

# The Bureau Bulletin

A publication of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

Spring 2019

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## Mat-Su CVB kicking off season with barbecue at Musk Ox Farm

Join the Mat-Su CVB and its members as we kick off the summer season with an open house and barbecue at the Musk Ox Farm on **Wednesday, May 29 at 4 p.m.**

The annual barbecue is a great way to visit with other members and get the word out about what's new at your business through three-minute presentations.

"We all are super busy in the summer, and this is a great opportunity to hear

what other members are doing and offering," Justin Saunders, Mat-Su CVB's membership manager, said. "It's a good way to network, build relationships and generate referrals."

It's also an opportunity to learn about the \$1.2 million renovation project at the Musk Ox Farm, which began this spring

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## New campaign targets Alaskans

The Mat-Su CVB is launching an in-state marketing campaign targeting residents and their visiting friends and relatives during the shoulder season this spring.

The campaign, "How do U Mat-Su?" features a new microsite that was established as part of the existing web site, [www.alaskavisit.com/alaskans](http://www.alaskavisit.com/alaskans) and highlights different destinations within the Mat-Su and related activities, attractions

and accommodations.

"This is a multi-media effort to show Alaskans what there is to do and see in their own backyard," Mat-Su CVB's Casey Ressler said. "We want them to know that when their relatives come to visit this summer, the Mat-Su Valley is the place to bring them."

The campaign also encourages visitors

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## From the Board Chair

# Beyond marketing, advocacy is an important membership benefit

From May 5-11, it was National Travel and Tourism Week, and the Mat-Su CVB participated by sharing a video, "Tourism Works for the Valley," as well as several photos of members with Tourism Works for Alaska posters. Advocating on the importance of the tourism industry is one of the items the board supported to make a priority this year.

Advocating for our industry goes far beyond the one week, however. We have a year-round advocacy plan that focuses on elected officials, civic leaders such as chambers and Rotaries, industry stakeholders such as our membership, and the media.

We want to communicate with everyone just how important tourism is to our local economy, as well as the state as a whole.

Just last week, Mat-Su CVB was the keynote presentation at the Greater Wasilla Chamber of Commerce and the spotlight at the Greater Palmer Chamber of Commerce meetings, and within the last month, Mat-Su CVB was also featured at three Rotary luncheons and the Gateway Community Council. Staff sits on the board of directors for both Palmer and Talkeetna chambers. Throughout these presentations, we are raising awareness about the value of our industry.

Statewide, our industry generates \$4.5 billion in total economic impact and accounts for one in 10 jobs, making it the second-leading private sector employer. Locally, out-of-state visitors accounted for \$133 million in economic impact and generated 1,700 jobs, according to a 2017

study by The McDowell Group. That study only accounts for out-of-state visitors.

We all know the importance of the tourism industry because we are a part of it. It's important that we inform those not in the industry about why destination promotion is so important – it's an investment into the future of our economy, and an investment that has a high return. The money visitors spend in our community circulates through and leads to improved infrastructure, facilities and opportunities. Tourism dollars help build our communities both physically, and through an enhanced way of life.

As an organization, we encourage you, our members, to be advocates as well. Remind your Assembly member why tourism is important. Talk to the mayor or your city council members in your community about why tourism matters. Share the Tourism Works for the Valley video (<http://bit.ly/valleytourism>) on your social media channels. It's important everyone knows that tourism is a renewable resource, one that grows our economy through investment in destination promotion, and that as we grow the industry, everyone wins – businesses, communities and residents. Be a champion of the industry.

Cheryl Metiva ([cherylm@catheatres.com](mailto:cherylm@catheatres.com)) is the Director of Sales and Marketing at the Extreme Fun Center and The Valley Cinema and the chair of the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors.



Cheryl Metiva



## *From the President & CEO*

# Networking, partnering and packaging help you grow

As you gear up for the summer visitor season I have an important message and valuable trifecta of advice. Networking. Partnerships. Packaging. Implementing these three actions are guaranteed to grow your business.

Networking is spreading awareness of your product at professional industry events like the Mat-Su CVB luncheons. Additionally, each spring the Mat-Su CVB organizes an annual Summer Kickoff to bring members together for a barbecue and an opportunity to spotlight your business.

