolumne County to the affluent Mexican market. Key target markets within Mexico include Guadalajara, Mexico City and Monterey. GMS promotes Tuolumne County to the Mexican travel trade through a series of strategic actions including sales calls with key travel agencies and tour operators. One such event where this took place was Mega Travel where 70 Mexican travel agents gathered with the objective of promoting the USA's iconic destinations, one of which was Tuolumne County. In addition to the travel trade side, GMS also supports Visit Tuolumne County through targeted social media outreach. Ads on Facebook and Instagram aim to promote Tuolumne County as a destination for family-friendly experiences, outdoor adventures, and scenic escapes. All social campaigns are optimized for engagement and reach.



International Marketing Events

Visit California Pan-European Mission

VTC was given the opportunity to be a part of the Visit California delegation for their inaugural weeklong Pan-European Mission which included three important markets: Germany (and Austria and Switzerland), France, and the UK (and Ireland). As part of the delegation, Lisa Mayo met one-on-one with tour operators which immediately resulted in new promotional opportunities for Tuolumne County, meaning that Tuolumne County has now been included as a must-visit destination as part of the sales portfolio for various tour operators. Companies that Lisa met with included Lufthansa, Bike the Best and Virgin Atlantic. Lisa also had the opportunity to network with travel journalists and influencers in each market. VTC was one of just 35 California tourism partners to attend the mission. In-person engagement is critical to building relationships, now more than ever, and this was a great platform to do just that. Highlighting Tuolumne County to the international community has helped our ties with the travel industry in each of those countries.



Germany Outlook

Bookings for the upcoming summer are promising and stable. However, new bookings have slowed, possibly due to seasonality or uncertainty around future political developments.

- The recent detentions of a handful of German travelers in the U.S. were top-of-mind and received outsized coverage. While actual impact on bookings has been minimal, reassurance from California partners is essential.
- German travelers are not distinguishing between California and the broader U.S., underscoring a need to clarify California's distinct identity and inclusive values.
- Influencers and media expressed deep affection for California and appreciated the chance to engage with the delegation. Our event stood out as warm, productive, and valuable.
- Lufthansa anticipates record-breaking summer performance, driven largely by U.S. outbound traffic to Europe. Economic factors and potential tariffs could impact longer-term performance.
- Partners praised Visit California's event for its friendliness and meaningful connections, especially compared to other activations happening the same week in Frankfurt.
- Trade contacts: 19
- Media contacts: 13

United Kingdom Outlook

- 82% of UK travelers plan to travel internationally in 2024-25.
- Travelers remain highly cost-conscious amid inflation and airfare prices. The U.S. and California maintain high aspirational appeal.
- Shorter booking windows and demand for bundled/value-added experiences are on the rise.
- Strong preference for authentic, value-driven travel. Sustainability is increasingly influencing decisions.
- Interest remains in multi-center trips (e.g., city + nature).
- High airfare costs and economic uncertainty are driving the need for flexibility and affordability.
- Opportunities include promoting bundled experiences, emphasizing California's sustainability leadership, and targeting high-spending experiential and sporting audiences.
- Delegates were extremely pleased with the quality and volume of trade appointments. Conversations were focused on value and product—politics was largely absent.
- Some privacy law restrictions (GDPR) limited access to delegate contact info; we recommend including opt-in language next time.
- Travel content demand remains strong despite economic headwinds. Editors emphasized the need for visual storytelling, DEI representation, and authenticity in coverage.
- Short-form (Reels, TikTok) content inspires; long-form (TV, YouTube) content drives planning.
- Trade appointments & evening event: 21
- Media lunch: 16
- Media evening event: 18

France Outlook

- French travelers seek escape, nature, and high-quality, uncrowded experiences. Sustainability matters, especially to younger travelers—70% want to travel more sustainably, with emphasis on buying local.
- Long-haul and sustainable travel is limited by cost and travel time. Traditional media remains influential despite the rise of digital tools and AI.
- Trade partners were highly satisfied with the event and the quality of connections.
- Booking challenges included confusion around Yosemite National Park's reservation system—a source of frustration and hesitancy in itinerary planning.
- Overall U.S. bookings are declining, though cancellations have not materialized. Canada is rising as a competitor for outdoor experiences.
- French travelers prefer local immersion, French-speaking guides, off-season trips, and California-only itineraries.
- Media remain enthusiastic about covering California and see it as offering distinctive, "Only in California" stories.
- Interest is strong around outdoor recreation, road trips, DEI content, and California's food scene.
- Language barriers posed a challenge for some media. Future events should include additional French-speaking support to ensure confident and productive exchanges.
- Opportunities include positioning California as distinct from the U.S. through storytelling that highlights local culture, sustainability, and seasonal travel. Road trips remain a winning angle—consider escorted options where language may be a barrier.
- Trade appointments: 22 attendees

Visit California Canada Reverse Mission

For the first time in their history, Visit California provided a “reverse” mission which brought 41 tour operators, travel journalists, and influencers from Canada to San Diego, California for two intense days of one-on-one meetings and networking. The event came at a pivotal time as the political climate was becoming increasingly intense between Canada and the U.S. However, this is truly one of the magnificent things about travel and building relationships. Here are some facts about the Canadian traveler:



- First and foremost they are keen to travel, but concerned by cost
- 60% plan to travel in 2025 and nearly 2/3 of them take up to six months to finalize their travel plans
- They want to bring the family including multigenerational
- They want to play outside
- They love filmsets
- They prefer road trips over flying citing they feel less stressed, more in control and can see and do more
- It's easy to see why the Canadian market is important to Tuolumne County and also why building relationships is key to future success.

