

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

2020/2021

# Annual Report



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

At the start of Fiscal Year 2020-21, we were months into a devastating pandemic that shook the world and continued to impact all our lives throughout the year. The travel and tourism industry was hit hard early on. Businesses pivoted week to week as protocols were added and updated. Some businesses shut down altogether.

Now, over a year later, we are finally able to embrace the light at the end of the tunnel as businesses emerge from pandemic restrictions into what is feeling normal again. Throughout the year it has been incredible to see the fortitude of our local business owners. Equally as amazing are all the new small businesses that bravely opened during one of the most tumultuous times in our history.

We are excited, and I do not use that word lightly, that we can now continue to welcome back visitors to Tuolumne County. Our Wander Freely campaign, created in partnership with Augustine Agency, is showing great success. Last year gave us an opportunity to focus on destination stewardship, sustainability, and responsible travel initiatives that we will carry forward into the new year. We embraced many new platforms including Spotify, creating a podcast and even TikTok.

This past year has put a spotlight on how important the visitor economy is to Tuolumne County. It is the largest private sector industry bringing in millions of new dollars and tax revenues that help sustain our community's vital services and support many of our family, friends and neighbors. Visit Tuolumne County's role of inviting visitors from around the world to Tuolumne County is more crucial than ever.

Thank you to the VTC Board of Directors for their unwavering support as we navigated new waters this year. A huge shout out to our Membership – that was given the opportunity to waive dues this past year and nearly 90% did not take that option even as they were dealing with so much uncertainty.

On behalf of the VTC Team and Board of Directors, a big thank you to the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors and the Sonora City Council for continuing to honor our long-standing partnership which allows us to do our job of inviting visitors to Tuolumne County in good times and in crisis recovery times.

Finally, a huge thank you to my VTC Team. So much has changed this last year and we are missing a big part of our Dream Team, but to those of you still here or who have recently come back part-time, you have shown incredible strength, loyalty and perseverance and I am forever grateful to each of you and the talents that you bring to VTC. Tuolumne County is lucky to have you (and so am I!).

Looking forward,



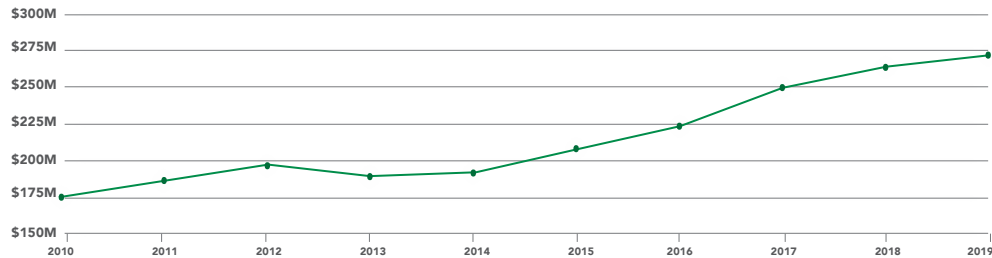
**Lisa Mayo, CDME**

President/CEO Visit Tuolumne County

## OVERALL TOURISM STATS

**2019** \$273 Million (Record Year)

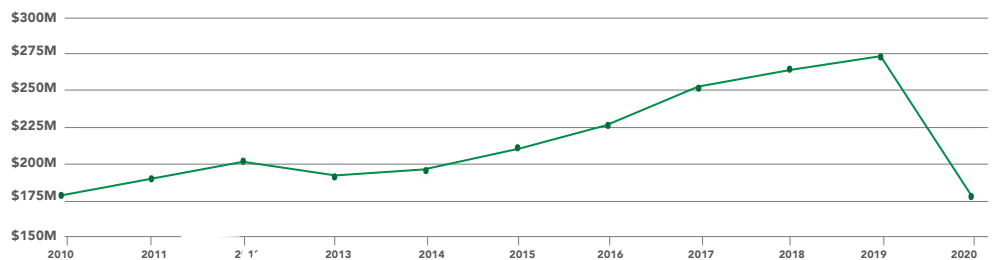
TUOLUMNE HISTORY OF TRAVEL SPENDING IN CALIFORNIA



Vs.

**2020** \$173 Million -36.8% change (vs. California -55% change)

TUOLUMNE HISTORY OF TRAVEL SPENDING IN CALIFORNIA

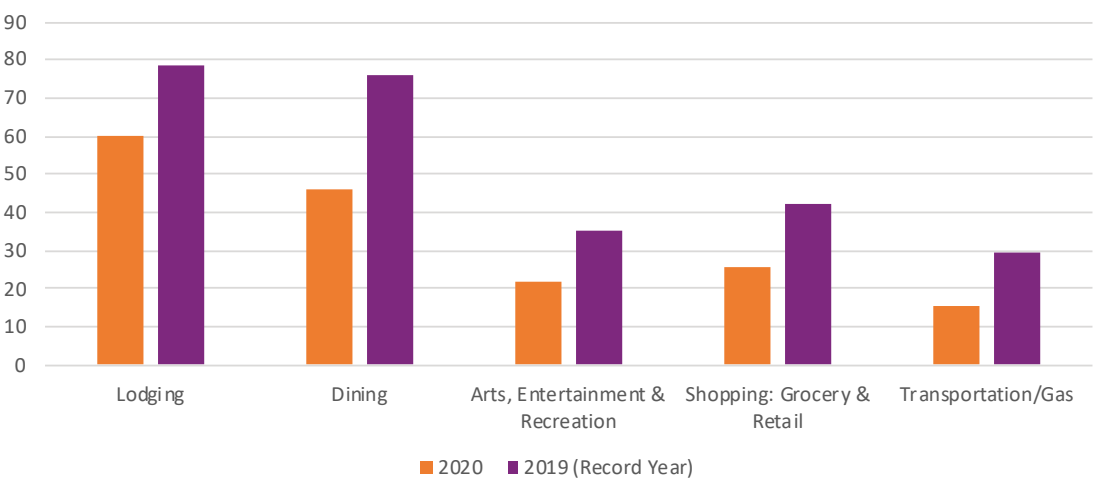


### 2020 Travel Spending and Tax Revenue

2020 Travel Spending and Tax Revenue	
Total Direct Travel Spending*	\$173 million
Tourism Industry Employment*	2,100
Government Revenue Generated by Tourism	
Local Sales Tax Receipts	\$6.6 million
State Sales Tax Receipts	\$7.3 million
Transient Occupancy Tax	\$3.575 million
State and local tax revenue equivalency per Tuolumne County household	\$638

\*These statistics do not include spending or job generation by either Black Oak Casino Resort or by Chicken Ranch Casino as they fall under Government. Casino employment estimated to be 1,500 plus. Reported by Dean Runyan Associates.

2020 Breakdown of Travel Spending by Industry (\$ in Millions)



## MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS



### Tuolumne County Healthy Pledge Program

In June 2020, Visit Tuolumne County introduced the “Tuolumne County Healthy Pledge” program, a local business commitment to creating and providing a clean, safe, and healthy environment for residents and visitors as businesses and organizations reopened with COVID-19 restrictions. VTC staff consulted with Acting Tuolumne County Public Health Officer, Dr. Liza Ortiz, and staff for input on the program and its components.

The Tuolumne County Healthy Pledge is a voluntary program and awareness campaign for Tuolumne County businesses to showcase their commitment to clean and healthy standards for their guests and employees to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As a priority recovery initiative, this free awareness program is led by the Visit Tuolumne County team.

Research studies on traveler sentiment continue to show that visitors will go where they have confidence that the businesses within the destination are abiding by health and safety protocols brought on by the pandemic and continue to be of importance to travelers. To date over 75 Tuolumne County businesses have taken the pledge, and VTC continues to invite local businesses to take the pledge. This in turn will assist businesses with economic recovery.

Businesses that have taken the pledge and are VTC members have a Tuolumne County Healthy Pledge icon displayed on their business listing at [www.visittuolumne.com](http://www.visittuolumne.com). An additional webpage dedicated to Tuolumne County Healthy Pledge lists all participating businesses (all Tuolumne County businesses are welcome). Each business may list basic protocols they are following, and they have access to additional marketing tools to help spread the word about their pledge and commitment to public health. Businesses are responsible for ensuring that they are abiding by all governmental and public health orders and directives.





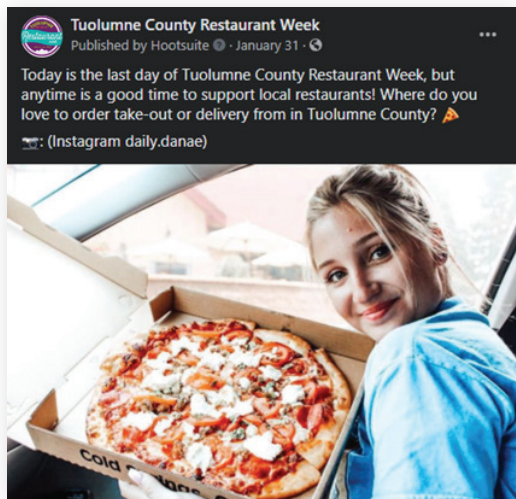
### Tuolumne County Restaurant Week

Tuolumne County Restaurant Week (TCRW) is an annual celebration of local cuisine, restaurants, bakeries, chefs, wine and cider makers, breweries and food producers, and is a collaborative way to share the bounty of Tuolumne County. Participation in Restaurant Week is open to VTC members and is FREE (besides any of the business’ associated operational costs). VTC re-introduced TCRW in January 2020 after a hiatus and it was met with great enthusiasm.

The 2021 TCRW was different due to the pandemic and although the circumstances limited dining in its traditional sense, VTC committed to promoting community support of our local businesses, which was of upmost importance and urgency. Taking place January 22—31, 2021 Restaurant Week had two promotional components:

1. Promote any special discounts or special menu offerings provided by restaurants, wineries, bakeries, etc. who wish to offer one during Restaurant Week.
2. Highlight and feature international dishes offered by local restaurants with the “Dine Local While Dreaming Global” theme.

