

VISIT **DURANGO**  
COLORADO

**2021**

YEAR IN REVIEW



AUTHORED BY VISIT DURANGO STAFF

# OUR MISSION STATEMENT

## VISIT DURANGO EXISTS TO:

- Promote the Durango brand
- Generate demand in visitation and increase overnight stays in Durango & La Plata County
- Support a positive visitor experience
- Drive economic development for the benefit of visitors and local stakeholders

## 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Name	Company	Board Position	Sector
Tori Ossola	Strater Hotel	Chair	Restaurants
Brian Lundstrom	Sky Ute Casino Resort	Vice Chair	Special Events/Entertainment
Cristina Dalle Grave	Twilight Toys	Treasurer	Retail
Matt Salka	La Plata County Commissioner	Representative	La Plata County
Dr. Lorraine Taylor	Fort Lewis College	Representative	Higher Education
Dave Rathbun	Purgatory Resort	Representative	Purgatory Resort
Carrie Whitley	D&SNGRR	Representative	Railroad Attractions
Denise Leslie	Hideaway Arts Consulting	Representative	Arts and Culture
Amber Andrew	Black Diamond Lodge	Representative	Specialty Lodging
Ken Stone	Durango Hot Springs	Representative	At Large
Roberto Casanueva	Outdoorsy Outpost	Representative	Outdoor Recreation
Jenny Roberts	Hampton Inn & Suites	Representative	Lodging
Nicholas Borst	Durango Cannabis Company	Representative	Agritourism and Heritage

# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



With 2021 officially in the rearview mirror, we would like to take a minute to pause and reflect on the accomplishments of our amazing team. For the world, and the tourism industry specifically, the last two years have had their share of challenges. However, Visit Durango didn't miss a beat. Our organization continued to pivot as the pandemic threw new challenges our way.

With the support of our tourism stakeholders, Durango was able to pass ballot measure 1-A, the increase to lodgers' tax. This win further verified the community's understanding of the tourism industry's importance to the long-term success of our economy. Years of committee meetings, advocacy, communications, and campaigning, lead to the increase of the tax from 2% to 5.25%, with 55% of collections earmarked for "Sustainable Tourism Marketing." The word "sustainable" didn't make it into the ballot language by chance. As the pandemic further clarified, now is the time for La Plata County's tourism to shift towards a responsible approach to visitation.

As Visit Durango solidified our commitment to regenerative and sustainable tourism, we ramped up our important work in all three categories of sustainability: the environment, culture, and the economy. We recruited top candidates

for all of our full-time roles and rounded out the team with our final hire, a Sustainability & Policy Manager. And for the first time, Visit Durango's strategic planning did not begin and end with marketing. We published our Strategic Destination Management & Marketing Strategy, that has served as a guiding light for the organization. The two-year plan will continue to guide our direction in 2022.

In Q4 of 2021, the City of Durango issued a Request for Proposal for Sustainable Tourism Marketing and Management Planning and Services. Visit Durango competed against four other firms and won. The City's confirmation that Visit Durango is the best organization to fulfill this new strategic direction is the perfect way to kick off 2022!

Thank you for your continued support of La Plata County's tourism industry and Visit Durango. Join us as we continue the tradition of collaboration that embodies our sweet spot of Southwest Colorado.

*Rachel Brown*

**Rachel Brown**  
Executive Director, Visit Durango

## DESTINATION MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT TEAM



**RACHEL BROWN**  
Executive Director



**PERCY STEVENS**  
Sales & Marketing Director



**WEYLIN RYAN**  
Sustainability & Policy  
Manager



**BROOKE HENDERSON**  
Partnerships & Operations  
Manager



**RACHEL WELSH**  
PR & Communications  
Manager



**NICK KOGOS**  
Marketing Manager



**JAMES FLINT**  
Marketing Assistant



**STEFANIE PANETTA**  
Sales Coordinator



**DEBRA CHEE**  
Administrative Assistant

## DURANGO WELCOME CENTER TEAM AND CONTRACTORS



**KAY ROTTENBERG**  
Visitor Services Administrator



**CLAUDIA MURPHY FOLEY**  
Visitor Services



**IZABELA RYDZ**  
Visitor Services



**NORA STAFFORD**  
Visitor Services



**RENEE SEBESTYEN**  
Visitor Services



**TRACY ROBINETTE**  
Visitor Services



**JENNIFER BASSIGNANI**  
Human Resources Contractor



**CONNIE WIAN**  
Bookkeeping Contractor

## NATIONAL OUTLOOK

The US Travel forecast highlights the continued resilience of the domestic travel market as well as the anticipated pace of recovery for the now-reopened international inbound market. This latest forecast presents a moderate upgrade to their previous domestic leisure and business forecast due to better-than-expected performance last spring and into the summer. International travel was down in 2021 but is predicted to be up slightly in 2022 and beyond.

The forecast projects the following:

**Domestic Leisure Travel:** Domestic leisure travel is continuing to drive the U.S. travel recovery. This segment, which typically accounts for more than 60% of total travel spending, has already nearly recovered. Domestic leisure travel spending reached 99% of 2019 levels in Q3 of 2021, despite the spread of the delta variant. The latest forecast projects that it will surpass 2019 levels in 2022 and beyond, reaching 108% of 2019 levels by 2025.

A general trend toward an increasing share of consumer spending allocated to services, including travel, will help fuel continued strong growth in this segment, particularly as pandemic restrictions continue to ease and the labor market recovers.

**Domestic Business Travel:** Business travel spending is continuing to lag far behind leisure but has improved significantly in recent months. Substantial business investment, a healing U.S. labor market, and the heightened return to the office and in-person meetings are expected to reignite domestic business travel. Spending is expected to reach 2019 levels while recovering fully in 2024.

- Both transient (general business) and group (conferences/conventions/trade shows) domestic business travel are expected to fully recover in 2024, but group travel will follow an initially slower path to get there.
- While transient business travel spending is

projected to reach 81% of 2019 levels in 2022 and 97% in 2023, group travel spending is projected to reach just 70% of 2019 levels in 2022 and 89% in 2023, before reaching pre-pandemic levels in 2024.

- **International inbound travel:** Behind the domestic market in its recovery, international inbound travel is not expected to reach pre-pandemic levels until 2024 or 2025. Performance in 2022 and beyond is expected to be slightly better than previously anticipated. The boost to foreign visits will be facilitated by waning international travel restrictions and strong global economic growth propelled by household spending. International leisure travel is expected to recover slightly faster than international business travel.
- **Total travel industry losses** since the start of the pandemic are expected to reach \$900 billion by the end of 2023.

Rising inflation, coupled with the lack of available workers, has created upward pressures on leisure and hospitality wages, which rose to above 2019 levels in October.

Several developments point to a gradual rebound in the labor force supply—which should help the travel industry recoup workers—and inflation is expected to ease in the second half of 2022. While the forecast assumes that the industry will succeed in hiring the workers it needs and that inflation will remain in check, that is certainly not a given and remains a risk for recovery. While nearly every sector of the economy has suffered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, travel has suffered disproportionately, and certain segments are expected to continue to endure unprecedented losses even as the recovery is gaining steam.

## COLORADO OUTLOOK

Total Colorado traveler spending in October 2021 was \$1.9 billion, down 5% from October 2019. Since January 2020, Colorado has lost \$11.7 billion in travel spending. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in \$677.9 billion in cumulative losses for the U.S. travel economy.

The Colorado Tourism Office continues to adapt and adjust in building strategies for recovery from the travel impacts of COVID-19, focusing on

collaborative industry strategies targeting the unique recovery needs of each community. Total travel spending finished at \$15.5B, a decrease of (\$8.8B) with Denver County accounting for a decrease of (\$4.7B). Some counties in Southwest Colorado showed an increase in traveler spending. This change in travel spending throughout Colorado's different travel regions led to regional promotions in areas of need and the development of responsible tourism strategies in other regions.



# IMPACT OF COVID ON THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Around the world, international arrivals are estimated to have dropped to 381 million in 2021, down from 1.461 billion in 2019 — a 74 percent decline. In countries whose economies are heavily reliant on tourism, the precipitous drop in visitors was, and remains, devastating.

According to recent figures from the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the decline in international travel in 2021 resulted in an estimated loss of \$1.3 trillion in global export revenues. As the agency notes, this figure is more than 11 times the loss that occurred in 2009 as a result of the global economic crisis.



## IMPACT ON REVENUE

Since January 2021, Colorado has lost \$11.7 billion in travel spending. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in \$677.9 billion in cumulative losses for the U.S. travel economy through September 2021.



## IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT

Leisure and hospitality added 164,000 jobs in October 2021—the most of any industry. Employment across the state is expected to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2022, but industries like leisure and hospitality are projected to take longer to recover, according to the Colorado Business Economic Outlook.

The yearly forecast, compiled by the University of Colorado Boulder's Leeds Business Research Division, shows the state's employment is expected to remain above average, but the state will likely fall out of the top ten for employment growth. The CBEO projects Colorado will regain 73,900 jobs (2.7%) in 2022, effectively recouping total jobs lost due to the pandemic recession.

"We forecast employment numbers to grow in all 11 industries in 2022, but the hole left by the COVID-19 pandemic in the leisure and hospitality industry is huge," said Richard Wobbekind, senior economist at the Leeds School of Business. "We don't anticipate the leisure and hospitality industry to return to pre-pandemic levels until 2023 or 2024."

However, the projections do show that despite the slower growth for the leisure and hospitality industry, both industries will add about 31,700 jobs.