Visit California Reverse Mexico Mission

We were honored to be chosen as one of twenty delegates to Visit California's Reverse Mexico Mission held in Oakland in mid-May. Teri Marshall, Director of Marketing & Communications for First Light Resorts and a VTC Board Member represented VTC. There were three core components to the mission:

- Individual meetings with twenty highly vetted travel trade professionals from the Mexico market who are actively pursuing travel options in California.
- A variety of networking events to immerse the Mexican delegates in California culture and experience California's many tourism options first hand.
- Formal presentations from a variety of leading industry experts to help us fully understand the market opportunities.

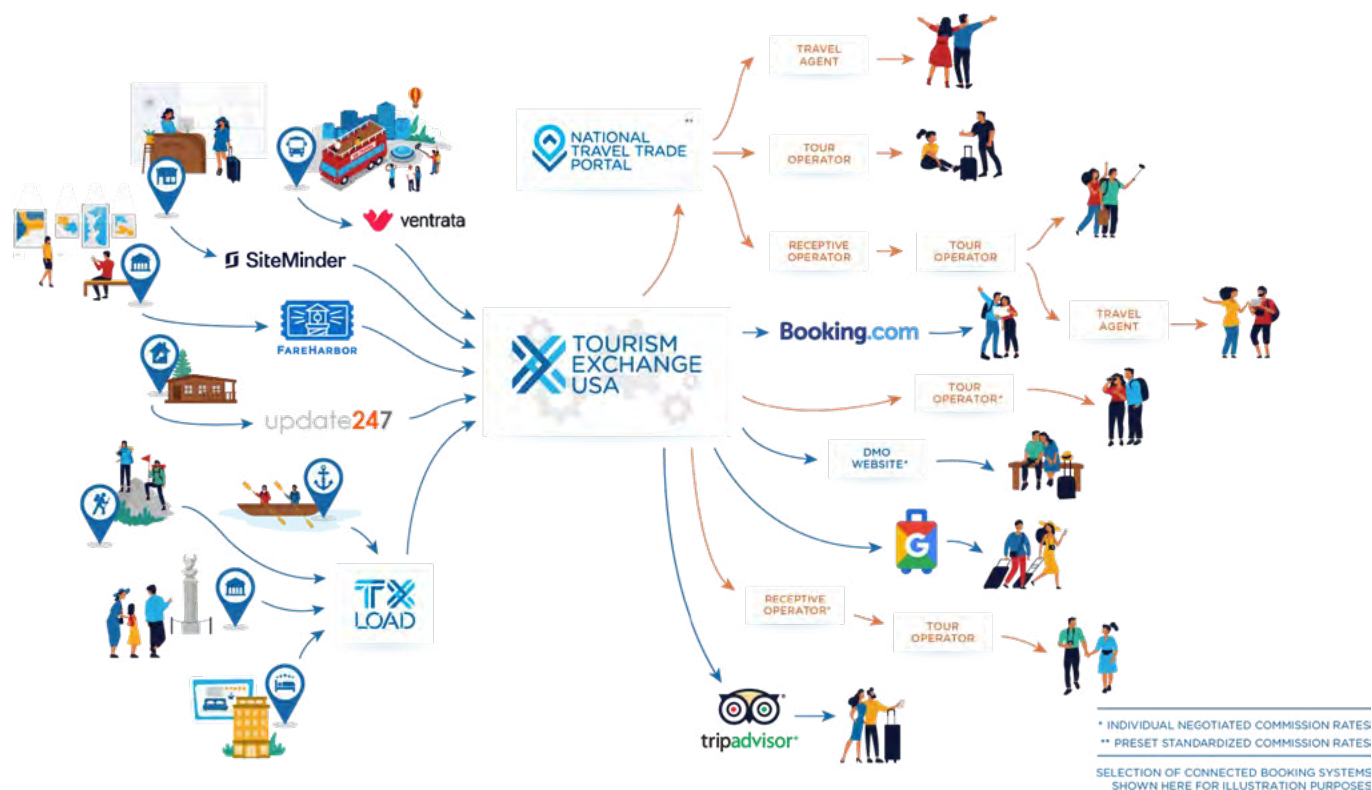
Mexican travelers to California have historically skewed towards family visits and home stays in Southern California. However, there is a growing middle class in



Mexico who now have access to FinTech, mobile devices, Buy-Now-Pay-Later trips, increased airlift to major California airports, and a strong desire to explore beyond Southern California and into Northern California's great outdoors. Tuolumne County is uniquely poised to satisfy this demand and was extremely well received by every delegate.