For the 2021 event, the approach was to promote restaurants in general and take-out options during the course of the week. Due to travel restrictions, promotions were kept to local radio and media outlets and on VTC’s website and social and digital platforms. Tuolumne County Restaurant Week 2022 will take place January 21st through 30th.





## Wander Freely

The Wander Freely campaign continues through 2020/2021, and will continue to pivot as needed to welcome visitors during periods when travel is allowed throughout the state. The goal of the campaign is to inspire family, friend and solo getaways primarily focused on the region's many outdoor experiences, wide-open spaces and charming towns.

By utilizing owned, earned and paid media channels, the campaign targeted nearby drive market residents in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Greater Sacramento area. While the primary objective was to increase visitation, travel spending, and overnight stays, the messaging needed to be sensitive to what the audiences had been through. The creative inspired people through imagery and copy that evoked emotion and communicated the authentic personality of the destination and its key assets.

**PLAN YOUR TRIP**  
 TRAVEL ADVISORY: Thank you for exercising responsibility while visiting Tuolumne County. Click here to learn more about healthy travel practices for your trip.

**FRESH AIR WITH A FRESH PERSPECTIVE**  
 Tuolumne County welcomes you to Wander Freely to realize your dreams, breathe clean air, enjoy scenic views and an unbeatable backdrop for a lifetime of memories. Click here to learn more about healthy travel practices for your trip.

**GOOD AS GOLD**  
 A new adventure on wheels. Enjoy the scenic views of Tuolumne County from the comfort of your car. Discover the beauty of the region from the comfort of your car. Click here to learn more about healthy travel practices for your trip.

**LIFE IN FULL BLOOM**  
 Enjoy your favorite spots of the region in Tuolumne County. Discover the beauty of the region from the comfort of your car. Click here to learn more about healthy travel practices for your trip.

**TAKE IT SLOW**  
 Enjoy your favorite spots of the region in Tuolumne County. Discover the beauty of the region from the comfort of your car. Click here to learn more about healthy travel practices for your trip.

**STAY HEALTHY**  
 Tuolumne County offers a variety of outdoor activities and scenic views. Click here to learn more about healthy travel practices for your trip.

**REQUEST A FREE INSPIRATION TRAVEL GUIDE**

**THE MOMENT YOU REALIZE YOU'RE In The Moment**

Wander Freely

Discover the beauty of nature in Tuolumne County. Wander Freely to enjoy the scenic views of the region from the comfort of your car. Click here to learn more about healthy travel practices for your trip.

Visit [TCToday.com/AdventureSports](http://TCToday.com/AdventureSports)

**STAND IN A PLACE WHERE Time Stands Still**

Wander Freely

Discover the beauty of nature in Tuolumne County. Wander Freely to enjoy the scenic views of the region from the comfort of your car. Click here to learn more about healthy travel practices for your trip.

Visit [TCToday.com/AdventureSports](http://TCToday.com/AdventureSports)

**STEP OUT AND Step Back in Time**

Wander Freely

Discover the beauty of nature in Tuolumne County. Wander Freely to enjoy the scenic views of the region from the comfort of your car. Click here to learn more about healthy travel practices for your trip.

**THE MOMENT YOU REALIZE You're in the Moment**

Wander Freely

Discover the beauty of nature in Tuolumne County. Wander Freely to enjoy the scenic views of the region from the comfort of your car. Click here to learn more about healthy travel practices for your trip.

**Find the Escape YOU'VE BEEN MISSING**

Wander Freely

Discover the beauty of nature in Tuolumne County. Wander Freely to enjoy the scenic views of the region from the comfort of your car. Click here to learn more about healthy travel practices for your trip.



## NEW FOR 2020/2021

### Sustainability

In January 2021 VTC created a fluid document that staff continues to expand upon to keep sustainability top of mind for everything from campaigns to social media. Sustainability and tourism are intertwined, and as a DMMO we take our role seriously in helping to ensure residents and visitors have a beautiful and resilient community and environment for generations to come. The plan is based on five pillars:

1. Protect the environment and cultural/historical resources, and regional identity
2. Protect and enhance resident quality of life
3. Foster a vibrant economy
4. Provide for an excellent visitor experience
5. Ensure enjoyment by future generations

From in-office initiatives such as adding more plants, practicing proper recycling procedures, and sharing ongoing “Too Cool To Trash” ideals with visitors to bigger, more visible aspects like a billboard in Riverbank featuring “Leave No Trace” in Tuolumne County messaging, we are not only sharing the message but living by it. VTC partnered with the Pinecrest Expedition Academy to plant a new grove of giant sequoias in Kennedy Meadows this spring. Efforts extend across social media by sharing how to be responsible in nature and educating followers on the importance of preservation for local flora and fauna. It is also woven into the Wander Freely campaign with standards of dispersing crowds and encouraging visitors to adventure responsibly.

VTC also participates in discussions for Tuolumne County’s Climate Action Plan and keeps in close contact with the Office of Emergency Services to ensure VTC’s messaging for a sustainable future and fire safety aligns with Tuolumne County Government.



### Tuolumne County Art Week

Tuolumne County Art Week, an inaugural celebration of arts of all kinds and the creativity that is deeply rooted in Tuolumne County kicked off in April 2021, coinciding with California’s Arts, Culture, & Creativity Month and took place during the week of April 10th–18th. Local artists, art-related organizations and businesses that promote the arts were invited to participate in the promotional campaign. Throughout the week, there were specials, deals, activities, demonstrations, and more offered by local artists, art shops and galleries which VTC promoted on the website and on social media.

VTC consulted with Tuolumne County Arts and VTC Board Member, Judy Grossman to get the event off the ground. We look forward to offering this event in 2022 with the anticipation for greater participation during a non-pandemic time.



### Wander Locally

As California and Tuolumne County went into more restrictive levels of operations and eventually lockdown in the fall, VTC shifted the Wander Freely campaign to Wander Locally through the holiday season and into January. The goal of the Wander Locally campaign was to encourage local residents to support local businesses. This campaign included geofenced advertising promoting shopping small and shopping at local businesses, ordering take-out and delivery from restaurants, and booking staycations (while lodging was open). VTC presented weekly local gift card giveaways on social media where gift certificates were purchased by VTC and awarded to only local winners from October 22nd—January 5th.

In December alone, VTC’s organic social media posts featured 37 businesses in Tuolumne County encouraging local support. We encouraged residents to use the #WanderLocally hashtag throughout this time.



### Trail Heads Program

According to research conducted on behalf of VTC by SMG Consulting, hiking is the number one outdoor activity in Tuolumne County!

Designed to help people enjoy the outdoors, the Trail Heads program positions Visit Tuolumne County as a resource for hikers, bikers and all trail enthusiasts. This idea brings in a stronger sense of community and creates brand loyalty for visitors, encouraging repeat visits. Sustainability messaging is also woven in encouraging people to stay on trails and leave no trace. The program consists of three parts:

- Collateral – there are hundreds of trails, so to make the selection not so overwhelming, a one-sheet digital flyer was developed that highlighted 12 trails, utilizing icons to help identify the type of activities the trails allow (hiking, biking, equestrian). This also works as an optional lead capture tool allowing VTC to obtain contact information of interested people who want to download the piece, further segmenting the organic database and increasing the number of contacts. It is also available to all VTC members to share.
- Landing Page – integrates the All Trails platform into the landing page to provide that interactive experience. Contact forms are included so people can show “proof” of their trail completion in order to receive a virtual badge.
- Badges – As people complete trails and complete the form on the landing page, they are emailed the corresponding badge, encouraging them to plan their next trip and trail experience. VTC also encourages trail users to share on social media, tag Visit Tuolumne County and use the VTC Facebook profile image frames developed for the Trail Heads program.





## Podcast

In May of 2021 VTC launched a Follow Me in Tuolumne podcast. The aim is to give listeners an in-depth look into the people who make Tuolumne County our favorite place. While podcasting has lower audience levels than traditional platforms, they are some of the most engaged as they are willing to spend 20–30 minutes listening. The demographic of VTC's listeners is largely male, which is unique as most social media and digital content skews female. To-date there are two episodes with monthly ones scheduled. We are excited to interview more unique members of the community.



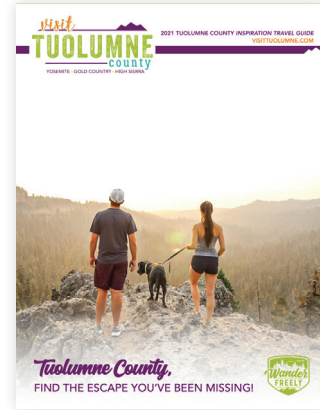
## MARKETING PROGRAMS

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

### VTC Annual Vacation Planner

The 2021 Tuolumne County Inspiration Travel Guide (formerly known as the Tuolumne County Vacation Planner) was reduced in page count and in physical printed copies.

- Printed 50,000 copies:
  - Distribution in Bay Area: 30,000 at BART stations, Peet's Coffee houses, Whole Foods stores and other highly trafficked locations.
  - 5,000 to California Welcome Centers at Pier 39 in San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland International Airports.
  - 5,000 to National Park Trips Media for distribution in their Yosemite information fulfillment package.
  - 10,000 distributed at travel and trade shows, in visitor center and to VTC members for distribution, plus fulfillment to leads generated by publications in which we advertise.
- An additional 10,000 copies were ordered in June for distribution and lead fulfillment.
- Digital version available **online**.