# ECONOMIC RECOVERY FROM COVID



TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION



PROMOTING SAFE TRAVELING



ADAPTING TO RAPID CHANGE

Visit Durango helped form the La Plata County Economic Recovery Task Force in response to COVID and serves on both the strategic and tactical sub-committees. Keeping our destination open by promoting wearing masks, social distancing, and responsible tourism during COVID will continue to be part of the overarching strategy.

Heading into 2022, Visit Durango anticipates continued demand for more rural, less crowded destinations and outdoor recreation. However, as the second wave of COVID hit Colorado during Fall and Winter of 2020, and considering the long-term

implications for the economy, this pandemic will continue to impact domestic and international travel well beyond 2022.

Visit Durango will continue to execute in-crisis and recovery phased strategies to support the tourism industry and economic recovery during the COVID pandemic.

The DMMO will also be looking ahead at long-term solutions to attract more sustainably-minded, conscientious travelers and support a consistent year-round economy throughout the area.

# OUR UNIQUE ADVANTAGES DURING COVID



REMOTE & RURAL LOCATION



OUTDOOR REC / COVID-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES



ROAD TRIP DESTINATION FOR DRIVE MARKETS



PRIMARILY DOMESTIC VISITORS



AFFORDABLE IN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN



HEALTHY & FRIENDLY CULTURE

# OUR PILLARS OF PROMOTION

When we build any content, in any department, our team promotes the following pillars. These pillars include within them specific areas, attractions, attributes, and/or businesses.



SEASONAL OUTDOOR RECREATION



ARTS



HERITAGE AND HISTORY



FOOD AND BEVERAGE



ATTRACTIONS



EVENTS, LIVE MUSIC, AND WEDDINGS



AGRITOURISM



RETAIL AND SHOPPING



ORGANIZED SPORTS AND SPORTS EVENTS



LODGING



HEALTH AND WELLNESS



FAMILY-FRIENDLY



SUSTAINABILITY AND RESPONSIBLE RECREATION



EDUCATION

# OUR DMMO PRINCIPLES

We released a resident survey in partnership with the Colorado Tourism Office in November 2021. We received more than 550 responses from city and county residents. After analyzing the results we revisited our “Care for Durango” campaign and its principles to ensure it aligned with resident sentiment.

The five principles that make up the “Care for Durango” campaign include Be Healthy, Be Prepared, Leave No Trace, Be Firewise, and Be Respectful. These principles were designed to reflect the top priorities of the city and country, and serve as a guide for Visit Durango to assist in managing and reversing the potential negative impacts of tourism.

In addition, these principles were created to protect the health and well-being of our community, residents and visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic and support long-term economic vitality, resiliency, and increased quality of life of residents.

Visit Durango is committed to targeting all marketing efforts to sustainable and regenerative tourism goals. The organization will continue its work with its Sustainable Tourism Task Force which is composed of local stakeholders from a variety of private and public entities. They include the City of Durango, La Plata County, Local First, Durango Trails, 4CORE,

San Juan Mountain Association, and Fort Lewis College. One of the main goals of this task force is to work with local stakeholders, businesses, and land managers to address Durango’s public lands and environmental needs.

We plan to continue to foster an open dialogue between Visit Durango, local stakeholders, residents, visitors, and local government to ensure the five principles serve as a beneficial guide for all.

*Visitors pledge to be responsible travelers by following these principles!*



## BE PREPARED

Learn about your destination before traveling to Durango or heading out in the mountains.



## BE FIREWISE

Always check and respect local fire restrictions in Colorado’s dry climate.



## BE HEALTHY

Wear a mask, practice social distancing, wash hands frequently, and stay home if you’re sick.



## LEAVE NO TRACE

Stick to trails, dispose of waste properly, take only photographs, and respect local wildlife.



## BE RESPECTFUL

Make the most of your trip by showing locals and other visitors plenty of kindness and respect.

# DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

## Partners

Regarding destination management and sustainability, Visit Durango uses a “triple bottom line” approach. This method acknowledges that true sustainability for a destination accounts for Planet, People, and Profit, or, in other terms, the natural environment, the local culture, and the economy. Visit Durango has created meaningful partnerships in each category. Below is a list of organizations that have attended a Visit Durango working group or partnered on a program.

- **Planet:** San Juan Mountain Association (SJMA), Durango Trails, Fort Lewis College, 4CORE, Parks and Rec, EV Readiness Working Group, Durango Sustainable Business Guide, and others
- **People:** Visit Durango Inclusive Tourism Program, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Adaptive Sports Association, Center for Southwest Independence, Rainbow Youth Center, Four Corners Alliance for Diversity, and others
- **Profit:** Durango Chamber of Commerce, Local First, BID, LPC Economic Development Alliance, SCAPE, Region 9, DAHLA, Colorado Restaurant Association - Durango Chapter, and others



## Accomplishments

- Created three new DEI working groups: Diversity & Culture, LGBTQ+, and Accessible Tourism
- Launched the Cycling Task Force
- Secured membership in the Colorado Historic Hot Spring Loop coalition for 2022
- Hired Sustainability & Policy Manager
- Created new materials for Care for Durango campaign
- Received nationwide media coverage for the Mask Marshal program
- Hosted several Partner Appreciation events
- Hosted a “How to be an LGBTQ+-Friendly Business” workshop in the community



## Lessons for 2022

- Create a Community Event Promotions grant program potentially including operations seed grants for new off-peak events, advertising grants for events marketing outside of La Plata County, and sponsorship opportunities.
- Pursue certifications and indexing, including Mountain IDEAL Destination Certification and Global Destination Sustainability Index.
- Increase community, stakeholder, and resident communication and education including the creation of partner toolkits and front-line hospitality training on the Inclusive Tourism Program.
- Create programmatic marketing events to drive up the local economy during off-peak season potentially including a Durango-wide “Restaurant Week” and a “Local Art Month.”
- Create a visitor carbon offset program.
- Research into short-term rental programs and potential controls, particularly in the context of the workforce and affordable housing.

### CITY LODGERS TAX COLLECTIONS



\*Due to June Increase in City Lodgers Tax from 2% to 5.25% a 35% YOY Increase was expected.

### COUNTY LODGERS TAX COLLECTIONS





## Hotels and Accommodations

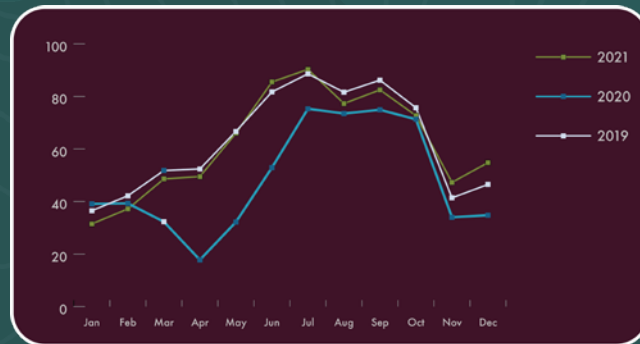
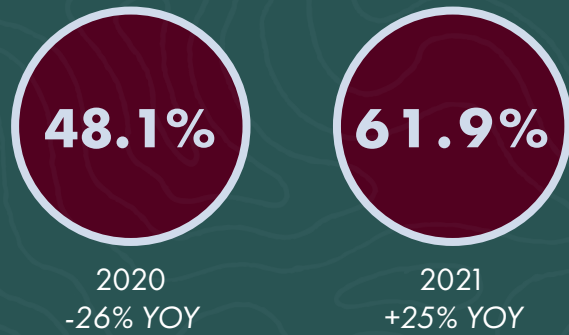
### TOTAL PROPERTIES/ ROOMS

	2020	2021
Total Properties	37	38
Total Rooms	2,471	2,490

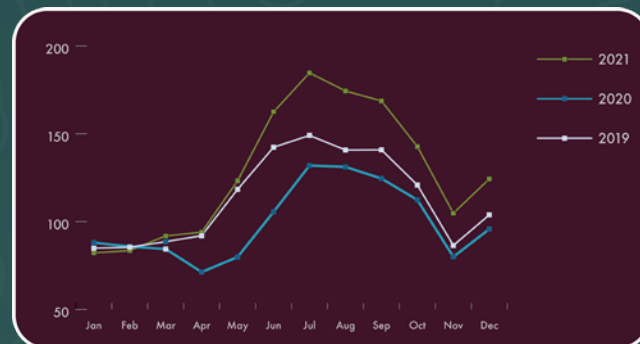
### REVENUE PER AVAILABLE ROOM/ACTIVE NIGHT



### OCCUPANCY RATE



### AVERAGE DAILY RATE



## Short-Term Rentals

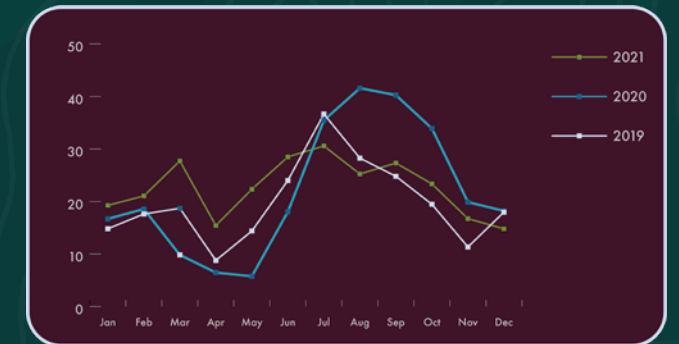
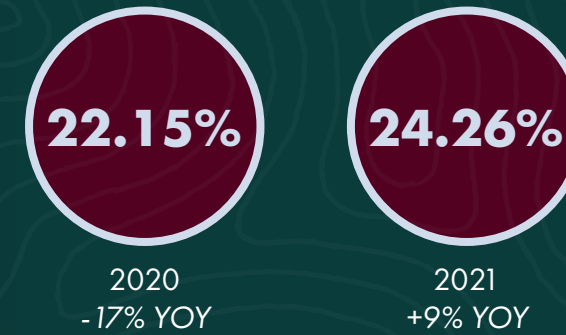
### TOTAL PROPERTIES



