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## **About Visit Loudoun**

Visit Loudoun is the destination marketing organization (DMO) for Loudoun County and its incorporated towns. The organization is charged with developing and implementing a comprehensive destination marketing program designed to attract visitors to the region who in turn generate economic, employment taxes for the region. Visit Loudoun also works with the industry to implement a county-wide tourism destination development strategy.

## Vision

To be a "must visit" destination supported by a community that recognizes the economics and quality of life benefits that come from sharing our home with visitors. Loudoun County will be the preferred east coast destination for lovers of artisanal, epicurean and culturally rich experiences.

## Mission

To stimulate the sustainability and enhancement of Loudoun County's economy and quality of life by advocating for smart destination development and marketing an exceptional experience to travel consumers worldwide.



## **About Visit Loudoun**

## Stakeholders

### VISITORS

As a marketing and sales organization, Visit Loudoun works to attract all types of visitors, increase the duration of their stay, maximize the economic impact from their spending, improve their overall experience and influence their intent to return.

## THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

As the industry leader, Visit Loudoun supports all tourism businesses from large hotels to small retail businesses and service providers with sales, marketing and service opportunities. It keeps the industry abreast of industry trends, market research, and local and regional issues and offers opportunities for education and training on a range of topics.

### THE COMMUNITY

As a community steward, Visit Loudoun works to generate tax revenues and enhance the quality of life for the entire community. It attracts visitors who spend their time and money here but do not require schools and other public services.

### POLICY MAKERS

As the industry advocate, Visit Loudoun offers policy makers tourism industry expertise and perspective, and communicates the industry's needs in terms of tourism development and sustainability.

## Funding

Visit Loudoun is mostly funded by Restricted Transient Occupancy Tax, a dedicated room tax collected by county accommodations that is required by state code to be reinvested in tourism promotion. It also receives funding from membership dues, participation fees for such things as cooperative programs, and by the towns of Middleburg and Leesburg. Visit Loudoun also receives in-kind services from tourism businesses to host programs for the tourism industry and to host group travel decision makers as well as travel and lifestyle media. The public/private partnership for funding tourism promotion enables tourism to thrive in Loudoun County and its jurisdictions.



Visit Loudoun (DMO) is accredited by Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) of the Destination Marketing Association International, 2505 M Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036 Phone: 202-296-7888

BRAND GUIDELINES Refer to Visit Loudoun's Brand Guidelines document for comprehensive brand identity guidance.

## **Agencies & Vendors**

### AGENCY OF RECORD / DIGITAL STRATEGY: MILES PARTNERSHIP

Destination strategy development; creative conception and development; brand management; advertising and collateral design and delivery; media planning and buying; SEM strategy & execution; Destination Optimization Program training and management; content creation support; social media support; industry trends/research support; industry education; website design and content strategy

### WEBSITE / CRM / SEO: SIMPLEVIEW

Website hosting and maintenance; CRM management; SEO strategy development and execution

## **WEBSITE AD SALES: DTN**

Online ad network for managing advertising on VisitLoudoun.org

### **DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT: CROWDRIFF**

Photo and video sourcing and distribution platform

## **HOTEL DATA: STR**

Hotel industry data insights and trends

## **EVENTS & MEETINGS RESOURCES: CVENT & HELMSBRISCOE**

Event management software and hospitality solutions; meetings procurement and site selection

### PR: DCI

Public relations and public affairs

### **RESEARCH: DESTINATION ANALYSTS**

Traveler research to inform key initiatives

## **Loudoun County Visitor Profile**

## **Basic Facts & Figures**

There were approx. 1.9M visitors to Loudoun county in 2016/17 These visitors spent \$1.84 billion in Loudoun County – up 4.6% from previous year.

Average party size was 2.9 persons

Average length of stay was 2.55 nights

80% of parties are adult only

Visitors who stay in paid lodging spend an average of \$885 per trip

Day trip visitors spend an average of \$163 per trip

## Visitor Breakdown

82% of visitors are coming for leisure vacation.

12% of visitors come for business

12% of visitors come for a Wedding or other special event

4% of visitors come for Sports events and tournaments.

Average age of Loudoun County visitors is 47.6 years old

According to the 2020 Lodging Study, occupancy is strongest in late Spring and remains strong through October. The most popular overnight travel months to Loudoun County in the 2019 calendar year were May (78.6% occupancy) and June (78.3% occupancy), followed by October (73.7% occupancy), April (73% occupancy) and August (72.9% occupancy). The slowest months were November through February. (STR)

Note: The vast majority of this data was pulled from the FY20-21 Marketing Plan More recent insights are featured on the following page.

## TO BE UPDATED

## Geographic Breakdown

49% of Loudoun County visitors came from Virginia

The top 5 states are

Virginia 49%

Maryland 23%

Pennsylvania 12%

Washington DC 11%

New York 69

## Visitor Activities & Motivators

Activity participation of Loudoun County visitors who stayed in paid lodging (SMARI)

43% Shoppin

42% Ate at a locally owned restaurant

39% Sightseeing

37% Rest and Relaxation

36% Visited Wineries/Vinevards

## Average Occupancy & Average Daily Rate History

The table is a summary of the average occupancy and average daily rates for 2020 and several previous years in Loudoun County.

2013	
2014	
2015	
2016	\$123.97
2017	
2018	
2019	\$131.21
2020	

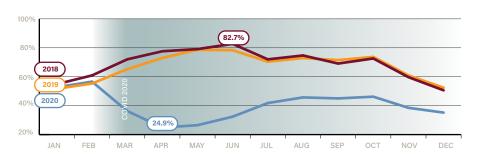
## **Loudoun County Visitor Profile**

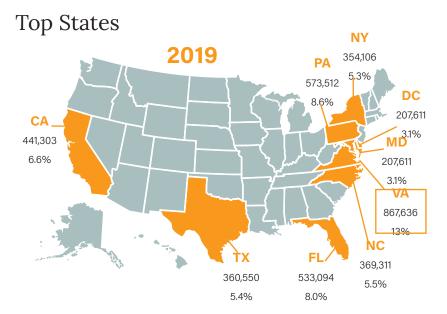
## **Visitor Spending**

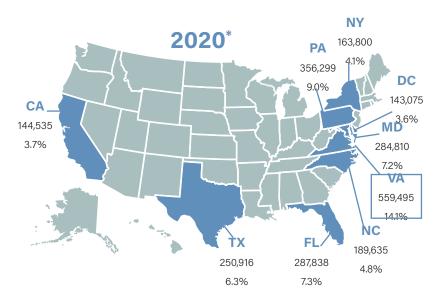
In 2019, visitors spent \$1.91 billion, up 3.6% from the previous year.

