



Visit Tuolumne County 2018-2019 Annual Report

August 2019

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 Visit Tuolumne County 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 over \$264 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 Visit Tuolumne County 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

2018 Tuolumne County Overall Tourism Statistics

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. VTC attributes this success in part to two vigorous fall marketing campaigns: *Summer 2.0* and *Fall is the New Summer*. You can read more about these campaigns and how they were funded further down in this report.

Total Direct Travel Spending	\$264.2 million
Tourism Industry Employment	2,400
Government Revenue Generated by Tourism	
Local Sales Tax Receipts	\$8.9 million
State Sales Tax Receipts	\$11.5 million
Transient Occupancy Tax	\$4.5 million
State and local tax revenue equivalency per Tuolumne County household	\$930

*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.

Community Engagement

Tourism Showcase and 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.



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. This year, recipients of those funds include:

- 2018 All Hallows Fantasy Faire, Sponsorship
- City of Sonora, Downtown Walking Tour Plaque
- City of Sonora, Five Dog Waste Stations
- City of Sonora, Printing of Downtown Brochures
- City of Sonora, Wild West Fest Graphic Design & Event Sponsorship
- Columbia Volunteer Fire Department Engine Co. #1 Ad
- Groveland Trail Heads, Platinum Sponsor of the Groveland Grind
- Highway 120 Lodging Properties, Sponsored Bay Area Travel Show Exhibit
- Sierra Repertory Theatre, Sponsored Season Brochures
- Sonora Celtic Faire, Event Sponsor
- Strawberry Music Festival, Event Sponsorship
- Summerville Bears quarterback Club, Westside Brew Fest Sponsorship
- Tuolumne County Arts Alliance, Ad in 209 Magazine
- Tuolumne County Sheriff's Posse, Mother Lode Round-Up Sponsorship
- Twain Harte Chamber of Commerce, Event Sponsorship
- Yosemite Highway 120 Chamber of Commerce 49er Festival – Digital Sign and Event Sponsorship
- Walkin' California PBS television shows
- Tuolumne Adventure Trolley
 - 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.

Numerous gift baskets, auction items and other donations were given for a number of causes over the last year.

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

Certifications

This past year, Lisa Mayo, President & CEO of Visit Tuolumne County obtained her **Certified Destination Management Executive** (CDME) accreditation from Destinations International. This professional development program is the tourism industry's highest individual educational achievement. The coursework focused on every aspect of managing a successful destination marketing organization including strategic issues in destination management, destination leadership, destination positioning and branding and destination organization and human resources. Writing assignments were given for each core course and the final consisted of three papers including one 3,000-word essay on an approved tourism topic of the writer's choice. Lisa's paper was entitled *DMO Advocacy, Government and Community Relations*.

Destinations International also offers the globally recognized **Destination Marketing Accreditation Program** (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! A set of 93 standards spread out over topics such as destination brand management, research, communications, visitor services, technology and finance had to be met to achieve the DMAP accreditation. The Visit Tuolumne County team worked diligently to meet each standard and will continue to build on the standards set forth by DMAP.



Name Change

Visit Tuolumne County invites and influences visitors to come to Tuolumne County. While Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau remains the official name, the 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.

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. Here is *Summer 2.0* plan that was fully carried out:

Marketing Efforts:

- Visit California Digital Banner Ads and e-newsletter Sponsorship
- Sunset Magazine Digital ad (start date: August 15th)
- Sunset Magazine Additional Print Ad (November)
- Strategic SEM Spend – (start date: August 14th)
- Additional Facebook advertising – (start date: August 14th)
- Central Valley/Tri-Valley Radio :30 spots
- Yosemite Journal Increase ad spend and content e-newsletter sponsorship



PR Efforts

- Local Social Media Influencer Campaigns – 1 per corridor (Highways 49, 108 and 120). This will help push content to our local and regional audience and engage new audiences through the channels of multiple influencers (timing: ASAP)
- PR Newswire – Amplify Summer 2.0 through press release with increased word allowance, photo allowance and additional channels
- Invite 5-7 media from Visit California’s SF Media Reception for a post FAM to focus on each corridor.

Another recovery opportunity was presented by 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 and an additional \$25,000 for a regional recovery effort. Out of the grant, the *Fall is the New Summer* campaign was created. This campaign aimed to let consumers know that summer wasn’t over just because kids were back in school. 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.