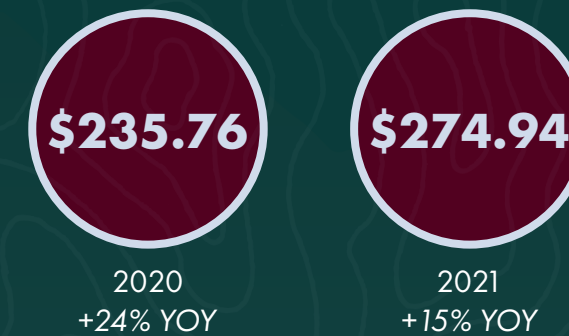
### REVENUE PER AVAILABLE ROOM/ACTIVE NIGHT



### OCCUPANCY RATE



### AVERAGE DAILY RATE

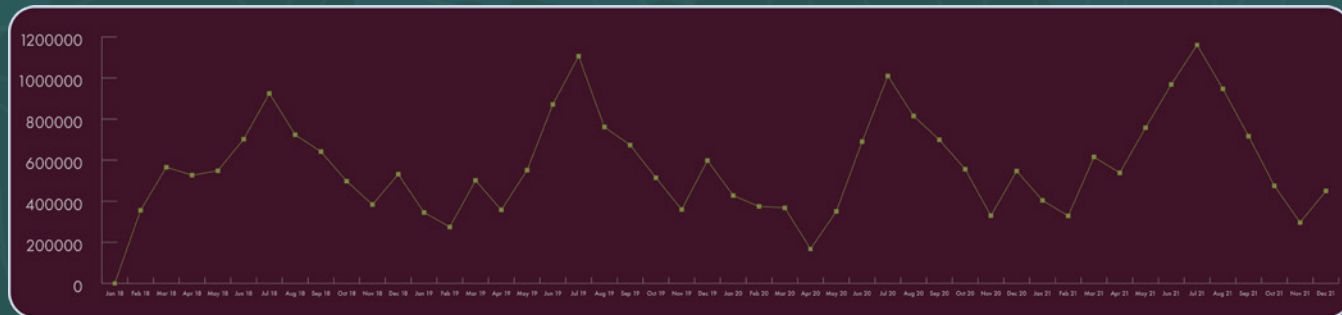




## Visitation Data

While lodger's tax (page 15) and occupancy (page 16 & 17) increased dramatically from 2020, to 2021, the number of unique visitors to the county experienced a slight decrease. In 2020, more visitors were staying in campgrounds, RV parks, and dispersed camping areas. In 2021 we had fewer visitors but they felt comfortable returning to hotels and they stayed for longer. In 2021 the average length of stay increased to 4.5 days. This combined with increased ADR (average daily rate, page 16) explain the increase in lodgers tax collections.

### TOTAL VISITORS

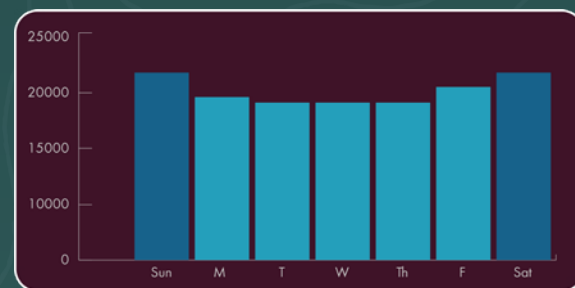
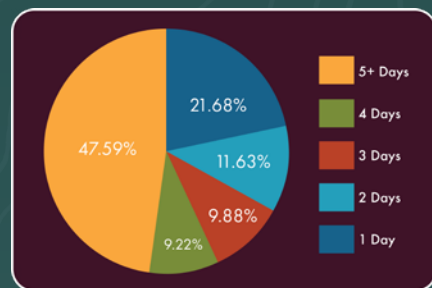


\*Data collection began on February 1, 2018. Data from January 1-31, 2018 is not included.

### AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY AND AVERAGE VISITORS PER DAY (2021)



Average Length of Stay

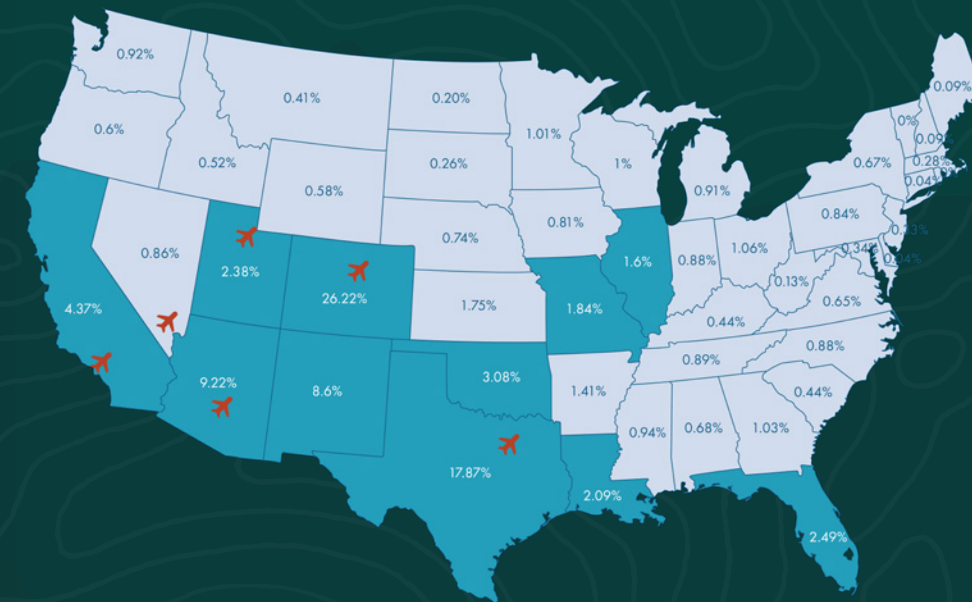


## Visitor Characteristics



### AVERAGE VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS

- 45-64
- 1-3 children ages 16 and under
- Caucasian
- \$150K+ household income
- Bachelors Degree



### VISITORS BY STATE

### TOP POINTS-OF-INTEREST FOR VISITORS†

1. Downtown Durango
2. Lodging Properties
3. Trailheads and Trails
4. Durango Airport
5. Animas River Put-ins and Beaches
6. Art Galleries and Museums
7. Mesa Verde National Park
8. Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad
9. North Main Business District
10. Purgatory Resort

†There is some cross-over of data sets. For example, "Downtown Durango" does include some "Art Galleries and Museums" visits. It is unclear at this time how this will effect the order listed above.

# COMMUNITY RELATIONS

## Tactics

- Board & Staff Strategic Planning Sessions
- Visit Durango Committees, Task Forces, and Working Groups
- Board Member and Elected Officials Liaison Program
- Local, State, and National Committees, Task Forces, and Working Groups
- Research Reports
- White Papers
- Data and Research
- Surveys
- Trainings and Professional Development

## Partnerships

### Local Memberships:

- Durango Chamber of Commerce and Young Professionals of Durango
- La Plata County Economic Development Alliance
- Local First
- Durango Area Hospitality & Lodgers Association
- La Plata County Economic Recovery Taskforce
- 5 Star Certification Community Relations Committee
- Ballot Measure 1-A - Lodgers Tax Increase Committee
- La Plata County Region 9 Strategic Planning Task Force - Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- Downtown's Next Step Stakeholder Group
- Durango Creative District Board of Directors
- Durango Botanic Gardens Marketing Committee

### State and National Memberships:

- Destinations International
- US Travel Association
- Colorado Tourism Office, Tourism Marketing Committee, Mountains & Mesas Regional Tourism Planning Committee, International Promotions Committee
- Colorado Association of Destination Marketing Organizations, and Short-Term Rental Task Force
- Tourism Industry Association of Colorado
- Destination Colorado
- Tour Colorado
- Destination Marketing Association of the West
- Care for Colorado Coalition
- Pledge for the Wild
- Tracks Across Borders Byways Board of Directors
- Grand Circle Association
- American Bus Association
- National Tour Association

## Accomplishments

- Secured 2022 Contract for Sustainable Tourism Marketing and Management Services with the City of Durango.
- Successfully advocated for Ballot Measure 1-A, lodger's tax increase.
- Secured grant and program membership for the Colorado Tourism Office Restart Destinations program.
- Hosted a Colorado Tourism Office Restart Destinations workshop.
- Hosted Meet & Greet with new Director of Colorado Tourism Office, Tim Wolfe.
- Launched the Client Oversight Working Group with Mayor Kim Baxter and Commissioner Matt Salka.
- Conducted a Board of Directors DEI Training.
- Conducted multiple staff DEI Trainings and staff professional development for DEI.
- Executive Director completed Destinations International DEI Masterclass.
- Tourism Briefing hosted in Spring of 2021.