	2019	2020*
Number	6.7 million	3.9 million
of Visitors	13% in-state, 87% out-of-state	14% in-state, 86% out-of-state
Avg. Length of Stay	1.9 days	1.8 days
Daytrip vs. Overnight	73% daytrips	76% daytrips
Prevalent Demographic Group	45-54 year olds	45-54 year olds

## Monthly Occupancy Rates (2018-2020\*)







<sup>\*2020</sup> numbers reflect pandemic impacts.

These five strategic pillars guide Visit Loudoun's destination management programs and messaging. For more details, refer to the FY2023-25 Strategic Plan.





## Variety is Key

Loudoun County will celebrate and inspire visitors and residents alike to enjoy the benefits and variety of Loudoun County



## Involve the Community

Loudoun County residents, business owners and government supports and advocates for tourism



## Support Music and the Arts

Loudoun County will leverage music and the arts as a key driver and enabler for destination growth



## Inform Infrastructure

Loudoun County will strive to be an integrated destination, participating in the development of frictionless travel for visitors



## Think Themed Experiences

Loudoun County will offer curated experiences that will delight and inspire visitors and residents alike to continue to drive destination growth

## FY23-25 Marketing Plan

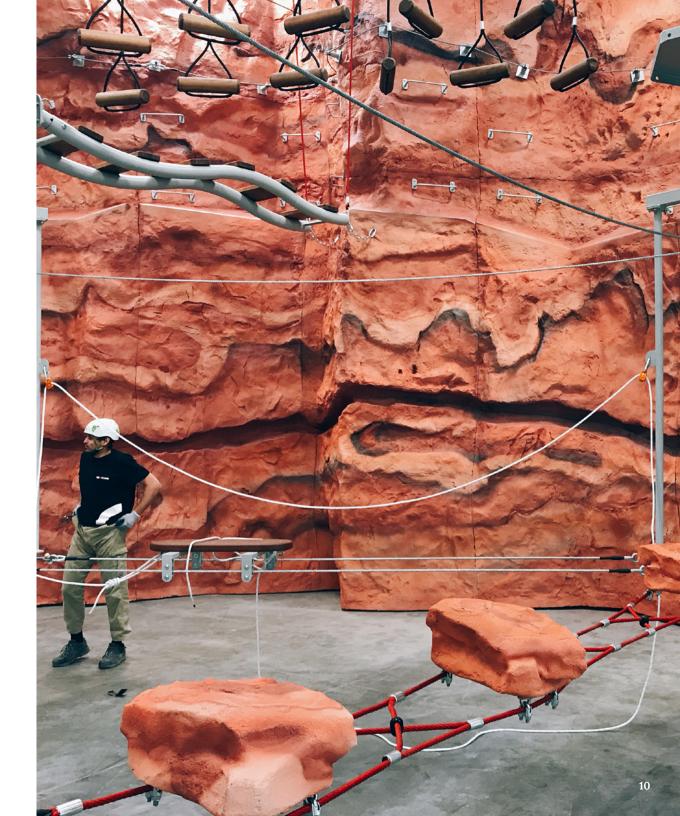
The marketing plan is a strategic road map that: (1) defines departmental goals and objectives, (2) outlines the content and partnerships that support a variety of initiatives, and (3) details a tactical plan outlining the primary campaign, niche campaigns and related products and programs.



# Marketing Goals & Objectives

The Marketing Department is responsible for the overall brand strategy and marketing to the Leisure travel segment, as well as within the meetings/conferences, sports/events, weddings as well as tour and travel verticals.

The primary goal of the department is to develop and promote key products and programs that facilitate tourism growth (with a focus on generating hotel and sales tax revenue) and the growth of the local economy overall. These efforts include the creation of accurate and compelling advertising, promotions, digital, social media and partner programs.



## **Marketing Objectives: Overview**

- Continue to evolve Visit Loudoun brands, positioning Loudoun as a destination of choice for leisure travel, meetings/conferences, sports events, weddings and domestic/international tour and travel.
- Ensure that all marketing efforts highlight the variety and diversity that Loudoun has to offer.
- Focus on creating demand for both eastern and western Loudoun County in a cohesive way.
- Regularly inventory and update marketing assets to more closely resemble Loudoun's demographics and attract new audiences.
- Conduct photo/video shoots as necessary to support campaigns, products and programs. Ensure assets reflect diverse audiences. Photo/video creation and curation is ongoing and will be assessed on an annual basis.
- Encourage visitors to do and spend more by leveraging content marketing (including video), social media marketing, online packaging and the creation of print collateral for distribution in welcome centers and other areas with high visitor traffic.
- Convert more day-trips to overnights by promoting events and entertainment (as appropriate), hotel packaging and incentives.
- Identify opportunities to market directly to a diverse set of travelers.
- Manage and promote VisitLoudoun.org, maximizing activity and engagement via SEO, SEM, content development, UGC and other tactics. Focus on enhancing and evolving the user experience to create more compelling and seamless user journeys. Explore opportunities for personalization.
- Create content focused on frictionless travel, including new technologies.

- Expand Visit Loudoun advertising impact and reach by offering comprehensive co-op opportunities to local partners for buy-in.
- Manage and participate in product development committees to encourage partner input in planning and promotions.
- Participate in organizations/associations representing local product in order to support and shape tourism opportunities within key segments.
   Support county product positioning events to drive visitation.
- Leverage industry partnerships with regional organizations including VTC, CRUSA, NVTP and Destination DC to further brand and reach.
- Conduct research to identify the highest potential revenue audiences and to ensure targeted marketing to the greatest reach.
- Leverage statewide funding programs to fund marketing initiatives.
- In cooperation with the Media Relations team, develop a strategy that will promote and build value for Visit Loudoun among local businesses and residents.

## **METRO EXPANSION & TRANSPORTATION**

With Metro now extending all the way to Ashburn, opportunities to leverage convenient rail transit and highlight accessibility should be incorporated into all products and initiatives, across both leisure and non-leisure markets, as appropriate. More generally, transportation options to help guide visitors and non-leisure travelers should be considered whenever possible.

## **Marketing Objectives by Vertical**

### MEETING SALES

- Ensure the sales team has all marketing tools needed to sell the destination.
- Manage the branding and production of sales collateral.
- Collaborate with the sales team to develop new designs and themes for tradeshow installations.
- Create and maintain meetings content for the website in collaboration with the sales team.
   New content opportunities include testimonials, videos, 360 tours and virtual team building.
- Provide social media support during key meetings.
- · Partner and advertise with CVENT and HelmsBriscoe.
- Support the sales team in encouraging venue and attraction partners to maintain their content and assets on VisitLoudoun.org.
- Add a Concierge Client Experience to make meetings services more robust.