Government Shutdown and Tourism Recovery

December 22, 2018-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.

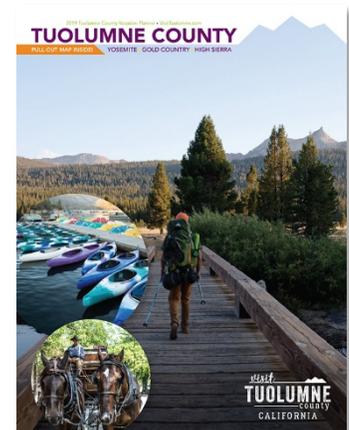
Leisure Marketing
Jen Lopez, Marketing Manager

Our destination marketing strategy is one rooted in amplifying our brand-Visit Tuolumne County: Yosemite Gold Country 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, print advertising in key travel-related magazines and newspapers sections, digital advertising in targeted markets, social media, promotions on radio and television and more.

In-House Marketing

VTC Annual Vacation Planner

- Printed 100,000 copies
 - Increased distribution in Bay Area: 80,000 at San Jose and Oakland International Airports, BART stations, Peet's Coffee houses, Whole Foods stores, etc.
 - Distribution in the California Welcome Centers at Pier 39 in San Francisco, Mammoth Lakes and Merced
 - 20,000 distributed at travel and trade shows, in visitors centers and to VTC members for distribution, plus mailed to leads generated by publications in which we advertise
- Digital version available online



Website

- Traffic to website increased by 52% over 2017-2018, VTC associates the increase to larger, more noticeable print ads, increased number of display ads running on media partners sites (San Francisco Chronicle, Sunset Magazine, etc.), third-party e-newsletter sponsorships (Visit California and Yosemite Journal, etc.), increased media exposure, larger investment in paid search engine optimization and search engine marketing, and Facebook ads

- Top International origins for web traffic:
 1. United Kingdom
 2. Canada
 3. Germany
 4. France

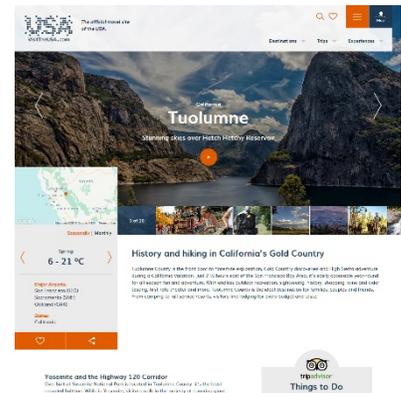
Booking Referral Engine

- A booking *referral* engine 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 engine, and is truly a book direct option for visitors.
 - Generated 5,039 referrals to Tuolumne County lodging properties with a \$41,000 estimated ROI

International Marketing Partnership

Strategic partnerships allow us to take advantage of these organizations' much larger budgets, expertise and industry tested marketing programs, intentionally created for international markets. International visitors are important as they tend to stay longer and spend more money at the destination. The goal with international marketing is to focus in on two to three international markets that are attainable and prime to increase visitation.

- Brand USA Partnership: Visit California Global Road Trip Co-Op
 - Total VTC investment: \$42,000
 - New Experience Page with content and video on VisitTheUSA.com sites
 - 2-minute destination video creation with online promotion and distribution; featuring Sonora Pass, Railtown 1897 State Historic Park, Groveland, Pinecrest Lake, Columbia, Tuolumne Meadows
 - Expedia Activation in UK including banner ads and landing page
 - 1/4 quarter page editorial in Visit the USA's Inspiration Guide (distributed 13 countries/languages)



Multi-Channel Print and Digital Advertising

Most times print and digital advertising go hand-in-hand as we are able to participate in custom-made packages through our media partners, such as Sunset Magazine and My National Parks Trips (Yosemite Journal).