## Community Presentations

- Durango City Council
- La Plata County Board of Commissioners
- Green Business Roundtable
- Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
- La Plata County Economic Development Alliance Investor's Meeting
- Durango Chamber of Commerce Lunch and Learn
- Durango Chamber of Commerce Coffee Talk
- Leadership La Plata
- Hosted a Colorado Tourism Office Restart Destinations Workshop
- Rotary
- Visit Durango Annual Tourism Briefing

## Lessons for 2022

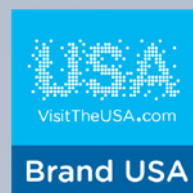
- Create a Client Dashboard and tools for Board Member use in the Elected Official Liason program.
- Present at City Council and Board of County Commissioners at least quarterly.
- Hire an Inclusivity Consultant to assess DEI of Visit Durango marketing and communications materials.
- Create tools for Board Members to use in sector outreach.
- Refine advocacy policy with the Governance Committee and Sustainability & Policy Manager.



# COMMUNITY RELATIONS



The organizations below either work directly with Visit Durango or through our committees, on specific projects, by reviewing and providing suggestions, or represent a group we consider to be a stakeholder within the community.



# PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

## Working Sessions and Events



Board of Directors Strategic Planning



Partner appreciation and Tim Wolfe (CTO) meet-and-greet



Restart Destination workshop with the CTO



Visit Durango booth at IPW

## Sampling of Deliverables and Projects



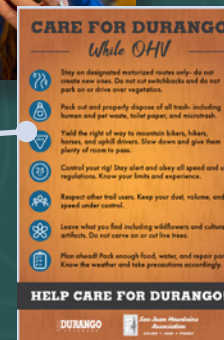
"Boomerang Bag" program with over 40 participating businesses



LGBTQ+ Friendly Business Branding with LGBTQ+ Working Group



"Care for Durango" responsible recreation flyers/posters with San Juan Mountain Association and Silverton Chamber of Commerce

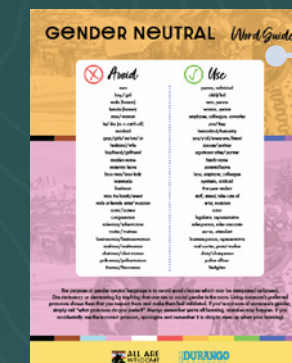


Land Acknowledgment policy and posters



Program and branding with 5 Star Certification Community Relations Committee

Program name and branding with Downtown's Next Step Stakeholder Group



Program and training guides/resources for local businesses with LGBTQ+ Working Group

# TESTIMONIALS ABOUT OUR TEAM



**Timothy Wolfe**  
Director, Colorado Tourism Office

"In my role as Director of the Colorado Tourism Office, I work closely with the various DMOs in the state, including Visit Durango. Throughout my work at CTO I have been impressed with Visit Durango's destination management, marketing, and sustainable tourism initiatives. Visit Durango has become a leading organization in the transition to regenerative tourism. Their team has also been very active in a number of initiatives on a state level representing her region adding insight that not only helped Durango but other like rural communities.

Visit Durango has the vision and skill to fulfill both planning and execution of a cutting-edge destination management program and I would highly recommend them."\*



**Jasper Welch**  
Former Mayor, City of Durango

"Visit Durango, with an experienced and trained professional staff, using a Strategic Plan and performance metrics to achieve contractual 'sustainable tourism management and marketing' goals and guidelines for the City of Durango and La Plata County. Visit Durango, works closely with stakeholders and other community organizations to coordinate "best practices" and community vision goals. In addition, Visit Durango has expanded their role in using "best practices" to manage our tourism and community resources to benefit our community, while respecting our cultural, business, environmental and social resources in the Durango area."\*



**Ken Stone**  
Director Sales & Marketing, Durango Hot Springs

"Durango Hot Springs is fortunate to have a Destination Management team at Visit Durango who are responsive to our needs and understand how to present our collective community and destination. With their support, we have been able to secure national media attention. We have also benefited from being included in Visit Durango social media efforts and online promotions. It is also clear that Visit Durango has taken on a new direction recently that focuses on a tourism model that considers the greater community interests and how tourism fits into overall prosperity for everyone in our community."



**Dionne Beggrow**  
Owner, Soaring Tree Top Adventures

"Working with the Durango Marketing team during the summer of 2021 was a true blessing. Their team was great to collaborate with - they were responsive and energetic about the possibilities of what could be done with our business from a marketing standpoint. They went above and beyond to capture Soaring in images and video and were great to work with. Beyond that, their team took the time to meet with me and my office staff to assist us in our efforts to create successful Google Ads campaigns. This was really above and beyond what I thought the Visit Durango could/would provide, and was extremely helpful for our business to gain insight into how to best position itself in a prominent marketing arena. We are grateful for the Visit Durango team's guidance and we look forward to working with them in years to come."



**Tim Walsworth**  
Executive Director, Durango Business Improvement District

"The Durango Business Improvement District (BID) worked very closely with Visit Durango and its Marketing Team on several projects in 2021. BID counts Visit Durango as one of its key partners, and we have been very impressed with their work. Their team spearheaded the Win a Trip to Durango sweepstakes, generating thousands of entries and thus new contacts. They were instrumental in creating a brand for another project that is looking at how Downtown Durango could be redesigned to include permanent outdoor space for businesses."



**Ryan Garcia**  
Chair, Four Corners Alliance for Diversity

"In my time working with the Visit Durango team I have been impressed by their professionalism and commitment to the Durango community. It is evident they have a deep passion for the local culture and that the issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion are a top priority for the Visit Durango team. They have proven themselves to be unwavering allies to the LGBTQ+, BIPOC, and other historically oppressed communities. When Visit Durango has faced struggles, they have listened, uplifted community voices, responded to any issues with grace and heart, and taken steps to improve and better serve our community."\*



**Sean Kingsbury**  
Professional Mountain Biker & Influencer

"Their team is deeply invested in telling the story about Durango. It was surreal being followed by a crew of talented people with cameras and drones. The best part is that while the equipment was impressive, the stories documented were relatable and opened many eyes to what a dream destination Durango is. I look forward to watching the storytelling that Visit Durango creates to make Durango into a dream destination for many more as it has for me."

# SUMMARY OF MARKETING CAMPAIGNS



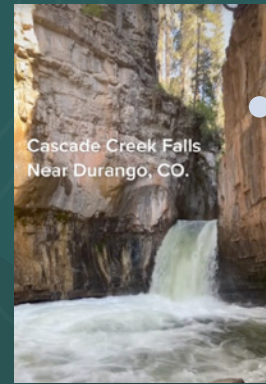
A quick breakdown of the marketing campaigns that ran through the 2021 year.

## Spring/Summer "Always In Season"

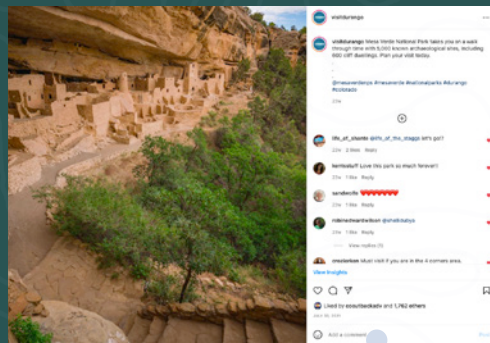
### ORGANIC CONTENT



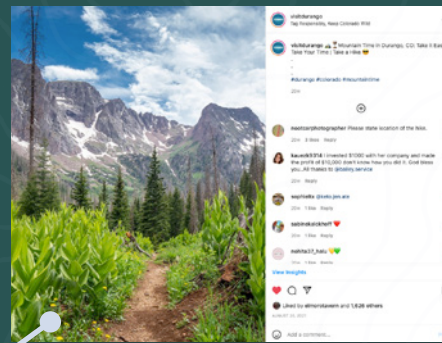
YouTube video



TikTok post

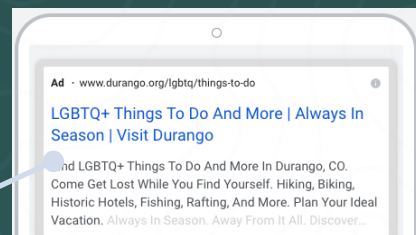


Instagram posts

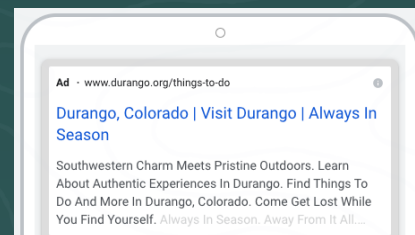


Welcome Center poster

### PAID CONTENT

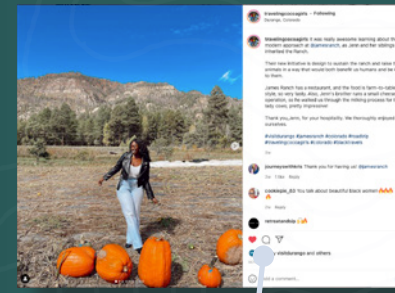


Pay-Per-Click ads via Google Ads



## Fall "Always In Season"

### ORGANIC CONTENT



Instagram post from a hosted-influencer



Sample page from the Fall microsite



Pinterest pin promoting a Fall blog post



Welcome Center poster

### PAID CONTENT



Facebook and Instagram ad



Pay-Per-Click ad via Google Ads



Pinterest ad

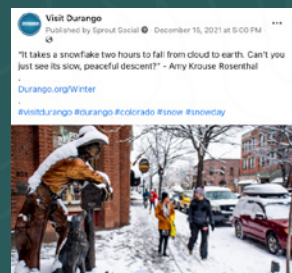


Print ad for Grand Circle Magazine

# SUMMARY OF MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

## Winter "Always In Season"

### ORGANIC CONTENT



Facebook post



Welcome Center itinerary



Sample page from the Winter microsite

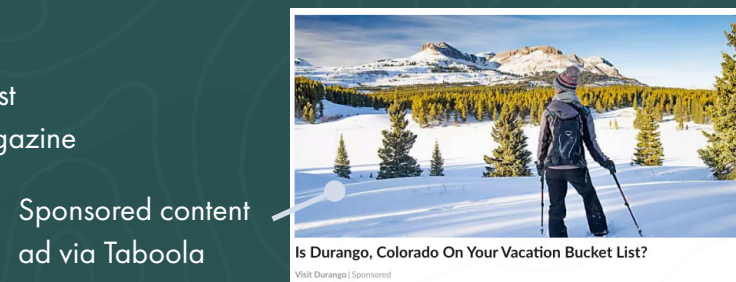


Outdoor recreation blog

### PAID CONTENT



Print ad in Thirst Colorado magazine



Sponsored content ad via Taboola

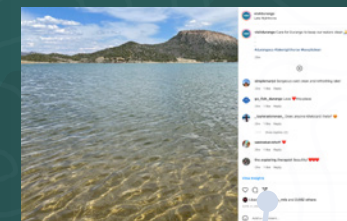


Pay-Per-Click ad via Google Ads

## "Care for Durango"

A campaign focused on promoting the six principles of Visit Durango to residents and visitors alike. During the height of the pandemic, Care for Durango was used primarily to promote safe travel through COVID-related health advice and guidelines. This campaign shifted towards promoting responsible recreation during 2021. Visitors are encouraged to sign a pledge declaring that they would be a responsible tourist during their visit to Durango.