### SPORTS SALES

- Manage the branding and production of sports venue and attraction collateral for use in selling the destination.
- Collaborate on sports content, including professional sports content, for digital marketing platform uses, including for the website.
- Support sports marketing with advertising, promotional brochures and enhanced website content, tools and assets.
- Support promotion of professional sports, teams and venues for future signature events.

### **CLIENT SERVICES & WEDDINGS**

- Manage all branding and production of marketing collateral used for services.
- Distribute and promote the visitors guide as a valuable resource for meeting/conference delegates, sports/events attendees and wedding guests on site; increase distribution as budget allows.
- Collaborate with Client Services team to develop servicing tools for groups with special interests and needs.
- Collaborate with FNP Events on Wedding Showcase Promotion.
- Support the wedding market with advertising, promotional collateral and enhanced website content, tools and assets.

## **INTERNATIONAL & TRAVEL TRADE**

- While domestic markets continue to be the primary focus, international marketing efforts are expected to increase as we emerge from the pandemic period. International marketing objectives are captured here but will be dependent on other priorities and budget.
- In partnership with NVTP and Capital Region USA, cross-promote the region's assets to domestic and international markets.
- Increase visibility for Loudoun in international markets by leveraging partnerships with Brand USA as well as sister county and sister airport partnerships for marketing and media opportunities.
- Support the development of itinerary content and marketing collateral promoting group tour product.
- Support the creation of targeted emails to group and FIT leisure planners.
- Attend IPW to promote Loudoun and Virginia to international tour operators and media.

### **INDUSTRY**

- Host webinars and educational forums to support and guide industry partners. See more about training programs on Page XX.
- Encourage partners to maintain their digital content and assets on VisitLoudoun.org, including calendar listing ownership.
- Manage the branding and production of collateral for industry marketing, including digital and print distribution.

### VISITOR SERVICES

 Continue to enhance and improve the Visitor Center experience, outlining key initiatives annually.

## PR & Media Relations Goals & Objectives

The Director of Communications is responsible for implementing Visit Loudoun's overall strategic public relations plan, which includes managing all external communication activities, ranging from media outreach to public awareness and crisis communications. DCI, the PR agency of record, works in concert with the Visit Loudoun team.

Local outreach will focus on ensuring the efforts of Visit Loudoun are illustrated and recognized as supportive and contributing to the economic development of the county. The Out-of-Market PR strategy will focus on regional, national and international media outlets in geo-targeted markets that specialize in travel and tourism coverage as well as outlets that target the meetings, weddings, sports and group tour markets.

We will continue to target print and digital outlets, freelancers and bloggers. We will expand on existing media relationships and develop new one-on-one relationships through press trips, virtual and in-market desk-side visits and media trade shows and will partner with organizations that will produce coverage on Loudoun.



## **Media Relations Objectives & Activities**

### **OUT-OF-MARKET**

- Generate positive media coverage positioning Loudoun as a premier domestic and international leisure destination, and a desired East Coast destination for meetings, sports events and weddings. Highlight curated experiences and art/music experiences where possible, and always emphasize the great variety of destination attractions and offerings.
- Pursue qualified media to participate in the Visiting Journalist Program, individually or on group press trips.
- Work with PR agency of record to develop media wishlist of 100 outlets and secure coverage in at least 10% of desired outlets.
- Work with PR agency of record to develop media wish list of 100 outlets and secure coverage in at least 17 of the desired outlets.
- Implement influencer program that targets specific key markets outlined in the strategic plan including African American and LGBTO travelers.
- Reach new publications that target the solo female traveler, African American travelers and LGBTQ market.
- Partner with regional tourism organizations to further reach and leverage media opportunities (see Partnerships on page XX).

## LOCAL MARKET

 Increase brand and product awareness among residents, local consumers and media.
 Build relationships with local television, print, radio and online media to build credibility in the local and business communities.

- Enhance relationships with the staff and public relations professionals who represent Loudoun municipalities and tourism attractions.
- Engage directly with the local business community to communicate Visit Loudoun's role and value and to help foster synergistic approaches to products and features.
- Work with local tourism industry partners to generate story ideas, news, events and unique publicity angles.

### MEDIA RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

Write, edit and distribute a variety of internal and external content, including story ideas, backgrounders, press releases, media alerts, newsletters, digital content and more.

Maintain the digital media database, track/report on media success and manage the Visiting Journalist Program.

Participate in media visits and events in key markets. Pitch story ideas via virtual and in-market desk-side visits and events geared toward writers covering leisure travel, lifestyle, meetings, weddings and sports markets.

Develop regional media list to assist meeting and sports planners and industry partners with reaching media for their Loudoun news and events.

Retain relevant memberships (including the Society of American Travel Writers, Public Relations Society of America and the Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance) and attend meetings when possible.

Maintain the Media section of VisitLoudoun.org and assist the marketing team with asset management in Crowdriff.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

Visit Loudoun and its PR agency will actively be pitching year-round. Below is an annual snapshot of activities.

PHASE 1 (Late Summer/Early Fall) – Update most wanted media list and key messages, conduct partner webinar on working with the media, host media in-market

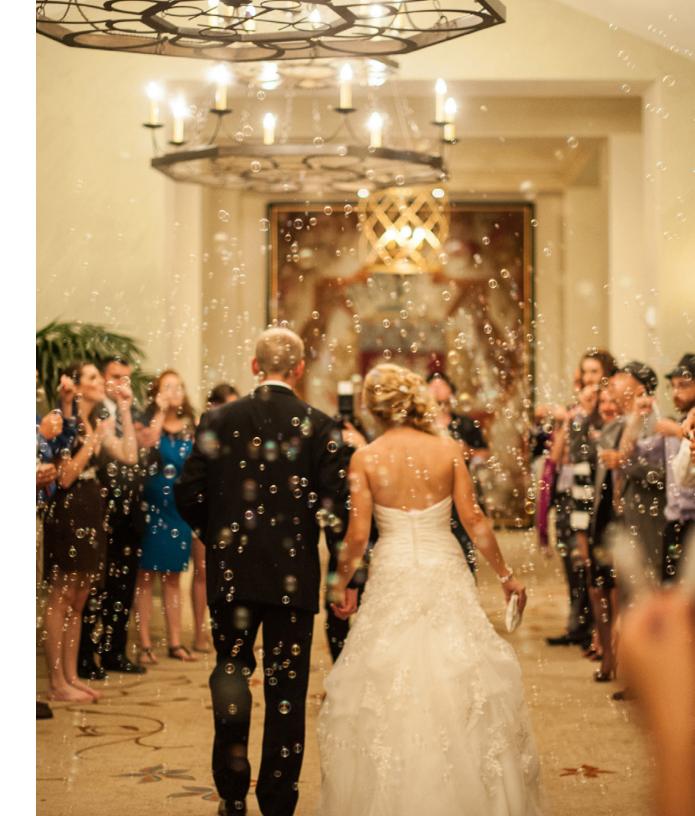
PHASE 2 (Fall/Winter) – Host media in-market, conduct virtual as well as in-person desksides, host digital influencer

PHASE 3 (Spring) – Host media in-market, conduct virtual or in-person desksides, host digital influencer

PHASE 4 (Spring) - Host additional writers in-market

# Content & Partnerships

This section outlines objectives and initiatives related to marketing channels and platforms, content creation, key partnerships (domestic and international) and sales support.



