



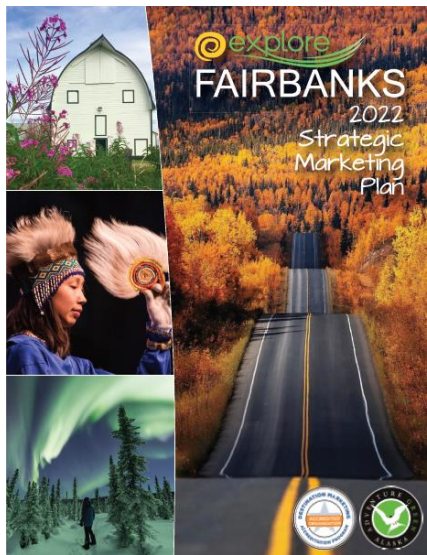
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## 2022 Explore Fairbanks Annual Progress Report

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### Introduction

The post-pandemic recovery in the regional visitor industry that was witnessed in 2021



carried over into 2022, with a continued surge of independent travelers along with the return of the Cross Gulf of Alaska cruise land tour passengers, international visitors, and highway travelers.

The greatest sign of positive recovery --- as well as an example of how inflation has impacted the industry --- can be found in the record high bed tax collections. All three government entities --- Fairbanks North Star Borough, City of Fairbanks, and City of North Pole --- reported record collections every month, with more than \$7.2M in total collections for the year (pages 3-4). Though there was an increase in occupancy rates, higher average daily rates (ADR) were the primary contributing factor. This is on par with what is happening on the national level, with hotels

raising rates due to a combination of market demand as well as higher operational costs fueled by inflation.

An interesting pattern in this year's independent market has to do with the lack of planning and the shortening of the trip booking window. Fairbanks and Alaska have typically been destinations that travelers plan for well in advance. 2021 and 2022 have been contrary to that, with visitors often times waiting until the last second to make their preparations and arriving in Fairbanks with nothing planned. The good news, and proof of the relevancy of our importance in the visitor industry, is that they sought out the assistance of Explore Fairbanks to help them with their trip.

While return to visitation was solid, the workforce woes of 2021 continued in 2022, an issue affecting every industry nationwide. Explore Fairbanks was not immune with the organization having difficulties hiring for vacant positions; as of February 2023 we are at 15 full and part time employees, compared to the 22 employees we were in April of 2019.

Nonetheless, the organization persevered despite the staffing challenges, with significant accomplishments to include:

- Developed the Aurora Viewing Map and Guide, a new publication created to assist visitors with where and how to see the aurora in Fairbanks (pg. 8).
- Hosting the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) Western Chapter Conference in February, which brought 45 travel media to Interior Alaska for a week and resulted in extensive media coverage for the region (pg. 9).
- Welcomed the return of meetings and conventions with Explore Fairbanks driven conferences with a 175% increase of bureau generate bookings over YTD 2021 (pg. 18-19).
- Hosted more than a 40% increase in travel trade familiarization tours over YTD 2021 with many coming from international markets and resulting in operators creating new product development and tour offerings (pg. 13-14).
- Welcomed an increase of more than 66% of visitors to the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center over YTD 2021 (pg. 23).



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## Administration Department

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### Department Staff

*President and CEO:* Scott McCrea

*Director of Finance and Administration:* Dawn Murphy

*Executive and Finance Coordinator:* Francine Garcia

### Year-to-Date Progress Report

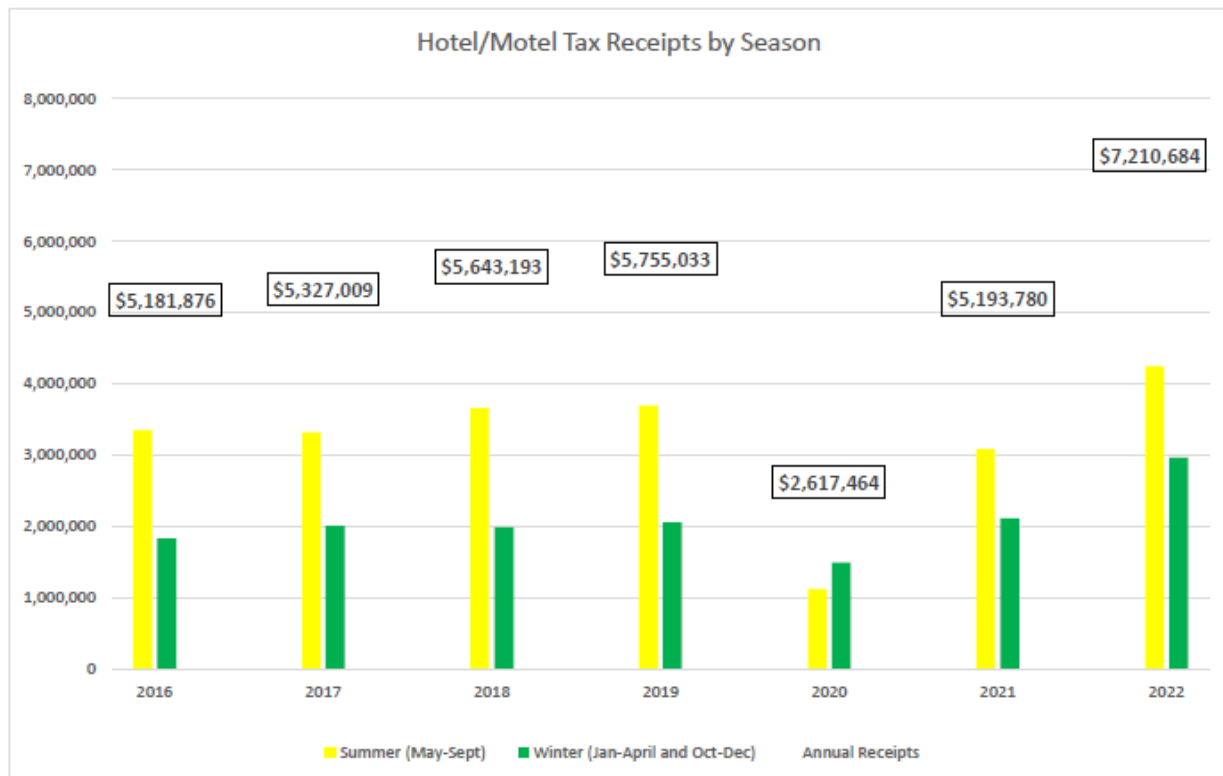
- **Bed Taxes to Date at Record Levels:** Bed tax collections exceeded previous records every month and surpassed the \$7 million mark for the first time ever. As previously stated, while occupancy rates were a contributing factor, the record high average daily rates (ADR) was the primary reason, as well as an increase in short term rentals.