### ORGANIC CONTENT



Instagram post promoting the pledge



Leaflet promoting "Leave No Trace" principle



Blog promoting a topic from the "Be Prepared" principle

Pledge for "Care for Durango"



### PAID CONTENT



Video ad via Durango Herald and Durango News Network

Print ad in Durango Magazine





# SUMMARY OF MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

## Sweepstakes Campaigns

This campaign was used to promote a fall colors sweepstakes, winter sweepstakes, and winter road trip sweepstakes. Visit Durango partnered with BID and Outdoorsy to develop these off-season, mid-week vacation packages to be given away via an online sweepstakes. These three sweepstakes had more than 148,000 combined entries.

### ORGANIC CONTENT

- Sign Up for Our Newsletter
- Upload Your Road Trip Video
- Sign Up with Outdoorsy
- Visit @visitdurango on Instagram
- Get Outdoorsy on TikTok
- Visit @outdoorsy on Instagram
- Visit visitdurango on Facebook
- Visit Visit Durango on YouTube
- Visit Durango on TikTok
- Follow @visitdurango on Twitter

Ways to enter the sweepstakes

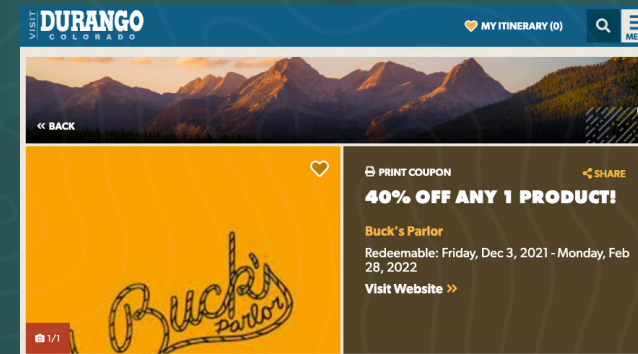
Sweepstakes entry form



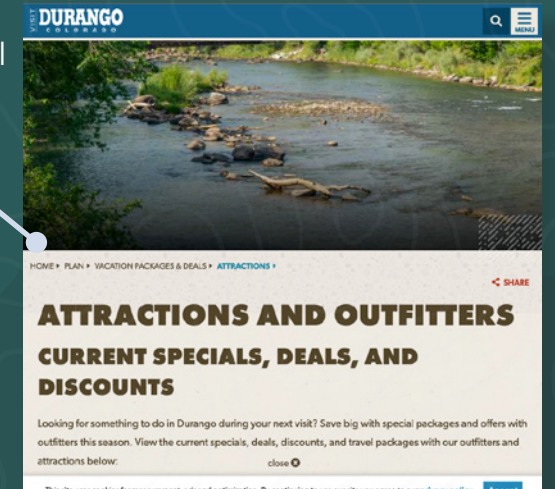
## "Durango Deals"

A campaign that was used to promote specific offerings, deals, and/or discounts from our many business partners across the county. Our team worked with each business featured in the campaign to build a particular offering, timeline, and certain audience to promote it to. This campaign began in the fall of 2021 and is continuing to run in 2022.

### ORGANIC CONTENT



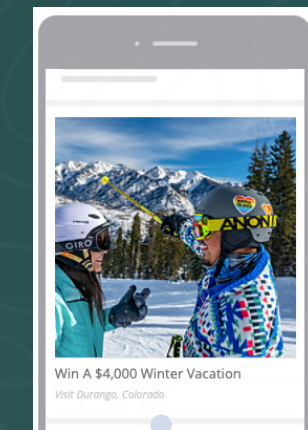
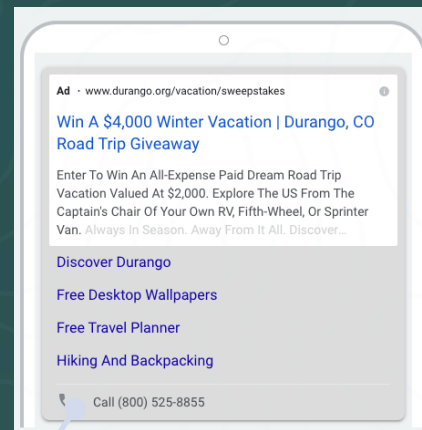
Promotional landing pages



### PAID CONTENT



Pay-Per-Click ads via Google Ads



Sponsored Content ad via OutBrain

### PAID CONTENT



Pay-Per-Click ads via Google Ads



Facebook/Instagram ad

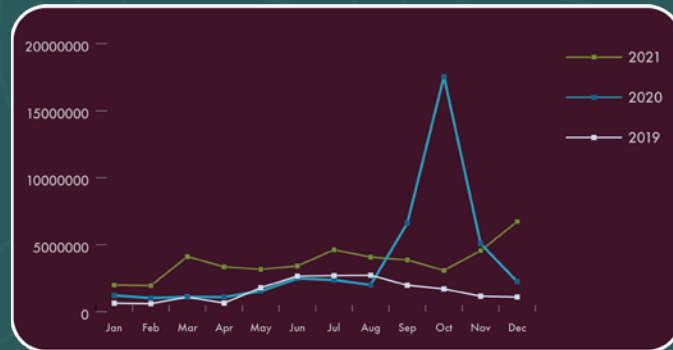


# PERFORMANCE RECAP: MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

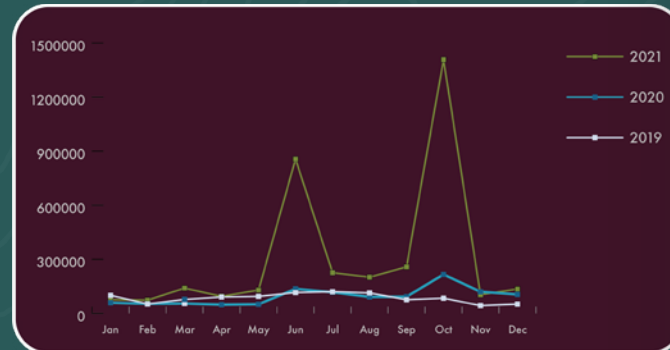


A look into the performance, KPIs, and metrics for all of the paid and organic marketing and advertising content and campaigns.

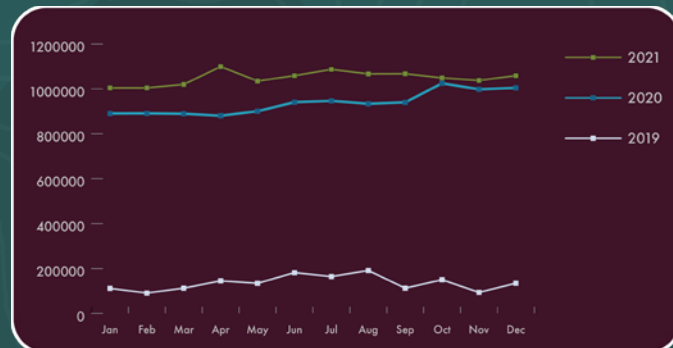
## Organic Marketing



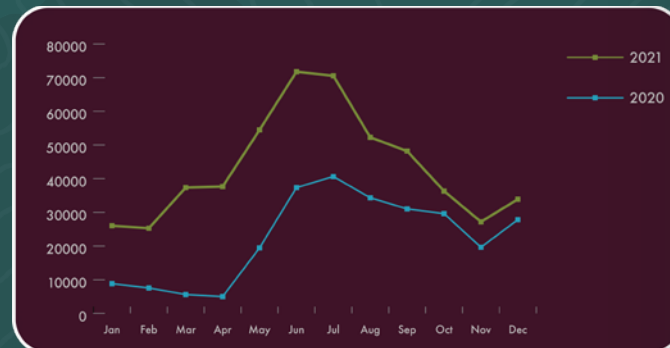
Impressions: 44,898,946 (+1% YOY)



