2022
YEAR IN REVIEW

AUTHORED BY VISIT DURANGO STAFF
When Visit Durango transitioned to a Destination Management & Marketing Organization (DMMO) three years ago, we understood the risks. Some caution destination organizations against tackling sustainability and stewardship. It seems this trepidation comes from a place of fear. Fear that we will be blamed for something we don’t have direct authority over. But now is not the time to be timid. Right now we need to be courageous.

As we have evolved from a simple marketing entity to a true management organization, part of our new charge is destination leadership. Strategic destination organizations are shifting to a “resident-centric” approach. As leaders and stewards for the county, we work together with local residents because successful tourism needs community support. We have heard, resoundingly, from our locals, that stewardship is a top priority.

While we must act now, and be bold, we must also be conscientious finding balance on this new path. With tourism being the largest industry in La Plata County, our community, workforce, and businesses are dependent on strong visitation. As the second M of DMMO confirms, marketing is still alive and well.

Please join us as we make the commitment to protect and promote our sweet spot of southwest Colorado so it will remain vibrant and continue to thrive for future generations.

Rachel Brown
Executive Director, Visit Durango
The United States Travel Association projects that all segments of travel will increase in the near future thanks to pent-up demand, travel deals, and lower gas prices. The United States lifted its Covid-19 testing regulations for inbound air travelers in June 2022, which is actively helping with the overall recovery. The surge is expected to continue despite rising inflation and a slowly recovering international market. This increase in travel is only expected in the short term and is not anticipated to last beyond 2023.

Travel in the United States was down 10% from levels set in 2019, and 16% down from pre-pandemic projections for 2022. An estimated $1.05 trillion was spent on travel in the U.S., according to U.S Travel. The forecast from Tourism Economics projects the following:

Domestic leisure travel will continue to drive the overall U.S. travel industry’s recovery. Spending is expected to to remain $46 billion below what projections looked like before the pandemic. 2022 domestic business travel was only at 81% of where it was projected to be before the pandemic. Thanks to more conferences and trade shows transitioning from virtual, back to in-person, domestic business travel is expected to significantly increase to 96% in 2023.

International travel is trending toward recovery. The current momentum of the recovery is thanks to the June 2022 repeal of international inbound Covid-19 testing requirements. The international travel recovery will slow slightly in 2023, but is expected to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels in 2025.

Additional policy changes could speed up the recovery. Reduction of wait times for visitor visas would gain the U.S. an estimated 2.2 million international visitors which equates to $5.2 billion in spending.

According to a report from Tourism Economics, international travelers are expected to generate more than $220 billion in expenditures during 2023. This represents a 3.2% increase over the previous year and is expected to be the third consecutive year of positive growth for U.S. Tourism. The hospitality industry is also projected to benefit from this growth, with revenue from hotels, restaurants, and other attractions set to increase by 2.6% in 2023.

The Tourism Economics report also outlines some of the key trends that will shape the U.S. Tourism industry in 2023, such as an increase in travelers from Asia and Latin America, growth in high-end travel experiences, and a shift toward sustainable tourism practices. As a result, the outlook for tourism in the United States for 2023 looks very positive, with travelers expected to spend significantly more during their trips.

Overall, the future of tourism in the United States is bright and with continued advancements in hospitality and travel, 2023 looks to be another successful year for U.S. tourism. By taking advantage of current trends and investing in innovations that will improve the traveler experience, the U.S. tourism industry is well-positioned for continued growth.

According to Region 9’s 2022 Economic Snapshot, “of the total number of jobs (32,935), 64% (21,099 jobs) are in base industries. Base analysis distinguishes which industries are responsible for overall growth and change. In La Plata, the largest base employment industries are tourism and households that spend money earned elsewhere (i.e., retirees).”

Sources: Region 9, 2022 Economic Snapshot

Sources: Travel forecast. U.S. Travel Association.
LA PLATA COUNTY’S UNIQUE ADVANTAGES DURING COVID-19

- Remote & Rural Location
- Outdoor Rec / Family-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
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 over twelve private and public entities. With the help of this Task Force Visit Durango will continue to make progress towards the following areas: community engagement and support, business impact reduction and tourism education.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT
In 2022 Visit Durango doubled down on its commitment to community engagement and support. Initiatives like a new community engagement platform, marketing event grants, and increasing attendance with community events and boards were a large part of our community engagement strategy. Our largest engagement process to date, was our “Listening to Locals” campaign, a ten month long process exploring risks, strengths and opportunities of our county. We also increased involvement with many nonprofits in La Plata County. Our community engagement will continue to grow as we look towards 2023 with another version of the resident survey being hosted on the engagement platform.