Tourism Exchange

Tourism Exchange has become a valuable tool in enhancing partner visibility and connectivity within the global travel marketplace. By partnering with Brand USA and participating in this digital distribution platform, Visit Tuolumne County can ensure that our partners' bookable experiences and accommodations are accessible to a wider network of online travel agencies, tour operators, and travel resellers. As an authorized distributor through Tourism Exchange, we provide an added layer of exposure for our local businesses—connecting them with potential visitors who may not have discovered them otherwise. This initiative helps level the playing field for small, independent operators while reinforcing Tuolumne County's presence as a competitive destination in the broader tourism ecosystem.



MEETINGS & GROUPS

Visit Tuolumne County is actively working to grow group and meetings business in the County—a key segment of the tourism market that supports midweek and off-season visitation. While the lack of nearby major airports presents a challenge, we're leaning into what makes our destination special: unique, intimate venues surrounded by natural beauty and endless opportunities for team building and to extend participants' stays. Our outreach will continue to target the Bay Area and Sacramento drive markets, where groups are looking for memorable, accessible getaways.

Connect Spring Marketplace

In April, VTC attended Connect Spring Marketplace, a leading travel trade event designed to foster meaningful connections between meeting planners and destination marketing organizations. Representing Tuolumne County, our Business Development Manager held over 20 one-on-one appointments with planners from across the country, pitching the County as a premier destination for executive retreats, team bonding experiences, and small group getaways.

We will continue to target faith-based retreats, wellness escapes, and self-care-focused gatherings, positioning Tuolumne County's unique offerings, ranging from outdoor adventure and rustic-luxury lodging to historic charm and access to Yosemite National Park—as ideal for planners seeking restorative and inspiring group experiences.

Post-event, we conducted personalized follow-ups with each contact, sharing tailored lodging properties, digital resources, and ongoing updates via our quarterly B2B newsletter. We will continue to remain in contact and continue to market Tuolumne County's group-friendly assets as an inviting and restorative destination for planners.

Our participation helped build brand awareness, initiate new professional relationships, and position Tuolumne County as a compelling choice for future meetings and retreats.



TwoSix Digital Campaigns

TwoSix Digital executed a campaign for VTC promoting meetings and event opportunities on the LinkedIn and StackAdapt ad networks. The campaign targeted meeting planners in the Sacramento and San Francisco areas with the aim of increasing awareness for Tuolumne County as a viable meeting location. The campaign's main goal was to promote awareness and generate website engagement with three new market-specific blogs.



| RESULTS | |
|------------------|-------------|
| Impressions | 1.7 MILLION |
| Clicks | 11,028 |
| Web Sessions | 11,988 |
| Engaged Sessions | 53.4% |



Meeting Planner Guide and 360-Degree Video

To align with current trends and demands, VTC refreshed the meeting planner guide, adding new information, venues, services, and team-building activities. This guide helps planners organize the best meetings or getaways for their groups. Another tool meeting planners utilize is 360-degree video, which allows them to visualize the setup of their event within the space. VTC collaborates with a local video professional to capture 360-degree videos of meeting spaces in Tuolumne County. VTC has shared the 360-video with participating partners so they can use it to promote their space on their own websites, social media, etc.

Visit California's Meet What's Possible

Visit California's Meet What's Possible initiative promotes California as the place for professional meetings and events. Tuolumne County is one of 55 destinations included in this initiative that touts the state's creativity, positivity, sustainability and technological innovation. Meet What's Possible is promoted through digital and print ads that can be found in the publications most trusted by professional planners. californiameetings.com



Courtesy of Kim Carroll Photography/Rush Creek Lodge

CVENT

Visit Tuolumne County's presence on Cvent, a leading event and hospitality platform, allows us to significantly expand our visibility to meeting planners and group organizers. By showcasing our destination and unique venues on Cvent, we are able to generate high-quality leads from professionals actively seeking locations for meetings, conferences, retreats, and group events. The platform streamlines the request-for-proposal (RFP) process, making it easier for planners to discover Tuolumne County and submit inquiries directly. This added exposure helps drive off-peak group business, increase overnight stays, and support our local lodging partners and event venues.



Photo by Rush Creek Lodge/Kim Carroll Photography

PUBLIC RELATIONS



MEDIA

Journalists have the ability to reach broad and targeted audiences through articles, blogs, and social media, helping to increase awareness of Tuolumne County among key travel markets such as leisure travelers, adventure seekers, food lovers, and cultural enthusiasts. This type of exposure is also a cost-effective alternative to traditional advertising, often delivering a strong return on investment when the resulting content is engaging and well-aligned with readers' interests. Over the past year, we've partnered with public relations specialist Laurie Armstrong-Gossy, whose expertise and industry connections have helped secure valuable media coverage and coordinate press visits. Many of the travel stories highlighting Tuolumne County stem directly from these proactive media pitches and hosted journalist experiences.



Metrics For VTC Public Relations

*UVM=Unique visitors per month

**AVE=Estimated ad value

What's New Media Pitches

Distributed via Muck Rack to travel editors, freelance writers, and other content creators in target markets.