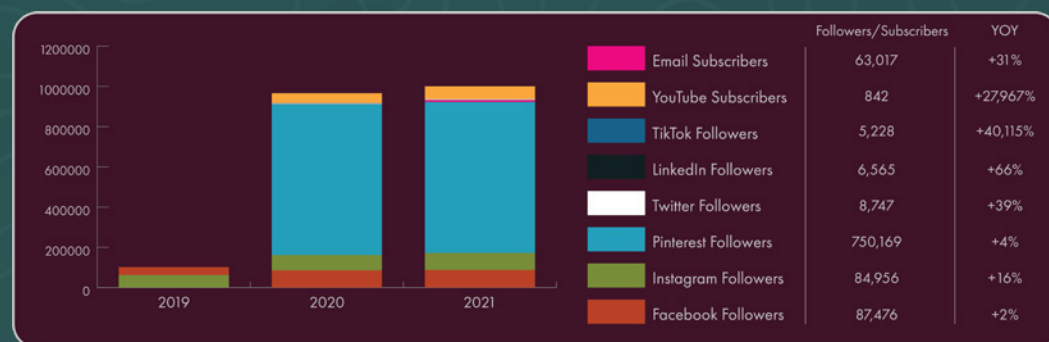
Engagements: 3,699,547 (+213% YOY)



Users: 12,586,420 (+12% YOY)



Conversions\*: 520,884 (+95% YOY)

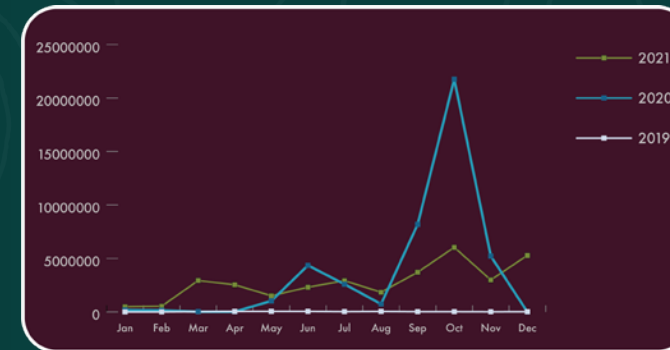


Social Media Followers: 11,125,555 (+2%)

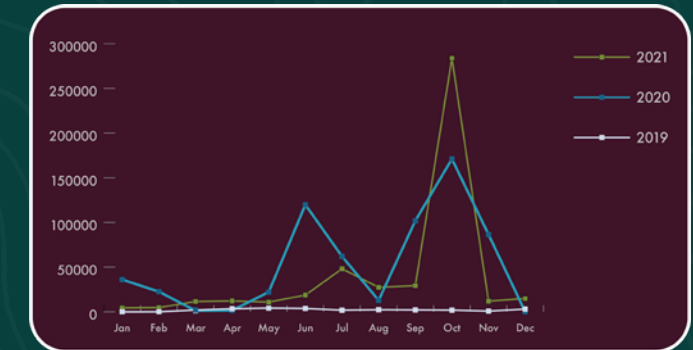


Average Conversion Rate (Organic)

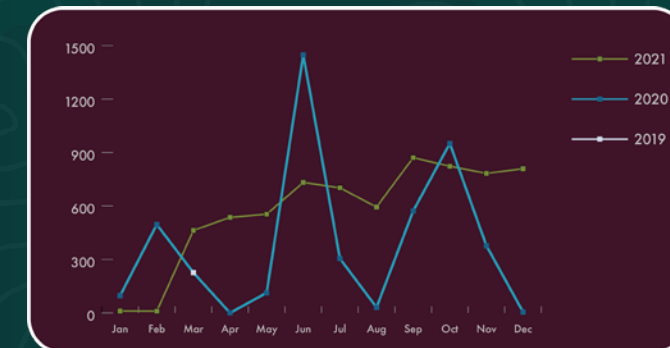
## Paid Marketing



Impressions: 33,072,474 (-30% YOY)



Engagements: 477,554 (-21% YOY)



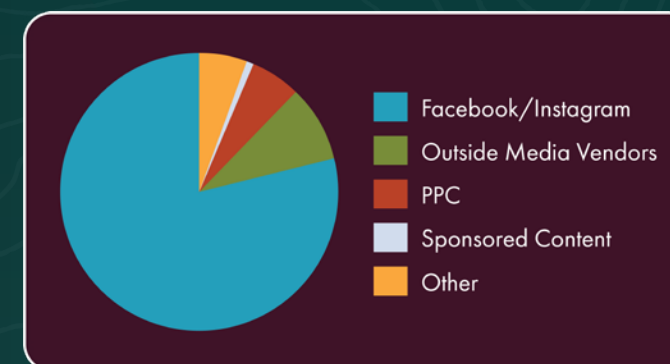
Conversions\*: 6,888 (+49% YOY)



Average Conversion Rate (Paid)



Est. County Economic Impact from Ads



Engagements by Platform

### \*Types of Conversions

- Phone Calls
- Leads to Businesses
- Digital Downloads
- Key Page Views
- Giveaway Submissions
- Sweepstakes Entries
- "Care For Durango" Pledge Sign-Ups
- Survey Completions

# PERFORMANCE RECAP: MARKETING: ORGANIC MEDIA



Defined as non-paid marketing, organic content. It was the main approach for Visit Durango's marketing in 2021.

## Tactics

- Organic social media
- Content writing and blogging
- Reputation management
- Website design/development
- On-page SEO
- Collateral including travel planners, itineraries, and "Care for Durango" guides
- Photography/videography
- Consumer emails
- Social sentiment listening
- Influencer marketing and partnerships

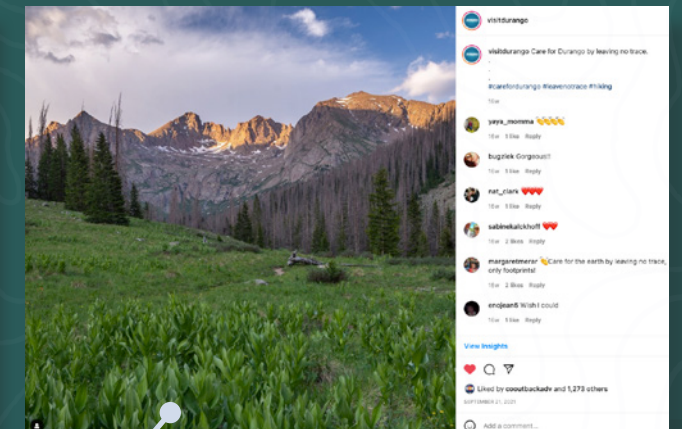
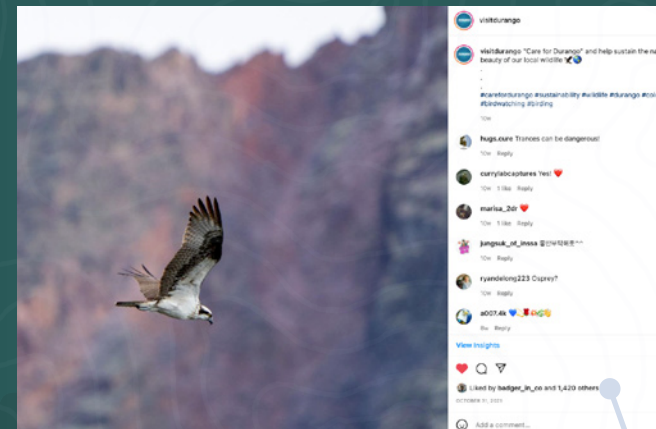
## Platforms

- Instagram
- TikTok
- Pinterest
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Google My Business
- Reddit
- Internal blog writing
- Guest posting
- Email
- Surveying

## Accomplishments

- Majorly expanded promotion of off-peak attractions and less trafficked areas
- Integrated destination management, environmental, and social sustainability into our content via the "Care for Durango" campaign
- Began working with a modeling agency that specializes in diverse actors and models for our photo and video shoots
- Expanded photography and videography asset library by 300%
- Expanded short form and ephemeral videos via TikTok, Instagram stories, Facebook stories, and YouTube shorts
- Expanded coverage of arts and culture, retail, and culinary sectors
- Built and launched off-peak giveaway sweepstakes during fall, winter, and spring
- Began outreach and hosting micro-influencers in the outdoor recreation industry, food industry, and travel bloggers

## Additional Content

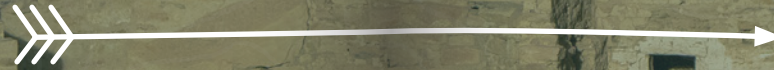


Instagram posts

## Lessons for 2022

- Host more micro-influencers.
- Move away from under-performing platforms and tactics.
- Place more emphasis on non-outdoor recreation products of Durango.
- Continue to tailor the content's messaging, using industry-specific terms, and more authentic imagery.
- Majorly expand photography and videography asset library with diverse actors and models.
- Expand blog content to include more blogs about responsible recreating.
- Refresh large portions of the website with more relevant information and responsible recreating content.

# PERFORMANCE RECAP: MARKETING: PAID MEDIA



Outlined below, these are the highlights of Visit Durango's advertising efforts in 2021.

## Tactics

- Paid social media
- Print and traditional publications
- Digital publications
- Display banner ads
- Pay-per-click advertising
- Sponsored emails
- Out-of-Home advertising (including billboards)
- Sponsored articles/blogs
- Event advertising and sponsorships

## Platforms

- Facebook
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Google Ads
- Miles Partnership
- Spotify
- Colorado.com
- Grand Circle
- Datafy
- Clear Channel
- Lamar
- Elevation Outdoors
- National Park Courier
- Durango Magazine
- Durango Herald
- Thirst Colorado

## Additional Content



Pay-Per-Click ads via Google Ads  
(Placed throughout Germany)



Out-of-Home outdoor billboard

## Accomplishments

- Aligned Visit Durango's advertising approach with the Marketing Committee and other community-led committees.
- Began advertising destination management, environmental, social sustainability into our content via the "Care for Durango" campaign.
- Redistributed about 70% of all advertising budget into off-peak season.
- Began a partnership with a DMMO data-provider (Datafy) to measure the economic impact in La Plata County with our digital advertising campaigns.
- Began running campaigns promoting specific businesses' special offerings and products during off-peak season.

