



November 3, 2015

Thank you to Tuolumne County and to the City of Sonora for continuing to support the TCVB by reinvesting TOT dollars into our Marketing Programs. Thank you also to all of our Partners who constantly support our many efforts as we go about marketing this great County! We are pleased to present this detailed report that dives deeper into various highlights as listed in the Annual Report.

Respectfully,

Lisa Mayo  
Executive Director  
Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau



**Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau  
2014-2015 Annual Report Detailed Information**

**Community Outreach/Local Marketing**

**1<sup>st</sup> Annual Tuolumne County Tourism Summit**

This inaugural event was held during National Travel and Tourism Week in May 2015. Industry partners and leaders presented ideas and opportunities. Speakers included Traci Ward of Visit California, Dave Kendrick of Dogtrekker.com, Tim Zahner of Sonoma County Tourism and local trails advocate Tyler Summerset with the Tuolumne County Transportation Council. We reached capacity for the event (50 attendees) and plan to put on an annual Tourism Summit.

**Tuolumne County Restaurant Week**

This promotion was to encourage residents to try a new restaurant or reintroduce them to a restaurant. It was advertised through local newspaper, social media and TCVB website. TCRW details sent to Visit California for larger California Restaurant Month promotion. In evaluating this promotion after three years, we have decided to put it on hold. We will, however, be encouraging local restaurants to offer up special menus and/or packages during California Restaurant Month and we will have a designated page on our website to promote them.

**P.I.T. Stops**

This year the TCVB created and implemented P.I.T. Stops. P.I.T. stands for Partners in Tourism and the idea was to showcase TCVB Partner businesses by having a get-together that often included food and a tour of the business to better familiarize ourselves and local residents about the tourism assets in Tuolumne County. We held seven P.I.T. Stops throughout the County. While they were not well-attended we did have many people ask about them. After evaluating the effectiveness of this program, we have decided not to continue it. We will put those efforts into more education and informational based events like Tourism Summits and mini-familiarization tours with the TCVB Team.

**ADVERTISING**

Multi-platform Advertising – includes print and online (Most print advertising includes an on-line component)

- VIA Magazine: 2,550,000 distribution per issue
- Sunset Magazine: 675,000 Northern and Southern CA combined distribution per issue
- Visit California Visitors Guide: 500,000 distribution
- San Francisco Travel Planner: 225,000 distribution
- Yosemite Journal: 100,000 distribution

**LocalGetaways.com** Special lodging promotion in April specifically to drive more overnight traffic to our lodging partners during slower time of year. Both online and editorial component. Participating properties indicated receiving bookings directly from this campaign.

**Radio**

KNBR 68 Radio, San Francisco: October 2014 “Follow Me to Tuolumne” campaign during Giants baseball. Tuolumne can be hard to pronounce. So we had fun with it, driving listeners to FollowmetoTC.com where they entered to win discounts on lodging (funded by the TCVB). Resulted in

additional air time, especially when DJs played up the pronunciation of Tuolumne. A highlight of this campaign was that one of our ads ran during one of the World Series games in San Francisco.

### **Social Media**

Facebook continues to be the social media outlet that provides the most engagement with users.

Facebook – Over 14,400 followers

Instagram – 380 followers

Twitter – 566 Twitter followers

Also have a presence on YouTube

### **The California State Fair at Cal Expo, Sacramento**

Tuolumne County received a Gold ribbon for our “Feasts and Festivals” themed exhibit. 550,000 attendees. Sixty Tuolumne County volunteers answered fairgoers’ questions. Black Oak Casino Resort and the County of Tuolumne sponsored the exhibit. We brought pieces of the exhibit back with us this year and shared them with various venues in the County. For example, the Mother Lode Fairgrounds now has barn façade which is where the volunteers sat. It is made of old barn wood and will be useful for ticket takers or registration table for various events at the fairgrounds.