Advertising in Annual Publications

NEW for 2018-2019:

- *California International Visitors Guide* (produced by Visit California)
 - 1/4 -page ad in print publication
 - Produced for 12 international markets
- *California Road Trips* (produced by Visit California)
 - 1/4 -page ad in print publication (Circulation: 1 million)
 - 600,000 inserted into July Travel and Leisure
 - 400,00 direct fulfillment and distributed at CA Welcome Centers
 - Digital version
- *209 Magazine* (Readers: 106,000; 1,185 in-room copies)
 - 1/4 -page ads in August-September 2018 and December 2018-January 2019 issues



Continued Advertising Partnerships

- *San Francisco Travel Planner* (Circulation 225,000, readers: 535,000)
 - Half-page print ad
 - Digital ads on www.sftravel.com
- *Yosemite Journal*
 - Full-page ad in annual print publication (Circulation 100,000)
 - Multiple Tuolumne County inclusive articles in the publication
 - Facebook posts
 - Digital ads on MyYosemitePark.com and in e-newsletters
 - California Road Trip Giveaway
- *KGO On the Go Magazine*
 - Ad on back cover of KGO on the Go Magazine (annual)
 - VTC Logo on front cover of KGO on the Go Magazine
 - Feature article on Tuolumne County
 - Facebook posts
 - Radio commercials and mentions: 250x
 - Streaming commercials and mentions: 200x
 - Live on-air interview with John Hamilton
- *California Visitors Guide* (the official California Visitors Guide produced by Visit California; circulation 500,000)
 - 3/4-page print ad in cooperation with OARS, Railtown 1897 State Historic Park and Rush Creek and Evergreen Lodges
 - Cooperative ad with Gold Country Visitors Association



- Generated 1,120 vacation planner requests/leads
- *Oh, Ranger!* Yosemite National Park Guide (Circulation 290,000, readers: 1.1 million)
 - Half-page print ad

Advertising In Periodicals and Other Internet Publications

- *Sunset Magazine* (includes Northern and Southern California editions; circulation 665,000)
 - Larger ads and editorial spots this year
 - October, 2018: Partner co-op with a two-page spread, giveaway and Instagram posts
 - November, 2018
 - February 2019
 - Print ads generated 1,004 phone calls/leads for vacation planners
 - E-Newsletter Sponsorships in January 2019 (425,800 total impressions, 1,260 clicks)
 - Digital ads during mid-August through mid-September 2018 on www.sunset.com/travel and www.sunset.com (fire recovery response)

- *Adventure Outdoors* (Readers: 550,000)
 - Half-page ad: Fall 2018 and Spring 2019
- *Where Magazine*, San Francisco Bay Area
 - Ads in monthly magazine (80,000 copies in 27,000 Bay Area guest rooms):
 - July, September, November 2018
 - January and March 2019
 - E-newsletter Display ad: May 2019



- *VIA Magazine* (Readers: 5.6 million)
 - Print ad: Winter 2018-2019
 - Generated 152 phone calls/leads for vacation planners

- *DogTrekker.com*
 - Banner ads ran in July-September 2018 and May-June 2019
 - E-newsletter sponsorship and takeover: June 2018

- *Visit California*
 - E-newsletter sponsorship: August 23, 2018
 - Received approximately 250,000 impressions
 - Banner Ads on VisitCalifornia.com: August – October 2018

- *San Francisco Chronicle* Full section Advertising Feature, March 11, 2018 (Circulation: 215,000 million)
 - Gold Country Road Trip: March 10, 2019 in partnership with Amador and Placer Counties
 - VTC full-page ad
 - 13 members/partners and 3 events mentioned in 8 stories (print and online)
 - 4 Tuolumne County advertisers



Other Ads

- Digital display advertising at Sacramento International Airport
 - Potential Impressions: 26.9 million per year

Regional Advertising

- Explore Sonora
- Columbia Firemen’s Muster program
- Sierra Repertory Theatre newsletters
- Mother Lode Round-Up Parade and Rodeo newspaper insert
- MyMotherLode.com (digital ads) for Holiday “Shop Local” and “Tuolumne Adventure Trolley” campaigns
- Tuolumne County Transit bus back wrap
- Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce monthly Union Democrat ad



Television

VTC Commercial

- Continued coverage in Sacramento and Tri-Valley (Pleasanton, Dublin, Livermore), and Fremont
 - Sacramento Commercial Airls (approx. 1.3 million households):
 - Television: 722 spots aired
 - Digital TV In-Video Streams: 230,438
 - Tri Valley and Fremont (approx. 138,700 households)

“I was watching my favorite show last night on Bravo, and hit the fast forward button to a screeching halt when I saw your commercial pop up! Awesome job! That was the first time I had seen it – very cool! I hope you are getting some good response. You definitely are in the right space as in the same time slot was Visit California, Visit Santa Cruz and you. It was so great!”