## **Channels & Platforms**

### **SOCIAL MEDIA & UGC**

- Social Media Strategy Continue account management and supplemental advertising to boost audience reach.
   Goals include increasing engagement and growing the audience, particularly by expanding into diverse markets.
   Tactics include (1) content creation, (2) key demographic and psychographic targeting and (3) leveraging User Generated Content (UGC), including from influencers. Focus on engaging non-leisure markets through social (for example: themed days of the week, such as Wedding Wednesdays).
- Social Platforms Primary channels are Instagram, Facebook and Twitter; secondary channels are YouTube. Pinterest and LinkedIn.
- UGC Platform Continue using Crowdriff as a visual marketing software platform to highlight and manage UGC content on VisitLoudoun.org,
- Social Campaigns The #LoveLoudoun campaign highlights local experiences with a focus on building an emotional connection with the audience. For details on this niche campaign, see Page XX.

### WEBSITE

- VisitLoudoun.org Continue robust content development while making significant improvements to the site design and user experience of this owned channel. A key focus is optimization to boost traffic, improve engagement and better serve audiences. The rebuilt website designed by Miles, built by Simpleview is slated to launch in 2023, incorporating and building on strategic recommendations outlined in the Miles web content audit (2021). For details on the website strategy, see Page XX.
- Simpleview SEO Continue to leverage the Ad Words platform to drive qualified traffic to the website to increase visitation. Focus on keyword ownership in the region and Virginia.
- DTN Co-op partner digital advertising on the website.
   Featured placements and promoting click-through rates.

### PRINT PRODUCTS

- Official Visitors Guide This product is geared toward leisure visitors but supports all markets as it is also used by a variety of planners, meeting attendees, event guests, sports event participants and other travelers. The guide is produced annually (recommended) or in 18-month intervals. Guides published through 2025 should generally follow the immersive, content-rich format introduced with the fully reimagined 2022 guide. For more details on the visitors guide, see Page XX.
- Trail Guides The LoCo Ale Trail Guide and Wine Trail Guide offer critical mapping and other trail information.
   Annual (or more frequent) updates should be made to keep the trail content as current as possible.
- NOTE: Digital Guides Interactive, mobile-friendly, responsive versions of all print products will be developed through BlueToad or a comparable digital publishing platform. This will expand product reach and ensure that consumers can access influential content instantly on any device.

#### **NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

- Destination Optimization Program (formerly Google DMO Program) – The program enables destinations to enhance consumer-facing content across a range of products and platforms, including Google and beyond. The program provides tools and tactics to improve the completeness, quality and accuracy of destination content across business listings, Google Maps, Destination Travel Guides and more. As part of the program, Google provides access to free tools and solutions for DMOs through its Knowledge Base. Miles operates the program and has provided tactical training to Loudoun's tourism partners.
- Threshold 360 This virtual tour platform allows businesses to easily produce 360° virtual tours for inclusion on websites. Attractions, restaurants, hotels and other businesses can all benefit from enhanced website experiences (and increased engagement) for both leisure and meetings audiences.
- ITI Calendar Widget Is this in use? If so, a brief description of product and purpose is needed here.

## **Content Creation & Development**

- Content Calendar This regularly updated document guides content creation and promotion for both web and social. Content planning should align closely with strategic pillars and include important content themes such as accessibility and sustainability.
- Images Photo curation is ongoing and will be assessed on an annual basis. Conduct additional photo shoots as needed to support specific campaigns and/or ongoing efforts to reflect diverse audiences across all channels. Leverage UGC to expand the asset library.
- Video/Film Continue to produce new video content and create opportunities for video content promotion.
- Display Create new branded display materials for use at tradeshows and events, both in target markets and for local industry events.
- Collateral Creation Continue to produce branded and product-focused marketing collateral for all departments and target markets, including Leisure, Meetings, Sports, Weddings and culinary travel audiences. Primary needs include (1) Visit Loudoun Deal Cards with welcome letters for all markets, including customization for each market, (2) Profile Sheets to support meetings and group travel marketing.
- Promotional Items Continue to identify and produce branded marketing giveaways as tools to extend sales and marketing efforts.
   Consider sustainability in these initiatives.

## **Key Partnerships & Advertising**

- Destination DC Continue this partnership to promote Loudoun as a unique asset to the DC region and complementary product to the DC experience. Advertising in printed guide bi-annually, digital ads on Washington.org and inclusion in direct mail lead generation.
- Virginia Tourism Continue this partnership to promote Loudoun as Virginia product through the VTC printed travel guide, digital ads on Virginia.org and social platforms.
- Tripadvisor Continue this advertising partnership to leverage the #1 travel website globally. Existing product content page, supplemental ads and mobile targeted delivery. Possible co-op opportunities.
- Places.Travel Continue partnering with this digital publication to leverage content solutions that are closely tailored to the Visit Loudoun brand.

## **International Partnerships**

Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, Visit Loudoun expects to increase international marketing efforts. The extent of international focus will depend on domestic marketing priorities, among other factors. Key partnerships essential for long-term growth are captured here.

- Brand USA Leverage content marketing partnership opportunities to drive traffic on the VisittheUSA.com site to Loudoun's foreign language content videos.
- CRUSA Continue partnership with Capital Region USA and Virginia Tourism to promote Loudoun to key international markets (UK/ Germany/Brazil/France/China). Partnership includes advertising on the CRUSA website, ads in multi-language print guides, participation in IPW, sales missions and hosted Tour Operator and Press trips.
- NVTP Partner with the Northern Virginia Tourism Partnership (NVTP) and Virginia Tourism to reach the Canadian market through a comprehensive marketing and PR campaign that includes digital advertising, in-market promotions, sales and media mission and website promotion.
- Sister City Partnerships Leverage the county's Sister City partnerships for market development.

## Sales Support

- Meetings/Corporate Identify advertising and partnership opportunities to promote Loudoun in the Corporate, Association, Incentive and SMERFEE markets. Includes CVENT and inmarket branded promotions for visiting meeting groups.
- Sports Identify advertising and partnership opportunities to promote Loudoun in the Sports Travel market. Includes inmarket branded promotions to visiting sports travel groups.
- Travel Trade Identify advertising and partnership opportunities to promote Loudoun in the Domestic Group Tour and International markets. CRUSA and IPW marketing opportunities to be included.
- Weddings Support campaigns through digital advertising, branded content and social promotion.

