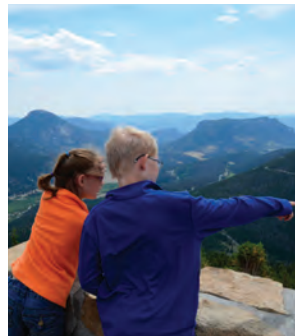


# 2013 VISIT ESTES PARK ANNUAL REPORT







## DEAR TOURISM PARTNERS:

How a destination reacts and responds to disaster can challenge the spirit of a place, but it can also bring out the best in us. While the catastrophic September 2013 flood was devastating for our region, it also put on display the community's 'Mountain Strong' resolve—the heart and soul of this resilient and caring community.

Like most of our businesses, Visit Estes Park suffered significant revenue shortfalls after the September 2013 flood, so for our part, we quickly and significantly reduced expenses and secured alternative funding sources. We collaborated with our tourism partners, and worked to change the message in the media. We applied for grants, sought support from our partners with Front Range destination marketing organizations, the Town of Estes Park, Larimer County and the Colorado Tourism Office. In partnership with the Estes Park Economic Development Corporation (EDC) we reached out to dozens of Federal, State and County elected officials, all of whom became strong advocates for Estes Park. Locally, we worked with other business leaders to respond to the needs of the community through existing organizations, such as Estes Park EDC, Estes Area Lodging Association, Estes Valley Partners for Commerce, as well as through new collaborative groups. These efforts by area leaders, including Visit Estes Park board members and staff, assisted in bringing the community together, unifying the recovery message, planning and implementing strategies to drive tourism, and encouraging grass-roots marketing efforts.

Overshadowed by the September flood, it's sometimes easy to forget that the 2013 summer season again started with catastrophic wildfires in Colorado, with the Black Forest Fire in Colorado Springs, the Royal Gorge Fire near Cañon City, and the Big Meadows Fire in Rocky Mountain National Park all starting in June. But despite the wildfires, Estes Park tourism remained strong until the epic flood which began on September 10th. The Town of Estes Park's total sales tax collection through August reached a record high, despite the fact that August receipts were down almost \$100k due to the sales tax submission extension granted by the State. Visit Estes Park destination marketing efforts were also highly productive, thanks to a focused and dedicated board and staff. In 2013, Visit Estes Park completed the last of our major strategic marketing initiatives identified by the Board in 2009 as critical to the long-term success of the newly formed Local Marketing District.

On behalf of the Visit Estes Park Board of Directors and our staff, we would like to express our heartfelt thanks to our tourism partners and stakeholders locally and regionally for their support and partnership. Working together in tourism, we continue to strengthen our economy and enrich our community. We are proud to be a tourism partner in these efforts and a member of our dynamic, hard-working tourism community.

Best Regards,

**Peggy Campbell**, Visit Estes Park President & CEO

## 2013 HIGHLIGHTS

### 1. DMO

#### Accreditation:

Visit Estes Park is awarded the highly prestigious DMO accreditation from Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI).

### 2. New Website:

Launched a powerful, consumer-driven VisitEstesPark.com website and mobile site resulting in significant growth and consumer engagement.

### 3. New Advertising

**Creative:** Retained new advertising agency that brought the Estes Park brand to life with fresh new advertising creative based on brand strategy learnings.

### 4. Brand Integration:

All marketing platforms including print, website, digital ads, and social media were redesigned to reflect the new Estes Park brand strategy creative elements and messaging.

### 5. Roll Out of Final Phase of Brand

**Strategy:** An ongoing initiative, the 'Delivering the Estes Park Promise' sessions began roll out to the community.

### 6. Continued Shift to Digital Media:

Hired a full time social media expert, retained a new digital advertising planning/buying agency and launched a new website.



## KEY INDICATORS

By the time Visit Estes Park received the second quarter's tax distribution on August 8, indicators pointed toward growth across all tourism sectors. Even the drop in Visit Estes Park lodging tax collections was not of deep concern because the decrease was due to a significant drop in the quantity of back taxes.