One thing we have learned since the pandemic is that community engagement is more important than ever and the best way to ensure quality of life is increased for residents. We also acknowledge that more work needs to be done engaging with certain resident groups and will continue to work towards these goals.

BUSINESS AND EVENT IMPACT REDUCTION
In 2020, La Plata County had 2,428 business owners registered with the State of Colorado. With such a huge stakeholder base to consider, Visit Durango began focusing on how we can both decrease their environmental impact and reduce their operating costs. We officially kicked off this effort in 2022 by pursuing Mountain Ideal Certification. Through this certification program and various stakeholders’ engagement programs, we have identified key issues that will guide us as we continue taking more meaningful steps during 2023. On the event side we have integrated sustainability into the grading system of our event grants, spoke on sustainability in events during the Durango event planners conference, and have held meetings with event organizers to discuss ways to reduce the environmental impact of their event.

TOURISM EDUCATION
In 2020 Visit Durango started the “Care for Durango” campaign. In 2021 based on results from the resident survey it was revisited to make sure it aligned with resident sentiment. We also involved outside entities to help craft messaging. In 2022 we created an official responsible recreation campaign process. This allows us to make sure we are accountable to our partners and stakeholders. We also expanded the scope and reach of the campaign, introducing banners over Main Avenue, informative fliers, and special material like the avalanche forecast board. In addition, our website attraction pages are now getting a Care for Durango section for visitors to learn about sustainable items when visiting.
Tourism Sentiment

Word of mouth has always been the predominant influence on travel decision-making. People trust their friends and family to advise about destinations and experiences, making capturing sentiment vital for destinations looking to improve their offerings. Tourism Sentiment Index (TSI) provides insights into people’s feelings about La Plata County with the Rankings Report that shows quarterly trends. With these tools, Visit Durango can track performance and make sure they are creating value that exceeds visitors’ expectations. So those visitors will be motivated to spread the word about their great experience.

In 2020, Visit Durango conducted its first Resident Sentiment Survey. During this survey, we learned much about our response to COVID-19 and what residents thought about it. This year’s survey’s primary goal was to monitor resident opinions on tourism in La Plata County over time. We advertised the survey to residents in the local paper, on KSUT, Visit Durango’s newsletter, and staff informed residents via in-person events and meetings. The survey ran from the beginning of November to the end of January. We had 525 respondents.

Top Priorities of Responsible Tourism

1. Fire Safety
2. Habitat Protection
3. Considerate Recreation
4. Proper Waste Disposal
5. Respecting Wildlife
6. Water Usage
7. Discouraging Single-Use Plastic
8. Responsible Backcountry Recreating
9. Respecting Residents
10. Volunteer Tourism

Top Beneficiaries of Tourism According to Residents

1. Restaurants
2. Outdoor Recreation
3. Shopping
4. Entertainment
5. Local Culture & Traditions

“Overall, I think tourism is good for La Plata County.”

Overall Sentiment Score

Breakdown of Score

PROMOTER → 28% of conversations were positive
PASSIVE → 67% of conversations were neutral
DETRACTOR → 2% of conversations were negative

Comp Set Score Comparison

Visit Durango 2022 — Year in Review

Top 10 Priorities of Responsible Tourism

Top Beneficiaries of Tourism According to Residents

“Overall, I think tourism is good for La Plata County.”

Overall Sentiment Score

Breakdown of Score

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Comp Set Score Comparison

Visit Durango 2022 — Year in Review
Our Approach

Visit Durango uses a “triple bottom line” approach regarding destination management and sustainability. This method acknowledges that sustainability for a destination takes into account the planet, people, and profit; or, in other terms, the natural environment, the local culture, and the economy. This approach means we continually evaluate how all the pieces connect, interact and play a part in the outcomes of initiatives.

During 2022, Visit Durango did a deep dive into engagement within our community, and the results will heavily impact where we are headed as an organization. We made sure to find out what our residents perceived risks, strengths, and opportunities are. This will help ensure we align with residents going forward with our different initiatives. We also increased our participation tabling at local events to interact with visitors to educate them on ways to enjoy La Plata County safely and respectfully. At these same events, we interact with residents to receive their feedback and let them know how we are trying to change the discussion around tourism here in the county. One outcome of this was doubling the number of places on our “Do Not Promote List,” which is generated solely by residents. This engagement and the resulting data are crucial as it moves Visit Durango into better alignment with the community in which it operates. This study will help La Plata County continue to be a great place to live while attracting visitors for years into the future.