## **Tactical Plan**

This 3-year plan is focused on boosting awareness, consideration and ultimately visitation for key audiences over the course of this plan.

## The plan is comprised of the following components:

- Primary Campaign
- Niche Campaigns
- Products & Programs

This plan will include initiatives for key target audiences, including Leisure/Consumer, Meetings, Group Travel, Weddings and Sports.



## **Primary Campaign**

The destination's branded primary campaign is the dominant campaign initiative and the central component of Visit Loudoun's advertising efforts.

#### **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

The robust primary campaign captures the essence of the destination and its brand story, driving **awareness**, **consideration** and **action** among leisure and group visitor segments.

The primary campaign targets potential visitors at every stage of the travel funnel, from high-funnel (awareness/reach) to mid-funnel (engagement/consideration) to low-funnel (action/conversion). While it takes a holistic, "whole funnel" approach overall, the campaign generally leans toward building awareness and consideration.

The Media Plan outlines all the objectives, KPIs, tactics and media outlets that support the primary campaign at every stage of the travel funnel.

### THE JOURNEY FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

Building awareness includes awareness of the destination's physical attributes and offerings as well as its brand image – the qualities, associations and impressions that make the destination desirable. Cultivating a positive brand image, connecting emotionally with the consumer and serving engaging, in-depth content are critical for moving the consumer from awareness to affinity, consideration, intent and action.

### **CAMPAIGN DURATION**

A primary campaign can stay in market for an undetermined amount of time based on its performance and effectiveness. The shelf life of primary campaigns can be a year or many decades, but the key is to evolve or shift to meet the needs of DMOs and their audiences.



## Campaign Overview: Branch Out

The "Branch Out" campaign aligns with the destination's brand identity, with Visit Loudoun's organizational goals and with consumer sentiment.

### STRATEGY & CONCEPT

The "Branch Out" concept was initially conceived for the local activation in the summer following the onset of the pandemic. The concept was evolved and expanded into the primary campaign and continues to offer many strategic benefits:

- Relevance, timeliness and alignment with consumer sentiment as travelers continue to seek new ways to expand their horizons
- Alignment with the brand identity in terms of nature and growth
- Alignment with organizational goals and strategic pillars, especially in terms of its versatility and enabling variety
- Consistency in brand messaging to foster brand recognition and trust
- Ability to apply data, insights and learnings to iterate and evolve the campaign

The evolution of "Branch Out" from local activation to primary campaign involved expanding markets, expanding media, acquiring new photography, developing new creative and making a variety of performance optimizations. As the primary campaign continues to evolve, these elements will continue to be revisited and expanded as needed to support campaign success and growth.

### TOP-LEVEL AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

Campaign details by audience segment are outlined later in this section.

- · LEISURE/CONSUMER
- MEETINGS
- WEDDINGS
- GROUPS
- SPORTS

#### KEY GEOGRAPHIC MARKETS

- VIRGINIA Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) partnership advertising; Campaign target
- WASHINGTON, DC Destination DC (DDC) partnership advertising; Campaign target
- · PHILADELPHIA & PITTSBURGH Campaign target
- MID-ATLANTIC CITIES Campaign target
- · NYC Campaign target
- LOUDOUN Local partnerships include Loudoun Economic Development and the Loudoun Chamber of Commerce; Campaign target (although not primary audience)

## Campaign Overview: Branch Out

### **CAMPAIGN CREATIVE**

The "perfect pairings" photo composition approach blends different sides of Loudoun into a cohesive whole. This visually striking imagery reflects connection and community with the literal "reaching out" to embrace other people, places and experiences. The action of giving and receiving is inviting, inclusive, welcoming and uplifting.

It is important for the creative to reflect diversity in many forms and showcase the community. A variety of actual Loudoun residents and business owners from different backgrounds are featured prominently across campaign imagery.

See the following pages for examples of campaign creative in a variety of executions.

## Campaign Overview: Branch Out



Proximity to DC Messaging (drive market audience)



Proximity to DC Messaging (DC-specific audience)

## Campaign Overview: Branch Out



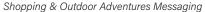




Unique Food & Drink Messaging

## Campaign Overview: Branch Out







Meetings Messaging

## Campaign Overview: Branch Out







Sports Event Messaging

## Campaign Details & Timing: Branch Out

### **CAMPAIGN CONTINUES - THROUGH 2023**

## **Campaign Push**

January-March, June-August

### **Market Segments**

Campaign details by market segment are outlined beginning on the following page.

- LEISURE/CONSUMER Primary focus
- **MEETINGS** Secondary focus
- **GROUPS** Secondary focus
- WEDDINGS Secondary focus
- SPORTS Secondary focus

### PLANNING & EVOLUTION - ONGOING

### **Creative Development**

The following are key areas of focus for additional creative development:

- LEISURE/CONSUMER Development of creative to support additional core themes and pillars
- WEDDINGS Development of wedding-themed creative
- MEETINGS Refinement of messaging and expansion of image assets

### **Future Planning**

Planning for the 2025 primary campaign is slated to begin in Fall 2023.

- Possibilities include a continued evolution and expansion of the same concept, a shift in the concept or an entirely new direction.
- Data, research and travel trends will continue to be monitored to ensure the campaign stays in alignment with user sentiment.

## Leisure/Consumer: Branch Out

## **GOAL**

The integrated leisure campaign will capture the essence of the brand, raising awareness and consideration of Loudoun County and ultimately inspiring visitation to the destination.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The leisure campaign has several objectives:

- Convey the variety of Loudoun experiences using DC's Wine Country® as the hook.
- Showcase artisanal, epicurean and culturally rich experiences whenever possible to differentiate Loudoun from the competition.
- Ensure that campaign creative and campaign landing pages include people with a diversity of backgrounds.
- Reflect key content themes as determined by seasonality and strategic pillars.
- Drive to the website's homepage, campaign page or relevant landing page.

### **AUDIENCE**

The campaign will heavily target drive market travelers, especially from the following markets: Washington DC, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Charlottesville, Baltimore and NYC. Historically, Loudoun's typical visitors are Gen X or Baby Boomers, and they tend to skew female. Solo female travelers and Millennial families are growth markets. Building the LGBTQ+ audience segment is also a focus.

## **CONCEPT**

For the leisure market, "Branch Out" will emphasize the following ideas and themes: Vineyards, dining, cultural attractions, shopping, small towns and family experiences. Emerging areas of focus include arts & culture, outdoor activities and wellness.

#### TIMING

Campaign pushes typically take place between January–March and June–August.