Indicators Through August 31	2012	2013	% Difference
Visit Estes Park Lodging Tax Collections	\$570,213	\$499,008	-12.49%
Town of Estes Park Lodging Tax Collections	\$1,463,257	\$1,515,980	3.60%
Website Visits	902,693	943,769	4.55%
E-newsletter Subscriber Growth	5,884	7,245	23.13%
Facebook Followers	26,008	46,639	79.33%
Media Impressions	126,685,295	228,131,015	80.08%
Publicity Value	\$1,110,716	\$4,786,769	330.96%

When December 31st came, the severity of the September flood's impact was clearly reflected in both lodging tax and town sales tax receipts.

Indicators Through December 31	2012	2013	% Difference
Visit Estes Park Lodging Tax Collections	\$1,513,415	\$1,365,383	-9.78%
Town of Estes Park Lodging Tax Collections	\$2,162,858	\$2,020,545	-6.58%
Website Visits	1,267,189	1,259,741	-0.59%
E-newsletter Subscriber Growth	7,336	9,437	28.64%
Facebook Followers	28,739	53,085	84.71%
Media Impressions	170,261,721	466,435,426	173.95%
Publicity Value	\$3,073,625	\$8,869,304	188.56%

## ABOUT US

### VISIT ESTES PARK

Visit Estes Park, the name under which the Estes Park Local Marketing District operates, is the official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Estes Park, Colorado. A DMAI (Destination Marketing Association International) accredited DMO, Visit Estes Park's mission is to drive tourism and year round economic growth by attracting visitors to the area through effective and efficient marketing. Visit Estes Park, which began operations in January 2010, is primarily funded by a 2% lodging tax, and is governed by a seven member Board of Directors.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

In 2013 two area residents were appointed to Visit Estes Park's Board of Directors. Jon Nicholas was named to fill a vacant term that began on Jan. 1, 2013. When former Board Chair Kathy Palmeri moved from the district in August, Adam Shake was selected to fill the three months of her unexpired term and the coming four years. Board members are appointed to serve four-year terms by the Town of Estes Park and the Larimer County Commissioners following an application-interview process.

