

Visit Tuolumne County
2018/2019 Annual Report Highlights



Welcome!

What a year it's been for Visit Tuolumne County! Launching new marketing initiatives, overcoming challenges presented by fires and a government shutdown, gaining two international accreditations from Destinations International and a business name change are just some of the highlights of the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

Remaining strategic and on-trend are two of the guiding principles for our team. These principles have helped us to rise to the top of California's tourism industry as we continue to have greater recognition not just with visitors but within the industry. A robust tourism economy that has set new records exemplifies the industry's resiliency even in the most challenging of circumstances.

I could not be prouder of the VTC team. Each team member is an integral component of the success we have seen as a destination marketing organization. Tourism remains a strong, growing economic driver. Visitors spent \$265 million dollars in Tuolumne County in 2018, saving local households \$930 in annual taxes.

The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors and the Sonora City Council are to be commended for recognizing the importance of Tuolumne County's tourism industry by ensuring that VTC has the funding needed to enhance and grow our marketing programs in turn, growing our local economy. Visit Tuolumne County thanks our many members and partners both locally and regionally for the work they do to promote tourism and for supporting our efforts. And finally, a huge thank you to the all-volunteer Visit Tuolumne County Board of Directors who listen, provide insight and inspiration and truly give us the space to do our job.

We can't wait to share with you what's next!

Respectfully,

Lisa Mayo, CDME
President & CEO
Visit Tuolumne County

A Year in Review



Taste SF

Certifications

Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME):

This past year, Lisa Mayo, President & CEO of Visit Tuolumne County obtained her CDME accreditation from Destinations International. This professional development program is the tourism industry's highest individual educational achievement.

Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP)

Destinations International also offers the globally recognized DMAP. Achieving this accreditation is a visible industry distinction that defines quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management, and we are excited to announce that Visit Tuolumne County has achieved this designation!



See the full annual report, at
[VisitTuolumne.com/members](https://www.visittuolumne.com/members)

Name Change

Visit Tuolumne County invites and influences visitors to come to Tuolumne County. While Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau remains the official name, TCVB is now doing business as Visit Tuolumne County. Every time it is said or written it is an invitation and a call to action for people to visit. This is keeping on trend with destination marketing organizations around the world.

Amplified Advocacy

Having an active voice in tourism industry advocacy is important to ensure that decisions are made on local, regional, statewide and national levels to support the economic development that tourism provides. VTC is developing an advocacy plan, which includes communications with key stakeholders, community speaking engagements, participating in Cal Travel Advocacy Days at the state level and much more.



Between July of 2018 and June of 2019, a total of 9 film permits were issued (county, city and state park) for a total of 15 days of filming. Productions included short documentaries and commercials.

The film commission continues to build an audience on Instagram reaching over 800 followers. The film commission pushes into the new year with multiple permits for filming already.



Michael Battey

17 Community & Marketing Sponsorships

Visit Tuolumne County has funding designated for local groups for the purposes of promoting their events or other marketing campaigns that drive tourism and overnight stays to Tuolumne County ideally during midweek and off-peak times.



VTC partners with Tuolumne County Transit to provide the FREE Tuolumne Adventure Trolley on Saturdays, May through September. VTC underwrites passenger fares and advertises the service.

Tourism Showcase & Annual Dinner

This year Visit Tuolumne County brought back the traditional Annual Dinner, with a twist, during National Travel & Tourism Week and California Tourism Month. The event, attended by 90 people, was held at Hurst Ranch and featured a taco bar by C&C Taqueria. Highlights of the event included guest speaker, Lynn Carpenter of Visit California, Merritt Hopper with Under Canvas and a Visit Tuolumne County video showing highlights of the previous year. Special recognition was given to Stephen Willey for his 45 years as the owner of the National Hotel in Jamestown, being a founding member of the Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau and for completing his most recent term on the Visit Tuolumne County Board of Directors.

Media and Travel Trade Highlights

Media Relations

In the 2018-2019 year, public relations developed with an increase in media interest. This increase influenced more media trips to Tuolumne County and a spike in publications featuring Tuolumne County.