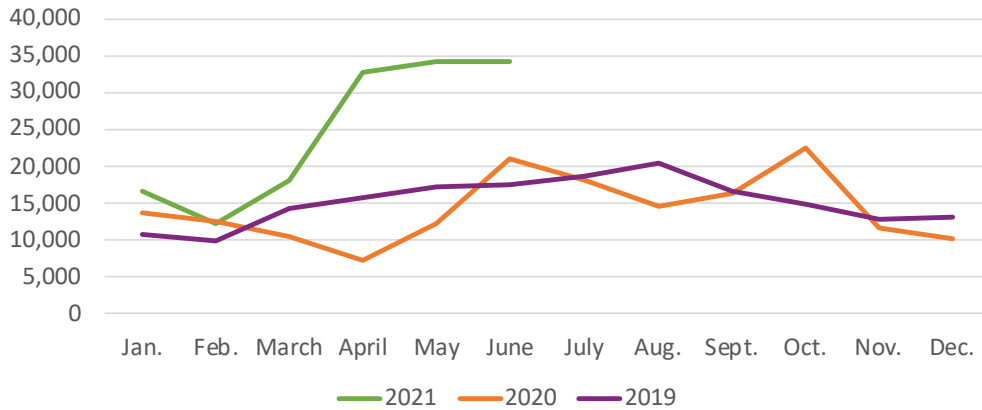
The DMO Visitor Guide Readership and Conversion Study, in which Visit Tuolumne County was a participant, just concluded with preliminary results showing that visitors guides remain relevant to those researching destinations and planning trips. In general, attractions, maps, and travel tips are at the top of the list when it comes to content sought by readers. The full report with Visit Tuolumne County's specific data will be available in Fall 2021.



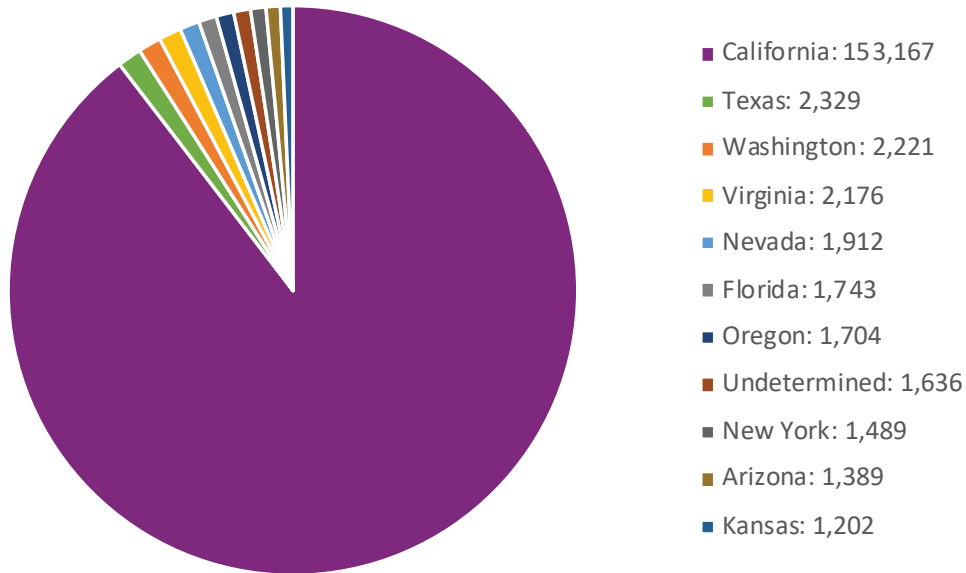
**Website**

Many of VTC’s marketing initiatives are built to drive potential visitors to the VTC website where they will be inspired to take a trip to Tuolumne County, find things to do, and find and book places to stay. Prior to the pandemic, website traffic continued to grow year over year. Although the beginning of the 2020–2021 year was off to a slow start, website traffic as of June 30th was pacing 58% higher than in 2019.

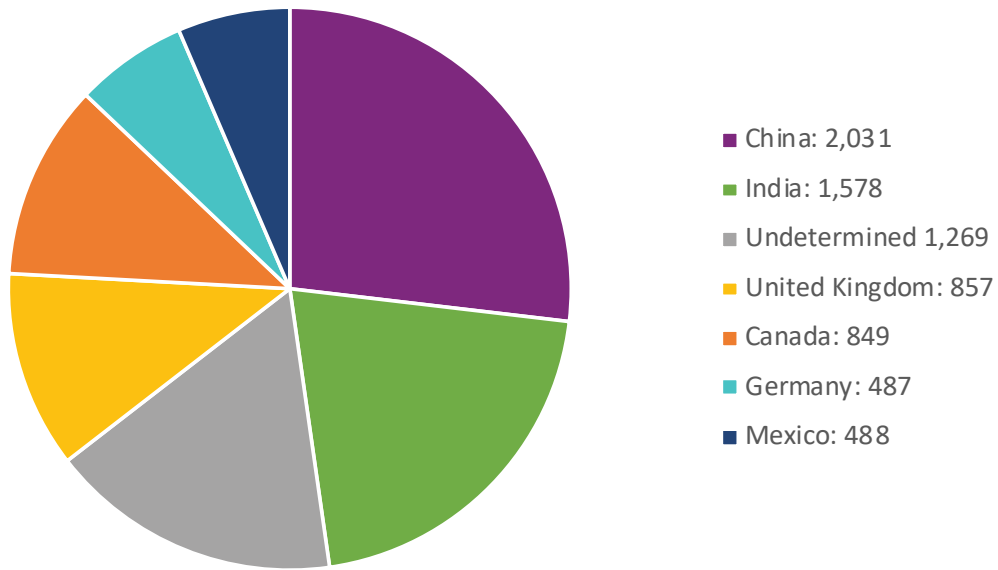
**Website Traffic Comparison: 2019, 2020, 2021 Calendar Years (# of Sessions)**



**Top 10 State Origins for Web Users**



**Top 6 International Origins For Web Users**



**More Notables**

In 2020/2021 VTC partners had over 89,000 pageviews on the VTC site and over 20,000 referrals to their own sites.

**Visitor Guide Requests:**

Change 2020/2021 compared to 2018/2019 Fiscal Year

- Visitor Guide requests increased 85%
- Online Visitor Guide views increased 8%

**Top 5 states for requests pre COVID-19 in 2020/2021 (VTC website):**

1. California
2. Arizona
3. Texas / Illinois (Tied)
4. Florida

**Top 5 states for requests post COVID-19 (VTC website):**

1. California
2. Michigan
3. Texas
4. Florida / Arizona (Tied)



**Booking Referral Platform**

The booking referral platform through JackRabbit/Simpleview is a segment of the VTC website that allows visitors to find lodging based on dates, towns and areas. The booking is completed through the lodging properties own booking software and is truly a book direct option for visitors. VTC continues to incur the entire cost of this platform as a benefit to its lodging members.

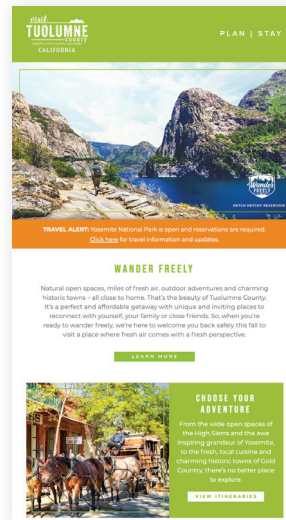
- Generated 11,673 referrals to Tuolumne County lodging properties
- Estimated bookings: 366
- Estimated booking revenue: \$104,659
- Estimated ROI: 1,800%

**Consumer Emails**

Organic emails came to a halt in 2020 and distribution resumed in December 2020. Seven monthly consumer emails were sent December 2020 through June 2021 with a 20.3% average open rate.

Through the paid media campaign, two emails were sent out during open travel periods. Both emails performed well and met the industry benchmark of 2–2.5% clicks.

- October 2020 Email
  - Audience Size: 28,333
  - Views: 3,970
  - View %: 14.01%
  - Clicks: 675
  - Clicks %: 2.38%
  - Click to View %: 17%
- March 2021 Email
  - Audience Size: 28,334
  - Views: 4,127
  - View %: 14.57%
  - Clicks: 803
  - Clicks %: 2.83%
  - Click to View %: 19.46%





**Continued Advertising Partnerships**

*California Visitors Guide* (the official California Visitors Guide produced by Visit California)

- Full-page co-op print ad with partners OARS and Rush Creek and Evergreen Lodges
- Cooperative ad with Gold Country Visitors Association
- Generated 1,967 vacation planner requests/leads

*Yosemite Journal*

- Full-page ad in annual print publication (Circulation 100,000)
- Multiple Tuolumne County inclusive articles in the publication
- Dedicated Facebook posts
- Digital ads on MyYosemitePark.com and in e-newsletters
- California Road Trip Giveaway included overnight stays provided by the Sonora Inn, Rush Creek Lodge and McCaffrey House B&B
  - Dedicated email on behalf of Yosemite Journal to giveaway entry leads (8,316)
  - Giveaway Promotional Facebook posts (3) generated:
    - 82,191 impressions
    - 2,079 engagements
    - 4,412 link clicks
- Program generated 4,000+ leads for VTC to add to direct email database

*Oh, Ranger!* Yosemite National Park Guide (Circulation 290,000, readers: 1.1 million)

- Half-page print ad



**Advertising in Periodicals and Other Internet Publications**

*Where Traveler San Francisco*

- 3x – 1/3 page print Premium Square print ads

*Adventure Sports Journal*

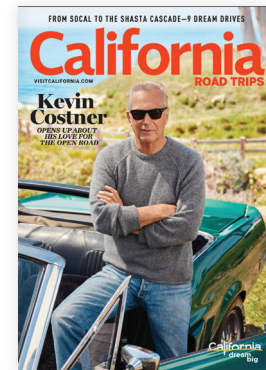
- 5x – Full-page ads (Circulation 45,000 per issue)
- Co-op ads featuring 10 VTC members

*California Road Trips*

- Stand alone and inserted into July editions of *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Travel+Leisure* and *Parents* magazines.
- Full-page print ad (Circulation 1,000,000)
- 620k digital media impressions

*Business View Magazine*

- Columbia Airport Feature ¼ page ad (readers: 840,000)



**Regional Advertising**

- Explore Sonora Magazine
- Discover Highway 120 Magazine
- MyMotherLode.com
- Union Democrat “Thank You Frontline Heroes” special publication
- Tuolumne County Transit bus back wrap



**Television**

- KRON4
  - 8x :60-sec segments
  - 25x :15-sec promos
  - 250k digital impressions on kron4.com
  - 2x social tags on Facebook
  - 1x dedicated paragraph in station newsletter
- KXTV
  - 90x :15-sec spots
  - 19x :30-sec spots
  - Sponsorship on Bartell’s Backroads 1x/week

**Radio**

- KOIT-FM
  - 47x :30-sec spots
  - Added Value – 25% in bonus spots
- KFBK-AM
  - 107x :30-sec spots
  - Added Value – 20 bonus spots, matched streaming schedule

**Travel Show Presence**

In the past members of VTC attended Travel and Adventure Shows in the Bay Area and Los Angeles which allows VTC to go straight to potential visitors in drive markets and connect with them one-on-one to provide personalized trip ideas. VTC was also able to talk with past visitors, hear their stories and spark a desire to visit Tuolumne County again. With the in-person spring shows postponed until October 2021, this past year VTC partnered with the Gold Country Visitors Association to attend two virtual Travel and Adventure Shows, where we were able to chat and video chat with show attendees.