- July 2024 —“What's New in Tuolumne County, CA—Discovering Gold and Yosemite Hacks”
- October 2024 —“Winter Fun is Closer in Tuolumne County, California”
- February 2025 —“Coming to Tuolumne County, California in 2025”
- April 2025 —“Tuolumne County summer kicks off with historic, diverse, and fun-loving events”
- May 2025 —“Tuolumne County is rich in dark skies and 'noctourism'”

Media Outreach

Inviting media and developing story angles with desirable media.

- Wrote and distributed press release: "Visit Tuolumne County announces return of Fuel Your Journey Promotion, Jan. 2-31, 2025"
- Distributed press release: "Celebrate Tuolumne County's culinary scene with the Snap & Savor Photo Contest"
- Distributed press release: "Columbia's Victorian Easter Celebration Set for April 20, 2025"
- Updated Visit Tuolumne County's online Press Room and created Story Ideas for IPW 2025.
- Wrote and distributed press release: "Visit Tuolumne County announces creation of three tourism awards"
- Coordinated with VTC staff on itinerary for Cheryl Crabtree, visiting in May 2025 to research Fodor's Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks (print and online), to be published in June 2026.
- Secured a visit by David DeVoss, creator of East West News Service, in September 2024 to write two stories. The first, in neighboring Bridgeport, appeared in February 2025. The second story, on Tuolumne's epic road trip, will appear shortly.
- Secured an interview with Lisa Mayo on [Travel Itch Radio](#) on February 27. The interview can be seen here: youtube.com/live/-RGLSC8lxWw.

Media Events

Networking and pitching story ideas for Visit Tuolumne County

- Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) Convention & Marketplace, Istanbul—November 2024
- Visit California Denver Media Event—May 2025
- Bay Area Travel Writers' Travel Showcase (via Zoom)—May 2025
- Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) Virtual Marketplace—June 2025

Visit California Story Idea Submissions

Each month, Visit California sends out a request for story ideas on various themes to be added to their domestic and international media outreach. Researched, developed and submitted story ideas for Tuolumne County.

- Indigenous Artists and Entrepreneurs
- Stargazing Splendor, Vegan Gastronomy
- Trendy Thrift Spots, Family Ski Resorts, Mountain Meetings
- Alternative Road Trips—Travel by pack animals, stagecoach and historic railroad
- Non-Alcoholic Options Beyond Dry January, Best Month to Visit
- Where to Watch the Big Games
- Glamping, Remarkable Rooftops, Meaningful Meetings
- Dining That's All About the Atmosphere, Adrenaline Fix, Green Groups
- Mocha Madness, Luxury at Any Budget, Boardroom with a View
- Luxury Wellness, Sustainable Travel
- Shoulder Season, A Park for Every Play Style

For examples of how submissions are published, see:

[Alternative Ways to Explore California](#)

[The Perfect California Calendar](#)

[Beyond Dry January: Year-Round Non-Alcoholic Delights in California](#)

[Game on! Best Places for Sports in California](#)

[Remarkable Rooftops in California](#)

[California's Coffee Shop Gems](#)

FAMILIARIZATION TRIPS & INFLUENCERS

Just as hosting journalists and influencers has many benefits, hosting travel trade representatives also serves multiple strategic purposes. Familiarization (FAM) trips provide tour operators or travel agents with firsthand experience of what the County has to offer. This exposure allows participants to gain in-depth knowledge of the destination, enabling them to better promote and sell Tuolumne County as a travel destination to their clientele.

Journalists and travel trade representatives will sometimes visit individually, and other times they are with a group. VTC hosted 11 FAM trips in total during 2024/2025 fiscal year, welcoming a total of 30 travel professionals and media representatives. A significant highlight was our collaboration with the Black Travel Alliance and Visit California, creating meaningful connections with diverse travel professionals and showcasing Tuolumne County's appeal to new markets. Additionally, our Irish FAM trip, coordinated in partnership with Black Diamond, our UK representatives, generated substantial international media coverage, including features in the Irish Mirror that highlighted the Gold Country experience and brought valuable exposure to Irish and UK markets.



VTC engages many local lodging, dining, and activities partners to participate in these FAM trips, and as VTC incurs most of the cost of these trips, many partners provide us with reduced rates or donated rooms and services. This collaborative approach strengthens our partnerships while maximizing the impact of our FAM trip investments, ensuring participants receive comprehensive experiences that truly showcase the best of what Tuolumne County has to offer.



TRAVEL INDUSTRY EVENTS

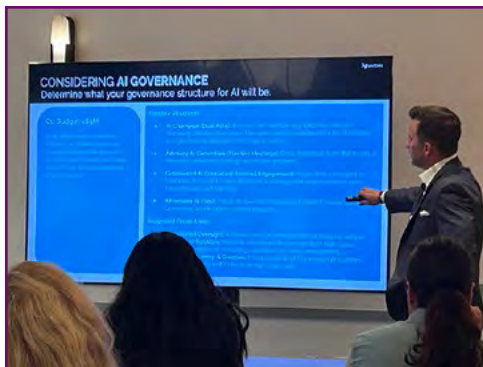
Educational Events

One West Tourism Alliance Leadership Summit:

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

Visit California Outlook Forum:

In March 2025, four members of the Visit Tuolumne County team attended the Visit California Outlook Forum in Los Angeles. This annual event brings together tourism professionals from across the state to explore the current landscape and future of California's travel industry. Attendees hear from top voices in the field, ranging from airline executives to representatives from Brand USA and the U.S. Travel Association. A standout session each year is the update from Visit California's international market representatives, who share valuable insights on global travel trends, visitor interests, lodging preferences, spending habits, and airlift projections that shape how international travelers experience California. View the VCA International Market Profiles: industry.visitcalifornia.com/research/global-market-profiles-landing



CalTravel Summit:

CalTravel is the advocacy association for California's tourism industry. The Summit focuses on the hot topics and pressing advocacy issues facing travel and tourism. This year the Summit offered several bite-sized sessions that included topics centered around economics, politics, stewardship and sustainability, funding models, homelessness, visa entry wait times, and more. The conference also leaves ample time to encourage

idea sharing and insights and lays the groundwork for building solid relationships amongst those in and related to the tourism industry. Additionally, Cal Travel has an award ceremony to celebrate industry leaders in various categories. Two VTC team members attended.

Visit El Dorado County Tourism Summit

Every year Visit El Dorado County hosts a one-day tourism summit. The content is always current and provides attendees with new understandings and ways of looking at things. One session was a public relations panel and it was moderated by the PR expert who provided questions and answers with a traditional media journalist and an influencer. Another great topic included industry updates, trends, and research and was presented by Visit California. This event is educational and another opportunity to network with people who are a part of the Gold Country's tourism and hospitality industry. It also provides the chance to reconnect with regional partners. VTC's President & CEO attends this event.

Visit California Board of Directors Meetings

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

Travel Trade Events

National Tour Association Travel Exchange

The National Tour Association (NTA) Travel Exchange (TREX) is an annual event that brings together travel professionals, including tour operators, suppliers, and destination representatives, from around the world. It's a marketplace for networking, learning, and conducting business. Tourism suppliers like VTC meet one on one with tour operators to share new destination products, remind them of the area, and help to answer any questions they may have. TREX provides all attendees the opportunity to attend educational sessions on industry trends and best practices. This year, VTC President & CEO attended and gave a bonus presentation on Tuolumne County to 14 tour operators who selected to learn more about our destination specifically.



IPW

Visit Tuolumne County proudly showcased our region at IPW 2025 in Chicago, connecting with over 40 international and domestic travel trade professionals, as well as 20 travel media representatives. We spotlighted iconic experiences like Columbia State Historic Park, Gold Country, the High Sierra, and the countless outdoor adventures just beyond our Yosemite gates.

In a special collaboration with Visit Madera County, we co-hosted a rock-climbing event that brought the spirit of our region to life. We invited some of our top-tier trade and media contacts to join us for this hands-on experience, which truly captured the authentic, adventurous vibe that defines Tuolumne County!

Since returning home, we've followed up with every connection, sharing curated itineraries like Hidden Treasures in Tuolumne County, Family Time in the Gold Country, and Recharge in the Sierra: A Wellness Escape. We thoughtfully included a wide variety of local partners—because it's businesses like yours that make our region so special and unique. We're also adding all new (and some familiar) contacts into our travel trade database to keep Tuolumne County top of mind for future coverage and itineraries.



ADVOCACY

Visit Tuolumne County (VTC) advocates for sustainable tourism, infrastructure development, and policy support to enhance the region's economic vitality and quality of life. VTC's efforts are focused on representing local interests to policymakers, securing funding, and managing tourism impacts to protect natural resources and community character. VTC is also a communication mechanism for publicizing to the community and visitors regarding various destination projects. VTC works hand in hand with our local Chambers and other organizations for the betterment of our business community.

Key Highlights:

- In partnership with business organizations such as local Chambers of Commerce, VTC emphasizes the importance of advocacy to highlight community priorities and foster collaboration that supports tourism. Tourism is a key economic driver in Tuolumne County. VTC acts as a representative for the tourism industry by supporting advocacy for the industry through organizations such as the US Travel Association, CalTravel and YARTS. VTC engages directly with local, state, and federal leaders to promote sustainable tourism and address infrastructure and funding challenges.
- VTC advocates in partnership with local elected officials and agencies for the timely maintenance and reopening of critical routes such as Highway 108 Sonora Pass, Old Wards Ferry Road, Lumsden Road and Tioga Pass. These routes are essential for tourism access, local business activity, and public safety.
- Overtourism: Efforts are made to balance visitation, the visitor experience and economic benefits while minimizing environmental and infrastructure



strain. Communications with local stakeholders and community leaders helps to better understand various situations and work towards solutions.

- Assisting organizations in publicizing new developments in the destination such as the Gold Rush Path and the Audubon Bird Town in Twain Harte.

FILM COMMISSION



Tuolumne County Film Commission

Visit Tuolumne County is also home to the Tuolumne County Film Commission. Tuolumne County has a rich and diverse film history dating back to the 1920's, with over 350 movies, TV shows, documentaries, etc. filmed in the area.