- Tiffany McKenzie
Director of Marketing
Visit Placer

Tuolumne County Culture & Heritage Video Series on Access Tuolumne

- Episodes of VTC’s Tuolumne County Culture & Heritage video series air six times each broadcast day on Access Tuolumne platforms including broadcasts on Tuolumne County Comcast 8, over the top channels Roku and AppleTV, and live streaming on AccessTuolumne.org.

Travel Show Presence

Attending travel shows allows VTC to go straight to potential visitors in our drive markets and connect with them one-on-one level to provide personalized trip ideas. We're also able to talk with past visitors, hear their stories and spark a desire to visit Tuolumne County again.

- Los Angeles Travel and Adventure Show, February 2019 (Attendees: 37,900+)
- Bay Area Travel and Adventure Show. March 2019 (Attendees: 22,500+) Participated with two booths, one in the Gold Country section and one in the Yosemite section.

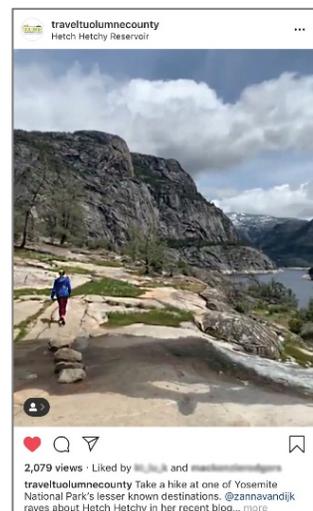


Social Media & Digital Content

Mackenzie Rodgers, Digital Content Coordinator

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.

- Facebook: 36% increase in followers. 34,230+
- Instagram: 107% increase in followers. 7,800+
- Twitter: 17% increase in followers. 1,445+



Social Media Campaigns

#MyTuolumneCounty is an on-brand, on-going campaign that encourages visitors and locals to share their Tuolumne County experience with us and their followers.

The **#TuolumneTogether** campaign informally launched on August, 6, 2018, in an effort to promote community togetherness and accurate communication of information in regards to the Donnell Fire and the Ferguson Fire. As these wildfires challenged our local region, it became imperative that our messaging be clear and direct for the safety of visitors. This campaign, alongside **#YosemiteNOW**, was a strong pillar of the VTC crisis communications and brought the social media community together in unison to spread truthful information and promote the areas in which needed support throughout the recovery of the fires.

January 2019 motivated similar messaging, in response to the prolonged government shutdown that affected the Groveland/ Highway 120 community. VTC brought back the **#TuolumneTogether** alongside

#YosemiteNOW in an effort to promote truthful, up to date information on the Park. VTC pushed for responsible travel and local advocacy. This campaign encouraged visitors and locals to gather in support of the Groveland community.

#MeetMeInTuolumne is a campaign that's ultimate purpose is to promote mid-week and off-season group travel, by advertising meeting spaces, lodging, venues, tour guide outfitters, events, experiences. etc. that cater to groups big and small. In an effort to take this campaign further, a "Meet Me In Tuolumne" Facebook page and an Instagram page were created to be a source for this information.

#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. It became a useful tool in promoting truthful updates of the impacted areas, and is a platform VTC uses to highlight members who actively make efforts to keep Tuolumne County an attractive place to visit and live.



Digital Content

Flip.To

In spring 2019, VTC implemented Flip.To, an innovative online platform that helps destination marketing organizations tap into the unmatched impact of visitor advocacy. Flip.To takes shape in the form of an online gallery of user-generated photos and captions showcasing visitors' authentic stories. Through the platform, VTC powers online photo contests where past visitors share their memories, encouraging others to visit Tuolumne County, visit the VTC website, or follow us on social media, by sharing the photo entries on their own social media accounts. The gallery can be viewed on the VisitTuolumne.com homepage.



Blogs

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.

- Blog articles published: 31
- Member mentions: 253

Media Relations, Travel Trade and Meetings
Katie Kirkland, Communications and Tourism Manager

Media

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:

- 10 Press Releases Issued
 - 3 Press Releases published by PR News Wire
 - 175 million circulation and 108 click-throughs
- 22 Journalist hosted
- 149 (tracked) articles published featuring Tuolumne County

Go to VisitTuolumne.com/press-room to view VTC press releases and articles about Tuolumne County.