**Social Media**

Overall, the goal of social media this year was to create an engaged audience who would feel safe and excited about visiting Tuolumne County through authentic content, while fostering local pride and support of local businesses. VTC started the fiscal year focusing on travel inspiration but with an emphasis on planning trips for later. As California and Tuolumne County began to reopen, VTC transitioned messaging to encourage visits as locals and visitors felt safe to do so.

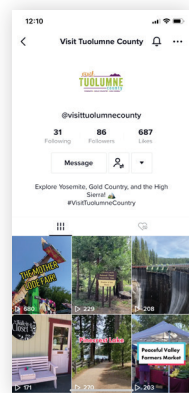
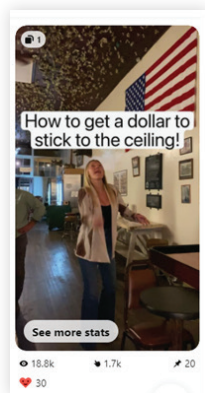
The primary highlights on social media were an extension of VTC’s overall goals and campaigns. Social posts featured wide open outdoor spaces, people and groups in limited numbers, and showcased the stories and people behind the businesses of Tuolumne County.

Other focuses were sharing more diverse and inclusive photos, sharing educational pieces on local flora, fauna, and wildlife to help followers gain a greater appreciation for protecting, and preserving Tuolumne County’s environment, promoting fire safety, and sharing hidden gems to help disperse crowds.

This year (September 2020–Present) VTC started releasing monthly social media insights to keep better track of the trends and changes across VTC’s social media channels and to share with partners.

- Instagram: 11,942
  - 21% increase over 2020
- Facebook: 35,959
  - 109 follower increase from 2020 (this is not surprising as Facebook as a platform is not growing at the rate it did previous years)
- Twitter: 1,656
- Pinterest: 355
- MeetMe Instagram: 1,186
- MeetMe Facebook: 527
- Restaurant Week Facebook: 598
- \*New\* TikTok: 77

Total Social Media Followers: 52,300  
 Over 2.3 million organic impressions (Sept 2020—June 2021) across all platforms.



**Organic Social Media Campaigns**

- Wander Wednesday: A series which highlights businesses in Tuolumne County that were new or adapting to COVID-19 guidelines in innovative ways and transitioned to include highlights of hidden gems in the spring. There have been 23 business owners interviewed and even more businesses covered through roundups and videos. This was created to encourage locals to support local businesses and explore our own backyard while travel was limited. It continues to be an extremely popular series with locals.
- Gift Card Giveaways: Gift cards from local businesses were awarded to local residents throughout the holiday season October 22nd — January 5th to coincide with the Wander Locally campaign.
- Business of the Week: Highlighted over 17 businesses in the summer and fall that were members of the Tuolumne County Healthy Pledge.
- Micro Itineraries: Created by local influencers, photographers and artists to show what locals could do in a couple hours in different areas of Tuolumne County by exploring their own backyard during restricted travel.



**Social Media Looking Forward**

Posts that show less crowded situations and that feature hidden gems and the outdoors to help disperse crowds and offer safety messaging is a trend that came out of COVID-19 and will continue. Looking forward, VTC will highlight the businesses of Tuolumne County even more through interviews, photos and video. The idea is to support and highlight Tuolumne County’s resiliency to visitors all over the world through social media.

Another emerging trend is videos and “story” platforms, like TikTok, which are continuing to grow and gain traction. Followers across all social media and especially travel, are searching for authentic content. VTC is in a great position and has an extremely engaged audience who trusts our content. It is expected that traditional platforms like Facebook and Instagram will have to make some big changes to keep up with emerging platforms like TikTok and ClubHouse. Through professional development opportunities such as conferences, webinars, and research, VTC remains on the forefront of trends and all things social media.

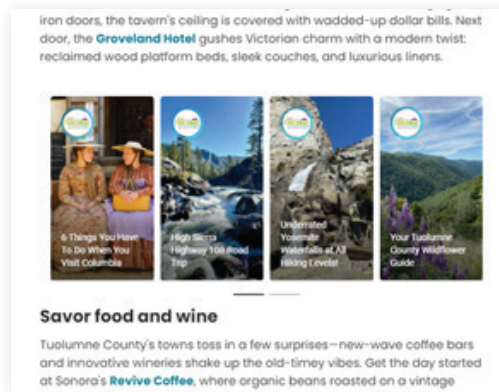
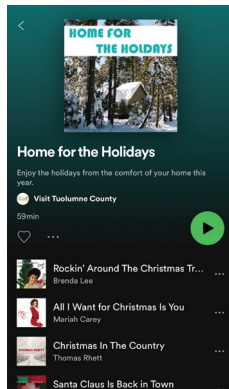


**Digital Content**

Blogs and Itineraries: 20 new blogs and many updated from previous years.

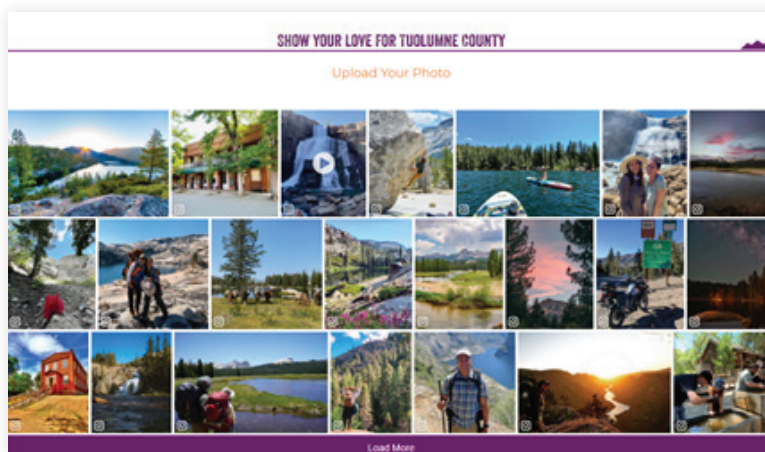
NEW Platforms for 2020/2021:

- Spotify: Playlists 13
- Podcast: Launched in May for California Travel and Tourism Month, 2 episodes to date.
- Visit California Travel Stories: Platform released in March 2021. VTC has created 13 stories. They have a 74.9% interaction rate.



**CrowdRiff**

VTC signed onto the CrowdRiff platform in February through a Visit California co-op. This makes it significantly easier to source UGC (User Generated Content) and gain and store the rights to them. It also provides access to a CrowdRiff gallery on VTC’s website (which has an average engagement of 70.2%), Visit California Travel Stories, and a Collector to use for photo contests or for followers to submit photos for VTC to use.



**Social Media and Digital Highlights**

- Growing VTC Pinterest from ~10k impressions per year to over 700K impressions for the year.
- On Instagram Stories we often have a view rate of +15% which is incredibly high. And VTC’s average Instagram post engagement rate is 6.74% while the industry standard for 2020 was 1.48%.
- VTC’s Instagram account was verified, which provides a blue check mark establishing the account as the official source of information for its field. With that comes a higher level of trust from followers and potential followers. Other perks include the account displaying higher when people search for similar accounts or themes and early access to special features.



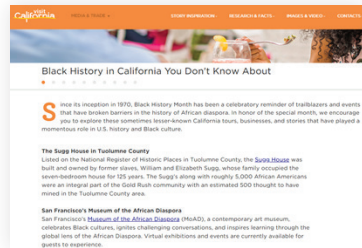
## MEDIA RELATIONS & TRAVEL TRADE

Visit Tuolumne County had to lay off a full-time Communications and Tourism Manager who handled media relations. During her lay off she took another position across the country and when it was time to start revamping and re-engaging with media, VTC hired Augustine Agency to help with domestic public relations. The contract with Black Diamond, VTC media representative in the UK, was put on hold for most of the year although media coverage on Tuolumne County still circulated in the UK keeping Tuolumne County top of mind. The Black Diamond contract was reactivated in November 2020.



### Augustine Summary

Augustine began public relations efforts for VTC in November 2020 with a goal of increasing awareness of the region as a safe, desirable, affordable and adventurous year-round destination. PR tactics were adjusted throughout the year based on everchanging COVID-19 developments, which included shifting from promoting inspirational content to encouraging safe travel as businesses were able to reopen.



### Media Relations

Prior to taking on all public relation efforts, Augustine developed and distributed a press release announcing the launch of the Wander Freely campaign on June 23, 2020. The campaign garnered national media attention leading to a feature on *Travel+Leisure* as well as an interview on KFBK radio in Sacramento.

Proactive pitches were developed to focus on travel trends including ways visitors could support Tuolumne County businesses from afar as well as story ideas to inspire visitors to plan a future trip to the region once leisure travel reopened. As the destination continued to welcome back travelers in 2021, focus shifted toward encouraging visitation by highlighting things to do, new businesses and supporting overall Wander Freely campaign efforts.

Media announcements throughout the fiscal year included a press release highlighting new businesses in Tuolumne County distributed on March 23, 2021, and a media alert distributed on April 28, 2021, followed by a post-event press release distributed on May 6, 2021, highlighting a partnership with Pinecrest Expedition Academy. A press release announcing the launch of the Trail Heads program was also distributed on May 18, 2021.