#### MEDIA

Refer to the Media Plan for details on the media strategy and specific advertising partners that will support the leisure campaign.

## Meetings: Branch Out

### GOAL

Raising awareness and consideration of Loudoun County as a viable meetings destination and ultimately driving bookings for overnight meetings.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Promote in-person meetings in DC's Wine Country®, focusing on accessibility, convenience and the unique Loudoun experience.

Promote affordability and flexible spaces.

Ensure that campaign creative and campaign landing pages include people with a diversity of backgrounds.

Drive to the Meetings homepage or relevant landing page.

#### KEY MARKETS

Small meetings are the primary focus. Markets include:

**Local** – Loudoun and Virginia-based organizations

**Regional** – Organizations from surrounding states and cities, including Washington, DC, Baltimore, Richmond, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh

National - Key metro areas with nonstop flight options

#### AUDIENCE

The campaign will target meeting planning professionals for small groups with convenient access to Loudoun by air, rail or car.

### **CONCEPT**

For the meetings market, "Branch Out" will emphasize the following ideas and themes: Unique venues, curated team-building experiences, elevated food & drink and proximity to DC. The broader message encourages planners to design a meeting full of valuable in-person interactions.

#### **TIMING**

Campaign pushes are planned for February and August.

### **MEDIA**

Areas of focus will include local/nearby DMO websites (including Washington, DC and Philadelphia) as well as meetings-specific channels such as CVENT, HelmsBriscoe and ePro. Refer to the Media Plan for more details.

## Weddings: Branch Out

### **GOAL**

Raising awareness and consideration of Loudoun County as an ideal wedding destination and ultimately driving bookings.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Promote accessibility, affordability, beautiful venues in a range of styles, wide-open spaces and the unique Loudoun experience.
- Ensure that campaign creative and campaign landing pages include people with a diversity of backgrounds.
- Drive to the Weddings homepage or relevant landing page

## KEY MARKETS

Key markets include:

Local - Loudoun and statewide

**Regional** – Surrounding states and cities, including Washington, DC, Baltimore, Richmond, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and New York

### **AUDIENCE**

The campaign will target wedding planners and couples in local and regional markets. Boosting the number of weddings for LGBTQ+ couples is also a focus.

#### CONCEPT

The weddings market will be a focus for new creative development. For this market, "Branch Out" will emphasize the following ideas and themes: Unique venues (including scenic outdoor or open-air venues), curated experiences for groups and proximity to DC.

### **TIMING**

Campaign pushes are planned for December through March.

### **MEDIA**

Refer to the Media Plan for details on the media strategy and specific advertising partners.

## **Groups: Branch Out**

### **GOAL**

Raising awareness and consideration of Loudoun County as an ideal destination for group travel and ultimately driving bookings.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Promote accessibility, affordability, memorable tours, elevated food & drink, cultural experiences, outdoor adventures and the unique Loudoun experience.
- Ensure that any campaign creative and any campaign landing pages include people with a diversity of backgrounds.
- Drive to the Groups homepage or relevant landing page.

### KEY MARKETS

Key markets include:

Local - Loudoun and statewide

**Regional** – Surrounding states and cities, including Washington, DC, Baltimore, Richmond, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh

### **AUDIENCE**

The campaign will target tour operators in local and regional markets.

## CONCEPT

For the group travel market, any "Branch Out" creative developed will emphasize the following ideas and themes: Unique, curated group experiences (with a focus on elevated food & drink, outdoor experiences and small towns) along with proximity to DC.

#### TIMING

TBD

### **MEDIA**

Refer to the Media Plan for details on the media strategy and specific advertising partners.

## **Sports: Branch Out**

### **GOAL**

Raising awareness and consideration of Loudoun County as an ideal destination for hosting a sports event and ultimately driving bookings.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- Promote accessibility, safety, ideal location for a variety of sports, top-notch facilities, a wide range of dining and activities for teams, affordable accommodations and grant programs.
- Ensure that campaign creative and campaign landing pages include people with a diversity of backgrounds.
- Drive to the Sports homepage or relevant landing page.

### KEY MARKETS

Key markets include:

Local - Loudoun and statewide

**Regional** – Surrounding states and cities, including Washington, DC, Baltimore, Richmond, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh

### **AUDIENCE**

The campaign will target sports event organizers in local and regional markets.

## CONCEPT

For the sports market, "Branch Out" creative developed will emphasize the following ideas and themes: Great facilities, unique group experiences (with a focus on family-friendly attractions and outdoor adventures) and proximity to DC. Accessibility, safety and affordability are key messages for this market.

### **TIMING**

TBD

## **MEDIA**

Refer to the Media Plan for details on the media strategy and specific advertising partners.

## **Niche Campaigns**

Key niche campaigns are outlined on the following page. Other campaign opportunities will be evaluated throughout the year.



## **NICHE CAMPAIGNS**

## Social, Seasonal & Other Campaigns

### **#LOVELOUDOUN LIKE A LOCAL**

- Focus: Highlights a wide variety of authentic, locally loved Loudoun experiences
- Audience: Appeals to a local leisure audience but also a wider leisure audience seeking authentic, locally driven and off-the-beaten-path experiences
- Channels: Heavily geared toward social platforms but promoted in all channels
- Time Frame: Ongoing/evergreen

## LOUDOUN MADE / TAKE LOUDOUN HOME

- Focus: Features Loudoun-made products and the artisans/crafters/makers behind the products
- Audience: Appeals to all leisure audiences, but especially local audiences and consumers in the lower stages of the travel planning funnel
- Channels: Promoted across all channels (especially owned media channels)
- Time Frame: Ongoing/evergreen with seasonal pushes
  - Special tie-in to holiday promotions not only Christmas but Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day and other holidays associated with gift-giving

## LEESBURG ARTS & CULTURAL DISTRICT PROMOTION

- Focus: Highlights points of interest, events and experiences connected to the Arts & Cultural District; this promotion supports the "Arts & Culture" strategic pillar
- Audience: All leisure audiences
- Channels: All channels (especially owned media channels)
- Time Frame: Ongoing/evergreen, with campaign pushes around key events, holidays or seasons

### WEDDINGS SHOWCASE PROMOTION

- Focus: Covers Loudoun's wedding product, services and experiences
- Audience: Wedding planners and couples who are engaged to be married
- Channels: All digital channels (especially earned and owned channels)
- Time Frame: Promotion in advance of the Weddings Showcase event, which returns in Spring 2023

## **Products & Programs**

Marketing efforts outlined in this section represent a focus on boosting the impact of strategic products and programs. These critical initiatives serve all markets, from leisure/consumer to group travel.