Travel Trade

Visit Tuolumne County increased their 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



Meetings

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.

Strategic Partnerships

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

- **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.
 - Super FAM: 7 travel trade representatives from Ireland and the UK and Visit California UK representatives toured Tuolumne County over 2-days with a 2-night stayover in Tuolumne County. VTC developed a partnership with British Holiday as an outcome of the Super Fam.
 - Post-IPW Fam: 29 media and travel trade representatives from across 14 countries and 2 Visit California representatives toured Tuolumne County over 2 days with a 2-night stayover. Tuolumne County has already been featured in one article with a circulation of 860,000 and an estimated ad value of \$44,000.
 - Publications: The VTC submits monthly media ideas to Visit California. For the 2018/2019-year Visit California accepted and published 13 media ideas to their domestic and international media outlets.
- **San Francisco Travel-** 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.
- **Black Diamond-** 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.

Regional Partnerships

- **Gold Country Visitors Association (GCVA)** - In the 2018/2019 year the 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.

California road trips are trending in travel and the Gold Country proves to be a perfect road trip destination with Highway 49, the “Golden Chain Highway,” running

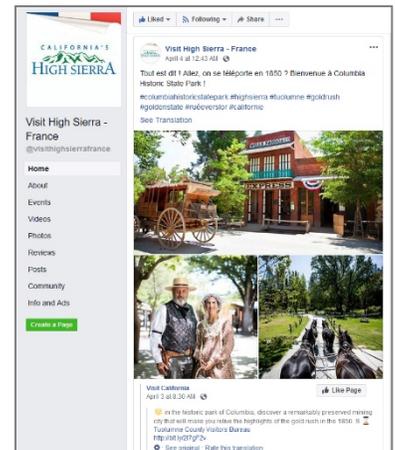


through Gold Country. With road trip initiatives taking off the GCVA trademarked their road trip slogan, “An Amazing American Road Trip™.” To further establish the Gold Country’s road trip initiative, the GCVA partnered with Visit California for the Gold Rush Rally. Thirty-five media representatives from 14 countries participated in the Gold Rush Rally 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 overall results of the Gold Rush Rally were: 332 Media Placements, \$1.9 Million Media Value, and 54.1 Million Impressions.

The funding for the GCVA comes from a Visit California Grant that is applied for each year. VTC President & CEO, Lisa Mayo, is the President of GCVA.

- **High Sierra Visitors Council (HSVC)** – 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.

New for 2018-2019, the HSVC partnered with HermannGlobal (Visit USA Parks) for content, itinerary and social media creation for the High Sierra region. Also, in June, the HSVC participated in the California Plaza activation at IPW in Anaheim. The extensive plaza featured the best that each California region has to offer visitors including, food, drink, special products, activities and more, with its own section highlighting the region.



The funding for the HSVC comes from a Visit California Grant that is applied for each year.

- **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 collaborated to develop the #YosemiteNow social media campaign to promote visitation following the Ferguson Fire and acquired Visit California’s Fire Recovery grant funds to contribute to a group-wide digital ad and social media campaign with Sunset Magazine.



Visitors and Membership
Debbe Pallante, Office and Membership Manager

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.

Visitor Center Statistics (Sonora)

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

Traffic Entering Yosemite at Big Oak Flat Entrance

July 2017 – June 2018: 421,574

Membership Statistics

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 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. Total members as of June 30, 2019: 302, a 4.5% increase over the previous year.

“I am so grateful for all of our customers but thank you guys for being such big tourist advocates for our community. It makes it possible for my small business to stay open.”

-Laina, Owner of Amala
Detox & Tea Lounge

“Whatever you’re doing, you’re doing it right!”

- Lauren, Owner of Sunset Inn
and Yosemite Cabins

Film Commission
Bethany Wilkinson, Film Liaison



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.