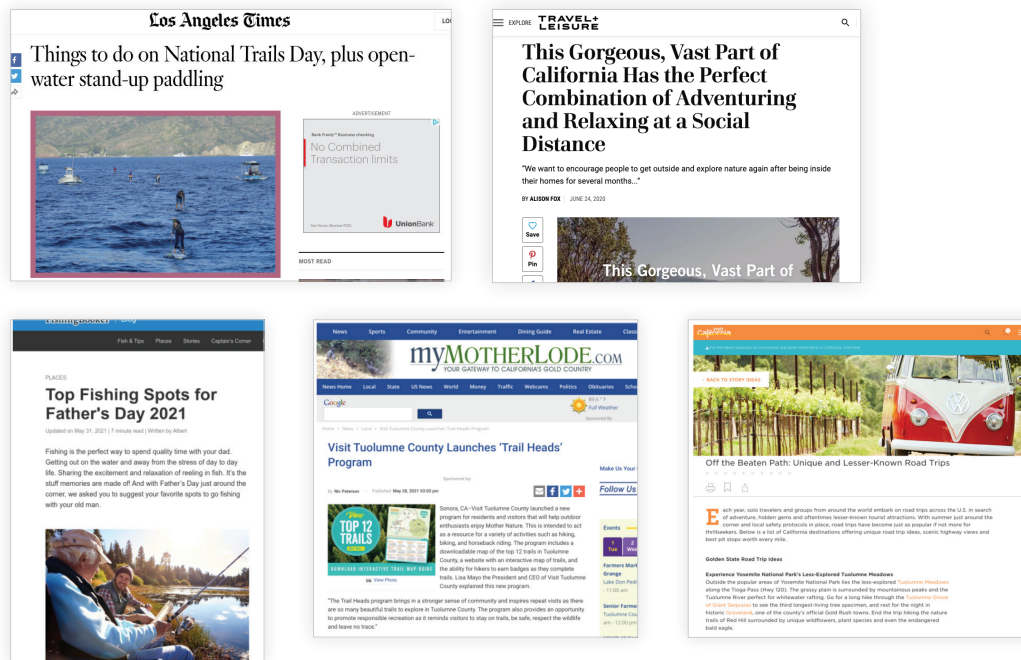
Overall proactive pitches throughout the year ran the gamut and highlighted outdoor experiences, wellness offerings, history, lodging, weddings and outdoor meeting spaces. To generate pitching content, Augustine collaborated with the VTC team on sending out regular calls for content to members, as well as facilitating meetings with businesses within the destination. Targeted outlets included a diverse list, such as travel/tourism, lifestyle, wedding and entertainment as well as drive-market media. Augustine also continued to partner with Visit California’s media relations team for relevant opportunities.



As media relations tactics combined with VTC’s overall marketing efforts, there were 132 media clips secured or flagged by Augustine including publications in *Travel+Leisure*, *Forbes*, *The Points Guy*, *Taste California Travel*, *Men’s Journal*, Visit California’s media and consumer channels, and other national, regional and local outlets.

**Key Results:**

- 4 Media Announcements
- 80+ Proactive Pitches
- 132 Earned/Flagged Media Clips
- 1.33B Potential Reach
- 4.51M Coverage Views



Media announcements/proactive pitches do not include a Wander Freely press release distributed in FY19/20.

The number of proactive pitches excludes the number of media contacts solicited with media announcements.

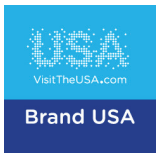
Potential Reach = Estimated total of monthly reach of secured coverage including digital, print circulation and broadcast views.

Coverage Views = Estimated total views a specific piece of coverage will receive during its lifetime.



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

VTC partners with regional, state, national and international marketing organizations. These partnerships allow VTC to leverage funding and capture additional markets while increasing Tuolumne County's outreach regionally and internationally. Over the years VTC team members have built strong relationships with each of these organizations. These relationships are key to Tuolumne County's tourism industry as they keep the county top of mind with partners regionally, statewide and around the world.



### Brand USA

#### Leisure

VTC partners with Brand USA to produce and distribute international content through various programs. In 2019, VTC signed on to the Global Inspiration Program, the Global Road Trips campaign in partnership with Visit California, the Destination at a Glance video series, and the multi-channel Canada digital campaign. None of the programs were able to begin due to COVID-19. These programs continue to be on hold, but will begin when travel from international markets resumes.

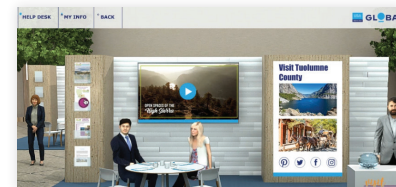
Total VTC investment: \$61,000

- The Global Inspiration Program is an award-winning integrated program that generates awareness of the USA. VTC participation includes an advertorial in the printed guide (465,000 copies in nine languages distributed to 40 countries), an accompanying e-guide, and highly targeted digital content.
- Visit California Global Road Trips is an itinerary-based series highlighting multiple stops and captures fun and memorable road trip ideas throughout California. Only open to 12 destinations. Market: Canada
- Participation in the Destination at a Glance video series includes short, energetic and candid vignettes, each focusing on a single experience of Tuolumne County (hiking in the Tuolumne Grove of Giant Sequoias, fly-fishing at Kennedy Meadows, and glamping throughout Tuolumne County). Videos were completed in January 2021 and can be viewed [here](#). Main Market: Canada; Secondary Market: Germany
- The digital media campaign is targeted for Western Canada includes a custom article on VisttheUSA.com hub, digital impressions, Facebook ads and an Expedia activation. Market: Canada

#### Travel Trade

The Brand USA Global Marketplace is a unique and innovative interactive digital platform designed for U.S. travel businesses to engage with travel trade from around the world in a 24/7 virtual setting. The platform was complete with a Main Stage for education, digital access for partners' marketing collateral and up-to-date resources for tour operators and other travel trade. Virtual exhibitor booths even included a fishbowl that collected business cards.

During the Global Marketplace VTC engaged with travel trade from the UK, Ireland, Spain, France and Italy. While there was no travel to or from those countries at the time of meetings, international travel trade plans out one-and-a-half to two years, so it is important to keep Tuolumne County at the forefront as travel agents plan their itineraries and packages.





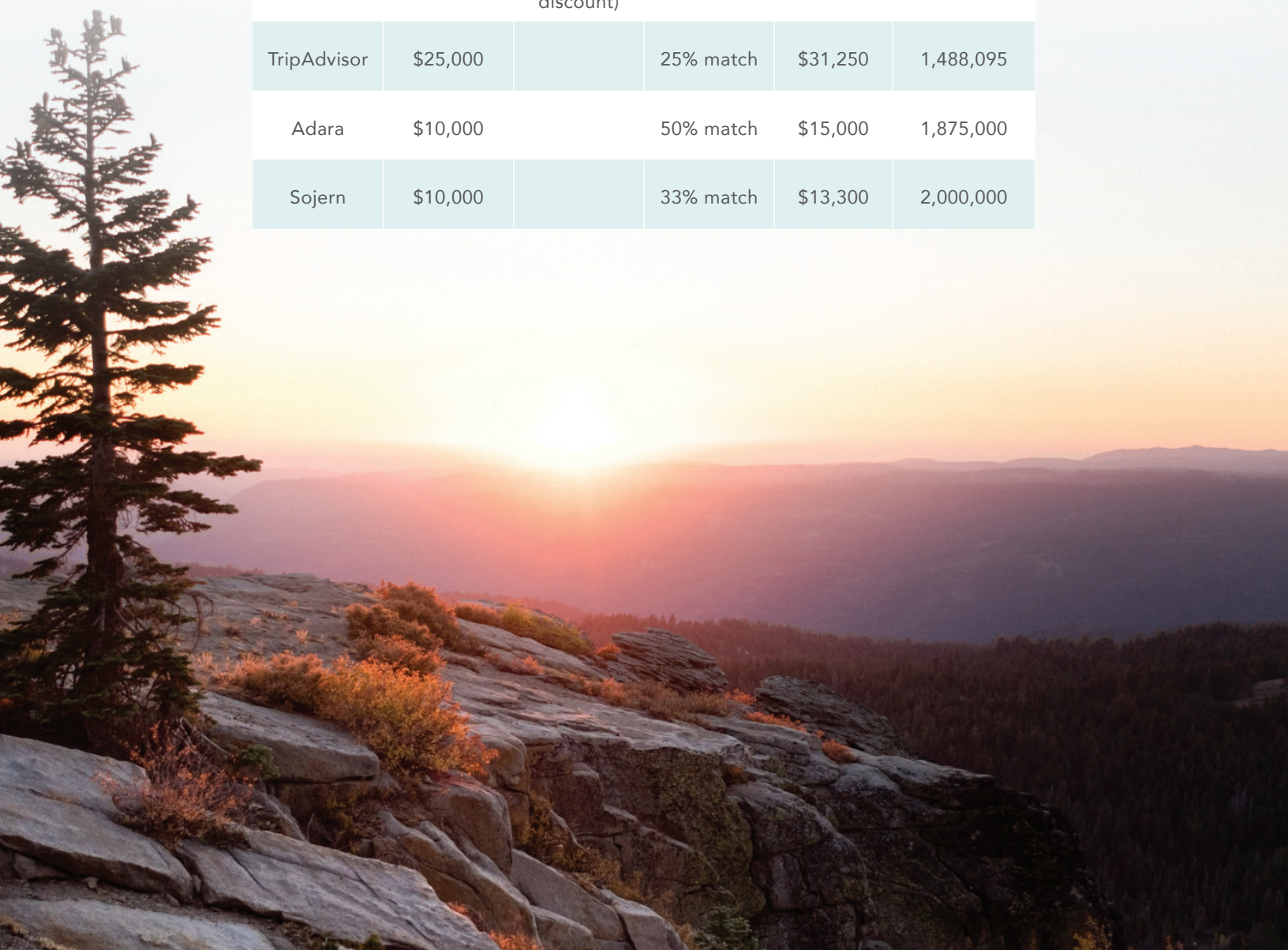
**Visit California**

A strategic partnership with Visit California provides exposure to Tuolumne County through multiple high-level familiarization (FAM) trips, increased media and influencer visits and publications used by Visit California’s domestic and international media teams. Plus, matching-fund co-op advertising opportunities, or discounted programs for leisure markets, allow VTC to further leverage its budget. VTC took advantage of several of these opportunities that were offered as part of COVID-19 recovery.

