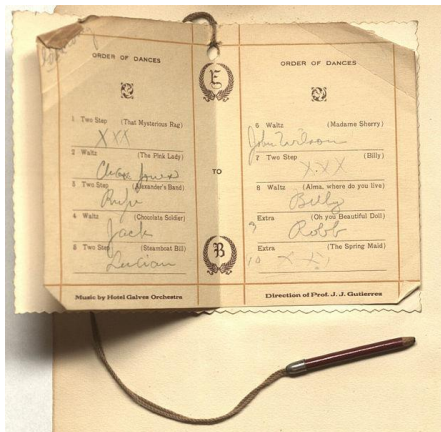


## PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT JANUARY 2022



via [Wikimedia Commons 1](#)

If you were a young single man or woman back in the Victorian era in both Britain and the United States, a typical Saturday night might find you attending a local ballroom dance, considered the premier social event of the time. That is, if you were lucky enough to get a coveted invite. This is when the concept of dance cards was developed. They were given to the ladies and included a list of the different dances (waltz, polka, etc.) along with a space for a man to pencil in his name. This of course led to the concept still used today of someone having a full dance card as an indicator of being highly sought after.

Like the popular belles of the ball of yesteryear, the Golden Heart City's dance card has been overflowing. Some recent examples of where we have been winning the popularity contest with visitors,

media and travel trade alike include:

- On Tuesday, December 28<sup>th</sup>, while Interior Alaska was digging its way out of #snowpocalypse2021, more than 400 visitors managed to make their way to the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center, seeking the advice and guidance from our small but mighty visitor information specialist's team on what they could see and do during their time in Fairbanks. That's four times more visitors than we saw on that same date in 2020, and more than on that same date in the pre-pandemic years of 2019 and 2018.
- Earlier last month we opened online registration for the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) Western Chapter Conference that we are hosting in late February. By the end of the day, the conference was sold out, and we began adding folks to the wait list—who have eagerly been checking in with our team on a regular basis to see if they might still be able to get in.
- In case you missed it, the print edition of the December/January issue of Travel + Leisure Magazine, (with a readership of 6.1 million people) had not just one, but two articles featuring Fairbanks; one on our distilleries and the other on dog mushing. Thanks to the diligent work of our communications department we've been getting some love from the online edition of the magazine as well to include this [recent story on winter travel ideas](#).

With this much publicity, we've jokingly suggested that Travel + Leisure magazine should change its name to the Explore Fairbanks Visitors Guide.

- Next month our tourism and meeting sales department will be hosting a familiarization tour for tour operators and travel agents who are attending the GoWest Summit in Reno, Nevada. Similar to the aforementioned SATW conference, that sign-up has gone into waitlist status as well.



All of these are positive indicators that despite all the challenges our industry has faced over what is approaching two years now, the interest and desire in our destination has not wavered. Overall, for 2021 we exceeded our expectations. The daily breaking news reminds us that we are not out of the woods yet, but we have good reason to be optimistic for what 2022 has in store for us. We're getting good reports that the peak winter months of February and March are looking solid, and barring any setbacks in these unpredictable times, the summer season will see significant numbers with the return of Cross Gulf of Alaska cruises/land tours, highway travelers, and international visitors.

Throughout 2020 and 2021, despite budget setbacks, Explore Fairbanks never stopped marketing. We kept Fairbanks in the forefront of the minds of domestic and international visitors alike, and, in fact, were able to advertise at even higher levels than the past thanks to various grants and COVID relief funds from the state and local government. I firmly believe that when we look at why visitation to our region has done so well the last six months, our continued strategic presence in the marketplace --- whether it be advertising, social media, new media, travel trade outreach --- is one of the top reasons. This is what a destination marketing organization, along with phenomenal partners such as yourself, bring to the table as an economic driver to the community.

Speaking of 2022, one of the things we are looking forward to that is right around the corner is the 2022 Interior Tourism Conference on January 26<sup>th</sup>. We have a robust slate of sessions covering a myriad of topics of relevance to our industry. You won't want to miss it.

Here's to a great 2022 and even more requests for waltzes, fox trots, polkas and more. Thank you for all that you do.



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