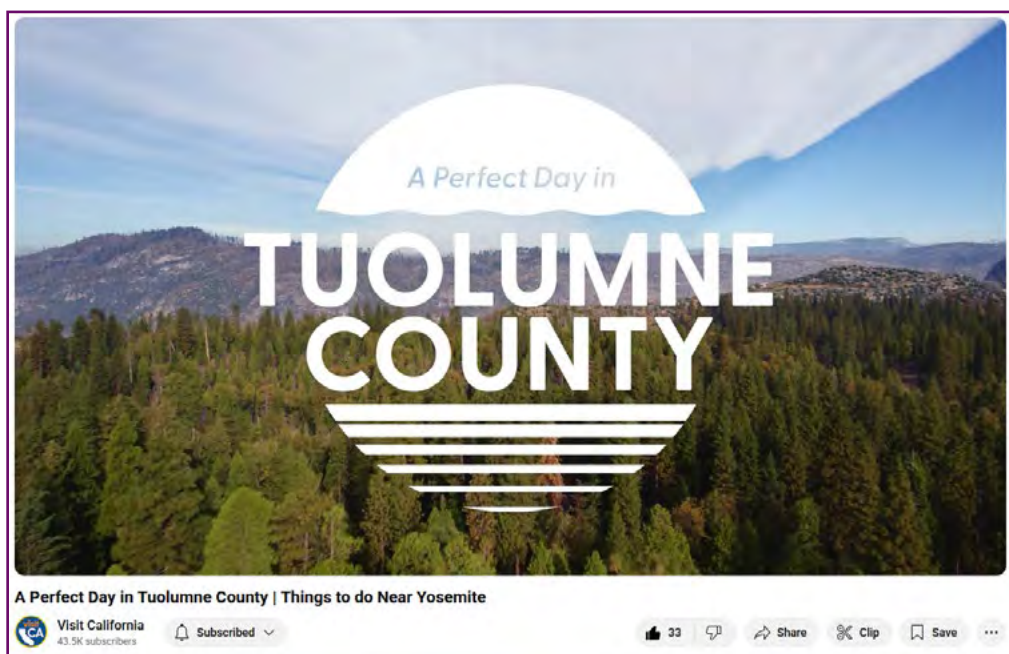
Some notable productions celebrating anniversaries in 2025 include:

- **Back to the Future Part III (1990):** Directed by Robert Zemeckis, this film features the Time Train and stars Michael J. Fox and Christopher Lloyd. Celebrating 35 Years in 2025
- **Little House on the Prairie (1975):** Starring Michael Landon, Dean Butler and Melissa Gilbert, this series was filmed at various locations throughout Tuolumne County. Celebrating 50 years in 2025

These productions showcase the County's scenic landscapes and historic landmarks, making it a popular location for filmmakers over the decades. Not only that, but many television and movie fans love to "set jet" where they visit various location sets. This is a great opportunity for Tuolumne County.

VTC maintains the Tuolumne County Film Commission website, www.filmtuolumne.org as well as social media channels. VTC is the go-between for the filming industry and various jurisdictions and provides help securing film permits, creating casting calls, offering location ideas, housing, food and more.

This past year seven film permits were approved including one for a Cal-Fire Columbia Air Attack Docuseries, a Rivian Commercial, and Visit California's "Perfect Day" campaign highlighting The Sugar Shack in Twain Harte, Columbia State Historic Park, The Iron Door Saloon in Groveland and Evergreen Lodge.



COMMUNITY



VTC Team Leadership & Community Involvement

The full-time team members of the Visit Tuolumne County (VTC) actively participate in a variety of local and regional organizations that support community and economic development. Through involvement in chambers of commerce, tourism councils, business associations, and civic committees, VTC staff contribute their expertise, build strong partnerships, and advocate for initiatives that enhance quality of life and drive sustainable economic growth throughout the region. This engagement helps ensure that tourism remains a collaborative force for good, benefiting both residents and visitors alike. The staff also volunteers at various events.

Lisa Mayo, President & CEO

- Visit California Rural Committee Vice Chair 2024-2025, Chair 2025-2026
- Visit California Marketing Committee
- Visit California 2025 Referendum Regional Co-Chair
- Visit California's Gold Country Visitors Association President, 2015-2025, Past President/Treasurer 2025-2026
- One West Tourism Alliance Board of Directors, Secretary/Treasurer 2025-2026
- YARTS Authority Advisory Committee 2014-2025, Chair 2025-2026
- Sierra Repertory Theatre Board of Directors 2019-present



Jen Lopez, Marketing Manager

- High Sierra Visitors Council
- Sonora Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors 2023-Present
- Groveland Facelift Committee 2022 (inaugural year)-Present
- Global Sustainable Tourism Council Sustainable Tourism Certificate Program: Certificate, December 2025
- Tuolumne County 175th Anniversary Committee, 2025
- Volunteer: Columbia's Victorian Easter Parade judging, April 2025
- Volunteer: Sonora Christmas Parade staging, November 2024
- Leadership Tuolumne County Graduate 2017



Amariah Richards, Business Development Manager

- Gold Country Visitors Association
- Central Sierra Economic Development District Board of Directors
- Celebrate Sonora Planning Committee
- Tuolumne County Business Council
- Volunteer: Pond Skim judging at Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort, April 2025



Community Sponsorships and Destination Development

Each year Visit Tuolumne County provides sponsorship funds and destination development funds to various organizations for events and projects that lead to increased tourism, overnight stays and off-peak visitation. \$37,700 was distributed to support activities of the following organizations:

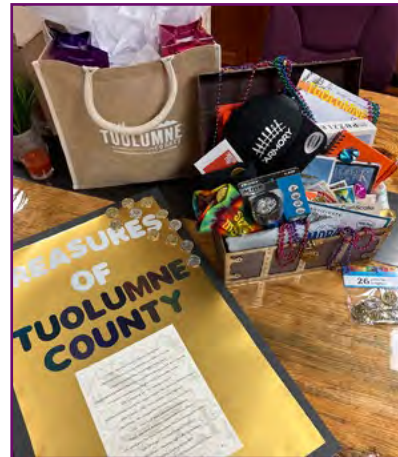
- Columbia Chamber of Commerce:
 - Little House on the Prairie Cast Reunion
- ConAMOR Building Bridges:
 - Columbia's Cinco de Mayo Celebration
- Don Pedro Recreation Agency:
 - The Bass Angler Magazine Pro60 Fishing Tournament
 - 4th of July Fireworks
- Farms of Tuolumne County
 - Farm and Ranch Guide and Map
- Groveland Trailheads
 - Groveland Grind
- Jamestown Promotion Club
 - Return to Hill Valley Event
 - Rods to Rails
- Mother Lode Art Association
 - Annual Fine Art Show and Exhibit
- Pine Mountain Lake Association
 - Roping in the Pines
- Sierra Repertory Theatre
 - Performance Sponsor
- Southern Tuolumne County Historical Society
 - 2025 STCHS Wine Tasting Cruise
- Sonora Chamber of Commerce
 - Christmas Town Sonora, Holly Jolly Wagon



- Christmas Tree Lane, Cocoa for Non-Profit Organization Tree Decorating
- El Campo de Sonora
- 2nd Saturday Art Night
- Tuolumne County's Standard Park
 - Sponsorship Signage
- Yosemite Highway 120 Chamber of Commerce
 - Groveland Beautification Projects
 - Groveland 49er Festival Presents the Taste of Tuolumne
- Tuolumne County Arts
 - InFocus Photography Competition, Exhibition, and Sale



Visit Tuolumne County has also provided various auction items for community organizations as well as for the annual Rural County Representatives of California fundraiser. Looking ahead to 2025-2026 VTC has scaled back the amount of funds available for sponsorships and destination development projects.



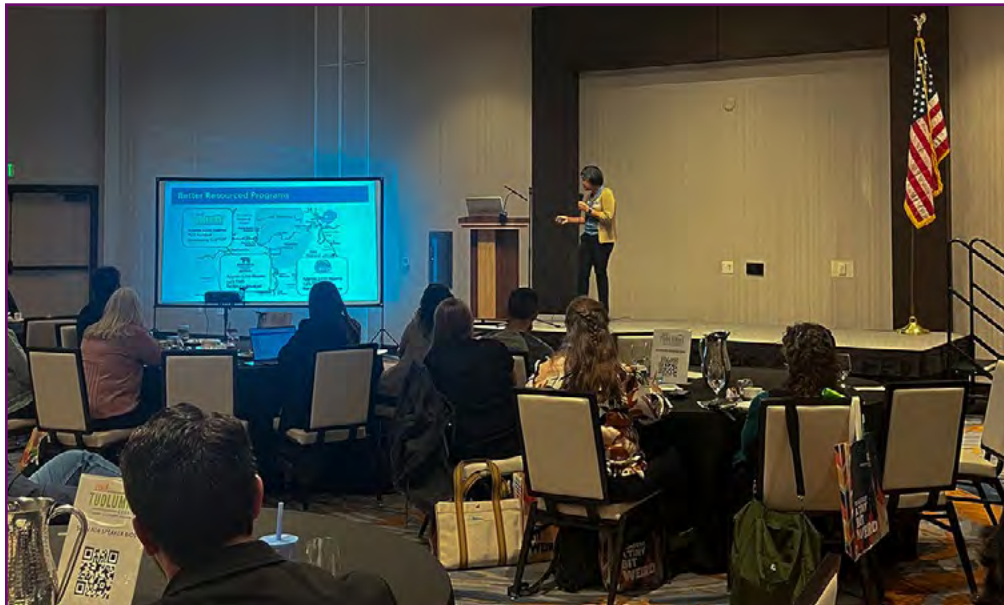
Community Event Presence

- Groveland Facelift—September 2024
- Groveland 49er Festival Taste of Tuolumne County—September 2024
- American Loggers Council Conference Check-In Lobby Table at Chicken Ranch Casino Resort (400 attendees)—October 2024
- Cover's Apple Ranch Fall Festival—October 2024
- Bass Angler Magazine Tournament Trail Super60 Fishing Tournament Welcome Event at Chicken Ranch Casino Resort—February 2025
- Sonora Home and Garden Show—April 2025



Visit Tuolumne County Tourism Summit

Visit Tuolumne County brought back the annual Tourism Summit in October 2024. Held at the all-new Chicken Ranch Casino Resort, the event welcomed nearly 70 attendees. The summit began with a warm welcome from former Tribal Chairman Lloyd Mathiesen, setting the tone for a day of inspiration and collaboration. Attendees heard valuable insights from Visit California, as well as presentations from VTC's advertising agency, Augustine Agency, and updates from our public relations contractor. Visit Tuolumne County shared its annual report and provided an update on the proposed Tourism Marketing District. The summit concluded with a powerful presentation by David Holder, principal of Clarity of Place, who emphasized the critical role that sustainable tourism funding plays in increasing Tuolumne County's market share—and encouraged attendees to champion the continued growth of tourism in our region.