### 2013 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Kathy Palmeri**, *Chair through August, 2013*

**Bill Almond**, *Vice-Chair January-August; Chair, September-December, YMCA of the Rockies*

**Jon Nicholas**, *Vice-Chair September-December; Estes Park Economic Development Corp.*

**Scott Webermeier**, *Secretary-Treasurer, National Park Village*

**Lindsay Lamson**, *Rocky Mountain Resorts*

**Lynette Lott**, *Rocky Mountain Resorts; Estes Area Lodging Association President*

**Adam Shake**, *Neanderthal Productions*

**Chris Wood**, *McGregor Mountain Lodge*

### STAFF

**Peggy Campbell**, *President & CEO*

**Suzy Blackhurst**, *Finance & Operations*

**Brooke Burnham**, *Public Relations & Communications*

**Kirby Hazelton**, *Stakeholder Relations & Communications*

**Kellen Toulouse**, *Digital & Social Media Communications*



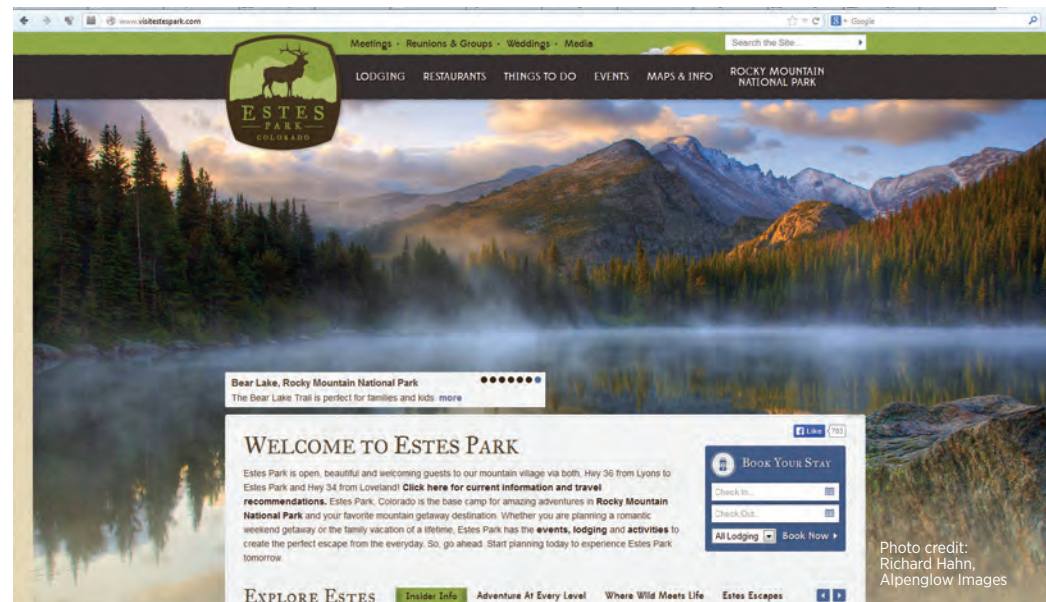
## VISIT ESTES PARK EARNS ACCREDITATION

**T**his accomplishment puts Visit Estes Park in elite company, joining just two other Colorado destination marketing organizations that have achieved this distinction: Visit Denver and the Colorado Springs CVB.

To attain the designation, Visit Estes Park was required to document its practices and policies in 15 key areas associated with destination marketing operations: Governance, Finance, Human Resources, Technology, Marketing, Visitor Services, Group Services, Sales, Communications, Membership, Management and Facilities, Brand Management, Destination Development, Research and Stakeholder Relationships.



In 2013 Visit Estes Park was awarded the highly prestigious destination marketing organization's accreditation from **DESTINATION MARKETING ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL (DMAI)**.



## NEW VISITESTESPARK.COM WEBSITE LAUNCHES

After having completed extensive visitor/consumer research and the brand strategy initiative, Visit Estes Park collaborated with the prominent destination marketing website development company, simpleview, Inc., to launch Estes Park's new world-class DMO website. VisitEstesPark.com brings the latest technology, consumer-driven features and destination marketing best practices together to successfully tell the Estes Park story to the world.

### NEW WEBSITE FUNCTIONALITY INCLUDES:

- An easy-to-use lodging booking feature integrating JackRabbit System's BookDirect™ function
- Language translation which allows virtually any web user in the world to use our site
- Trip builder allows users to create and share their custom vacation itinerary
- Google Maps, social media and TripAdvisor integration
- A public 'Partners' section that includes information about Visit Estes Park board meetings, staff contact info, marketing programs, research and reports and more
- An extranet feature allows tourism partners, via a password protected section of the website, to update their listings, contact information, photos, and social media channels; read important bulletins and messages posted by Visit Estes Park staff, and more

We also began working with Destination Travel Network, our partner in the creation, sales, and fulfillment of dynamic, customized advertising programs for Visit Estes Park stakeholders.

With the launch of the new website, Visit Estes Park is able to offer consumer-focused and conversion-driven advertising programs to partners, increasing the quality of referrals to their websites, and better showcasing the experiences guests can expect to receive when visiting Estes Park.





## PUBLIC RELATIONS & ADVERTISING

### PUBLIC RELATIONS & CRISIS COMMUNICATION

The bulk of the first eight months of 2013 were spent engaging the media with the Estes Park brand with the assistance of public relations firm, Turner PR. In January, we traveled to New York to meet with a variety of writers and editors, familiarizing them with Estes Park, Rocky Mountain National Park and various story angles.

Along with domestic travel media, we also hosted multiple international familiarization (FAM) trips, organized through the Colorado Tourism Office. The international media and travel trade were from Germany, the UK, France and Japan, which centered on the first nonstop flight from Denver to Tokyo. In all, Visit Estes Park, with the help of many stakeholders, hosted 16 domestic and nine international media visits. During the year, Visit Estes Park had a role in media exposure reaching over 466 million impressions, with an ad equivalency of \$8.87 million.

### 2013 TOTAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

383,725,340  
traditional media  
relations results

87,710,083  
flood results

466,435,426

### ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

A new advertising campaign, 'Where Wild Meets Life,' was created to fully integrate our brand strategy and knowledge gained from Visit Estes Park research conducted over a three-year period.

To meet campaign goals to grow awareness and create emotional connections with Estes Park, advertising was expanded to large, full-page print ads with compelling and branded design. A series of breathtaking 'hero' photographs was developed along with a group of vintage-feel illustrations of wildlife characters to connect consumers with the natural beauty and the real wildlife experiences of Estes Park. Targeted copy told of the wonderful experiences here.