### **The Capitol Window, Sacramento**

All California counties are given a display window at the State Capitol. A local 4-H Member approached the TCVB about working with us to create an updated window that would really promote our area to the thousands of people and school children who walk the Capitol halls. The display features a large bear juggling fun things to do in Tuolumne County with a tagline “Tuolumne County – where history and adventure go hand in hand.” We estimate that it is the first time since 1993 that the Window has been updated.

### **Travel Shows:**

- LA and Bay Area Travel and Adventure Shows and Sunset Celebration Weekend provide opportunities to invite consumers to Tuolumne County. Partnerships with regional visitor bureaus and with Tuolumne County partners are a component of these shows.
- International Pow Wow (IPW) – The travel industry’s premiere international marketplace in the U.S.; Strong media component that has resulted in international press

### **2015 Tuolumne County Vacation Planner**

The Vacation Planner is more popular than ever. In August 2015 we printed 15,000 additional Planners bringing the total to 95,000. We were running low due to:

- Increase in distribution
- Increase in Reader Response Leads (resulting from more ad placements)
- Increase in Visitor Center traffic

Insider’s Tips were added this year, highlighting partners with an ‘inside scoop’ message.

### **Public Relations**

*Objective 1:* Elevate the Profile of Yosemite Gold Country

#### **Tactics**

- The TCVB took an aggressive approach under new leadership by first adding a veteran public relations contractor to begin changing mindsets and knowledge of Tuolumne County.
- Contractor has four years’ experience with Gold Country, past PR consultant for Tenaya Lodge, current contractor with San Francisco Travel Association, Communications Committee member with U.S. Travel Association and PRSA member

#### **Results**

- Developed online press room for better information and journalist access
- Visit California’s heightened awareness of the differences within the Yosemite gateways, featuring Lisa Mayo as one of eight California Dreamers profiled in the VCA annual report,

- Recognition of unique county offerings such as Indigeny Reserve Hard Apple Cider as one of three libations featured at Los Angeles Media event hosted by SF Travel
- Successful IPW (International Pow Wow) Marketplace with one international journalist already in the county with coverage (published Oct. 2015)
- Garnered the attention of NationalGeographic.com for a month-long campaign provided to Yosemite Gold Country at 25% of the quoted pricing, with additional road trip exposure
- Created awareness of off-season opportunities with regional journalists through Bay Area Travel Writers' membership, resulting in organized press trip (moved to April 2016)
- Created awareness of off-season travel with radio promotion on KNBR radio, including "Follow Me to Tuolumne" messaging

*Objective 2:* Develop an informative partnership with San Francisco Travel Association to drive tourism business to Tuolumne County

#### Tactics

- Better use of SF Travel partnership; included in web content, annual partner presentation, encouragement of other Bureau partners to align themselves with SF Travel, sought opportunities for partnering and have a sustained presence.

#### Results:

- Development of first familiarization tour for SF Travel – 10 staff representing Partnership, Convention Services, Marketing and Tourism
- Partnership with SF Travel for IPW trade show to promote proximity of Yosemite Gold Country to San Francisco
- Presented at SF Travel's Partners Showcase to educate their team about Tuolumne County
- Participation in SF Travel's LA Media Dinner – 40 hosted media with presentation and local product featured
- Annual presentation featuring What's New and partners
- Introduction of lead generation for media and travel buyers
- Introduction to SFO's International Marketing team for inclusion in upcoming fairs

*Objective 3:* Educate domestic and international tourism partners and their audiences on the attributes of Tuolumne County versus other gateways, "front door" campaign

#### Tactics

- With Tuolumne County marketing efforts, development of the "front door to Yosemite" concept permeated all messaging, with distance information and visuals
- Use of visitor center stats to qualify our messages
- Outreach to journalists on location, proximity to San Francisco and that 95% of all visitors to Yosemite only experience 5% of the park
- Use of local partners and businesses, guides, festivals and events to illustrate unique attributes of the area