VTC submitted monthly media ideas to Visit California publications. For the 2020/2021 year, Visit California accepted and published 13 suggestions for Tuolumne County in its “Story Ideas” and seven suggestions in its “What’s New in California” story ideas.

VTC took advantage of the advertising and promotional opportunities offered through digital partners including Sojern, Adara and TripAdvisor. VTC also leveraged the discounted buy-in to CrowdRiff, a commonly used UGC platform.

Co-Op	VTC Investment	Visit California Investment	Vendor Investment	Value	Impressions
CrowdRiff	\$8,000	\$3,000 (20% discount)		\$11,000	
TripAdvisor	\$25,000		25% match	\$31,250	1,488,095
Adara	\$10,000		50% match	\$15,000	1,875,000
Sojern	\$10,000		33% match	\$13,300	2,000,000





### Gold Country Visitors Association (GCVA)

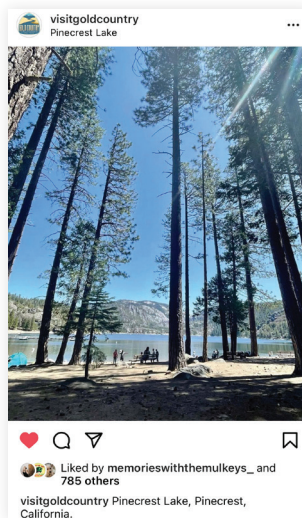
The Gold Country Visitors Association (GCVA) is one of 12 regional marketing groups designated by Visit California. Historically Visit California has provided rural regions with matching grant funds of up to \$60,000 annually. This allowed our region to engage as a group on several marketing programs. For 2020/2021 Visit California lost much of their funding as the pandemic hit but they were still able to provide \$15,000 in matching funds. This helped GCVA to accomplish the following projects:

- The GCVA decided to continue working with our social media coordinator to provide inspirational messaging and photos to followers during the pandemic. It was a way to keep Gold County out there in front of a smaller, California-based audience.
- The GCVA also participated in a cooperative ad for the *California Visitors Guide*. This was a pay-to-play opportunity, but also used some VCA funds to help cover the cost.

Additional projects for GCVA include:

- A new map of California's Gold Country/Highway 49 corridor
- Updated website
- Enlisting a public relations agency
- Pay-to-play social media drive campaign targeted at Bay Area and Sacramento

The funding for the GCVA comes from a Visit California grant that is applied for each year and from membership dues. VTC President & CEO, Lisa Mayo, continues to serve as President of GCVA.



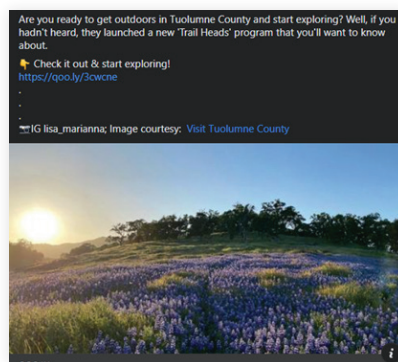


### High Sierra Visitors Council (HSVC)

The High Sierra Visitors Council (HSVC), one of 12 regional marketing groups designated by Visit California, traditionally fosters outreach in the French market, both on a travel trade and media level, however, the program was paused during COVID-19. HSVC also maintains an active online presence through its website, [www.californiahighsierra.com](http://www.californiahighsierra.com), along with blogs and social media posts, created by “Local Freshies,” highlighting High Sierra destinations.

In May 2021, VTC hosted a social media influencer @seekingthehorizon\_ on Instagram, which was in conjunction with other members of the HSVC. The content gathered in his two-day stay was used as part of a social media takeover in June on HSVC’s social media accounts.

The funding for the HSVC comes from a Visit California grant that is applied for each year and from membership dues.



### Yosemite Gateways

The Yosemite Gateways, not to be confused with Yosemite Gateway Partners, is made up of one representative from each of the Destination Marketing Organizations from Yosemite National Park’s four gateways: Tuolumne, Mono, Madera and Mariposa Counties. In the past the group has collaborated on messaging that included how to visit Yosemite and how to travel responsibly. This collaboration was done in an effort to help control over tourism in the park. This past year, while Yosemite Gateways did not have funds to do specific projects, VTC continued to work closely with one another as we monitored various crisis situations.

The effort is funded by Yosemite National Park.



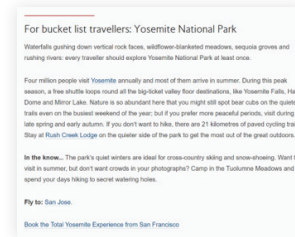


**Black Diamond**

The strategic partnership with Black Diamond gives Tuolumne County a strong presence in the UK and Ireland markets. VTC entered a third year working with Black Diamond’s public relations and travel trade teams and the fiscal year proved to be prosperous.

**Media Relations**

- 63 articles on Tuolumne County (view articles at [www.visittuolumne.com/in-the-news](http://www.visittuolumne.com/in-the-news))
- Circulation: 11,539,092
- Estimated Value: \$65,333



**Travel Trade**

Throughout COVID-19, Black Diamond continued to promote Yosemite’s Tuolumne County to the UK travel trade. The destination’s wide open spaces and adventure style travel lends itself well to the UK market, especially post pandemic.

Product development proved tricky with many members of tour operator staff being placed on furlough and resources not available to advance offerings. In fact, many tour operators have used this time to consolidate their product and in some cases removed destinations entirely.

Thankfully with Tuolumne County, we have seen some new product features with British Airways Holidays, USAirtours/TravelPlanners and Scott Dunn adding more less-congested destinations to their portfolios.

- Tour Operator Meetings: 80
- Agents Trained: 137
- Training Platform Completions: 193
- New Product Features: 3
- Trade Campaigns: 1

By being present in market throughout this fiscal year, Tuolumne County has stolen market share from those who haven’t. Going into 2021/22 VTC will see the benefits of this with new product features and further training opportunities.

**Yosemite’s Tuolumne County Training Portal**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK Government announced a furlough scheme that would see them cover the salaries of employees while workers were unable to work. Most UK tour operators and travel agents were able to furlough staff while lockdowns were in place, but during this time they were allowed to take part in training making it the perfect time to engage agents.

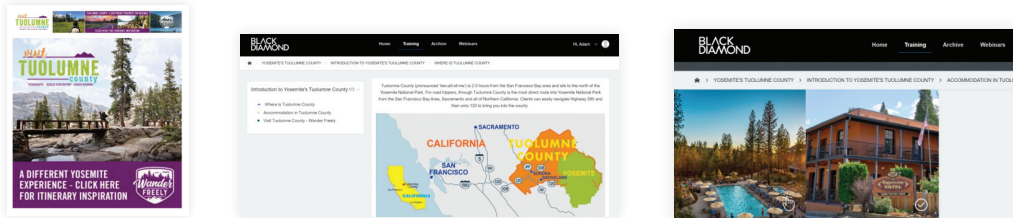
Black Diamond built a Yosemite’s Tuolumne County online training portal to direct agents to in order to learn more about the destination. By having an online portal, it allowed agents to complete the training at their own pace and come back to the modules when they had the time.



Results:

- 328 started the Tuolumne County course
- 193 agents completed the training

This portal was also used during California-themed webinars to highlight Yosemite's Tuolumne County to agents selling the USA. Feedback from these webinars were very good.



## Travel Gossip

Travel Gossip is a Facebook community of 25,000+ UK travel professionals who share ideas and talk about the news. The Facebook group gets high levels of engagement with industry peers assisting others with queries and asking advice.

Bruce Martin, the administrator of Travel Gossip wanted to capitalize on the group's success by launching his own news channel Travel Gossip News. The website and email service will focus on agent stories, peer to peer selling and destination information.

To capitalize on the launch, Black Diamond negotiated that Yosemite's Tuolumne County would be the prime sponsor. Tuolumne was given the lead banner on every news page and every lead banner on a daily email.

The creative focused around "A Different Yosemite Experience" enabling agents to get brand recognition as well as learn something about Tuolumne County. Agents were directed to the 2021 Inspiration Travel Guide as a call to action.

### Website

- 17,573 unique visitors
- 86,248 page views
- 1m 38s average time on site
- 3.77 pages per session

### Email

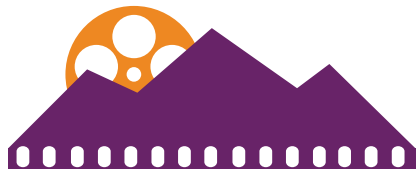
- Featured in 19 daily emails
- Sent to 9,300 per day
- 25% open rate
- 44,175 impressions

The campaign was meant to run for two weeks but Black Diamond negotiated a further three-week promotion as well as some editorial coverage.

## FILM TUOLUMNE COUNTY

Film Tuolumne County had a total of four film permits and more than three weeks of filming from July 2020 through June 2021. These permits included two feature films, a photoshoot and a documentary television show. Locations included Chinese Camp, Columbia State Historic Park, Sonora and the town of Tuolumne.

One feature film, *Lantern's Lane*, relocated its entire production to Tuolumne County and shot over three weeks, utilizing local businesses for food and locations. The production also followed strict safety guidelines due to COVID-19 and tested weekly at the hospital to keep the locals safe as well as the cast and crew. The movie was recently picked up for distribution in theaters and on streaming services, and is seeking international distribution to release by the end of the year.