Notable Projects Underway and Upcoming

- Television Commercial in Orange County – VTC began airing its television commercial in Central Orange County on August 20, 2019. This is the first time that VTC has expanded coverage into Southern California. Central Orange County was selected from a number of Southern California markets due to a high visitation to VTC visitors centers, interest via phone calls, and because of the high number of travelers with families in that area. It's anticipated that this opportunity will be an influential complement to VTC attendance at the LA Travel and Adventure Show in February, 2020.
- Economic Development - Tourism is economic development. After all, it all starts with a visit! As part of VTC's video series one video will focus on economic development. A variety of business owners will be interviewed about why they chose Tuolumne County to do business in. Business owners will range from young families to seasoned professionals with established Tuolumne County businesses and everything in between. Lifestyle will be highlighted throughout the video as that is a key selling point to encourage new business to come to Tuolumne County. This video will be shared via VTC's database, website, social media and will be available for all to use/share, including Tuolumne County's Economic Development Department, who we would like to collaborate with on this project.
- Mobile Visitor Center - Visit Tuolumne County needs to be where the visitors are! Since closing the Chinese Camp Visitor Center earlier this year, an alternative visitor center has been in the works. VTC is currently working with Sonora Ford to purchase a van that will be transformed into a mobile visitor center. Local companies are working with VTC to retrofit the van and add a branded wrap that will be sure to make it stand out. This mobile visitor center (official name, TBD) will be at festivals, events and high traffic areas around the county and regionally. It will also be used to transport displays for out-of-area travel shows and simultaneously will be a rolling billboard advertising Tuolumne County to potential visitors as it is driven to events in the Bay Area, LA and Sacramento. The mobile visitor center is projected to make its debut by late Spring 2020.

- ROI Study – In fall of 2019, VTC will conduct an ROI study to determine the influence of VTC marketing efforts on encouraging traffic to the VTC website, which is the focus of marketing initiatives. This study will allow us to show effectiveness of VTC efforts to stakeholders and gauge where adjustments should be made in marketing efforts. This study will provide additional information such as influencers of visitation, how much time visitors spend in Tuolumne County, how much they spend, what their interests are, etc.
- Sociality – Sociality will hold their 2020 camp in Tuolumne County bringing in nearly 130 social influencers from the US, Canada, and Europe. The reach is estimated to exceed 10 million. The camp will take place over 4-5 days and nights. Along with dedicated print articles and social exposure Visit Tuolumne County will receive photo and video assets. The VTC will have the opportunity to involve members. Furthermore, the VTC will host post-media trips with top-tiered social influencers.
- Experience Pass- The *Tuolumne County Experience Pass* is anticipated to be a County-wide program that will encourage visitors, and local residents, to visit more places and spend more money while they visit by offering discounts and other incentives to stay, shop, dine, etc. at local businesses.
- Luxury marketing – There is a rising demand for luxury products, accommodations, tours, and dining experiences in the travel industry. In keeping up with trends Visit Tuolumne County is working to develop luxury experiences to share with media and travel trade to start to develop consumer interest in Tuolumne County as a luxury travel destination. Examples of luxury products include: Yosemite Flight Tours, Echo Adventures Cooperative private dining experiences, the Salt of the Earth Personal Chef, and Under Canvas Glamping.
- Development Counsellors International (DCI) - DCI is a travel marketing and economic development marketing firm based in Toronto, Canada. VTC will engage their services to increase Canadian visitor arrivals, disperse visitors and augment travel spending. VTC has worked with DCI through the Gold Country Visitors Association and already has traction with the Canadian market. New direct flights on Air Canada from Vancouver to Sacramento is a huge opportunity for Tuolumne County. Some additional benefits of DCI to VTC are:
 - Tuolumne County is the only Yosemite destination with DCI.
 - DCI is the agency of record for Visit California.
 - DCI manages a California Collective which includes Berkeley and Oakland and North Lake Tahoe. Tuolumne County fills the itinerary void between those destinations.
 - The California Collective gives Tuolumne County representation at Travel Events in Canada with a DCI representative.
 - In Fall 2020 Tuolumne County will be hosting Sociality. This lead came to Tuolumne County from DCI. This makes for a very strong partnership when the time comes for that event; most of the 140 influencers for that event are from Canada.

- Throughout the industry international travel is slightly declining due to tariffs, competition and a strong US dollar. With that, Canada remains a strong neighbor.
- Through Black Diamond VTC has seen an incredible ROI by having an agency in market that can promote Tuolumne County in ways that VTC can't. It is projected that the same will be true with DCI.

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; Century 21 Wildwood Properties, Inc.

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

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

Thank You!