#### FNSB including cities of Fairbanks and North Pole Hotel/Motel Tax Receipts

Month	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	186,183	231,509	227,576	227,056	269,245	184,860	340,061
February	209,909	243,413	238,780	259,542	275,720	186,453	374,883
March	323,428	435,949	342,256	322,486	253,608	270,636	518,024
April	314,914	278,442	268,721	278,453	113,855	312,907	504,388
May	355,309	318,365	364,507	356,957	116,539	403,084	511,957
June	1,024,165	1,007,647	1,111,034	1,027,221	229,937	764,283	1,154,003
July	796,392	707,294	896,058	924,934	213,634	728,975	1,025,382
August	522,585	605,041	575,103	688,626	287,170	494,961	1,038,692
September	653,240	683,500	711,931	700,579	276,195	692,188	516,960
October	432,315	224,638	440,852	467,399	241,939	453,242	520,435
November	164,279	362,081	218,653	260,147	178,402	330,723	355,317
December	199,156	229,129	247,722	241,632	161,219	371,467	350,582
Total	\$5,181,876	\$5,327,009	\$5,643,193	\$5,755,033	\$2,617,464	\$5,193,780	\$7,210,684

*\*FNSB figures subject to change; they record when entered and accrue at June 30th fiscal year-end which is typically complete by November. in 2022 under the directions of new CFO adjustments made in September instead of August.*

- **Dramatic Increases in Winter Bed Tax Collections:** Winter bed tax collections (Jan-Apr/Oct-Dec) increased by 62% from 2017, while summer collections increased by 27%.



- Fairbanks Sees Increase in YTD Occupancy, Average Daily Rates for Hotels and Short-Term Rentals:** The Fairbanks area saw year to date substantial increases in average daily rates (ADR) and revenue per available room (RevPar) for both hotel properties and short-term rentals. Occupancy rates for hotels increased by 5% while rates for short-term rentals slightly decreased by -2% (short-term rental supply, however, increased by 22%). The below data was provided by Smith Travel Research (STR) for hotels and Madden Voyage for the short-term rentals, two platforms that Explore Fairbanks recently invested in in order to better track and analyze visitation trends and impacts to the region.

#### Hotels\*

	2021	2022	% Increase
Occupancy rate	66%	70%	5%
ADR	\$140	\$171	22%
RevPar	\$93	\$119	28%

#### Short term rentals\*\*

	2021	2022	% Increase
Occupancy rate	82.5%	81%	-2%
ADR	\$137	\$158	13%
RevPar	\$113.32	\$121	3%



*\*does not include every single hotel property in the borough*

*\*\*includes AirBnB and VRBO*

- **Engaging in Infrastructure Development, Public Policy, and Advocacy**

Explore Fairbanks was involved in the following issues regarding infrastructure development, public policy, advocacy and education.

**Infrastructure Development:**

- Actively involved with and facilitated meetings of the Polaris Working Group, which has been working on identifying funding solutions to demolish the Polaris Building in downtown Fairbanks. Now that the funds have been secured, the group's focus will shift to redevelopment of the lot once it is vacant.
- McCrea is actively involved in the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the FNSB Downtown Fairbanks Working Group.
- Actively involved with the FNSB Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) planning efforts and provided significant contributions to the visitor industry section of the plan.

**Public Policy, Advocacy and Education:**

- Hosted a meeting with Senator Lisa Murkowski in January to discuss regional visitor industry issues, to include the need to increase the government per diem rate for accommodations in the Fairbanks. EF worked diligently with the congressional delegation, hoteliers and other stakeholders to work on getting the rates increased, which went into effect in November of 2022 with winter and summer each seeing increases of \$50, the biggest increase in the state.
- McCrea presented to the House Arctic Policy, Workforce Development and Tourism Committee in March along with ATIA President and CEO Sarah Leonard, Visit Anchorage President and CEO Julie Saupe, and Travel Juneau President and CEO Liz Perry.
- McCrea conducted visitor industry presentations to the Sunrisers Rotary Club, the Rotary Club of Fairbanks, the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce General



Membership Luncheon, and the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

- EF surveyed all candidates running for local office on where they stood on issues of importance to the regional visitor industry. Additionally, McCrea met one on one with all candidates to educate them on the relationship between the organization and the respective government entity.
- Coordinated advocacy efforts with EF board and local hoteliers to testify against the City of Fairbanks Ordinance #6210 to increase the bed tax collections from 8% to 9%; the ordinance was defeated unanimously.
- Coordinated advocacy efforts with EF board and partners to testify against a proposed change to the original bed tax ordinance to decrease EF funding in order to increase funds for bed tax discretionary grants and Golden Heart Landing. The ordinance was postponed with EF agreeing to a one-time donation of \$100,000 to increased funding for both entities.
- The EF Public Policy Committee had meetings with Kinross Gold and the Advocates for Safe Alaska Highways to discuss the proposed trucking plan for the Manh Choh mine and potential impact on the visitor industry. McCrea was appointed to the Department of Transportation Advisory Committee to further study the safety implications of the increased traffic.
- **Working on Building and Improving Internal Operations**
  - Explore Fairbanks hired the following new employees:
    - Jared Cagwin, Visitor Information Specialist
    - Tyler Chiles, Tourism Sales Manager
    - Shara Shewfelt, Tourism and Meetings Sales Associate
    - Jesse Pfeffer, Meetings and Conventions Sales and Service Manager
    - Mickee McGuire, Social Media Manager
  - Long-term employee Kasey Gillam was promoted to the position of Director of Communications, replacing Amy Geiger who retired after 11 years with the organization.
- **Looking to the Future**
  - EF Board of Directors and management team completed the 2022-2027 strategic plan, to include a revised mission statement, the addition of core values, and modifying previous strategic priorities to align with the organization's vision over the course of the next five years.

- **Providing Leadership and Community Support**

- **President and CEO Scott McCrea** serves on the Board of Directors of the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce (GFCC) and the Alaska Travel Industry Association; and serves on the ATIA Board Development Committee, the ATIA Public Policy Committee, the GFCC Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, GFCC Government Relations Committee, and the GFCC Education and Workforce Development Committee. He is also an adjunct instructor in the applied business program at the UAF Community and Technical College.
- The **Director of Finance and Administration Dawn Murphy** serves on the Finance Committee for the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce and as Treasurer on the Board of Directors and Finance Chair for the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center. She serves on the Fairbanks North Star Borough Career and Technical Education Advisory Committee, Alaska Travel Industry Association Workforce Development Committee, and works with other organizations to provide academic pathways and highlight the varied career opportunities with the tourism industry.