This free event on May 29 at the Musk Ox Farm will provide you an audience of frontline employees and business owners who interact with visitors.

During the three minute business spotlights, you can inform the crowd of what you have to offer, what's new at

your business and invite them to come experience your business first-hand. Networking allows others to become familiar with you and your business and is the best way to generate referrals. Don't miss this opportunity to share your business with other members.



Bonnie Quill

Partnerships share a similar interest. For example, visitors who seek out historical experiences will go to not one, but several museums. Adventure travelers add multiple thrilling activities to their bucket list like hiking on a glacier, riding a zipline and rafting class IV whitewater. Identify other tourism businesses where your guests are frequenting and this could develop into a partnership. Perhaps you each provide a discount or an added value for visiting both. Reach out, connect and create a

partnership that you will both benefit from.

Packaging is either offering your business to receptive tour operators who package and sell inclusive tours, or putting your partnerships together and selling it as a package. An easy way to try or experiment is to choose a popular event or holiday weekend (like Colony Days or Fourth of July) and promote a package with your partners. Add an extra-value box lunch with Alaska Grown produce and focus on the authentic local features of your experience.

Your marketing plan along with your online and media advertising should also include these strategies to grow your business. I hope to see you at the Musk Ox Farm on May 29 to kickoff the summer, network, partner and package!

Bonnie Quill ([bonnie@alaskavisit.com](mailto:bonnie@alaskavisit.com)) is the president and CEO of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau.

## BBQ: May 29

Continued from Page 1

and will continue throughout the year. You might also get a glimpse of the two newest residents at the farm, Muenster and Gouda. They are the two calves born just weeks ago, with a "cheese" naming theme this year. The Musk Ox Farm had its annual open house on Mothers Day and will be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week.

"We hold the season kickoff at a different spot every year, so we can highlight the good things our members are doing," Saunders said. "We're excited about the new developments at the Musk Ox Farm, and it's a chance for members to find out more as well."

If you know of someone who is not a member but should be, please invite them to the barbecue, and bring your frontline employees and let them learn about what is happening at other Valley tourism businesses this summer.

Burgers, pulled pork sandwiches and refreshments will all be served. There is no cost to attend. Members can RSVP by e-mailing [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com) or by calling 746-5032. Also, feel free to bring a door prize giveaway from your business.

## HOW DO 'U' MAT-SU?



Alaskans, your backyard is filled with adventure around every corner! For some great ideas of ways to explore this summer, visit:

[www.AlaskaVisit.com/Alaskans](http://www.AlaskaVisit.com/Alaskans)

## ALASKANS: In-state campaign

Continued from Page 1

to post to Instagram and Facebook using #UinMatSu, and Alaska Grown hoodies will be given out once a week to those who use the special campaign hashtag.

The Mat-Su CVB is using digital placements, social media ad buys, radio and targeted pay-per-click advertising on search engines to drive traffic to the site. In addition, members will receive a flyer via e-mail to display at their business, encouraging visitors to post photos of their adventures.

"We want visitors to know what we have to offer, so they stay another day," Ressler said.



## Mat-Su CVB hosts 14 China-based tour operators

The Mat-Su CVB, in partnership with Alaska Aurora Expeditions, hosted 14 Chinese tour operators on a three-day Mat-Su familiarization trip in late March as part of the Active America China convention held in Anchorage.

The operators visited Knik River Valley, Hatcher Pass and Talkeetna, and were left with a sense of amazement at Alaska's beauty.

"This was a great opportunity to host China-based tour operators in Alaska for the first time and showcase our area," Mat-Su CVB Marketing Manager Casey Ressler said. "This national convention was held in Anchorage this year, so it gave all of Southcentral a chance to show these operators why they should start selling Alaska."

China is one of Alaska's emerging markets, with more and more Chinese visitors coming each year. By hosting operators from China on the three-day Mat-Su trip, they got to experience what makes the region special, and hopefully return home excited about Alaska and ready to develop itineraries to their clients.

"FAM trips are so important, because the operators get to experience the product first hand," Ressler said. "By experiencing a destination, they are more motivated to sell it."

The Mat-Su CVB also participated in a welcoming reception for the operators at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center.