## Website: Content & UX Enhancements

The website is a critical owned channel serving all of Visit Loudoun's target audiences. It is a destination point for campaign traffic, organic search traffic, social promotions, print promotions and non-leisure based marketing and PR efforts. The website should reflect the brand and advance the user journey, and doing this effectively requires ongoing attention. It's important to keep pace as the destination and user behavior change.

### WEBSITE REBUILD

The relaunch of VisitLoudoun.org focuses on evolving the content, design and user experience in order to better reflect the brand and boost performance. Additional strategy details can be found in the Website Content Audit, Analysis & Recommendations Report (Miles 2021).

- Goal Grow organic traffic and engagement to more powerfully influence travel to Loudoun.
- Key Objectives Redesign the website to (1) align more closely with the brand, organizational strategic pillars and modern web usage, (2) support more robust delivery of engaging content, and (3) create a user experience that's frictionless and fruitful for all audiences.
  - Design & Brand Alignment Take a mobile-first
    approach to ensure a positive experience across all devices.
    Highlight immersive photography for visual impact, taking
    care to reflect diversity in terms of people, places and
    experiences. Refresh colors, fonts, iconography and other
    design elements in a way that inspires interest in the
    destination and builds brand affinity and trust. Revamp
    site structure and navigation. Clearly denote ad units.
  - Content & Optimization Surface content in a more discoverable and dynamic way at the right places along the user journey. Expand access to content and storytelling by restructuring the blog and incorporating that content across related landing pages. Highlight a mix of evergreen and

- timely content with a focus on accuracy, specificity and creating emotional connections with the audience. Follow best practices for content and optimization to drive organic traffic growth and engagement.
- User Experience This responsive website will
  offer an enjoyable, seamless experience that delivers
  inspiration and information for all audiences. Readability,
  usability and accessibility considerations will be
  prioritized. Navigation will support the user's movement
  across the site (whether up or down in the funnel or
  laterally), and heading styles will have a clear hierarchy.
   Forms will be designed to maximize completion.

### ONGOING CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Ongoing content development will serve to better serve user needs, drive organic traffic and boost site engagement. Content can be in the form of editorial articles (including listicles and itineraries) or video. Key areas of focus include:

- Arts & Infrastructure Creating content around these topics supports two key strategic pillars: promoting music & the arts and helping to facilitate frictionless travel, particularly around transportation and getting around.
- Accommodations Rich, robust editorial content such as "Loudoun's Most Romantic Places to Stay," "Top Places to Stay for Families" or "Top Loudoun Inns for History Lovers" is ideal for boosting SEO and inspiring overnight stays.

- Weddings Rich, robust editorial content covering venues and wedding experiences is ideal for boosting SEO and promoting Loudoun weddings.
- Accessibility Promote accessible-friendly Loudoun experiences not only on dedicated hub pages but holistically throughout the website.
- Sustainability Increase content addressing sustainability in the destination and eco-friendly travel.
- Trails & Itineraries See Page XX.

## **Print Guides & Maps**

Each print product provides a mix of high-level inspiration and tactical information to guide travel. Content aims to support Visit Loudoun's strategic pillars, elevate the brand, differentiate the destination and ultimately inspire travel to Loudoun. Product highlights are captured below; for more details, refer to the Content Plan for each individual product.

Note: All print guides have a digital component available on VisitLoudoun.org.

### OFFICIAL VISITORS GUIDE

The Visit Loudoun Official Visitors Guide highlights artisanal, cultural and epicurean experiences in DC's Wine Country®. With immersive photography and custom illustrations, the content explores towns and villages, public art, cultural attractions, outdoor adventures and more. A core objective is to reflect Loudoun's creativity and echo the handcrafted feel found in the destination's food, drink and art.

**CONTENT APPROACH** – The guide's curated storytelling approach focuses on the high-funnel and mid-funnel stages of travel planning. While the guide does include some tactical planning information, (including transportation and maps), partner listings are not included except for Accommodations. Instead, the focus is on magazine-style content, primarily theme-based and place-based features. Content sections include the following (subject to shift from year to year):

- Get to Know Loudoun An overview including a map, travel tips, towns & villages feature and seasonal spotlight
- Culture, Arts & Entertainment Covers culture, history, arts, music, events and more
- Food & Drink Guide Designed to also be a stand-alone guide, this section is a highly visual exploration of Loudoun's epicurean delights
- Outdoor Adventures & Attractions Covers horse & hunt country, parks & trails, attractions, family fun and more

Web promos and QR codes throughout the guide point readers to Loudoun's website for more information.

**FORMAT** – The magazine-style format has approximately 60 pages and includes advertising.

**TIMING** – The guide is produced annually (recommended) or in 18-month intervals.

**DISTRIBUTION & PROMOTION** – The guide is available in print as well as digitally on the website. It is distributed via fulfillment and in person at the Visitor Information Center and other locations. Promotion includes website, social and email outreach (direct to consumers as well as to partners to help promote and disseminate).

### WINE TRAIL GUIDE

The Visit Loudoun Wine Trail Guide highlights wine experiences and other culinary offerings in DC's Wine Country®. With robust content and listings, the guide is a compelling and comprehensive resource.

**CONTENT APPROACH** – The guide offers a blend of inspirational and informational content. Engaging features introduce travelers to the region (its terroir, major varietals and top accolades) and explore wine experiences, wineries with a view, seasonal events and more. Meanwhile, a color-coded map, travel resources section and a detailed listing for each winery provide helpful tactical information.

**FORMAT** – Saddle-stitched booklet/ brochure; includes advertising

**TIMING** – The guide is produced annually (recommended) or in 18-month intervals.

**DISTRIBUTION & PROMOTION** – The guide is available in print as well as digitally on the website. It is distributed via fulfillment and in person at the Visitor Information Center and other locations. Promotion includes website, social and email outreach (direct to consumers as well as to partners to help promote and disseminate).

## LOCO ALE TRAIL POCKET GUIDE

The LoCo Ale Trail Pocket Guide helps travelers navigate and experience Loudoun's craft beer scene.

**CONTENT APPROACH** – This product highlights core information in a highly visual and streamlined way. One side of the foldout brochure features a simplified map highlighting brewery locations while the other side highlights the Beer Passport program, a breakdown of breweries by geographic area, a list of breweries with a view and a list of breweries along the W&OD Trail.

FORMAT - Folded brochure; includes advertising

**TIMING** – The guide is produced annually (recommended) or in 18-month intervals.

**DISTRIBUTION & PROMOTION** – The guide is available in print as well as digitally on the website. It is distributed via fulfillment and in person at the Visitor Information Center and other locations. Promotion includes website, social and email outreach (direct to consumers as well as to partners to help promote and disseminate).