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## Communications Department

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### Department Staff

*Director of Communications:* Amy Geiger (through July 31), Kasey Gillam (since August 1)

*Assistant Director of Communications:* Kasey Gillam (through July 31)

*Public Relations Manager:* Jerry Evans

*Internet Marketing Specialist:* Amalia Phillips (through April 1)

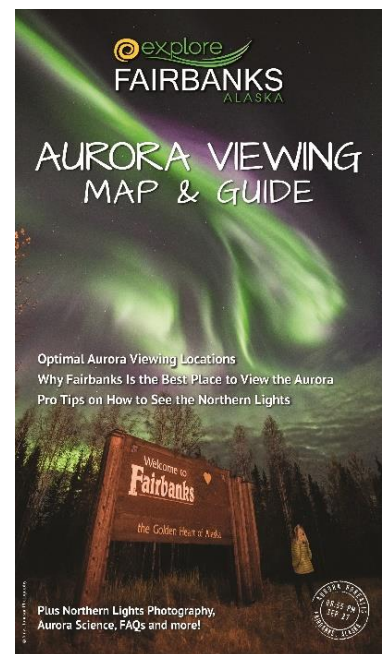
*Branding and Production Coordinator:* Angie Cerny (part-time)

*Social Media Manager:* Mickee McGuire (since September 8)

### Year-to-Date Progress Report

#### Collateral and Promotional Materials

- Designed and produced the brand-new *Aurora Viewing Map & Guide*. The guide is intended to help demystify aurora chasing in the Fairbanks area by providing helpful tips and an easy-to-read map featuring aurora viewing locations.
- Revised and produced 35,000 copies of the 2022-23 *Fairbanks Winter Guide*.
- Revised and produced 150,000 copies of the 2023 *Fairbanks Visitors Guide*.
- In June, collaborated with two Alaskan photographers and local talent to procure new Midnight Sun Season photos featuring landscapes and activities. The photographs will be used widely on social media, in print publications, on the website and other promotional materials.
- Created Aurora and Midnight Sun stamps featuring date, time and location to help identify photos.
- Designed a variety of materials and promotional items for the 2022 SATW Western Chapter Meeting including bags, lanyards, name badges, welcome banner, program book and Photo Quest Awards PowerPoint presentation.
- Designed and produced many promotional and organizational materials such as business cards, programs, report covers, ads, flyers, digital and print invitations, table displays, profile sheets, and envelopes. *Highlights include:*
  - Custom graphic for President and CEO's Interior Tourism Conference presentation
  - Program for Interior Tourism Conference
  - Updated profile sheets for Tourism and Meetings Sales & Communications departments
  - Invitation and awards for Annual Partner Banquet
  - Banner and signs for Condor's return to Fairbanks







- 2023 ATIA Convention logo
- Logo for Golden Heart Giving and re-usable giant check

## Public and Media Relations

- In 2022, the Communications Department hosted 23 media tours with a total of 37 participants. Explore Fairbanks business partners have provided over \$30,200 of in-kind support for these media tours. *Highlights of results from these tours include:*
  - "Summer Fun at Fairbanks' Bear Lodge" on Hotel-Scoop.com by Dana Rebmann
  - "Jeffrey 'L is for Love' Brooks Gives a Peek into the World of a Black Alaskan Restaurant", "Isaiah Mangum Chats About Education Through Art and His Favorite Part of Traveling", and "25 Things to do When Visiting Fairbanks, Alaska" on TravelNoire.com by Maggie Jay
  - Multiple videos and photos posted by Artem Shestakov (shestakovphotography and artshestakov) on Instagram including one video with over 65,000 likes
  - "7 Trails that Prove Alaska is a Dream Hiking Destination" by Julia D'orazio on WeAreExplorers.co
  - "Beyond the Aurora: The Surprises of Fun and Funky Fairbanks, Alaska" by James Bartlett on Frommers.com
- In February, Explore Fairbanks hosted the SATW Western Chapter Meeting at Pike's Waterfront Lodge. We hosted 45 visiting travel writers, associate members and guests for a four-day trip in the Fairbanks area that included visits to local museums, North Pole, Chena Hot Springs as well as activities including dog mushing and walking with reindeer. Pre- and post-meeting trips were also offered that included trips above the Arctic Circle, to Denali and to Black Rapids Lodge/Castner Glacier. *Highlights of media coverage from hosting this meeting include:*
  - "Fantastic Fairbanks" in *Denver Post* by Mindy Sink
  - "Fairbanks, Alaska: Patiently Chasing the Aurora" on GoNomad.com by Donnie Sexton
  - "Fun, Frigid Fairbanks" in *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* by Doug Peebles
  - "Best Things to do in Fairbanks, Alaska in Winter" on BearfootTheory.com by Ariel Frager
  - "It's the Trip of a Lifetime—Here are the 25 Top Things to Do in Alaska!" and inclusion in "What's on Your Bucket List?" in *Parade Magazine* by Melanie Haiken

 BLOG ACTIVITIES OUTDOOR GEAR VAN

### BEST THINGS TO DO IN FAIRBANKS, ALASKA IN WINTER

Discover the best things to do in Fairbanks in winter plus tips for when to visit, what to pack, and how to see the Northern Lights.

Last updated on: September 22, 2022 | by Ariel Frager



Fairbanks, Alaska is truly a winter wonderland. The rugged beauty of the snow-covered roads, trees, and massive mountains of the Alaskan Interior will dazzle visitors. Fairbanks prides itself in being the main US destination for seeing the aurora borealis. Visitors from around the globe make a pilgrimage to Fairbanks each winter to catch a sight of the magical, dancing Northern Lights.

- Additional 2022 media coverage generated from previously hosted media tours includes:
  - "In this Alaskan City, the Food Outshines the Northern Lights" in *Food & Wine Magazine* by Brad Japhe
  - "Winter in Alaska: Reindeer Sausages and Chasing the Aurora Borealis" in *The Sunday Times* (London) by Will Hyde
  - "5 Things We Love About Fairbanks, Alaska" in *AAA Via* by Summer Rylander
  - "18 Top Things to Do in Alaska" by Gwen Pratesi on MSN.com
  - "I Spent the Winter Solstice in One of the Darkest Places on Earth" by Kate Siber on OutsideOnline.com
- Explore Fairbanks answered 423 media inquiries requesting photos, regional information, fact checking, potential filming questions and more, in addition to participating in 31 media interviews.
- In May, Kasey Gillam attended the 2023 North American Travel Journalists Association Conference and Marketplace in San Juan, Puerto Rico, along with Scott McCrea and Leslie Young. At the Conference, it was announced to the attendees that Explore Fairbanks will be hosting the event in May 2023.
- Explore Fairbanks issued 10 press releases to more than 16,900 media contacts. *Highlights include:*
  - Hosting the 2022 SATW Western Chapter Meeting
  - Announcing the 2022 Explore Fairbanks annual awards winners
  - Release of Midnight Sun and Aurora stamps
  - Aurora Map & Guide release
  - 2022-23 Winter Guide release
  - 2023 Visitors Guide release
- In October, Jerry Evans and Kasey Gillam attended ATIA's Alaska Media Road Show event in Las Vegas. While at the event, 29 meetings were held with well-vetted journalists interested in Alaska. As a result of the event and meeting with Matador Network's outdoor editor Suzie Dundas, Fairbanks was featured in Matador's "The Best Small Towns in the United States to Visit in 2023" in November.
- In December, Jerry Evans and Bill Wright worked in conjunction with ATIA and Thompson & Co. to host the Today Show in Fairbanks and North Pole. The piece featured A Taste of Alaska Lodge, Chena Hot Springs, dog mushing, aurora viewing, winter solstice and was capped off with live shots outside Santa Claus House with reindeer by Kerry Sanders.