149+ domestic and international stories published to highlight Tuolumne County

VTC published 10 press releases



Visit California; Mason Trinca

VTC hosted 22 media and tour operator trips

Travel Trade

VTC increased presence with the travel trade industry at the following events:

Go West:
One-on-one meetings with 25 travel trade representatives

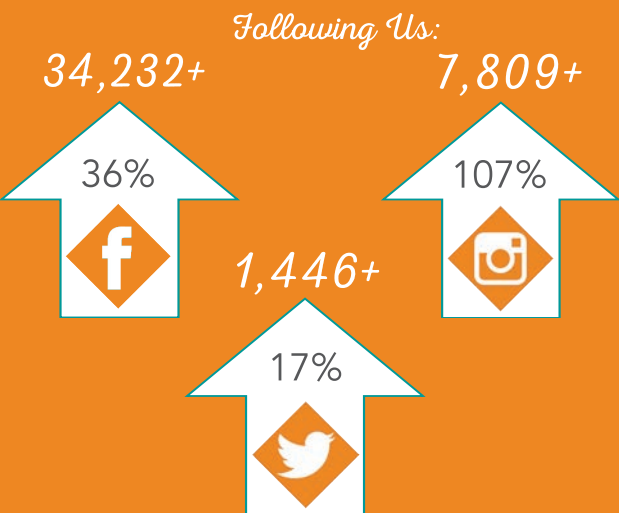
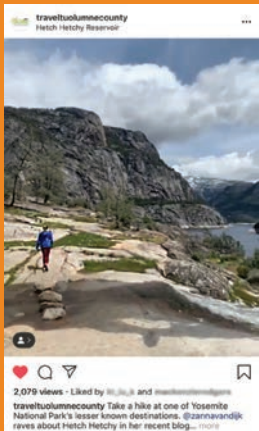
IPW:
One-on-one meetings with over 40 travel trade representatives



VTC went social in the meetings industry. By developing a Facebook page and Instagram account, both titled "Meet Me in Tuolumne," VTC was able to generate new followers and engagement from local community groups and the meetings industry. VTC advertised in various meeting publications, developed postcards and mailed them to select businesses in the Silicon Valley and attended the Meeting Planners International Northern California Chapter's Annual Conference where VTC engaged with Bay Area meeting planners.

Social Media & Digital Content

VTC has continued to increase an engaged social media following with the use of trustworthy content that is streamlined alongside the overall marketing messaging and campaigns for the destination. The efforts are showcased in the daily social media posts for active visitors, potential visitors, and locals. Social media has elevated the credibility of VTC because of the consistent presence of reliable information, inspiring travel itineraries, and the promotion of VTC members.



Marketing Highlights

Print & Digital Advertising

25+ ads in various publications and on websites including: Sunset, VIA, Where SF, California Visitors Guide, Yosemite Journal, and NEW for this year... the California International Visitors Guides.

Television Advertising

VTC commercial ran in three markets, Fremont, Tri-Valley, Sacramento from October through April.

San Francisco Radio Advertising

KGO & KNBR:

- 180 spots
- Live on-air interview with John Hamilton
- Print Ad and editorial in "KGO On the Go" Magazine

KOIT:

- 56 spots
- Display ads on koit.com



Michael Battey

VTC Web

Website:

128,475 Users = 52% increase
162,845 Sessions over 2017-2018

Booking Referral Engine:

\$5,500 VTC's annual investment
5,039 Lodging referrals
\$41,000 Estimated booking revenue

Crisis Communications

Visit Tuolumne County has a crisis communications plan in place but every crisis is different. The Ferguson Fire closed Highway 120 and the Donnell Fire closed Highway 108 at the height of tourism season. The VTC team presented a plan to the VTC Board of Directors to divert \$40,000 in the budget to a specific late summer/early fall marketing campaign. When the time was right, VTC deployed the Summer 2.0 marketing campaign inviting visitors to come back, extend their summer and enjoy Tuolumne County.



Another recovery opportunity came up with Visit California. They made grants available to destinations that were affected by California's wildfires. VTC applied for a grant and received \$25,000 for Tuolumne County. Out of the grant, the Fall is the New Summer campaign was born. This campaign aimed to let consumers know that summer wasn't over. There was still plenty of summer activities that could be done in the fall – only those activities are most likely less expensive, cooler and more colorful.