Community Holiday Mixer

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



Tuolumne County 175th Anniversary Collaboration

2025 marks the 175th anniversary of Tuolumne County. In recognition of this historic year, the 175th Anniversary committee, composed of Supervisor Steve Grier, community members, organizations, and local partners, worked to coordinate commemorative efforts that honor our past and present and engage the community and visitors.



Visit Tuolumne County's role consisted of:

- Coordinating the design of the official logo, which was thoughtfully designed to honor the County's beauty and natural landscape and its diverse cultural history highlighted by the feather, four acorns, and gold nugget. The creation of the logo involved collaboration between the committee members and representatives of the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians and Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians, ensuring it reflects the county's thousands of years of cultural history.
- Distributing event information for media coverage and is incorporating the logo into advertising for broader awareness.
- Hosting a dedicated anniversary webpage that highlights events and historical milestones and provides information about purchasing the exclusive ornaments, which you'll hear about in a few minutes.



Wildfire Toolkit for Partners

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

The toolkit includes:

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



CURRENTLY & LOOKING AHEAD

Currently & Looking Ahead

The Visit Tuolumne County team continues to market Tuolumne County using proven strategies that have grown tourism year over year. We attend industry conferences and events that advance our insights and knowledge of the latest trends in destination promotion and technology, while learning about co-operative marketing programs that stretch our marketing dollars strategically.

This year we are excited to celebrate our tourism heroes at our Second Annual Tourism Summit, where we will introduce our premiere awards program. We are thrilled to recognize outstanding contributions through three prestigious awards: the Tourism Advocacy Award, Spirit of Tuolumne County Award, and Front-Line Hospitality Award.

Our team remains small—even smaller than last year—but we are mighty and more focused than ever. The CEO has created a new Business Development Manager position focused on VTC partners, stakeholders, and sales, who is also sitting on the Central Sierra Economic Development Board of Directors. We are proud to have a seat at the table as tourism is a huge economic driver for our region.

Last year we spoke about forming the Tourism Marketing District (TMD). While VTC strongly believes this will be the most sustainable funding source, we have decided to put TMD formation on hold due to the economic climate of our stakeholders, political challenges, and uncertainties around Yosemite's reservation system. We will continue to monitor these conditions and move forward when the timing is more favorable.

Tourism has been and continues to be the bright spot in Tuolumne County's economic outlook, and we remain dedicated to ensuring its continued success for years to come.

Madden Media

Visit Tuolumne County is excited to partner with Madden Media as its new marketing agency to launch a refreshed, cohesive brand campaign. Madden Media is a seasoned, data-savvy, storytelling-first marketing agency specialized in promoting places—they bring both strategic depth and creativity to make destinations like Tuolumne County stand out. The new approach that we are developing together will unify messaging across digital, print, and social platforms, highlight the County's unique offerings and target key markets including the Bay Area, Sacramento, and international audiences.

Mobile Trails

Visit Tuolumne County is developing two new mobile trails to highlight the region's distinctive character. These interactive experiences will engage visitors through storytelling while celebrating the county's rich history and local charm.

- Tuolumne County Veterans Memorial Trail – A countywide mobile experience honoring local veterans and memorial landmarks.
- Sonora Paranormal Trail - A city-specific digital trail exploring haunted sites, ghost stories, and paranormal history in historic downtown Sonora. This project is per VTC's Scope of Work Marketing Agreement with the City of Sonora.

Website SEO

The way that people are searching online is rapidly changing and Visit Tuolumne County is updating its website's search engine optimization to better match how people search using AI tools. This means using more natural, conversational language and question-based keywords so the site appears in results when users ask tools like ChatGPT or voice assistants for travel ideas or local info.

Emphasis on Sustainability

Visit Tuolumne County will emphasize sustainability in the coming year. Marketing Manager Jen Lopez will receive the Tourism Sustainable Council certification for Visit Tuolumne County in December of 2025. This milestone supports sustainable travel initiatives to inspire responsible recreation, protect natural resources, and promote community resilience in all tourism marketing efforts. The certification course will provide valuable insights that inform more effective strategies for promoting sustainable tourism.

Secretarial Order 3434

Visit Tuolumne County supports Secretarial Order 3434: Strengthening Coordination with Gateway Communities, which prioritizes collaboration between federal agencies and gateway towns like ours. We will continue to advocate for stronger partnerships that support tourism, public land access, and local economies.



Photo by Visit California/Max Whitaker

MANAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

Management & Accountability

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

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

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

GLOSSARY OF INDUSTRY TERMS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TOURISM IS VITAL TO THE TUOLUMNE COUNTY ECONOMY.

Thank you for your continued support!



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