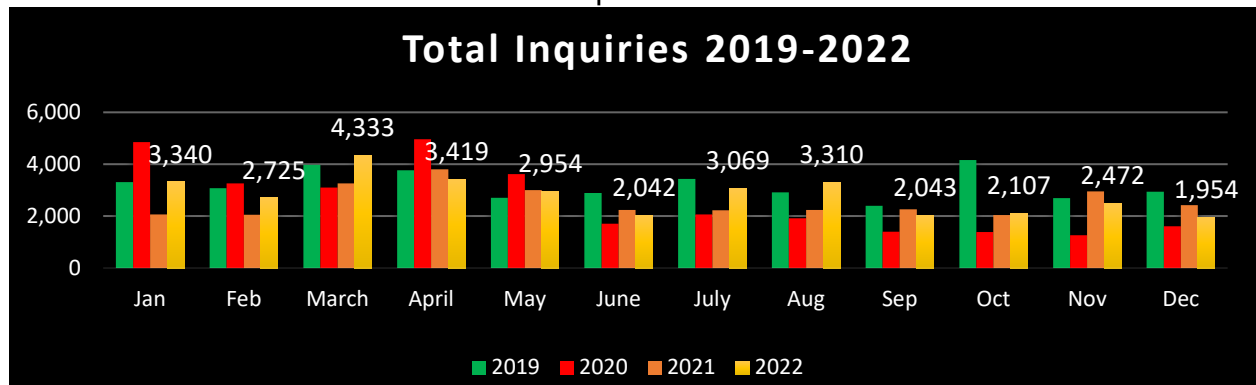


Reindeer yoga and neon pink night skies?  
Yes, please.

The aurora borealis – more commonly known as the northern lights – is one of the most fascinating natural phenomena on the planet. The weaving, twisting, dancing colors of green and pink in the sky are caused by solar storms on the sun. Those storms send charged particles flying toward the Earth. When they get

## Advertising Placements and Promotions

- Year-to-date inquiries for Visitors Guides are up 10% from 2021. The largest contributing factors to the increase are website-based inquiries and Facebook leads.

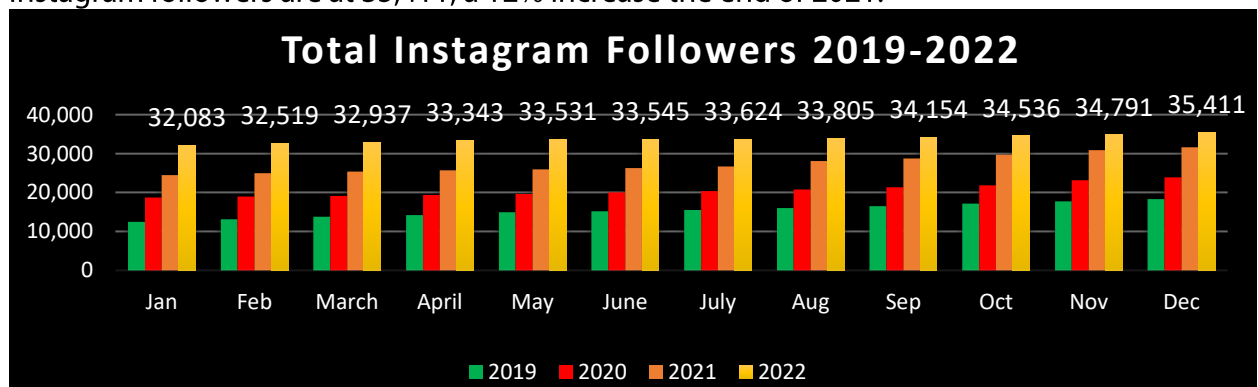
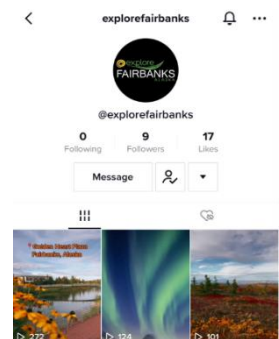


- Updated all digital banner, display and native advertising with new images and text.
- Provided support for direct flights to Fairbanks to and from Chicago, Minneapolis and Seattle. Social media ads were created in each market promoting the flights to/from the respective city and directed traffic to dedicated landing pages for each location. Radio ads were also used in Fairbanks, Minneapolis and Seattle.
- Digital marketing has contributed significantly to traffic to the [explorefairbanks.com](https://explorefairbanks.com) website. *Highlights include:*
  - ATIA Audience Extension Program (*program ended in March 2022*): 1,309,381 impressions; 9,865 clicks; .75% click through rate (CTR)
  - Facebook/Instagram: 12,142,342 impressions; 37,137 clicks; .31% CTR
  - Google Display: 8,277,287 impressions; 59,724 clicks; .72% CTR
  - Google Search: 594,441 impressions; 44,095 clicks; 7.42% CTR
  - Sojern: 8,527,632 impressions; 4,509 clicks; .05% CTR
  - TravelAlaska.com: 1,615,040 impressions; 9,912 clicks; .61% CTR
  - Travel Spike: 5,158,005 impressions; 6,728 display ad clicks; .13% CTR; 50,474 contextual ad clicks
  - Tripadvisor: 2,468,225 impressions; 6,355 clicks; .26% CTR
- Ran OTT (streaming television) ad campaign in Denver, Minneapolis, Portland and Seattle in November and December. The campaign served 3,187,560 impressions across the four markets with a video completion rate of 99.12% (above the average of 98%).

## Website and Social Media

- The [explorefairbanks.com](https://explorefairbanks.com) website has seen decreases in traffic in 2022 compared to 2021. This is due to the large volume of traffic seen in 2021 from the COVID-Safe Travel Promotion Grant. With the digital budget decreasing by 26% from 2021 to 2022, the website traffic is keeping on par with that decrease:
  - New visitors: 659,471; down 25%
  - Returning visitors: 143,577; down 14%
  - Sessions: 1,026,392, down 18%
  - Page views: 1,747,616; down 19%

- Blog post views: 109,144; down 27%
- Moved COVID-19 travel information off the homepage and placed under the “Planning Tools” menu navigation.
- Posted 11 new blogs featuring Fairbanks information. *Highlights include:*
  - “Experience 24 Hours of Light in Fairbanks, Alaska” featuring new Midnight Sun Season landscape photos
  - “Welcome to the Land of the Midnight Sun” featuring new Midnight Sun Season activity photos
  - “Lucky Seven Tips for Aurora Viewing in Fairbanks, Alaska” featuring helpful aurora viewing tips and photography
  - “A Visit to St. Nicholas” featuring photos of elves participating in winter activities and visiting attractions
- Continued e-news titled “The Explorer” that is sent to consumers, partners, media, travel agents/tour operators and meeting planners. Three e-news were published in 2022 for a total of over 187,800 sent with an average open rate of 25.1%.
- In September, hired the first full-time Social Media Manager for Explore Fairbanks and launched a new TikTok account.
- Created and ran campaign on Facebook called “12 days of Fairbanks” that featured 12 different outdoor winter activities. Posts from the Facebook timeline were also shared to Facebook and Instagram stories.
- Facebook followers are 421,377, a 9% increase over the end of 2021.
- Twitter followers are 7,050, a 2% increase over the end of 2021.
- Instagram followers are at 35,411, a 12% increase the end of 2021.