The magazine print ads were modified to fit digital banners, newspaper ads and newspaper advertising inserts. The new strategy was largely based on our research that showed large opportunities to attract those unfamiliar with Estes Park as the base camp for Rocky Mountain National Park.

In addition to the general destination campaign, Visit Estes Park and our partners also developed advertising to promote the destination's events and event calendar. The campaign included posters, magazines, radio, newspapers and digital. The goal was to drive visitation, keep the regional audience aware of upcoming events, and brand Estes Park as a great destination for fun events.



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VISIT ESTES PARK TRACKED 75 MAJOR MEDIA STORIES WITH A REACH OF OVER 203 MILLION IMPRESSIONS.

#### IMPACT OF SEPTEMBER FLOODS ON VISIT ESTES PARK

The estimated 15 inches of rain that fell over Estes Park during a week-long period in September resulted in devastating flooding throughout the area. The “500-year” epic flood created disastrous damage to Estes Park’s infrastructure, its businesses and homes, and damaged or destroyed all of the direct highways into Estes Park, forcing the closure of U.S. Hwy. 34, U.S. Hwy. 36 and Colorado Route 7, a move that all but eliminated tourism—the basis of the Estes Park economy.

Knowing the flood and road closures would drastically reduce revenues for our destination marketing efforts, we reacted swiftly to significantly reduce expenses, and began exploring alternate funding sources. We sought, and received, support from our partners in Front Range destination marketing organizations (Fort Collins, Boulder, Loveland), the Town of Estes Park and Larimer County. Additionally, we gratefully accepted post-disaster communication and advertising assistance from the Colorado Tourism Office and a grant from the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado.

Visit Estes Park worked with Turner PR and other area agencies to manage communications, including general media relations; publication of press alerts, the creation and dissemination of talking points to stakeholders and partners, on-air interviews and the coordination of stakeholder interviews, social media communications and monitoring, and media hit tracking. In all, Visit Estes Park tracked 75 major media stories that included Estes Park with a reach of over 203 million impressions and an ad value of almost \$13.74 million.

**\$13.74** MILLION

PR value of tracked press coverage on the 2013 flood

#### VISIT ESTES PARK CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS

- Obtain balanced coverage
- Develop media alerts
- Conduct media outreach
- Arrange local interviews
- Distribute talking points
- Act as tourism spokespeople
- Monitor for misinformation
- Manage rumors
- Work closely with emergency managers & information officers
- Distribute public information





## INCREASED FOCUS ON DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA:

Recognizing the continued consumer shift to digital information sources, especially in the travel industry, Visit Estes Park added a full-time digital communications expert to our team to increase our focus on the VisitEstesPark.com website, social media channels, e-newsletter program and blog content.



Email marketing also received a complete make-over in 2013 with our investment in the professional email service, Distribion. Newsletters are crafted with quality, dynamic content and highly attractive visuals to raise awareness of events, promote blog and website content and drive overnight visitation.

## STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS

2013 was an important year for stakeholder relationships and partnerships as major initiatives and flood crisis made it more evident than ever that Visit Estes Park's success relies on the strength of its partnerships with local businesses.

We continued to focus on enhancing relationships with stakeholders by ensuring open communications and advocacy to and among our partners. Visit Estes Park also continued to strengthen partnerships with local associations, including Estes Area Lodging Association, Estes Valley Partners for Commerce, Estes Park Wedding Association, and the newly-formed Estes Park Economic Development Corporation via quarterly facilitation of the Estes Park Association Forum. We also emphasized close-knit communications and partnerships with governmental agencies including the Town of Estes Park, Larimer County, Rocky Mountain National Park, neighboring communities, and the State of Colorado.

## BRAND STRATEGY

The fourth and final phase of destination brand strategy continued in 2014. Brand Culturalization, or "Delivering the Estes Park Brand Promise," is a community-focused phase of sharing the Estes Park Brand Promise and how it can be delivered to our guests. In February, over 100 community leaders and business owners participated in "Delivering the Estes Park Brand Promise" roundtable sessions, learning about the Estes Park brand strategy and how it can be incorporated into the guest experience. The Estes Park Promise continues to be the primary driver of Visit Estes Park's marketing efforts, and will continue to be shared with the community to ensure that the destination is able to support and enrich the delivery of the Estes Park brand.







**Visit Estes Park**  
The Destination  
Marketing Organization  
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