New Campaigns



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

#TooCoolToTrash was established to encourage locals and visitors to be ambassadors for Visit Tuolumne County, encouraging good stewardship practices. This campaign was promoted alongside the "Yosemite Now" movement during the Government Shutdown.

Digital Content

Blog articles, created in-house, amplify VTC's efforts to be a credible source for destination inspiration. These articles are useful in promoting an array of activities and members to target audiences, while reflecting overall campaign messaging.

31 Blog articles
253 Member mentions

Strategic Partnerships

VTC partners with regional and international Destination Marketing Organizations to assist in capturing additional markets and increase Tuolumne County exposure to both domestic and international markets. By working with these partners, VTC leverages funding and has a greater impact.



VTC entered a third year partnership with Brand USA and Visit California to participate in a custom global cooperative program designed to inspire international travellers to visit California. The 2018-2019 year had special focus on road trips with National Geographic and Expedia activations.



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. Among media visits was the IPW Post FAM, which

included 29 media and travel trade representatives from across 14 countries visiting Tuolumne County for two days.



The continued partnership with San Francisco Travel launches Tuolumne County further into the Chinese market. Tuolumne County was the only Yosemite representation in the C-Trip Spring Campaign which resulted in 40 rooms booked in Tuolumne County, representing a 22% increase over the previous year.



The strategic partnership with Black Diamond gives Tuolumne County a strong presence in the UK and Ireland markets. VTC entered into a second year working with Black Diamond's public relations and travel trade teams and the fiscal year was prosperous:

- Public relations = 49 editorial placements with a media value of \$510,316.
- Travel trade = seven new tour operators featuring Tuolumne County, three FAM trips, attended Visit USA Ball and Annual General Meeting.



In the 2018-2019 year the Gold Country Visitors Association (GCVA) has continued to see success working with the Canadian market through Destinations Counsellors International (DCI). Through attending the Visit California Canadian Sales Mission and working with DCI the GCVA continues to see a growth in the Canadian Market. The GCVA hosted two group media trips in 2018-2019. The group also partnered with Visit California to create the Gold Rush Rally, which was attended by 35 media representatives from 14 countries over a five-day period. The groups' itineraries took them to various areas of Gold Country as part of Visit California's new Road Trip Republic initiative.



The High Sierra Visitors Council (HSVC) continues to build its outreach in the French market, both on a travel trade and media level. Many destinations with High Sierra, including Tuolumne County, have cited an increase in French visitors since beginning this representation nearly five years ago. This year, the HSVC participated in the California Plaza activation at IPW in Anaheim.



Yosemite Gateways (not to be confused with Yosemite Gateway Partners) is made up of the Destination Management/Marketing organizations from Madera, Mono, Mariposa and Tuolumne Counties. The group is charged with creating marketing to promote visiting Yosemite in off-peak times and using alternative transportation. The effort is funded by Yosemite National Park In the summer of 2018, the group also collaborated to develop the

#YosemiteNow social media campaign to promote visitation following the Ferguson Fire.



Top: President & CEO of Visit California, Caroline Beteta and VTC President & CEO, Lisa Mayo speak at the Gold Rush Rally grand finale in May 2019. Bottom: High Sierra Pavilion in the California Plaza activation at IPW in June 2019. Photos by Visit California; Max Whittaker

Partial Government Shutdown

December 22, 2018 through January 25, 2019.

In respect to tourism and stewardship one of the challenges was that federal employees were not working, which meant trash wasn't being picked up in Yosemite and bathrooms were closed in Yosemite and the National Forest. VTC quickly realized this was an opportunity to kick off the "Tuolumne County is Too Cool to Trash" campaign that was in planning stages.

Rangers were not at Yosemite's entrance gates so visitors were going to the Park for free, but many still needed information about the park. This was an opportunity for stewardship education. VTC purchased trash bags and gave out information at the gate to Yosemite visitors. Many thanks to Elisabeth Barton of Echo

Adventures Co-Op for helping to organize this big volunteer effort and to businesses along Highway 120 that not only allowed visitors to dump their trash at their business, but rewarded them for doing so. Pinecrest Lake was having similar issues, but the bathroom situation proved to be where the need was. VTC rented four additional portable toilets to help keep Pinecrest clean during this time.