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## Tourism & Meeting Sales Department

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### Department Staff

*Director of Tourism and Meeting Sales:* Bill Wright

*Tourism Senior Sales Manager:* Ed Malen (through mid-May 2022)

*Tourism Sales Manager:* Tyler Chiles (mid-May to present)

*Meetings & Convention Sales & Services Manager:* Leslie Young (through Sep.)

*Meetings & Convention Sales & Services Manager:* Jesse Pfeffer (beginning in Oct.)

*Tourism & Meeting Sales & Services Coordinator:* Shara Shewfelt (April to present)

### Contractors

*European Contractor:* Elke Brosin

*China Contractor:* EastWest Marketing (social media only; contract ended July 1, 2022)

### Year-to-Date Progress Report

#### Familiarization (FAM) Tours

The department hosted 18 domestic and seven international travel trade familiarization tours and meeting planner site visits for a total of 78 participants. Explore Fairbanks partners contributed close to \$80,000 in in-kind donations to support the FAMs. Some examples of the FAMs and Sites resulting in new product development include:

- The 2022 Post GoWest Summit FAM from Reno, Nevada to Fairbanks brought seven delegates from the U.S., Singapore, Germany, Switzerland and Argentina to the Interior from February 17 – 20. Participants enjoyed a wide variety of activities and tours in Fairbanks as well as North Pole and the Arctic. A few representatives have existing Fairbanks offerings and others have initiated new itineraries based on their exposure to our destination.
- A group of six travel agents from the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) visited Fairbanks in conjunction with the Alaska Travel Industry Association from May 13 – 16. North Pole, Denali and the Arctic were all featured in the four-day FAM, which was developed to help promote the cruise land packages. At the ASTA Global Convention in August, two of the participants had meetings with the Director of Tourism and reported that they have added this package to their agency's Alaska Cruise offerings.





- The annual European Summer FAM from September 1 – 8. The FAM consisted of four agents and one Condor rep as well as our European Contractor, Elke Brosin. The agents were from Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland and Czech Republic. The participants visited Denali, the Arctic Circle, North Pole, and Chena Hot Springs. Two receptions for the delegates were held with partner exhibits in both Fairbanks and Denali. Participants have begun to book clients for their new Fairbanks, Alaska itineraries based upon their experiences on the 2022 FAM.



- A FAM from June 6 – 12 for Canada-based Kensington Tours. Both participants are active, and adventurous, and were eager to explore the distinct areas on this trip. The participants visited Denali and Fairbanks and experienced products for a new Alaska package they are putting together with itineraries being planned for both winter and summer. They reported that they gained a strong understanding of both the tourism infrastructure and the state itself and will help guide Kensington in its future trips.
- A Site Visit from June 19-23 with participants from the North American Travel Journalists Association (NATJA) explored the Fairbanks area in advance of the May 2023 Annual Convention. NATJA representatives were shown area accommodations meeting spaces and Midnight Sun Season attractions on their five-day tour. Two of the participants finished off their time with two days in Denali National Park.



### **European Contractor International Trade Shows/Sales Missions**

Explore Fairbanks' European-based contractor Elke Brosin attended and participated in a total of two virtual and 12 in-person international trade shows that resulted in appointments and contacts made and exposure with tour operators and travel agents. Elke also continued to maintain contact with points of contact in Europe by way of emails, brochure mail-outs and various presentations. Highlights included participation in:

- Attended the two-day virtual FVW counter days February 22nd and 23rd, 2022 on behalf of Explore Fairbanks as an exhibitor. Explore Fairbanks was part of the joint USA booth of VUSA Germany. A 20-minute webinar was attended live by about 40 participants. A total of 2000 attendees were counted the first day of the event and a total of 170 exhibitors representing destinations worldwide were present.
- Attended the USA Trade workshop in Copenhagen, Denmark March 7 as an exhibitor on behalf of Explore Fairbanks. 120 travel trade and media participants attended the workshop live.

- Attended the VUSA Switzerland roadshow April 5-7 and stopped in six Swiss cities {St. Gallen, Zurich, Basel, Bern, Luzern and Lausanne). A total of about 250 travel agents have been trained in individual 15-minute workshop trainings for about 4-8 people per workshop. Explore Fairbanks held the workshop training together with Condor Switzerland. A total of 160 Visitor Guides and 145 Winter Guides were distributed during the show.
- Attended the general assembly of VUSA The Netherlands virtually which was held April 14th.
- Attended the USA destination showcase branch as an exhibitor April 27th at the U.S. ambassador's residence in Prague (Czech Republic). Also gave a 5-minute presentation at the event about the Fairbanks region and direct air service on Condor from Europe. About 50 Visitor Guides and 40 Winter Guides were distributed at the event.
- Attended the Aviareps Nordic Roadshow May 9-12, 2022. We shared a booth with Condor but were able to hold individual 1:1 meetings. The roadshow took place in Stockholm, Sweden (May 9), Copenhagen, Denmark (May 10), Oslo, Norway (May 11) and Helsinki, Finland (May 12). The show was organized in a speed dating concept. 55 individual meetings were held during the four-day roadshow.
- Attended the Aviareps Roadshow in Vienna May 19th as an exhibitor and our booth was located next to Condor. Travel agents came by to inquire about Fairbanks, pick up brochures and learn more about the destination.
- Participated in the hybrid FVW USA Knowledge Day June 23rd. 57 travel agents attended the 20- minute EF presentation. We provided links to EF resources for travel trade on line as a summary in the chat while the webinar was still ongoing. The EF booth was kept open all day with further information, video material and the opportunity to seek advice directly. A total of 24 visits were counted at the EF booth. Overall, 107 travel trade participants attended the knowledge day. On average 60-70 participants attended per webinar session.
- Brosin and Wright attended Brand USA Travel Week Europe, September 26-29 at the Alte Oper in Frankfurt. We had 32 appointments with tour operators from throughout Europe and the U.K. Networking events rounded out further contact touch points during the event. While in Germany, Brosin personally introduced Wright to Taruk at the Taruk Roadshow event in Dresden September 30th. Taruk is a group tour operator for long haul travel who is potentially interested in adding Alaska to their portfolio. Mentioned the possibility of joining the European summer fam to get a better feel for Alaska.
- Brosin participated in the Discover America Sweden Roadshow Oct 10-12 as a co-exhibitor with Condor Air. Cities included Malmo, Goeteborg, and Stockholm. EF/Condor had stage presentation time in both Malmo an Stockholm, and reached close to 200 agents in all three cities combined.



- Brosin attended the Visit USA Germany event for travel trade and media in Munich Oct. 18.
- Brosin attended the Visit USA Belgium Workshop in Brussels on Oct. 27. The workshop was attended by close to 100 travel agents.
- Brosin attended the Visit USA Austria Seminar in Graz on Nov. 10 which was attended by a total of 35 agents.
- Brosin attended the USA Canada Experience in Zeist, Netherlands Nov. 3-4 which was attended by a little under 100 travel agents.

### **EastWest Marketing**

Focused entirely on social media postings on WeChat and Weibo and provided Explore Fairbanks with monthly market and Covid-19 updates. Due to lack of international travel and Chinese pandemic protocols, Explore Fairbanks ended our contract with EastWest Marketing on July 1. We will re-evaluate this marketing strategy when China fully emerges from government travel restrictions.