We also made strides in working towards Mountain Ideal Certification. This included actions like creating a robust Asset Database, including but not limited to attractions like museums and resources like the Animas River. Each of these were broken down with helpful information for visitors and residents. It also takes a deeper dive into management issues.

On the economic front, we reinvested in tools to better track data and our performance. We also actively participate with many local economic entities to monitor and help maximize visitor spending.

In 2023 we plan on developing tools and programs to benefit small business owners, increasing the bottom line while reducing environmental impacts. This will help bolster one of our lowest scoring areas in Mountain Ideal, “Sustainable Business Programs.” We can also investigate “waste accumulation” and “natural heritage conservation,” which are areas we would like to score higher on for our Mountain Ideal certification.

We also plan to build up all our working groups with local organizations, stakeholders, and residents who want to help Visit Durango manage our visitors.

Accomplishments

- Achieved #1 destination in Colorado by the Tourism Sentiment Index.
- Visit Durango was selected as a Top 100 sustainability story by Green Destinations.
- Executive Director received a professional certificate in sustainable tourism from Global Sustainable Tourism Council.
- Created an Asset Database for use by Marketing Department, Destination Management department, and other organizations.
- Advocacy Policy created.
- Selected by the Colorado Tourism Office for their Tourism Management Grant, looking at the cultural history of La Plata County.
- Staff was invited and became involved with the Colorado Tourism Office Destination Development Committee.
- Increased resident engagement across the community.

Lessons for 2023

- Continue to evolve the Lodger’s Tax Local Event Marketing Grants program.
- Create grants for businesses to decrease environmental impact.
- Continue to work towards mountain IDEAL Certification.
- Increase community, stakeholder, and resident communication and education, including creating partner and front-line hospitality toolkits.
- Begin partner training on the Inclusive Tourism Program.
- Create programmatic marketing events to drive up the local economy.
- During off-peak season, potentially including a County-wide “Restaurant Week” and a “Local Art Month.”
- Track carbon emissions of Visit Durango and visitors.
- Evolve visitor carbon offset program.
- Create a water reduction program for lodging.
- Work towards International Dark Sky Certification for Durango.
Calculated by Green Destinations and Good Travel Guide, the “Destination Sustainability Scorecard” is a measurement of sustainability efforts across the destination in 18 core criteria. These criteria are determined and defined by Mountain IDEAL Standard and cover a variety of sectors in a destination.
### Hotels and Accommodations

#### Total Properties/Rooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Properties (Reporting)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Rooms</td>
<td>2,490</td>
<td>2,540</td>
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</table>

#### Occupancy Rate

- **2021:** 61.9% (+25% YOY)
- **2022:** 63.5% (+3% YOY)

#### Average Daily Rate

- **2021:** $128.10 (+25% YOY)
- **2022:** $140.48 (+10% YOY)

### Short-Term Rentals

#### Total Properties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Properties</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td>1,425</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021: +13% YOY</td>
<td>2022: +6% YOY</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Revenue Per Available Room/Active Night

- **2021:** $170.7
- **2022:** $180.75

#### Occupancy Rate

- **2021:** 51.9% (+13% YOY)
- **2022:** 54.2% (+4% YOY)

#### Average Daily Rate

- **2021:** $298.78 (+6% YOY)
- **2022:** $339 (+13% YOY)

### Total Lodger's Tax Collected

#### City

- **2022:** $3.45M (+24.7% YOY)

#### County

- **2022:** $892K (+13.8% YOY)

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Data sources: Datafy, STR Report, AirDNA
In 2022 the number of unique visitors to the county increased by 600,000 compared to 2021, with the average visitor being from out of state and between the ages of 45-64. While there was an increase in unique visitors, the average length of stay decreased from 4.5 days in 2021 to 2.6 days, which could be due to an increase of ADR (average daily rate) for 2022 compared to 2021.

**Overview of 2022’s Visitation**

**TOTAL VISITORS**

- **2019 (+7%)**
- **2020 (-12%)**
- **2021 (-2%)**
- **2022 (+42%)**

**AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY AND AVERAGE VISITORS PER DAY**

- **3.1 DAYS**

**AVERAGE VISITOR AGE**

- 45-64: 35.8%
- 30-44: 24.3%
- 25+: 28.1%
- 18-24: 11.8%
- 18: 9%

**AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE**

- 3+: 46.9%
- 1-2: 44.1%
- 1: 9%
- 4+: 9%

**Demographics**

- Out-of-State
- 45-64
- 3-5 Household Size
- $100K+ household income
- Bachelor’s Degree

**VISITORS BY STATE**

**TOP POINTS-OF-INTEREST FOR VISITORS**

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

Data sources: Datafy
COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Visit Durango’s commitment to community relations is evident in the effort we put into improving the lives of La Plata County residents. We are actively working to make sure we gather feedback and hear voices from all walks of life. This starts with our partnerships with local organizations, residents, as well as staying informed and involved on all relevant local issues. We want to make sure La Plata County is a great place to live and grow. Visit Durango strives to demonstrate how the power of collaboration between citizens and businesses can help build stronger economies and communities from within.

Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Task Force

During 2022 we restructured the Sustainable Tourism Task Force. In 2023 we plan on building the participation with members of La Plata County and a focus on current Mountain IDEAL certification process.

Inclusive Tourism Working Groups

The Inclusive Tourism Program was created in order to promote Durango as an inclusive destination for our community and visitors. We are working with partners to help support systematic change within La Plata County. The working group includes many local partners and focuses on Accessible tourism, Diversity and Culture and LGBTQ+ community.

Lessons for 2023

- In 2023 we would like to implement community engagement indicators and index in order to better track our impact on the community.
- Continue to expand current resident and community engagement efforts.
- Build Visit Durango’s reputation as the Destination Management organization.
- Continue to gain more attendance in working groups to extend our diversity and community input.

Accomplishments

- Awarded Destination Management grant from CTO focusing on history of La Plata County.
- Attended and graduated from the Leadership La Plata program.
- Created a community engagement platform (engage.durango.org) for surveying and feedback.
- Hired an inclusivity contractor.
- Sponsored and tabled at the Earth Day event.
- Updated La Plata County businesses’ accessible options on our main website.
- Presented to Regional Housing Authority (RHA) and created documentation for members.
- Increased Spanish translation in surveying, communications, website, and collateral projects.
- Community engagement initiative with six in-person meetings and 12 virtual meetings.
- Hosted educational community trainings about Fentanyl and the benefits of Narcan.
- Promoted, attended, and documented the Durango Trails volunteer day.
- Assisted with the development of the “Share The Love Cycle” event during Spoketober that upcycled more than 70 bikes and donated them to the Navajo Nation.
- Completed the La Plata County resident survey.
- Apply and awarded the Dark Sky grant in partnership with city of Durango.

Partnerships

- San Juan Mountain Association
- Business Improvement District
- Durango Trails
- Fort Lewis College
- Southwest Center for Independence
- In the Weeds
- Four Corners Alliance For Diversity
- Leadership La Plata
- Durango Chamber of Commerce and Young Professionals of Durango
- La Plata County Economic Development Alliance
- Local First
- La Plata County Hospitality & Lodgers Coalition
- Downtown’s Next Step Stakeholder Group
- Durango Creative District Board of Directors
- Durango Botanic Gardens Marketing Committee
- Bayfield Chamber of Commerce
- Sustainability Alliance of Southwest Colorado
- Green Business Round Table
- Care for Colorado Coalition
- Tracks Across Borders Byways Board of Directors
- Four Corners Alliance for Diversity Board of Directors
- 4CORE
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EVENTS

Visit Durango is present at events throughout the community. From training sessions, to tabling at events, our team makes a strong effort to be present throughout the County.

- Tabling at Clean Commute Week 2022
- Visit Durango Bump-Out
- Local leadership business training
- LGBTQ+ “Safe Zone” training
- Community Narcan and Opioid Awareness Training
- Networking at the Visit Durango Holiday Party
- Tabling at Noel Night
- Staff participation at “Downtown Clean-Up”
- Community Engagement for Resident Tourism Survey
- Volunteering at the Durango Food Bank
- Website training for La Plata County businesses
- Staff participation at Durango Pride
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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.
Your Lodger’s Tax Dollars at Work

40 GRANTS AWARDED = $120,000 GIVEN

The City of Durango and Visit Durango understand the important role that special events play in improving the quality of life for residents and in attracting visitors to the area. In early 2022 the City of Durango City Council earmarked a portion of the new lodger’s tax funds for the support of local event marketing.

Visit Durango’s Board of Directors formed the Events Committee to create a process for systematically and strategically distributing this funding.