## Tuolumne County FILM COMMISSION



## INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS

Visit Tuolumne County belongs to various industry associations, each with a specific purpose that is important to VTC. Purposes of these associations include organization and professional growth, marketing outreach opportunities, tour operator meetings, journalist meetings, film industry connections and industry advocacy. These associations include the following:

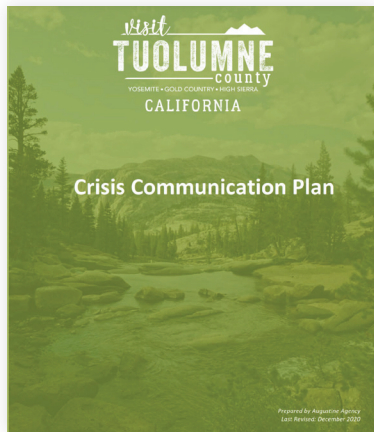
- California Film Commission
- California Travel Association
- Destinations International
- Destination Marketing Association of the West
- Meeting Planners International
- National Tour Association
- Public Relations Society of America
- TravMedia
- US Travel Association
- Visit the USA – UK and Ireland





## CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS & RESPONSE

While in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, VTC invested in resources and developed a new Crisis Communications Plan. It is a comprehensive evaluation of potential crises for the region, including a response plan for each crisis with steps specific to the onset of the crisis, what to do during a live crisis and evaluation post crisis. The plan also has a crisis tracker template to monitor responses in real time, outlines spokesperson and crisis communication team, media policies and procedures, prepared statements, sample news releases, email and social copy templates, key audiences and media contacts.



## COMMUNITY

### Community Sponsorships, Destination Development & Stewardship

Each year Visit Tuolumne County sets aside funds to sponsor community events that drive tourism and to support projects that support tourism-related activities, such as trail building. Many events did not take place in 2020, but are coming back strong in 2021. VTC is happy to assist in marketing and sponsoring these events or projects that promote or enhance tourism to Tuolumne County.

2021—Sonora Chamber of Commerce 2nd Saturday Art Night: \$3,000

2021—Sonora Chamber of Commerce Coffill Park Concerts: \$2,000

2020–2021—Twain Harte Chamber of Commerce Concert Series: \$1,350

2021—Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce Bronze Sponsorship: \$1,000

2021—Sierra Repertory Theatre Impossible Dream Fund: \$2,500

2021—#1pileatatime: \$1,000

2021—49er Festival Chili & Salsa Cook-Off, Groveland: \$2,500

### Community Involvement

- Lisa Mayo: Tuolumne County Historical Society Board of Directors, Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System Advisory Board, Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee, Tuolumne County Business Council Member, Sierra Repertory Theatre Board of Directors
- Jen Lopez: Yosemite Gateway Partners Board of Directors, Sonora Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Leadership Tuolumne County Executive Committee
- Bethany Wilkinson: Access Tuolumne Board of Directors



### Community Participation

In June 2020, VTC's marketing coordinator, Sarah Spoljaric hosted a Tuolumne County Trivia Night at Servente's Saloon in Sonora for locals to play and learn about Tuolumne County in a fun atmosphere. Nine teams participated and the event was very well received.

## CURRENTLY & LOOKING AHEAD

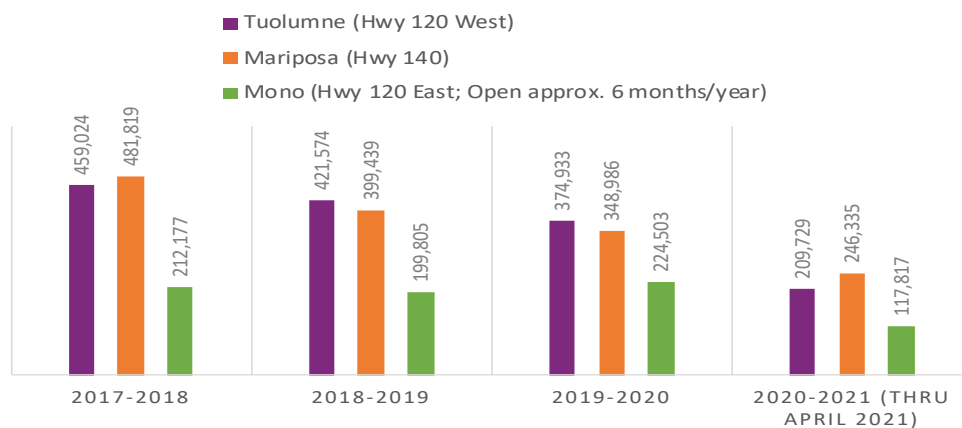
### Visitation

In the past it has been challenging to obtain actual numbers of visitors that come into the county. In spring of 2021, VTC hired the services of Madden Voyage which is an encompassing data resource. The system is still in the process of being set up, but very soon VTC will begin receiving data about visitors, their origins, travel patterns, plus visitor data of competing regions.

Yosemite National Park provides monthly data for each of the gateways.

### Traffic Entering Yosemite (NPS Traffic Count — number of vehicles)

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



### Membership

The partnerships formed with members enable VTC to engage with them on a number of levels. VTC is a strong advocate for Tuolumne County and works to support local businesses by bringing the world to Tuolumne County. Throughout the year, VTC provided its members with multiple cooperative marketing opportunities that help them market their business at little to no cost. VTC also provides educational opportunities, such as an Agritourism Summit held in February 2020, and advocates for the industry on statewide and national levels. Most recently VTC has been advocating alongside many other destination marketing organizations across the U.S. to obtain federal economic relief for the tourism industry due to the negative economic effects that COVID-19 has had on the tourism industry.



**Total members as of June 30, 2021 was 301 and the membership is diverse:**

- Art galleries
- Associations
- Attractions and parks
- Automotive services and gas stations
- Bars and saloons
- Marinas
- Business support services
- Casinos
- Catering
- Chambers of Commerce
- Charters services and tour companies
- Farmers' markets
- Festivals
- Financial services
- Floral businesses
- Gold panning providers
- Golf courses
- Guided hiking providers
- Guided recreation outfitters
- Health care providers
- Horseback riding
- Insurance agencies
- Laundromats
- Libraries
- Lodging:
  - Bed & Breakfast
  - Cabins
  - Camping/RV
  - Hotels/Resorts
  - Short-term rentals (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.) and vacation rentals
- Marketing services
- Media outlets
- Museums
- Photographers
- Places of Worship
- Real Estate agents
- Retail shops
- Restaurants
- Schools
- Special event venues and services
- Theatres
- Transportation providers
- Utility providers
- Wedding services
- Wellness
- Whitewater rafting outfitters
- Wine and cider producers and tasting venues
- Winter recreation providers



### More New and Upcoming Notables

- VTC President & CEO nominated onto Visit California's Calling all Californians Task Force. As of June 15, California legislature passed the budget bill which included \$95 million for Visit California's tourism marketing campaigns. The task force will have input and insight into how these marketing funds are being spent by Visit California.
- New public relations activations to include:
  - Sustainability Travel Tips
  - Top Instagrammable Locations
  - Digital Media Kit
  - Consumer-facing MAT release
- Meeting and Event Planning Guide: The 'bleisure' market is where it's at. Combining business and leisure, Tuolumne County is prime for welcoming small meetings and groups. Meeting planners are relying on CVBs and DMMOs more than ever to provide accurate information as there are so many varying restrictions by jurisdictions as we continue to come out of COVID-19. Planners are looking for planning guides that outline all properties with available meeting and event space to help them know what to expect before their clients visit. A new Tuolumne County Meeting and Event Planning Guide was designed including available venues, team building activities, responsible and sustainable travel tips, things that can be done in advance of a trip to prepare, and information on how best to get to Tuolumne County from key airports and major cities. It also includes a list of public transportation options while in the County. The guide will be used by meeting planners as well as those looking to plan leisure events such as weddings, providing a resource of everything they would need to know to plan a successful event in 2021 and beyond. This helpful tool that all lodging properties and event venues can use, will be available online and shared by VTC to all partners and meeting/event planner contacts this summer.
- In November 2021 Visit Tuolumne County will host the Outdoor Writers Association of California (OWAC) Fall Conference. This is an opportunity to show off Tuolumne County and all that is new since last hosting this conference in 2014. VTC expects 30–40 travel writers to descend on Tuolumne County for two to three days, exploring and participating in a variety of activities that they will then write about. In exchange for hosting the conference, VTC will receive media coverage on several platforms along with photos and video of their time here. VTC looks forward to welcoming OWAC back to Tuolumne County.

## MANAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES

Visit Tuolumne County follows industry and business best practices. To this end, VTC is affiliated with the following professional organizations:

- California Film Commission
- California Travel Association
- Destinations International
- Destination Marketing Association of the West
- Meeting Planners International
- National Tour Association
- US Travel Association
- Visit California

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

In 2019 VTC renewed its Destination Management Accreditation Program (DMAP) designation through Destinations International. This program serves as a visible industry distinction that defines numerous quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management. In addition, VTC has an independent financial audit or review annually conducted by a Certified Public Accountant.



## VISIT TUOLUMNE COUNTY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The all-volunteer Visit Tuolumne County Board of Directors is made up of tourism industry professionals, business owners and/or business leaders from throughout Tuolumne County. Board positions for lodging members are defined by Supervisorial Districts. Each District has a lodging representative, with the two largest lodging Districts (3 and 4) having two lodging representatives. The VTC Board also has seats for tourism attractions, restaurants, retail shopping and two at large members.

Non-voting representatives from the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors, the Sonora City Council, the Tuolumne County Business Council, Yosemite National Park and the U.S. Forest Service also regularly attend and give updates and input at Board meetings.

### **2020/2021 Visit Tuolumne County Board of Directors:**

Chair – Mark Truppner, Clarke Broadcasting

Vice Chair – Katie Dunn, District 1, The Carriage House on Barretta, Airbnb

Treasurer – Katie Fromm, Dodge Ridge Ski Area

#### **Directors:**

District 2 – Launa Valente, Lazy Z Resort

District 3 – Amanda Silacci, Black Oak Casino Resort

District 3 – Stephanie McCaffrey, McCaffrey House Bed & Breakfast

District 4 – Teri Marshall, Evergreen Lodge and Rush Creek Lodge

District 4 – Kathy Hakl, Best Western PLUS Sonora Oaks Hotel & Conference Center

District 5 – Rhiannon Montgomery, Central Valley District, California State Parks

Betsy Hurst-Younger, Century 21 Wildwood Properties

Judy Grossman, Brush and Cork

### **2021/2022 Visit Tuolumne County Board of Directors:**

Chair – Katie Dunn, District 1, The Carriage House on Barretta, Airbnb

Vice Chair – Judy Grossman, Brush and Cork

Secretary/Treasurer – Stephanie McCaffrey, District 3, McCaffrey House Bed & Breakfast

#### **Directors:**

District 2 – Launa Valente, Lazy Z Resort

District 3 – Alison Daniels, Century 21 Wildwood Properties

District 4 – Teri Marshall, Evergreen Lodge and Rush Creek Lodge

District 4 – Kathy Hakl, Best Western PLUS Sonora Oaks Hotel & Conference Center

District 5 – Rhiannon Montgomery, Central Valley District, California State Parks

Zac Broxham, Local Collective

Jeff Hauff, Dodge Ridge Ski Area/Dodge Ridge Campgrounds

Ryan Reis, Don Pedro Recreation Agency

Scott Viets, Sierra Repertory Theatre

## VISIT TUOLUMNE COUNTY TEAM

The Visit Tuolumne County Team has gone through major changes this year. While some of the team members listed below are no longer with us due to being laid off because of COVID-19, the commitment to our mission and to our community remains strong.