## Lessons for 2022

- Segment content based on activity and consumer's preference.
- Utilize more co-op advertising opportunities.
- Utilize more animation in ad creative.
- Expand audiences in digital campaigns to include more outdoor recreation advocates.

# PERFORMANCE RECAP: ASSET COLLECTION



Below is a small sampling of the assets (photography and videography) Visit Durango collected in 2021. Our asset collection is about 80% in-house, 20% from contractors and now contains more than 7,500 items.



Besides our in-house photo/video team, we worked with the following partners for assets:

- Colorado Tourism Office
- Epic Trails
- Outside
- Social media influencers
- Purgatory Resort
- San Juan Mountain Association
- Over five local, Durango photographers

# PERFORMANCE RECAP: PUBLIC RELATIONS



Outlined below are the highlights of Visit Durango's public relations and earned media efforts in 2021.

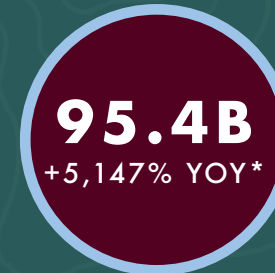
## Tactics

- Media outreach via targeted media pitches, press releases and in-person networking.
- Story coordination in print publications, broadcast media and online publications.
- Hosting Durango focused FAM (familiarization) tours with travel, tourism and lifestyle media.
- Coordinating media efforts with local businesses and stakeholders that result in publication mentions.

## Accomplishments

- Created connections and collaborated with 50+ travel journalists, editors and influencers.
- Partnered with the Black Travel Alliance to host black travel content creators in Durango.
- Visit Durango team members take turns writing the monthly "Tourism Effect" column for the Durango Herald, some topics included upcoming local events, marketing advice, and tourism industry news.

## Performance Highlights



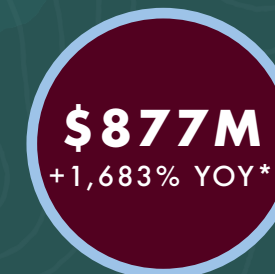
Total Reach



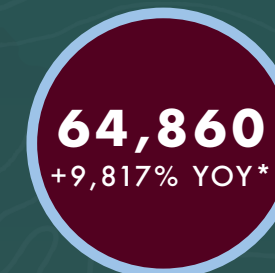
Total FAM  
(Familiarization)  
Tours



Total "Care  
for Durango"  
Placements



Total Advertising  
Equivalent Value



Total Placements

## TOP 10 COVERAGE BY REACH

- BuzzFeed | 46,863,006
- Hemispheres Magazine | 12,333,333
- Thrillist | 7,148,476
- Reader's Digest | 3,000,000
- Lonely Planet | 2,549,475
- USA Today | 2,500,000
- Outside Magazine | 2,400,000
- Men's Journal | 1,326,000
- Matador Network | 1,139,992

## Secured Coverage

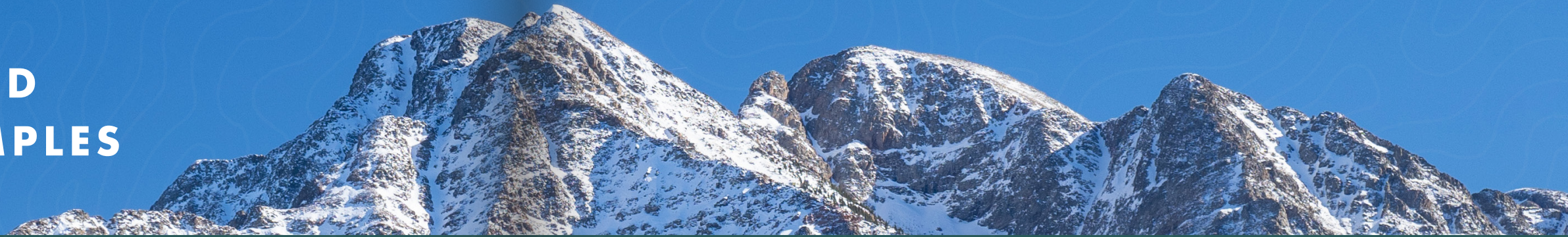
- Outside Magazine
- Men's Journal
- Travel + Leisure
- BuzzFeed
- USA Today
- Thrillist
- Lonely Planet
- Hemispheres Magazine
- Reader's Digest
- Bicycling Magazine
- Backpacker Magazine
- True West Magazine
- And 300+ more

## Lessons for 2022

- Partner with more micro-influencers and niche publications to reach a more engaged and targeted audience.
- Maintain open communication with local businesses and stakeholders to ensure media outlets receive the latest Durango news.
- Hosts FAM (familiarization) tours often and during off-peak seasons.
- Stay up-to-date with communication trends and ensure messaging is consistent and welcoming to all.

\*Visit Durango started measuring PR performance consistently in early 2021.

# EARNED MEDIA AND PR COVERAGE SAMPLES



**lonely planet**

## 51 affordable discoveries across America in 2021

### Colorado – Durango

Durango, Colorado's remote location in the San Juan Mountains offers unimpeded access to some of the best attractions in the state. Take the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad through the gorgeous mountain peaks. Explore the ancient Pueblo ruins of **Mesa Verde National Park**. Take a road trip along the 'Million Dollar Highway', known as one of the most scenic drives in America. Outdoor adventurers will love the 300+ miles of mountain biking and hiking trails near downtown Durango.

**Bicycling**

## The Best U.S. Destinations for Learning How to Mountain Bike

Destination: Durango, Colorado

**Outside**

## The 24 Best Mountain Towns in the U.S., Ranked

19. Durango, Colorado

**TRAVEL AWAIT'S**

## 6 Best Fall Getaways In Colorado 2021

4. Durango

**Reader's Digest**

## 15 under-the-radar places to visit in 2022

Durango, Colorado, USA

**GOING ON FAITH**  
THE MAGAZINE FOR FAITH-BASED TRAVEL PLANNERS

From its famous Durango-Silverton railroad to its location at the base of Colorado's San Juan Mountains, Durango is steeped in both Western and Native American history. The city's art scene ranges from historic to modern mountain culture, benefiting from the area's plethora of outdoor recreation opportunities and its proximity to two Native American tribes: the Southern Ute and Navajo nations.

Groups that want to sample the arts and crafts scene in Durango should take advantage of its monthly Artwalk that takes place downtown during summer and fall; visitors can wander gallery-lined streets, meet artists and see craft demonstrations, all while drinking a glass of wine and sampling hours of oysters. Several galleries in the area cater to Native American and Western art. The Toh-Atin Gallery works with several of the area's top Native American artists to display their work, which includes paintings, pueblo pottery, beautifully handcrafted silver and turquoise jewelry, and Navajo rugs. Sacred Sky displays contemporary and traditional Western art, as well as Native American jewelry, paintings, sculpture and photography.

The Southern Ute are known for their beadwork, and the area's galleries are full of amazing examples of this skillset. Durango's Autumn Arts Festival takes place every September in the city's historic downtown. It features more than 100 artists and is organized by the Durango Arts Center, a hub for the area's artists. Durango is a great jumping-off point to visit Mesa Verde National Park and its famous Native American cliff dwellings and arts scene. Smaller towns in the area also have extensive art scenes, among them Mancos and Cortez.

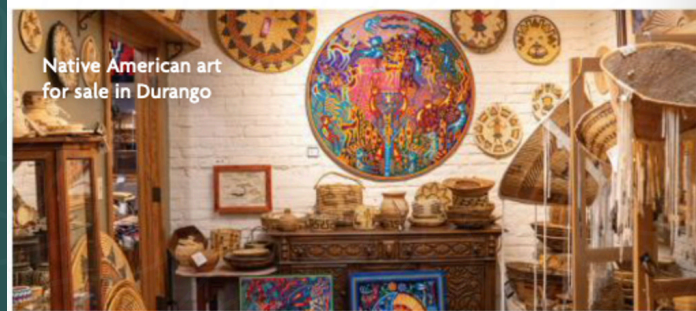
durango.org

**COLORS OF THE SOUTHWEST**

FAITHFUL PENNSYLVANIA

MILITARY MUSEUMS

PICTURESQUE PANAMA CITY BEACH



**NEW YORK POST**

## Sexy ski resorts: These no hassle slopes are for lovers and honeymoons

Purgatory Resort, Colorado

**5280** DENVER'S MILE HIGH MAGAZINE

## 5 Weekend Trips Through Colorado's Wine-Making Regions

Four Corners Region

**Hemispheres**

## The 5 Most Festive Christmas Towns in the United States

Durango, Colorado

visitdurango Durango, Colorado [View profile](#)

**BEYOND ASPEN AND VAIL**

Spanning Colorado's three climatic regions—with Durango out west on the Colorado Plateau, Telluride tucked in among the Rockies, and Boulder surrounded by farmland on the Great Plains—these towns offer a bounty of reasons to explore.