Consideration Criteria

- Non-peak season
- Promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Sustainability and low environmental impact
- Multi-generational, family friendly
- Accessible to the disabled
- Appeal to Durango residents
- Robust event marketing strategy
- Growth potential or longevity
- Educational elements
- Lodging partnerships and tourism appeal
- Previous event that was impacted by the pandemic

I'M VERY GRATEFUL TO VISIT DURANGO FOR THE GENEROUS MARKETING GRANT THAT SUPPORTED OUR FIRST-YEAR “SHARE THE LOVE CYCLE” EVENT TO PAY FOR A BEAUTIFUL POSTER PRODUCED BY A LOCAL GRAPHIC DESIGNER AND AN EVENT RECAP VIDEO CREATED BY A RIDER FROM THE SILVER STALLION DEVO PROGRAM, WHICH SERVES KIDS ON THE NAVAJO NATION.

TEAL STETSON-LEE
SHARE THE LOVE CYCLE

A quick breakdown of event marketing program and awarded grants in 2022.
A quick breakdown of the marketing campaigns that ran through the 2022 year.

Spring/Summer Content

**ORGANIC CONTENT**
- Email Campaign
- Instagram Posts
- Blog Post
- Itinerary
- YouTube Ad
- Sponsored Content Ad
- Pay-Per-Click Ad via Google Ads

**PAID CONTENT**
- Email Campaign
- Instagram Content from Influencers
- Facebook Post
- Blog Post
- Pay-Per-Click Ads via Google Ads
- Sponsored Content Ad

**SUMMARY OF MARKETING CAMPAIGNS**

**Fall Content**

**ORGANIC CONTENT**
- Email Campaign
- Blog Post
- Facebook Post

**PAID CONTENT**
- Email Campaign
- Instagram Content from Influencers
- Pay-Per-Click Ads via Google Ads
- Sponsored Content Ad
SUMMARY OF MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Winter Content

ORGANIC CONTENT

PAID CONTENT

“Care for Durango” Content

This campaign shifted towards promoting responsible recreation and stewardship during 2022. Visitors are encouraged to sign a pledge declaring that they would be a responsible visitor during their time in Durango.

ORGANIC CONTENT
In 2022, Visit Durango hosted numerous sweepstakes, including collaborative efforts with Mild to Wild, the 2022 Economic Summit, Four Corners Rainbow Alliance, Create Art & Tea, and the Four Corners Motorcycle Rally. Visit Durango’s most popular sweepstakes was the Sustainable Vacation Sweepstakes, with 104,645 entries, and everyone who entered signed the pledge to care for Durango. In 2022, Visit Durango sweepstakes received a total of 357,302 entries sending web traffic and engagement to partners and our website, social media, email newsletter, and more.

**“Durango Deals” Content**

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.

**ORGANIC CONTENT**

Promotional landing pages

**PAID CONTENT**

Pay-Per-Click Ads via Google Ads

Pay-Per-Click Ads via Google Ads

Facebook/Instagram Ads

**Sweepstakes Entry Forms**

Sweepstakes Entry Forms

**“Durango Deals” Content**

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.
SUMMARY OF MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

“Spoketober” Content

Visit Durango’s first programmatic campaign was “Spoketober.” Running the entire month of October, it featured nearly 50 events hosted by partners throughout the county. Visit Durango handled the coordination, scheduling, and subsequent promotion of the individual events.

ORGANIC CONTENT

Facebook and Instagram Posts
Branded Sticker

PAID CONTENT

Pay-Per-Click Ad via Google Ads
Print Ad in the Durango Herald
Facebook/Instagram Ads

“Holiday Station” Content

Visit Durango’s winter programmatic theme was a month-long celebration of everything “Holidays.” “Holiday Station” featured events throughout the county- organized by individual partners and businesses. Similar to “Spoketober,” Visit Durango handled the coordination, scheduling, and subsequent promotion of the individual events.

ORGANIC CONTENT

Facebook and Instagram Posts
Branded Sticker

PAID CONTENT

Pay-Per-Click Ads via Google Ads
Facebook/Instagram Ads
Pay-Per-Click Ad via Google Ads
Street and Business Posters

Pay-Per-Click Ad via Google Ads
Street and Business Posters
Facebook/Instagram Ads
PERFORMANCE RECAP: MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

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

Organic Marketing

Impressions: 35,231,502 (-6% YOY)
Engagements: 1,891,145 (-47% YOY)
Users: 12,843,486 (+2% YOY)
Website Pageviews: 2,693,947 (-8% YOY)

Paid Marketing

Impressions: 39,797,235 (+20% YOY)
Engagements: 263,856 (-45% YOY)
Conversions*: 4,673 (-32% YOY)

*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

Data sources: SimpleView Dashboard, Google Analytics, Sprout Social

Social Media Followers: 11,305,006 (+2%)
PERFORMANCE RECAP:
MARKETING: ORGANIC MEDIA

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
- Launched organic marketing campaigns for the inaugural Spoketober and Holiday Station programmatic events.
- Created “marketing pillars” to determine all of the industries to promote throughout the county.
- Expanded promotion of off-peak attractions and less trafficked areas.
- Executed 10 off-peak giveaway sweepstakes during fall, winter, and spring.
- Expanded content creation and publication for off-peak season during fall, winter, and spring.
- Expanded use of video content across all platforms and tactics.
- Hosted 15 social media influencers.
- Integrated destination management, environmental, and social sustainability into our content via the stewardship “Care for Durango” campaign.
- Focused on making video & photo content “distinctly Durango.”
- Focused on creating content that tells authentic, organic stories.