#### Results

- Garnered National Geographic campaign to air Nov 2015 reaching 6 million viewers plus additional reach with other marketing programs
- Hosted first IPW journalist, resulting in three page glossy magazine county coverage with several partners
- Training SF Travel, Visit California and other organizations on the difference between Mariposa's portion of Yosemite and Tuolumne's portion of Yosemite – confusion greatly reduced
- Developing ongoing relationship with SFO marketing (see tactic under #2)
- Heightened awareness of Tuolumne County with Bay Area Travel Writers and select Society of American Travel Writers active members

- County partners included in two articles in Los Angeles Times
- Participation in regional golf fam, resulting in coverage from all six participants including KGO's On the Go radio program (Lisa Mayo and Tyler Summersett interviewed)
- Press coverage on Yosemite free days and USA Today's top 10 list

*Objective 4:* Promote the unique assets of state parks, fairs and festivals and unique businesses within the county.

#### Tactics

- Feature Columbia State Park lodging and State Historic Park attributes in PR messaging.
- Feature Railtown 1897 SHP relevance and importance in PR messaging.
- Combine fairs and festivals to create a sense of unique experiences in PR messaging.
- Promote county food and beverage attributes.
- Promote State Fair involvement.

#### Results

- Media fam in April highlighted history with Mark Twain impersonator, Railtown and Columbia and the first organized Tuolumne County Saloon Crawl.
- Development of Christmasland theme for holiday events
- Promotion of various festivals and celebrations, covered on travel web sites, SF Travel, LA Times
- Heightened awareness of state park offerings and significance
- Inclusion in new attractions, businesses in What's New messages to Visit California
- Distribution of news regarding State Fair
- Assistance in development of first Annual Tourism event
- Development of journalist vetting system for better coverage and higher percentage of coverage

#### **Visitor Information Centers**

The TCVB continues to operate two Visitor Information Centers (VICs): Chinese Camp and Sonora. Chinese Camp continues to grow in numbers and is epicenter for greeting visitors and booking lodging. Last year we opened the CC VIC three days per week during the winter to try and determine traffic patterns. Prior to this, it had been closed all winter. Being opened proved to be very valuable to the visitors and our partners and this year we will keep it a seven day operation unless it drastically slows down.

#### **Industry Partners/Associations**

The following organizations provide one or all of the following benefits - Marketing, Advocacy, Education and Grant Funding for Partnership Programs:

- Visit California
- California Travel Association
- San Francisco Travel
- Gold Country Visitors Association
- High Sierra Visitors Council
- U.S. Travel Association – Brand USA
- Destination Marketing Association of the West (formerly Western Association of CVBs)
- Destination Marketing Association International
- National Tour Association
- Outdoor Writers Association of California
- Bay Area Travel Writers Association

#### **Filming**

Three film permits were issued this past year. There were several scouting inquiries which did not result in filming.

- “Dive” – August 2015
- “In Search of Colour” – June 2015
- “Breaking Legs” – October 2014

**Current Marketing Activity and Looking Ahead:**

- Television Commercial – on Xfinity, AT&T Uverse, Dish and DirectTV networks in the Sacramento and Central Valley Region; runs Sept.-Nov. 2015 and Feb. –April 2016
  - San Francisco Chronicle Tuolumne County Insert, published October 18th
  - National Geographic Digital Nomad Campaign – runs November 2015
  - Bay Area Travel Writers Media Trip, Scheduled for April 2016
  - Every Kid in a Park Campaign – Now through August 2016
  - Adventure Outdoors Magazine advertising – Fall 2015 Issue
  - Adventure Sports Journal advertising – Aug./September 2015 and Oct./Nov. 2015 issues
  - PR with Super Bowl 50 taking place in San Francisco (January 2016)
  - Brand USA Partnership: Discover America Inspirational Guide - 2016
  - Create Airport Partnerships and Messaging - 2016
  - Create New Website to include Booking Engine - 2016
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*Thank you!*