### **Domestic Travel Trade, Consumer and Meetings & Conference Shows**

The Tourism and Meeting Sales Department participated in 20 domestic trade, consumer, and meeting sales shows. Highlights include:

- Wright attended the American Bus Association convention from January 17 – 20 in Dallas, TX. Wright had 35 business-to-business meetings with domestic travel buyers.
- Wright participated in the 2022 Chicago Travel & Adventure Show. Organizers reported around 10,000 consumers attended.
- At the 2022 Go West Summit in Reno, NV from February 14 – 17, Mr. Malen conducted 47 business-to-business appointments. The appointments were with domestic companies as well as international delegates.
- Wright attended Routes Americas airline conference in San Antonio, TX from February 15-17, along with the Marketing Manager of Fairbanks Internationals and their consultant. Business meetings were held with 7 North American airline representatives.
- Wright attended and presented at the Holland America Alaska Cruise and Travel Show on March 19<sup>th</sup>. Holland America reported approximately 4,000 consumers attended the return of this annual event.
- Wright presented a workshop and hosted a booth at the 2022 NTA Contact conference held in Anchorage from March 23-26. More than 80 domestic tour operators attended this intimate boutique event while it was in Alaska for the first time.





- Wright attended the Cruise360 tradeshow in Fort Lauderdale, FL from March 29 to April 3. During the event Wright conducted a destination training workshop to 75 cruise travel agents and interacted with hundreds more during the tradeshow portion of the conference.
- C.E.O. Scott McCrea attended and partnered with ATIA at the annual SeaTrade Cruise Global event in Miami, FL April 25-28, interacting with cruise industry leaders and professionals to encourage development of their land cruise packages.
- Wright participated in the 2022 Chicago Travel & Adventure Show. Organizers reported around 8,000 consumers attended the annual show.
- Young, McCrea and Gillam attended the annual North American Travel Journalists Association conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico to learn about the convention hosting details and reveal the news that the 2023 event will be held in Fairbanks in May 2023.
- Wright, Chiles, McCrea and P.R. Manager Jerry Evans attended 2022 IPW in Orlando, FL on June 4 – 8. Four industry partners joined Explore Fairbanks in meeting more than 80 travel agents, tour operators, online travel platforms and journalists from EF's core international markets to include India, China, Japan, Australia, Europe, Taiwan, United Kingdom and South Korea.
- Young attended Northstar Small and Boutique Meetings in Greenville, S.C. The tradeshow brought qualified meeting planners from around the U.S. who need destinations for their small and boutique meetings—100pax or under. Immediately Explore Fairbanks was approached to assist with a 90-person incentive for the winter of 2023. Other connections were made, and conversations started, continued follow up and relationship building is underway.
- Wright hosted a booth and had B2B meetings at the ASTA Global Convention in San Francisco, CA from August 24-26. While in San Francisco, he co-hosted sales calls with Visit Anchorage, ATIA and Alaska Railroad with three travel agents.
- Wright attended World Routes in Las Vegas Oct. 16-18 in Las Vegas with the Fairbanks International Airport and their consultant where they had meetings with five domestic and international carriers.



- Wright and Pfeffer attended the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention Oct. 20-22 in Anchorage. EF had a booth there to generate interest in trying to bring the convention back to Fairbanks.
- Wright participated in the Holland America Cruise and Travel Show Nov. 4 in Scottsdale, Arizona which was attended by approximately 1,000 consumers and travel trade.

- Pfeffer participated in the AAA Northeast Threads tradeshow event Nov. 14-17 in Orlando, Florida. EF attended in conjunction with Visit Anchorage and ATIA. Approximately 120 travel agents attended the 10-minute EF presentation and another 70 travel agents at the Partner Networking Trade Show
- Wright attended the National Tour Association Travel Exchange Nov. 13-16 in Reno, Nevada where he had B2B meetings with 26 travel agents.
- Wright attended the Professional Travel Agents of North America (PTANA) Maryland training event Nov. 17-18 in Maryland, which was attended by 43 travel advisors.
- Chiles attended the U.S. Tour Operators Association (USTOA) Conference and Marketplace Nov. 29 through Dec. 2 in Austin, Texas, where he met with close to a dozen tour operators.

### **Travel Trade Destination Training Webinars**

- We presented in two Travel Age West Alaska Roundtable Webinars in May and June, along with other Alaska partners. More than 700 individuals attended the live presentations or watched the 1-hour recordings after the fact.
- Wright conducted an Explore Fairbanks webinar with more than 260 tour operators and travel agents in India. The webinar was arranged in cooperation with U.S. Commercial Services.

### **Travel Agent and Tour Operator Contacts**

The Tourism Department had a total of 1,111 separate travel trade contacts via email or phone through September:

- 924 contacts with domestic and international travel agents
- 187 contacts with domestic and international tour operators

### **Meetings, Conventions and Conferences**

The Meetings and Conventions Department issued 20 sales leads to business partners for upcoming meetings and conventions and assisted with 20 service requests. The department played a key role in bringing the below 10 meetings to Fairbanks or provided hands-on assistance to help make them successful.

- 2022 Alaska National Air Guard
- 2022 Alaska Swimming Age Group Championships
- 2022 American Society of Travel Writers, Western Conference
- 2022 Alpha Delta Kappa Alaska State Convention
- Intertribal Timber Council 2022 Conference



- Alaska Association of School Business Officials 2022 Conference
- Alaska Minerals Commission Meeting
- UAF International Arctic Research Center Meeting
- Association of Alaska School Boards Fall 2022 Boardsmanship Academy
- Foundation Health Partners, Alaska Respiratory Care Society Conference



## Convention Sales

Detail summary through end of year.

			Estimated Direct Attendee	
	<u># Of Groups</u>	<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Rooms</u>	<u>Spending (EDAS)</u>
Sales Leads:	20	3,393	8,958	\$3,254,755
Bureau Generated Bookings:	11	2,085	5,135	\$2,400,582
Completed Events:	11	1,064	2,851	\$1,992,464