Additional Content
- Defined as non-paid marketing content. It was the main approach for Visit Durango’s marketing in 2022.

Lessons for 2023
- Expand use of long-form video production and publication across social media platforms.
- Incorporate more “heart-felt” and inspirational storytelling in blog content.
- Place more emphasis on non-outdoor recreation products of Durango.
- Work with influencers who create their own video content.
- Host sweepstakes where partners supply the prize.
- Tabling at more events to spread the word about Visit Durango initiatives.
- Utilize lodging and attraction partners when hosting influencers.
- Teaching our partners to create stronger content.
- Collaborating with partners on social media content.
- Continue to tailor the content’s messaging, using industry-specific terms, and more authentic imagery.
**PERFORMANCE RECAP: MARKETING: PAID MEDIA**

**Platforms**

- Facebook
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- TikTok
- YouTube
- Google Ads
- Miles Partnership
- Colorado.com
- Grand Circle
- Datafy
- Durango Magazine
- Durango Herald

**Tactics**

- Paid social media
- Print and traditional publications
- Digital publications
- Display banner ads
- Pay-per-click advertising
- Sponsored articles/blogs

**Accomplishments**

- Implemented a new paid strategy to advertise to more sustainable and activity-based individuals
- Increased reach and performance of off-peak season ad campaigns by 35-50% (depending on tactic/platform)
- Increased reach and performance of destination management, environmental, and social sustainability into our content via the stewardship “Care for Durango” campaign by 80%
- Increased reach and performance of specific businesses’ special offerings and products during off-peak season by 20%
- Discontinued use of advertising partners and tactics that did not yield a high return on investment and/or return on ad spend.

**Lessons for 2023**

- Expand on and utilize internal first-party data audiences for remarketing
- Expand segmentation of ads based on activity and consumer’s preference
- Pull out of all traditional advertising with the exception of the stewardship “Care for Durango” campaign.

Outline below, these are the highlights of Visit Durango’s advertising efforts in 2022.
PERFORMANCE RECAP: ASSET COLLECTION

Below is a small sampling of the assets Visit Durango collected in 2022. Our asset (photography and videography) collection now contains more than 17,000 items.

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

- Colorado Tourism Office
- Fort Lewis College
- City of Durango
- Purgatory Resort
- San Juan Mountain Association
- Over 10 local, Durango photographers
- Social media influencers
PERFORMANCE RECAP: PUBLIC RELATIONS

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, personalities and stakeholders that result in publication mentions.

Accomplishments

• Attended eight media conferences and receptions where we pitched Durango to a total of over 100 international & domestic travel journalists, editors and influencers.
• Hosted 22 media FAMs (familiarization tours) in La Plata County resulting in media coverage for a variety of sectors. It includes 10 international media FAMs coordinated in partnership with CTO.
• Partnered with local PR firms to create partnerships for new annual events including Spoketober and Holiday Station. Secured media coverage for new annual events.

Secured Coverage

• Conde Nast Traveler
• The Points Guy
• Outside Magazine
• Men’s Journal
• Travel + Leisure
• USA Today
• Thrillist
• Lonely Planet
• AFAR
• Architectural Digest
• Hemispheres Magazine
• Bicycling Magazine
• Backpacker Magazine
• True West Magazine
• And 300 + more

Lessons for 2023

• Collaborate with other Southwest CO destinations to create more cohesive itineraries for international media and highlighting the differences of each city/region.
• Encourage local businesses and partners to create new programming and provide info to Visit Durango with enough lead time to secure media coverage.
• Create relationships with more local personalities which can join visiting media FAMs. This will add to Durango stories and incorporate local culture.

Performance Highlights

Total Reach

$270M
-69% YOY

Total FAM (Familiarization) Tours

Total Referral Traffic

2.4T
+152% YOY

25
+131% YOY

725K
+2% YOY

TOTAL PLACEMENTS

35,489
-45% YOY

Data sources: SimpleView Dashboard, Cision

Outlined below are the highlights of Visit Durango’s public relations and earned media efforts in 2022.