Stewardship is a responsibility that we all have, and VTC is proud to be growing our role in destination stewardship.



2018 Tuolumne County Travel Impacts

In 2018 Tuolumne County saw an increase in visitor spending of 5.6% over 2017. California's state average was 5%. Following two fires in Tuolumne County that closed two major highways at the peak of tourism season, followed by a government shutdown, VTC anticipated tourism spending to be status quo. However, a healthy 5.6% growth was achieved despite those challenges.

Government Revenue Generated by Tourism

Local Sales Tax Receipts = \$8.9 million

State Sales Tax Receipts = \$11.5 million

Transient Occupancy Tax = \$5 million

(Combined Unincorporated Tuolumne County and City of Sonora)

Tourism Industry Employment

2,400*

+ approx. 2,000 jobs at local casinos

*These statistics are produced by Dean Runyan Associates for Visit California. They do not include spending or job generation by either Black Oak Casino Resort or by Chicken Ranch Casino as they fall under Government.



Lodging
\$76.4 Mil.



Food Service
\$74.5 Mil.



Arts,
Entertainment
& Recreation
\$35.6 Mil.

Direct Travel Spending \$264 Million*

=5.6% increase over 2017, more than
any other rural California county!

*preliminary



Retail Sales
\$26.9 Mil.



Fuel &
Transportation
\$28.8 Mil.



Food Stores
\$11.4 Mil.



Visitor Services

Team members in two Tuolumne County Visitors Centers, in Sonora and Groveland (seasonal), offer maps, directions, area brochures, trip ideas, lodging referrals and local perspectives, providing personalized service to visitors to assist with a positive travel experience.

Top 3 International Visitors to Visitors Centers

1. United Kingdom
2. Germany
3. France

Top 3 US Visitors to Visitors Centers (other than California)

1. Colorado
2. Oregon
3. Illinois

Top 3 California Visitors to Visitors Centers (other than Tuolumne County)

1. Southern California/ Orange County
2. Stockton/Modesto
3. East Bay Area

Membership

VTC supports members by helping them with marketing their businesses, from a listing in the VTC Vacation Planner and website, to spreading the word about them in the visitors centers and to visiting journalists. VTC staff refers to members first to visitors and locals alike.

The partnerships formed with members enable the 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.

302 VTC members = 4.5% increase over 2017-2018

VTC Leadership and Team

2018-2019 Board of Directors

Margaret Davis – Chair, Junction Shopping Center
Mark Truppner - Vice-Chair, Clarke Broadcasting
Katie Fromm – Treasurer, Dodge Ridge Ski Resort
Katie Dunn, The Carriage House on Barretta
Judy Grossman, Brush & Cork
Kathy Hakl, Best Western Plus Sonora Oaks Hotel & Conference Center
Betsy Hurst Younger, Twain Harte Business Association
Candice Kendall, Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce
Teri Marshall, Rush Creek Lodge/Evergreen Lodge
Stephanie McCaffrey, McCaffrey House Bed & Breakfast
Amanda Silacci, The Hotel at Black Oak Casino Resort
Launa Valente, Lazy Z Resort
Stephen Willey, The National Hotel & Restaurant



VTC Team

Full Time:

Lisa Mayo, President & CEO
Jennifer Lopez, Marketing Manager
Katie Kirkland, Communications & Tourism Manager
Debbe Pallante, Office & Membership Manager

Part Time:

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

Visitor Services:

Diane Rock
Richard Haratani
Dave Gookin
Kate Greene



Team 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

Jen Lopez: Leadership Tuolumne County Executive Committee

Katie Kirkland: Mentor for Summerville High School Senior Project, participated in Soroptimist of Twain Harte's "Dream It, Be It" event

Debbe Pallante: Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Committee

Bethany Wilkinson: Access Tuolumne Board of Directors

Anna Davies: Coordinated Chinese Camp Science Academy history brochure project