## Polaris Working Group

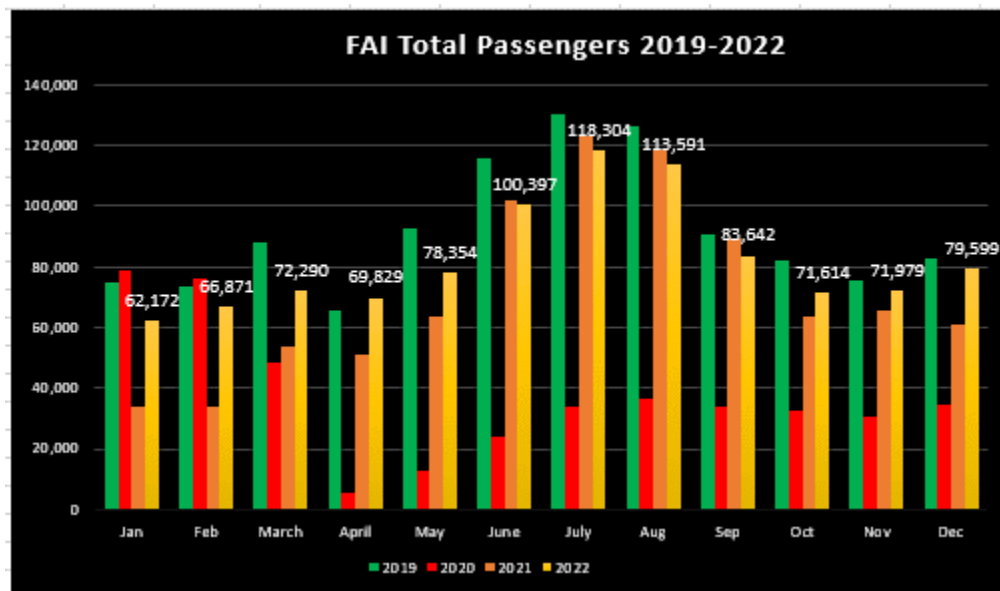
The Department continued to participate in meetings and provide administrative support of the Polaris Work Group. Those efforts paid off when the Alaska Delegation secured \$10 million from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to begin the disassembling of Polaris. While Explore Fairbanks has conducted studies to demonstrate the economic impact a Convention and Arts Center would have within the Polaris space as well as the adjoining lot, efforts for now have been concentrated solely on the demolition of the building.

## Cruise

Alaska's Cross-Gulf of Alaska cruises returned for summer 2022. Early data from Cruise Lines Industry of America suggests total Alaska Cruise passenger count was approximately 1.1 million. Holland America Princess (HAP) Alaska provided three land only Travel Agent FAMs and Explore Fairbanks trained more than 50 participants on our destination while they were in Fairbanks. We also hosted a reception with one such group in August at the Morris Thompson Center during one of the HAP Land Tour FAMs.

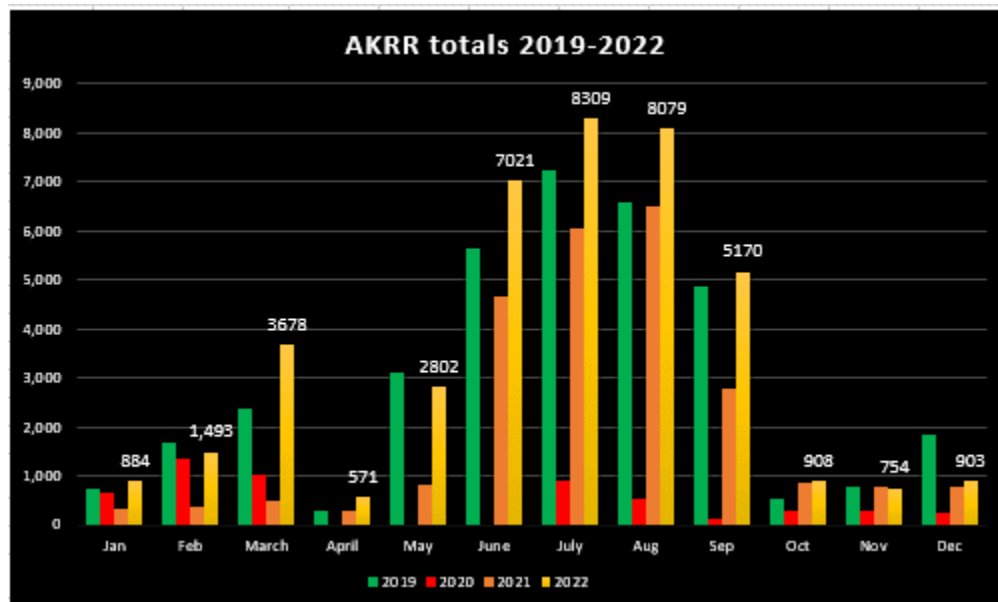
## Airport Numbers

Summer 2022 saw the return of seasonal carriers such as United (direct Chicago), Delta (direct Minneapolis) and Condor (direct Frankfurt) as well as the regular service to Seattle with both Alaska and Delta. The numbers in the graph below compare 2019 through 2022. Combined arrivals and departures are up by 15% over 2021 and down by 11% from 2019. The winter months (Jan to April/Oct to Dec) accounted for the growth with a 37% increase over 2021. For the May to September summer season, combined arrivals and departures are down by less than 1% from 2021.



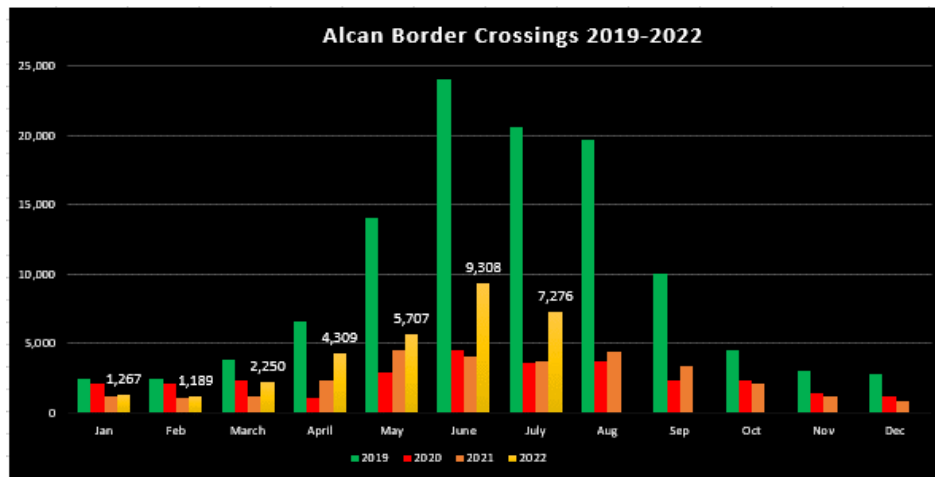
## Alaska Railroad

The Alaska Railroad returned to offering its train service between Fairbanks and Anchorage at 100% capacity throughout the winter and summer months. Summer service also restarted normal daily Southbound/Northbound to 7 times a week in either direction. The railroad resumed its weekly Aurora Train in mid-September. The below graph compares 2022 to 2021, 2020 and 2019; note that for 2020 there was no train service from April through June. Combined arrivals and departures are up by 64% over 2021 and up by 14% over 2019. For the May to September summer season, combined arrivals and departures are up by 50% from 2021 and up 14% from 2019.



## Highway Traffic

The U.S./Canada border opened to non-essential travel in August 2021. Based on the chart below, highway traffic through July 2022 continued to be modestly impacted by the lingering pandemic and high fuel prices. We are still trying to obtain numbers for August-December.