## Themed Trails & Itineraries: Development & Promotion

Trails and itineraries help visitors connect the dots and make exploring easy. They support Visit Loudoun's strategic pillars by highlighting a variety of points of interest, grouping top destination drivers into thoughtful themed experiences, and helping to disperse visitors across the county. Taking a road trip to follow one or more Loudoun trails or itineraries is a fun and frictionless form of travel ideal.

## **Key Definitions**

## **TRAILS**

All trails are pathways or routes that facilitate a journey. They can be traditional outdoor recreation trails or any variety of themed trails linking related points of interest. Consumers are generally familiar with both types of trails.

- RECREATIONAL TRAILS offer an active journey outdoors. Often singular entities, many are "trails" in the traditional sense – outdoor pathways connecting distinct natural habitats, scenic vistas, picnic sites and more.
- THEMED TRAILS offer a flexible travel journey unified by a theme or interest, such as beer or wine. They aggregate and link related points of interest in a comprehensive, complete way.
  - Trails evoke a sense of fun, freedom and adventure. Trails present options for exploration; visitors choose what to do and when to do it.
  - Passport Programs incentivize travelers to visit more trail locations; while this is ideal, it isn't required. A trail can serve its purpose without an incentive program.
  - Trails are more developed than itineraries and typically include robust mapping. Some trails can be branded, such as the LoCo Ale Trail, but this is not required. Trails can evolve and be further developed over time.
  - Themed trails are ideal for broad topics that are also major tourism drivers.

### **ITINERARIES**

Itineraries offer a curated travel journey linking multiple attractions and experiences. Itineraries typically do not attempt to present all the options; they tend to be collections of hand-picked points of interest unified under a common theme or interest.

As underscored in RedSky research, itineraries help visitors "feel less overwhelmed by planning."

- While itineraries can be inspirational, they are most often thought of as helpful planning tools. They are more tactical in nature and offer guidance in terms of time frames and order of exploration.
- They tend to be more curated than comprehensive.
- Itineraries are ideal for more narrow topics or niche themes, but they can also cover broader topics.
- A single trail could have multiple itineraries associated with it:
  - · A Delicious Day on the LoCo Ale Trail
  - · A Weekend on the LoCo Ale Trail
  - A Pet-Friendly Weekend on the LoCo Ale Trail

## Themed Trails & Itineraries: Development & Promotion

### VISIT LOUDOUN TRAILS

The trails below are created, curated and promoted by Visit Loudoun. Emphasis is on maintaining, enhancing and promoting existing trails; explore the creation of new trails as resources and budget allow.

- LoCo Ale Trail Includes Passport Program; has a print component
- Loudoun Wine Trail Consider adding Passport Program component; has a print component
- NEW: Cider & Spirits Trail -or- Craft Drink Trail Consider creating a new trail highlighting distilleries,
   cideries and related offerings; alternately, create a
   broader craft beverage trail that includes these offerings
- NEW: Adventure Trail Links a variety of recreational assets across several content themes

### PARTNER TRAILS

The trails below are owned and operated by other organizations. Guidance for leveraging these trails in Visit Loudoun promotions is outlined allow.

- Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD)
   Trail Promote local trail connections
- Appalachian Trail Leverage this popular trail, promoting Loudoun as an ideal jumping-off point
- C&O Canal Trail Biking to this famous trail that connects to DC
- Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
  - Historic pathways and waterways
- Virginia Birding & Wildlife Trail Promote Loudoun locations
- Virginia Civil War Trails Operated by Civil War Trails®

### **ITINERARIES**

Visit Loudoun itineraries are promoted on the website (on a dedicated Itineraries landing page and contextually throughout the website) as well as on other marketing channels.

**NEW:** Horse & Hunt Country Itinerary – Covering equestrian history and culture, horse-themed shops and restaurants and the National Sporting Library & Museum. FUTURE OPPORTUNITY: Potential development into a themed trail

**NEW:** Back Roads & Hidden Gems Itinerary – Covering tucked-away treasures, from hidden history to intimate restaurants and bars; includes Rural Roads promotion

### **NEW:** Loudoun Arts, Music & Culture Itinerary

- Spotlighting the arts/culture district, galleries, public art and live music venues/spaces

African American History Itinerary - In development

**PRODUCTION PLAN:** For new trails and itineraries, points of interest will be identified, followed by the creation of editorial content, photography and trail maps (print and digital). For existing trails, updates or enhancements will be explored, including the creation of guided video tours to showcase key trails. Specific content considerations across all trails include:

- TRANSPORTATION This is a key component needed to facilitate each journey. Transportation options should be addressed across all trails and itineraries to help guide visitors, leveraging Metro and pointing to viable transport options whenever possible.
- LOUDOUN MADE Locally made products should be featured wherever contextually relevant.

**DISTRIBUTION & PROMOTION:** Trails and itineraries are promoted in the following ways:

- WEBSITE Showcase key trails and itineraries through engaging editorial content and video.
- SOCIAL Feature the trails in an engaging, shareable way, primarily through Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.
- EMAIL Email target consumers as well as partners; partners could display trail products in their places of business and promote them through their own channels to help spread the word.
- PRINT Key trails and itineraries will have a dedicated supporting print component and will be promoted in the annual Visitors Guide. The print products will point readers to the website for more information and maps, and the website will promote the availability of hard copy guides.
- ADVERTISING Paid placements should be considered, including SEM and digital banner advertising, especially to local and drive markets.
- PR & MEDIA RELATIONS Aim to secure coverage of various trails through press trips or desk-side visits.

### **DIGITAL TOOLKIT**

A toolkit could be created and shared with partners to summarize the trail highlights and provide tips for messaging and promotion.

# **Industry Education & Community Relations**

Visit Loudoun creates and facilitates training opportunities to support the success of individual partners and to advance the industry toward increased economic and quality of life benefits. Local partners should be leveraged to lead or co-lead sessions as appropriate.

Visit Loudoun also works to earn the community's support of the local tourism industry. Community members are invited and encouraged to participate in tourism-related programs.

### INDUSTRY TRAINING: KEY TOPICS

- Destination Optimization Program (formerly Google DMO Program) – Enables partners to enhance their consumer-facing content across a range of widely used products and platforms, including Google
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Offers a foundation in key concepts and practices, with a focus on how to leverage these principles to positively impact business
- Accessibility Explores key concepts, practices and tactics, with a focus on how to boost accessibility to positively impact business
- Sustainability Explores key concepts, practices and tactics, with a focus on how sustainability enables growth and profitability in in the short- and long-term
- Content Marketing Best Practices How to leverage Loudoun's brand and fundamental content marketing practices to attract and engage customers

### COMMUNITY RELATIONS: KEY PROGRAMS

Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) Program – An internationally recognized certification program that helps to create positive destination experiences and drive visitor spending; by empowering residents to share their in-depth knowledge of the local tourism product, destinations gain a lasting competitive advantage