Above, members of the Active America China FAM meet with Mat-Su CVB members at a reception held at Denali Brewpub. At left, FAM participants did a pie making class at Talkeetna Roadhouse.



## Los Angeles Travel & Adventure Show a success

The Mat-Su CVB distributed information about the Valley to potential visitors at the nation's largest consumer travel show this winter.

Nearly 38,000 people attended the Los Angeles Travel and Adventure show in February, the most ever. The show features destinations from around the world, and guest speakers such as Rick Steves and Samantha Brown.

"This is a great show for us because the attendees are very interested in finding out information and in many cases, are actively planning a vacation," Mat-Su CVB's Casey Ressler said. "They are more in the decision phase than in the 'kicking tires' phase of travel."

It's also an ideal show because of the demographics of the attendees in one of Alaska's top markets. According to the show's organizers, 66 percent of attendees have household incomes over \$100,000, and 74 percent of attendees are 40-65 years old, which lines up with Alaska's visitor demographics.

In addition to general consumers, there were 5,000 members of the travel trade and 231 travel media who attended.

The Mat-Su CVB is planning to have a booth at the 2020 show and there is an opportunity for a member to participate. More information will be available in the fall.



Mat-Su CVB's Casey Ressler mans the booth at the Los Angeles Travel and Adventure Show. More than 38,000 people attended the show in two days, making it the largest travel show in the country.



## MAT-SU JOB EXPO



The Mat-Su CVB sponsored the Mat-Su Job Expo in March, bringing together businesses looking to hire and job seekers. Several Mat-Su CVB members, including Settlers Bay Golf Course and the Albatross Restaurant, pictured above, took advantage of this opportunity to have a free booth and meet with potential new employees.

## Mat-Su CVB meets with motorcoach operators at ABA Marketplace

The Mat-Su CVB met with more than 20 group tour motorcoach operators during the American Bus Association Marketplace event in January in Louisville, encouraging them to add new products to their Alaska packages.

The ABA Marketplace is one of two national travel trade events the Mat-Su CVB attends every winter, along with the National Tour Association Travel Exchange convention, which was held last October in Milwaukee.

"ABA and NTA provide an opportunity to reach many tour operators under one

roof," said Casey Ressler of the Mat-Su CVB. "We highlight new products and existing tours that would fit into these national operators' itineraries."

At both NTA and ABA events, the CVB makes appointment requests through a computer system, as do tour operators. The scheduling system ensures that all appointments are highly qualified.

"The scheduling system ensures that the appointments are very productive and focused on our specific market," Ressler said. "The operators are interested in hearing what's new in the Mat-Su Valley."

## Mat-Su CVB exhibits at four outdoor shows

The Mat-Su CVB targeted in-state residents and their visiting friends and relatives at four in-state shows this spring.

The Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show, the Alaska Summer Showcase, the Great Alaska Sportsman Show and the Fairbanks Outdoors Show are each a chance to connect with residents looking to get out and plan their summer getaways.

"Each one is a little different than the others, but the important thing is that we reach residents and show them that there are many adventures in their own backyard," Mat-Su CVB's Casey Ressler said.

At all four shows, the Mat-Su CVB distributed 1,000 visitor guides, generated nearly 250 e-newsletter sign-ups and distributed 18 member brochures.

## Meeting planner kit set to publish

The Mat-Su CVB is publishing a meeting planner kit and distributing it to planners across Southcentral Alaska, and there is still opportunity for members to be highlighted.

For \$50, members will receive an entire page of the booklet (published size will be a half-page, 5.5 inches wide by 8.5 inches tall) including a 200-word description and two photographs, along with meeting room capacities. It's specifically targeted for meeting planners.

"Developing a new printed piece for meeting planners is important because we can reach a lot more people than just those who could attend our traditional meeting planner luncheon" explained Mat-Su CVB's Casey Ressler. "This gives members far more exposure to meeting planners."

This is a good opportunity for members who host meetings, retreats or even small conventions.

If your business works with these types of groups, contact Ressler at 746-5037 or via e-mail at [casey@alaskavisit.com](mailto:casey@alaskavisit.com) to register for the planner. The registration form is also available at <https://www.alaskavisit.com/members/membership-programs/>

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# ExTRAVELganza sells out, raises money for destination promotion

The Mat-Su CVB's annual Beer and Wine Tasting Travel Auction ExTRAVELganza, held April 12 at Evangelo's, was a sold out event and proved to be a very successful fundraiser and community event.