BY JENNIFER ABSTON BEAR

**MENS JOURNAL**

## Plan Your Next Destination Run to the 15 Best Running Trails in America

K. Colorado Trail via Weber Pass Trailhead in La Plata County, Colorado

**THE POINTS GUY**

## 6 epic train trips to take this summer

Melissa Hadden July 14, 2021

Passengers gaze out the windows of the Durango & Silverton through the San Juan mountains. (Photo courtesy of Visit Durango)

The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad

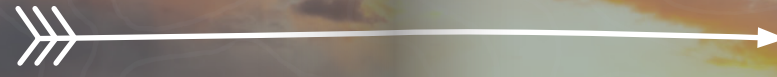
**thrillist**

## 7 Resources Queer Hikers Should Know (Plus Where to Hit the Trails)

**Colorado**

If you want to challenge yourself to a mega-hike, check out the Colorado Trail, a 485-mile long-distance trail from Denver to Durango which takes between four and six weeks to finish. If that's too long, you can hike shorter segments of the trail and still get all the awesomeness. Another popular challenge for experienced hikers is summiting one of the 54 "Fourteeners"—mountains taller than 14,000 feet—of which Colorado has more of than any other state.

# PERFORMANCE RECAP: SALES, GROUPS, & EVENTS



Outlined below, these are the highlights of Visit Durango's group sales efforts in 2021.

## Tactics

- Promoted Durango at multiple in-person and virtual hybrid shows including Destinations International, Go West Summit, Receptive Tour Operators Summit, California Cup, IPW, Brand USA, Colorado Tourism Office Sales Mission London, GovCon, and National Tour Association Travel Exchange.
- Meetings/appointments with Receptive Tour Operators and International Travel Agents.
- Distributed a master list of all lodging and activities, seasonal itineraries, photo/video access, and a What's New in Durango press release to all appointments and meetings at trade shows.
- Host quarterly sales meetings with Durango partners to keep them up to date.

## What We're Promoting

- Mid-week and shoulder season dates to assist with congestion in the peak seasons.
- Providing educational materials to attract sustainable and responsible tourists.
- Utilizing Durango as a 'basecamp to adventure', encouraging for longer stays as visitors explore our region.
- Durango Business of the Month blog post.
- Longer stay and responsible itineraries for all seasons.

## Performance Highlights



Tradeshow  
Appointments



Total Leads



Potential Lead  
Room Nights



Confirmed  
Booked Rooms



Definite Event  
Economic Impact



Total Receptive  
Operators/Partners

## Accomplishments

- Brought Sales Department in-house with local hires.
- Created a new, comprehensive Sales Deck, highlighting all of the paid, and free opportunities we can provide to our partners.
- Created a new Durango Deals Marketing Program to further promote our local businesses and assist traffic to our off-peak seasons.
- Promoted a seasonal sweepstakes four times a year.
- Cleaned up and updated all business listings, ensuring each business has accurate photos, descriptions, and links, where applicable.
- Updated lodging database with new hotels and contact information.

## What We Expect in 2022

- Demand for travel is still pent up. With the borders to the US officially opened, we're expecting the international travel market to increase significantly. Domestic travel in the US is still preferred with the ongoing surges of COVID-19 and its variants. The domestic traveler is more inclined to travel for longer, and are okay with splurging more than in previous years.
- COVID-19 prevention remains the top priority for businesses and visitors alike.
- Hotelier research shows that occupancy, ADR and RevPar will likely meet, if not exceed 2019's numbers.
- Receptive tour operators (RTOs) will be offering more tours, with less capacity, with a reduced budget due to the COVID-19 shutdowns in 2020.



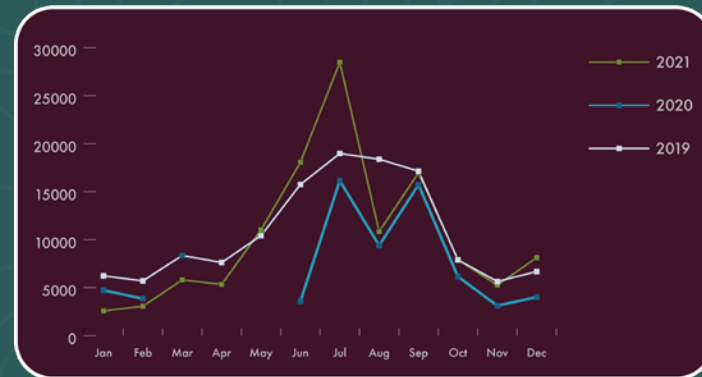
# PERFORMANCE RECAP: DURANGO WELCOME CENTER

Outlined below are the accomplishments and highlights of the Durango Welcome Center over the 2021 year.

## Tactics

- Visitor tracking and people counting
- Distribution of stakeholder business information
- Reputation Management of Facebook, Google My Business, Yelp, and Trip Advisor reviews
- Phone and online chat assistance
- In person assistance for visitors
- Local training on marketing, DEI and customer service
- Digital and print travel planners and maps
- B2B emails

## Performance Highlights



Door Count: 123,461 (+60%)

**11,139**  
+52% YOY

Total Visitors Assisted by Staff

**1,942**  
-12% YOY

Mailed Travel Planners

**5,663**  
+48% YOY

Travel Planner Downloads

**618**  
+140% YOY

Care for Durango Pledge Sign-ups

## Tech Used

- SimpleView
- Square
- Sling
- Google My Business
- TripAdvisor
- Yelp
- Facebook

## Accomplishments

- Launched the "Boomerang Bag" reusable bag program to cut down on single-use plastic in the downtown district.
- Hosted a San Juan Mountain Association Forest Ambassador throughout the summer.
- Installed hand dryers to reduce paper towel use.
- Created a Junior Forest Ambassador Program.
- Partnered with the Durango Creative District and Fort Lewis College to create an "Instagramable" art piece.
- Posted a land acknowledgment.
- Began retail sales of Durango merchandise and Local First coupon books.
- July was our busiest month ever with a total of 28,483 visitors.
- We welcomed our one millionth visitor during the summer of 2021.

## Partnerships

- Durango Business Improvement District
- Fort Lewis College
- San Juan Mountain Association
- Durango Trails
- Durango Creative District

## Lessons for 2022

- Update Travel Planner with more current and relevant information.
- Cross-reference in-person visitors with online visitor statistics.
- Plan and budget for an interior refresh and update.
- Expand seasonal ad options for more effective results.
- Partner with a local organization to gain a more accurate picture of our carbon footprint, and put processes in place to offset it.

# RECAP: OPERATIONS



A look into the operations, budget, and staffing of Visit Durango and the Durango Welcome Center.

## Tactics

- Remain in communication with local stakeholders through B2B emails and working groups.
- Review annual budget monthly with finance department and staff.
- Verify accuracy of income and expenses with 3rd party contractor.
- Track and approve all expenses and receipts to insure accuracy and that spending limits are being followed.
- Total employee working hours bi-weekly with the schedule to verify employee time management.
- Complete annual audit for financial transparency.
- Communicate with HR consultant to ensure handbook and policies are up to date, and in alignment with Visit Durango's culture, values, and current employment laws.
- Onboard new team members and maintain accurate employee records.

## Platforms

- Quickbooks
- Expensify
- Google Drive
- B2B email
- Mailchimp

## Accomplishments

- Created a compensation philosophy and pay bands to ensure employee wages are fair by La Plata County and industry standards.
- Increased all hourly employees to above the Durango livable wage according to Thrive Living Wage.
- Created a new budget to improve accuracy and transparency.
- Separated the Welcome Center expenses from Destination Management to better manage cost.
- Updated Visit Durango cultural values.
- Created a company credit card and business expense policy.

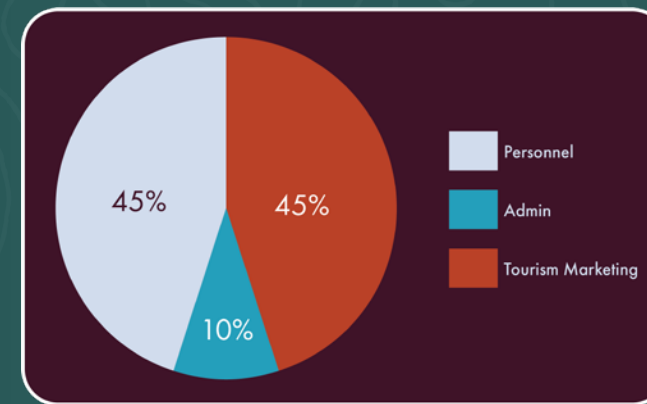
## Lessons for 2022

- Create a hybrid space for upcoming training to ensure safety for all who want to attend.
- Provide employees with digital only paperwork to cut our paper waste.
- Update employee credit cards to sync with Expensify for a more seamless expense reporting process.
- Maintain more regular B2B communication with stakeholders to better communicate upcoming events and Visit Durango news.

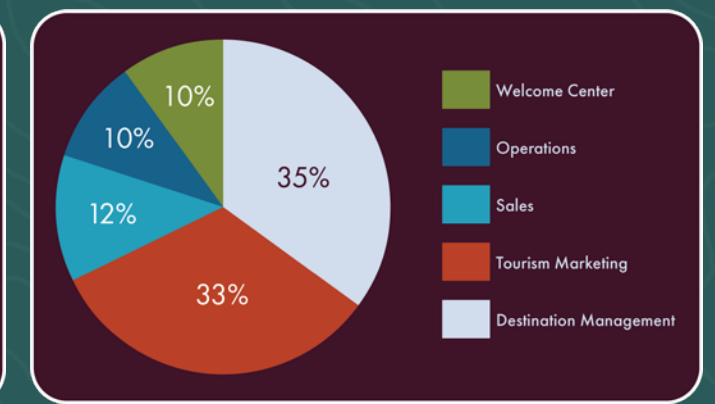
## Contractors

- Essential Operations HR
- TaylorRoth Auditor
- Fox Law Group

## Performance Highlights



2021 Budget: \$1,497,261



2022 Budget: \$1,800,000

## Planned 2022 Organizational Chart



Full Time Staff = 9

Part Time Staff = 6

# 2021

## YEAR IN REVIEW



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