TOP 10 COVERAGE BY READERSHIP

TODAY | 402,283,753
Insider | 147,977,480
The Washington Post | 69,597,835
Forbes Advisor | 62,430,000
AARP | 13,439,055
Thrillist | 6,618,284
The Points Guy | 4,882,656
Conde Nast Traveler | 3,399,029
Travel + Leisure | 2,985,716
Men’s Journal | 2,596,874

Visit Durango
2022 — YEAR IN REVIEW

EARNED MEDIA AND PR COVERAGE SAMPLES

MEN'S JOURNAL
These Lesser-Known Scenic Drives Roll You Way Beyond the Crowds

TRAVEL LEISURE

RACHEL WILSON
Why You Should Be Skiing in Durango This Fall

ROAD TRIP: WATER SOULTR THERAPY SOUTHERN BREEZES

INSIDER
49 of the best hiking trails to visit in the US. Take some of the famed Colorado Trail in Durango.

UNESCO at 50: 24 World Heritage sites to see across America

60 Best Destinations To Spend Your Points In 2022

VISIT DURANGO

25 best Christmas towns in the US for a winter getaway

Durango, Colorado

A historic mining town, Durango puts its local steam engines to service with Minutes. Image by the scenic mountain. In December, the ride opens as a special "Winter Express" inspired trip for children along with rides to faith and on down Christmas scenes in historic old homes.

TOPS
Don't ski? You can still have fun this summer at these 7 ski destinations

Durango, Colorado

TRADE ROUTE
This Road Trip Route Leads to Some of Colorado's Best Hot Springs — Including Natural Riverside Pools and Vapor Caves

60 Best Destinations To Spend Your Points In 2022

VISIT DURANGO
PERFORMANCE RECAP: SALES, GROUPS, & EVENTS

Tactics

- Promoted Durango at multiple in-person travel trade shows, including National Tour Association’s Travel Exchange, Go West Summit, and the U.S. Travel Association’s IPW.
- We hosted a Sales Familiarization Tour with a representative from Belgium-based travel agent, Bridges2Bruges, to provide hands-on experience before they represented La Plata County at Visit U.S.A. Belgium.
- Pitched La Plata County during trade show one-on-one appointments with receptive tour operators (domestic and international) 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 La Plata County Hospitality & Lodging Coalition meetings with local tourism partners to keep them updated on any potential leads, business promotions, and educational opportunities.

What We’re Promoting

- Longer stays during mid-week and shoulder season dates to assist with congestion in the peak seasons.
- Less visited areas, attractions, and businesses.
- Providing educational materials to attract responsible and respectful visitors in a sustainable and regenerative way.
- Utilizing La Plata County as a ‘basecamp to adventure’ encourages longer stays as visitors explore our region.
- Encouraging tours/groups/travel agents to include La Plata County in itineraries with the Grand Canyon (Grand Circle), Utah, and New Mexico, not just those visiting Colorado.

Accomplishments

- Two sales team members completed and received certifications with Destination International’s Professionals in Destination Management Course.
- Merged Visit Durango’s Sales & Services Task Force with the Durango Area Hospitality & Lodging Association (DAHLA) to form the new La Plata County Hospitality & Lodging Coalition. LPCH&LC Mission Statement: Our mission is to cultivate and support the hospitality & lodging professional community of La Plata County through education, networking, and collaboration to both represent and advocate for the common interests of the local industry.
- Created new complimentary listings for tourism-related businesses on Durango.org.
- Received international representation at Visit U.S.A Belgium.

What We Expect in 2023

- Pent-up demand from the pandemic is still strong, with leisure travel surpassing pre-pandemic levels across the U.S. While people traveled in 2022 to see loved ones, 2023 will be full of fun and exploration, where people are focusing on taking that dream trip they’ve been pushing off for the past few years.
- Business travel is still improving from the pandemic, though this is expected to slow down slightly as we enter a mild recession in 2023. Instead, we’ll see a growth in “bleisure” travel in 2023.
- Sustainability is at the forefront of travelers’ minds, where they will pay more and go out of their way to give their business to those with sustainable practices that align with their goals and commitments to sustainability.
- 2023 is expected to bring international travel back to 75% of pre-pandemic levels. Full recovery to pre-pandemic levels is not expected until 2025.
- Our key international markets include Mexico, Australia, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Outlined below, these are the highlights of Visit Durango’s group sales efforts in 2022.