The event featured local beers from Arkose Brewery, Bearpaw River Brewing Company and Denali Brewing Company, as well as wines from The Grape Tap. Attendees bid on donated items including trips, artwork and more.

"We had to stop selling tickets the week of the event because we sold out, which is great. We're thankful to all the sponsors and donors who help make this event so successful every year, along with

the community that supports the event," said Justin Saunders, the Mat-Su CVB membership manager.

This year, for the first time, tickets were available to purchase online, and that helped drive the increase in ticket sales.

In conjunction with the travel auction, the MTA/Alaska Airlines luggage tag raffle was also held throughout the spring. The winning ticket this year was held by Spiff Chambers, a membership coordinator with Visit Anchorage.

"We also need to thank MTA and Alaska Airlines, because they have been so great in supporting the luggage tag raffle for over 10 years now," Saunders said.

## Thank you to our auction donors

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Alaska SeaLife Center

Alaska State Fair

Alaska Tour & Travel

Alaska Wild Berry Products

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Grande Denali Lodge

Hilton Downtown Hotel

Husky Homestead

Iditarod Trail Committee

Iditarod Trailside Lodging

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Kristy Bernier

Mahay's Jet Boat Adventures

Major Marine Tours

Matanuska Brewing Company

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Musk Ox Farm

Northern Alaska Tour Company

North Star Helicopters

NOVA

Palmer Golf Course

Phillips Cruises & Tours

Pike's Waterfront Lodge

Premier Alaska Tours

Princess Cruises

Pump House Restaurant

Red Robin Gourmet Burgers

Settlers Bay Golf Course

Shane Lamb Gallery

Sheep Mountain Lodge

Stan Stephens Glacier & Wildlife

Cruises

Subway of Alaska

Talkeetna Air Taxi

Talkeetna Roadhouse

TEMSCO Helicopters

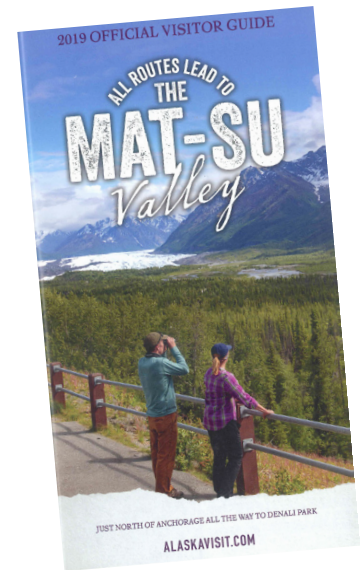
The Landing Hotel & Restaurant,

Ketchikan

Tracy Ressler

Turkey Red

Visit Anchorage



## 2020 Visitor Guide ad sales under way

Advertising packets for the 2020 Mat-Su Visitor Guide were mailed to members in early May. The guide is a great opportunity to reach high-potential visitors in an affordable way.

The Mat-Su CVB prints 100,000 copies of the guide featuring new photography and content every year. Every member has a free listing in the guide, and display advertising starts at just \$170.

"Our advertising rates have not increased in more than 10 years, giving members an affordable opportunity for a lot of exposure," said Justin Saunders, Mat-Su CVB's membership manager. "These are in the hands of people planning their Alaska vacation."

The Mat-Su CVB mails 55,000 guides to high-potential visitors who have requested the state vacation planner, in addition to those who request the guide on the Mat-Su CVB's web site. An additional 3,000 are mailed to top travel agents around the Lower 48. In-state, the guides are distributed at visitor centers, airports, train depots and hotels. For more information about advertising in the guide, contact Saunders at 746-5032 or [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com).