## Providing Leadership and Community Support

- Director of Tourism and Meeting Sales, Bill Wright serves on the Carlson Center Community Advisory Board and the board of directors of Midnight Sun Council Boy Scouts in Fairbanks. He is also a member of the Rotary Club of Fairbanks and volunteers as Co-chair of Membership for Rotary District 5010.
- To highlight the return of northern lights viewing, Explore Fairbanks and Pike's Waterfront Lodge teamed up for an inaugural celebration that shined a light on Fairbanks' natural phenomenon. The kickoff activities took place at Pike's on August 21st with a host of interactive games, entertainment, food and beverages, plus a sneak peek inside the new Pike's Aurora Discovery Institute. The organizers hope to use this event to raise awareness to the greater Fairbanks community of our dynamic aurora season that attracts visitors from around the world.



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## Visitor Services and Partnership Development Department

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### Visitor Services Staff

*Director of Visitor Services and Partnership Development:* Charity Gadapee

*Manager of Visitor Services and Partnership Development:* Alanna McBrayer

*Visitor Information Specialists Full-time:* Bob Eley, Kai Doak

*Visitor Information Specialists Part-time:* Jared Cagwin

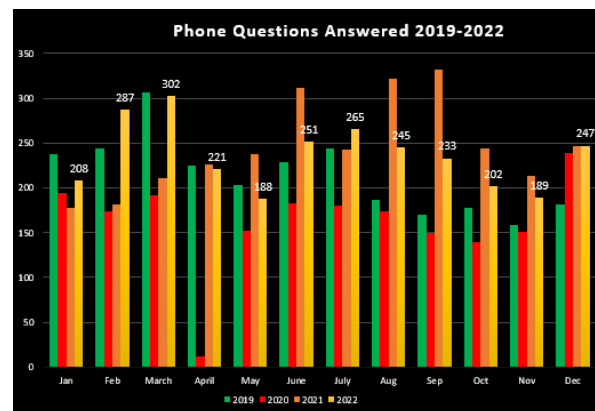
*Visitor Information Specialists Seasonal – Pioneer Park:* Julia Parzick

*Golden Heart Greeter Volunteers:* 15 year-round

**Visitor Count from Memorial Day to Labor Day was 49,635 guests.** When compared to last year, that's a 64% increase in visitation. When compared to 2019, pre-COVID, that is a decline of 36% for the same time. At the Visitors Center we are inching our way back to pre-pandemic levels.

Our team is not only managing our face-to-face interactions but answering phone calls, responding to email inquiries, while labeling and mailing out thousands of Visitors Guides every month. We experienced a wide range of preparation levels from guests – from the guest who had postponed a cruise land tour for two years and spent two years researching Fairbank to guests who show up having done zero research of the area.

For the past two years we've answered more phone calls and emails monthly than we did pre-Covid. Anecdotally, what this tells us is that we are the respected authority in sharing information about what there is to see and do in Fairbanks as well as the surrounding areas of Denali and the Arctic.



### **Year-to-Date Progress Report**

- **Greeting Our Guests**

Explore Fairbanks Visitor Services staff greeted and provided customer service to 98,333 visitors at the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center for 2022. This is a year-to-date increase of 64% in visitation compared to 2021.

- Staffed the information kiosk at Pioneer Park throughout the summer with help from the Fairbanks Alaska Public Lands Information staff. Stocked and maintained brochure centers at Fairbanks International Airport and Alaska Railroad Depot.

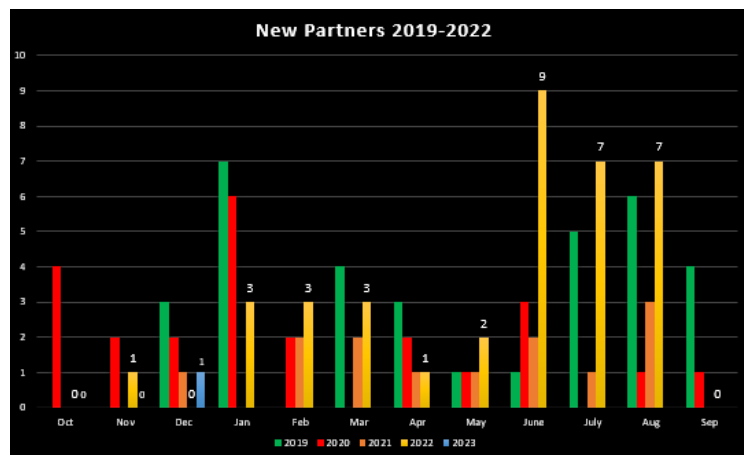
- The Fairbanks Golden Heart Greeter program continued to gain momentum after being dormant for two years. Eighteen greeters donated 149 hours of service in 2022 with the bulk of volunteering being at Pioneer Park.
- Continued the Fort Wainwright Newcomer's City Tour orienting in-processing soldiers to downtown, the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus, and surrounding community. In 2022, 1,435 soldiers have taken part in the tour—a 18% increase over 2021.
- Distributed Visitors Guides, Winter Guides, Fairbanks area maps, and the new Aurora Map & Guide to Fairbanks hotels and downtown businesses several times throughout the year.

### **Partnership Development Staff (Shared with Visitor Services)**

*Director of Visitor Services and Partnership Development:* Charity Gadapee

*Manager of Visitor Services and Partnership Development:* Alanna McBrayer

The Partnership Department saw a 169% increase in new partners over 2021. The bulk of businesses who joined for 2022 did so between June to August. Anecdotal, we believe this is the result of businesses having increased revenue with increased visitor traffic after two years of little income. Of the 35 new partners, only eight of those businesses were previously partners with Explore Fairbanks. More and more businesses are investing their marketing dollars in Explore Fairbanks as the respected authority for destination marketing.



### **Year-to-Date Progress Report**

#### **• Events**

Listed below are some of the events that took place in 2022:

- Organized and coordinated the Annual Interior Tourism Conference in Fairbanks in January as an in-person and online educational summit. In attendance were 86 participants representing 61 organizations from across the state. Topics included an in-depth look at the J-1 Visa program, a transportation sector update, and seminar on owned-data strategies to futureproof your marketing efforts.



- The Explore Fairbanks Annual Banquet was a 70's themed soiree not to be missed at Birch Hill Recreation Center. The Golden Heart Award was presented to Willy Vinton of Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum. The Aurora Award was presented to Tanana Chiefs Conference. The Jim and Mary Binkley Award was presented to Lisbet Norris of Arctic Dog Adventure Co. The Raven Award was presented to



Pike's Waterfront Lodge. Matt Atkinson, Brett Carlson, and Lee Kenaston of Northern Alaska Tour Company were inducted into the Tourism Hall of Fame. The President's Award was presented Mayor Bryce Ward, Fairbanks North Star Borough.

- In December, Explore Fairbanks held its inaugural Golden Heart Giving event raising over \$3,000 for the Fairbanks Rescue Mission. A warm clothing drive was held in conjunction with event with many hats, mittens, socks and coats being donated from local visitor industry businesses. This new program will replace the previously held Visitor Industry Walk for Charity.

- **Hybrid In-person and Virtual Attendance Luncheons**

Hybrid events have continued allowing more of Explore Fairbanks' partners to participate effectively from anywhere in the world. In hosting online webinars, ease of recording presentations made the content more accessible to partners via the partner extranet on the following topics:

- Summer Product Update
- Department of Transportation Construction season outlook
- Coffee Talks
- Winter product updates
- Annual Meeting and Board Candidate introductions