Visit Durango table at Visit U.S.A in Belgium
Outlined below are the accomplishments and highlights of the Durango Welcome Center over the 2022 year.

**Performance Recap: Durango Welcome Center**

### Performance Highlights

#### Door Count: 93,429 (-24%)*

- **2022**
- **2021**
- **2020**

**Tactics**

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

**Tech Used**

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

**Accomplishments**

- Assisted and participated in many community events including: Durango Wine Experience, Clean Commute Week, Downtown trick or treating, and Noel Night.
- Partnered with a local artist and the City of Durango in order to display two art pieces in the Welcome Center.
- Expanded our advertising options for local stakeholders.
- *Upgraded all door counters to digital cameras that are much more accurate.
- Increased the merchandise available for sale at the front desk.
- Created and implemented a seasonal avalanche and fire awareness sign to better educate visitors.
- Expanded our summer partnerships with Durango Trails to better educate visitors on trail education during the summer.

**Partnerships**

- Durango Business Improvement District
- Fort Lewis College
- San Juan Mountain Association
- Durango Trails
- Durango Creative District
- Local First
- Durango Chamber of Commerce

**Lessons for 2023**

- Gain a more accurate picture of our carbon footprint, and put processes in place to offset it.
- Prepare a 3, 5, and 10 year budget for necessary building updates and future renovations.
- Create a new ad contract that will require stakeholders to update and revise advertisements when needed to keep them modern and up to date.
- Expand our visitor tracking to include phone calls and chat interactions.
- Ensure that staff members are aware of our emergency procedures.

**Care for Durango Pledge Sign-ups**

- 637
- +3% YOY

**Travel Planner Mailings & Downloads**

- 68,612
- +3% YOY

**Total Visitors Assisted by Staff**

- 10,355
- -7% YOY
**RECAP: OPERATIONS**

### Tactics
- Remain in communication with local stakeholders through B2B emails and working groups.
- Review annual budget monthly with the finance department and staff.
- Verify accuracy of income and expenses with 3rd party contractors.
- Track and approve all expenses and receipts to ensure accuracy and that spending limits are being followed.
- Track employee working hours bi-weekly with the schedule to verify employee time management.
- 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.

### 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 and employee handbook.
- Hosted a full staff evacuation training to ensure the safety of our team.

### Platforms
- Budget
- Sling
- Quickbooks
- Expensify
- Google Drive
- Slack
- AhaSlides
- Adobe Creative Cloud
- Mailchimp

### Contractors
- Essential Operations HR
- TaylorRoth Auditor
- Fox Law Group
- Quayla Allen, Inclusivity Consultant
- Connie Wian, bookkeeping

### Budget Recap for 2022 and Approved 2023

#### 2022 Budget: $2,289,600
- Destination Management: 29%
- Tourism Marketing: 9%
- Sales: 9%
- Operations: 44%
- Welcome Center: 9%

#### 2023 Budget: $2,657,248
- Destination Management: 36%
- Tourism Marketing: 11%
- Sales: 11%
- Operations: 32%
- Welcome Center: 10%

### Lessons for 2023
- Update the Employee Business Expense Policy to fit better with our larger team and budget.
- Work with staff to better understand finance policies and chart-of-accounts.
- Ensure that W-9’s are received prior to any payment from Visit Durango.

### Planned 2023 Organizational Chart

- **Executive Director**
  - **Marketing & Sales Director**
    - Communications/PR Manager
    - Marketing Manager
  - **Sustainability & Policy Manager**
  - **Partnerships & Operations Manager**
    - Operations Assistant
  - **Durango Welcome Center Staff**

Full Time Staff = 9
Part Time Staff = 7
DESTINATION MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT TEAM

RACHEL BROWN  
Executive Director

JOHN RAGOZZINO  
Marketing & Sales Director

WEYLIN RYAN  
Sustainability & Policy Manager

BROOKE HENDERSON  
Partnerships & Operations Manager

RACHEL WELSH  
PR & Communications Manager

JAMES FLINT  
Marketing & Events Coordinator

STEFANIE PANETTA  
Sales Coordinator

NICK KOGOS  
Marketing Manager

NICOLE BENNETT  
Operations Assistant

DURANGO WELCOME CENTER TEAM AND CONTRACTORS

KAY ROTTENBERG  
Visitor Services Administrator

CLAUDIA MURPHY FOLEY  
Visitor Services

IZABELA RYDZ  
Visitor Services

STEPHANIE HERBST  
Visitor Services

QUAYLA ALLEN  
Inclusivity Consultant

CONNIE WIAN  
Bookkeeping Contractor