**Visit Tuolumne County Team** (as of beginning of 2020/2021 year):

**Full Time:**

Lisa Mayo, CDME, President & CEO

Jennifer Lopez, Marketing Manager

Sarah Spoljaric, Marketing Coordinator

**Part Time:**

Anna Davies, Special Programs Coordinator

Bethany Wilkinson, Film Liaison

Diane Rock, Visitor Services

Richard Haratani, Visitor Services

Monique Holcomb, Administrative Assistant

**Contract:**

Ginger Malatesta, Bookkeeper



## COVID-19 RESPONSE TIMELINE

Throughout the pandemic VTC shared updates and orders from Tuolumne County Public Health as well as the County's Innovation and Business Assistance Department. VTC continues to do this as appropriate.

### 2020

#### March

March 12: VTC requests vendors to pause all digital, TV and radio marketing (coinciding with Tuolumne County government asking visitors not to come).

March 13: VTC headquarters and visitors center in Sonora closes. VTC team begins working from home.

March 17: VTC pauses travel tips and planning ideas on social media and begins promoting "do at home" activities that are reminders of Tuolumne County (watching movies filmed here, coloring pages, virtual tours, etc.) plus promoting pertinent information.

March 18: VTC releases "How to Visit Tuolumne County Virtually" press release.

March 19: Governor Newsom issues statewide stay at home order.

March 20: Yosemite closes to all visitors.

March 23: VTC begins COVID-19 resource page for industry businesses and the "Open for Business" page on the VTC website to inform residents of open businesses.

March 26: Press release from Tuolumne County Public Health: Visitors be mindful and avoid travel into Tuolumne County.

March 27: Joint press release from Tuolumne County and City of Sonora requesting visitors delay travel plans until state order is lifted. Acknowledges essential travel.

#### April

April 3: Dr. Sergienko issues order for all short-term lodging to only house essential travelers, those who require emergency shelter, and for COVID-19 mitigation and containment measures.

April 20: VTC begins providing the weekly Destination Analysts Travel Sentiment Report Index information to members and community organizations.

April 22: VTC hires Augustine Agency to create a recovery campaign "Wander Freely" to propel Tuolumne County to the forefront of travelers as they begin to travel again.

April 30: VTC hosts update and check in call for members. Supervisor Rodefer and Augustine Agency were available for comments and questions.

#### May

May 6: California Tourism Month and National Travel and Tourism Week. 2019 Travel Impact data is released.

May 7: California Department of Public Health releases operations guidance for 17 industries including lodging, food service and retail.

May 18: Yosemite National Park presents draft reopening plan.

**June**

June 8: After consultations with acting Tuolumne County Public Health Officer, Dr. Ortiz and Michelle Jachetta, VTC launches voluntary Tuolumne County Healthy Pledge program in preparation for reopening.

June 11: Yosemite begins phased reopening, including starting day-use reservation system through October 31.

June 12: Public Health Officer Dr. Ortiz gives green light for lodging, camping and some other sectors to open with adaptations.

June 14: Paid search marketing restarts.

June 23: Wander Freely recovery campaign launches (digital, TV, radio and paid social media).

**July**

July 3: VTC requests vendors to pause all digital, TV, and radio marketing once again in response to significant increase in cases in Tuolumne County.

July 9: VTC reinforces Tuolumne County is Too Cool to Trash campaign on social media as litter and trash increase on public lands.

July 21: VTC begins Business of the Week on social media, one of our initiatives to promote shopping locally.

July 29: VTC introduces Wander Wednesdays social media campaign as a shop, experience, dine locally initiative focusing on new businesses and adapting businesses.

**August**

August 5: Tuolumne County Lodging Association reforming.

August 28: Blueprint for a Safer Economy released.

**November**

November 17: Tuolumne County moves to most restrictive Purple Tier of the Blueprint for A Safer Economy.

November 20: VTC develops an online shopping page to promote shopping locally from home. Open to any Tuolumne County business, VTC invited businesses to sign up.

November 23: VTC begins Wander Locally campaign to encourage residents to shop, dine and stay locally for the holiday season.

**December 2020**

VTC's Wander Locally digital media campaign continues.

December 3: Governor Newsom issues new stay-at-home order.

December 28: VTC releases #Tuolumne Together Facebook profile frame.

December 29: VTC resumes sending monthly consumer emails featuring planning for a future visit and the Tuolumne County Healthy Pledge.

**2021****January**

VTC's Wander Locally digital media campaign continues.

January 7: VTC begins reminders for responsible winter recreation on social media.

January 22–31: VTC Hosts Tuolumne County Restaurant Week.

January 26: National Plan for Vacation Day.

**February**

VTC's Wander Locally digital media campaign continues.

February 8: Yosemite National Park reinstates reservation system through February 28th as a safety measure during Horsetail Fall phenomenon.

February 11: VTC releases first micro-itinerary.

**March**

March 14: Tuolumne County transitions from Purple Tier to Red Tier. Paid search campaign resumes.

March 31: Tuolumne County transitions from Red Tier to Orange Tier. Wander Freely campaign components such as television, online television, social media ads, etc. resume.

**April**

VTC's Wander Freely digital media campaign continues.

April 6: Governor Newsom announces projection that California business restriction will end on June 15.

April 10–18: VTC hosts Tuolumne County Art Week.

**May**

VTC's Wander Freely digital media campaign continues.

California Tourism Month; 1st week is National Travel and Tourism Week.

May 1: VTC headquarters and visitor center in Sonora re-opens to the public.

May 21: Yosemite National Park reinstates day-use reservation system through September 30.

**June**

VTC's Wander Freely digital media campaign continues.

June 15: Blueprint for a Safer Economy Ends

June 30: Fiscal year ends.

## VISIT TUOLUMNE COUNTY VENDORS LIST

### Vendors

**Augustine Agency:** Augustine is an integrated marketing and communications agency that VTC hired as its Agency of Record in April 2020, initially to assist with COVID-19 recovery efforts. VTC is now in a yearly contract with Augustine and through this partnership campaigns such as Wander Freely, domestic public relations efforts, and programs such as Trail Heads have come to fruition. Augustine represents other DMOs such as the City of Napa and North Lake Tahoe.

**Mahk:** A counterpart of Augustine Agency, Mahk (formerly Richter7) is responsible for securing paid search, paid social and other digital advertising placements.

**Black Diamond:** Having international representation is something that Visit Tuolumne County has only recently been able to add to the scope of our work. It is so important to reach international travelers. They stay in destinations longer and therefore spend more money than domestic travelers.

International representation puts Tuolumne County on the world stage and we are able to compete with nearby destinations. Currently VTC's international outreach is with Black Diamond in the UK and Ireland.

Black Diamond has represented Visit Tuolumne County in the UK for three years. This has been a successful alliance as Tuolumne County has gained media coverage and market share from both the UK and Ireland that VTC otherwise would not have. Travel agents in these areas now have a much greater awareness of Yosemite National Park in relation to Tuolumne County. Black Diamond has been successful in training tour operators and travel agents to understand Tuolumne County's Highway 120 access to the park and also the myriad of activities and attractions that exist beyond the park in Tuolumne County. Additionally, media coverage helps the consumer to understand the area better. The Black Diamond contract was put on hold in April 2020 and restarted in November 2020.

**Drozian Webworks:** Drozian has been VTC's web development agency since 2016. Besides the website, Drozian provides VTC's CRM (our membership database), the new partner portal and also manages Search Engine Marketing, keeping the VTC website optimized to its fullest extent.

**Jack Rabbit/Simpleview:** Provides a platform housed on the VTC website for visitors to search for and book directly with VTC member lodging accommodations.

**Madden Voyage:** A destination intelligence platform tailored to VTC's needs to access previously difficult to secure travel and tourism data. Coming on this summer, the platform will provide the VTC team with marketing performance and insights, hotel and lodging insights, competitor data and more.

## Glossary

**Brand USA:** Essentially the Destination Marketing Organization for the United States, Brand USA works in close partnership with the travel industry to maximize the economic and social benefits of travel. These benefits include fostering understanding between people and cultures and creating jobs essential to the economy.

**DMMO:** Destination Marketing and Management Organization — Local tourism marketing companies involved in increasing tourism to a city, area or region and helping shape the destination as a visitor economy.

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

**Familiarization Tour (FAM):** A complimentary or reduced rate organized trip for tour operators, travel agents, travel writers, or other members of the travel trade for the purpose of educating and familiarizing them with the 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.

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

**IPW:** Formerly known as POW WOW – the largest international travel marketplace held in the United States sponsored by the US Travel Association.

**Leisure Travel:** Travel for recreation, educational, sightseeing, relaxing and other experiential purposes.

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

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

**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.

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

**Owned Media:** Any online property owned and controlled by a brand, such as a blog, website or social media channels.

**Earned Media:** Publicity gained through promotional efforts other than paid media advertising, which refers to publicity gained through advertising, or owned media, which refers to branding.

**Paid Media:** The purchase of ad inventory on a media channel or publisher site to broadcast your brand message and reach your target audiences.

TOURISM IS MORE IMPORTANT  
THAN EVER TO TUOLUMNE COUNTY.

*Thank You for your  
continued support!*



Visit Tuolumne County • 193 S Washington St.

Sonora, California 95370 • (800) 446-1333 • VisitTuolumne.com

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