## News from the membership

**Alaska Farm Tours** is offering a bi-weekly tour in Anchorage this summer, in addition to regular tours in Palmer and Talkeetna. The five-hour Urban Farm and Food Tour is being offered every other Saturday. The tour begins at the Anchorage Museum with the What Why How We Eat food, and then a visit to the Port of Alaska, where about 90 percent of merchandise goods enter our state. You'll also see how some city growers are overcoming urban land scarcity and the cold climate — all while training our next generation of farmers. The tour includes an indoor hydroponics farm, a local kombucha brewery, and lunch at the Saturday Market, Anchorage's biggest farmers market. Visit [www.alaskafarmtours.com](http://www.alaskafarmtours.com) for more details.

**Mat-Su Events** is the new owner of the Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show and is looking to make the 2020 show the best one yet. Matt and Sue Rowley have committed to taking both the ice arena and the turf arena at the Menard Center for the 2020 show, hoping to double the amount of event space and vendors. They bought the show from Tony Russ, who founded and operated the show for 14 years. For more information about the 2020 show, visit their web site at [www.matsuevents.com](http://www.matsuevents.com).

**MICA Guides** is now offering helicopter tours of Matanuska Glacier. They are offering three different tour packages this summer – a 30-minute flightseeing trip, a 30-minute flightseeing trip combined with a glacier trek, and a fully customized package in which you pick the activities. In addition to their popular ice climbing and Matanuska Glacier treks, they also have a zip line, luxury camping and ATV tours available. Visit [www.micaguides.com](http://www.micaguides.com) for more information.

**Denali Brewpub** is expanding in Talkeetna. They now operate the Denali Brewpub Mercantile next door to the brewpub, which serves as a gift shop. Additionally, they are decking the beer garden for an improved experience. Stop by and see the new digs this summer and enjoy a draft cocktail made with Denali Spirits, or a locally brewed beer.

**Knik River Lodge and The Raven's Perch Restaurant** will be opening for the season on May 24 for Memorial Day weekend. The new varied menu features fresh ingredients from local Palmer farms and the pristine waters of Alaska. They locally source ingredients whenever possible and support the local farmers.

Beer offerings change often as they carry local microbrews. Bleeding Heart Brewery, Arkose Brewery, and Matanuska Brewing are some of the Mat-Su brewery brands you will find available. Visit [www.knikriverlodge.com](http://www.knikriverlodge.com) for more information.

**Meier Lake** is finishing construction of the first Professional Disc Golf Association championship course in Alaska. PDGA world champion Eric McCabe designed the course. A limited number of holes will be available to play beginning on July 12, with all 18 holes available later this summer. The course will be open to the public for a fee. Meier Lake, located on Wasilla Fishhook Road, is a completely restored Alaskan Summer Camp sitting on 120 acres with 12 rooms and a private lake. Rooms can be rented individually or the entire property as a compound. Visit [www.meierlake.com](http://www.meierlake.com) for more information about the property.

Join **Skeetawk**, the new ski area in Hatcher Pass, on Wednesday, June 19 at the Palmer Alehouse for their "Logo-Reveal Fundraiser" party. Bearpaw River Brewing will have a special Skeetawk Ale on tap. Learn more about the progress and how you can help build our first chairlift this summer.

## Welcome to these new members!

Alaskan Hillside Cabins  
Randall Martin  
376-4912  
[www.hillsidecabins.com](http://www.hillsidecabins.com)

Gold Rush Jewelers  
Randall Martin  
376-4192  
[www.alaskangoldrushjewelers.com](http://www.alaskangoldrushjewelers.com)

Friday Flings  
Sydney Fouch  
761-3500  
[www.palmerchamber.org](http://www.palmerchamber.org)

Drifters Lodge  
Bob Rima  
595-5555  
[www.drifterslodge.com](http://www.drifterslodge.com)

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745-8935  
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Mat-Su Events  
Matt Rowley  
301-7870  
[www.matsuevents.com](http://www.matsuevents.com)

Do you know of someone who should be a member but isn't? We should fix that today. Justin Saunders, our membership manager, would love to speak to a potential member. You can refer potential members to him at 746-5032 or [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com).

## Web site statistics

January 1 - May 12, 2019

### Site Users

41,087  
Increase YoY of 26 percent

### Total Sessions

51,003  
Increase YoY of 24 percent

### Page Views

93,439  
Increase YoY of 18 percent

*Interesting note: Continuing a trend from 2018 is a dramatic increase in mobile traffic. So far in 2019, 51 percent of total site traffic came from a mobile device.*



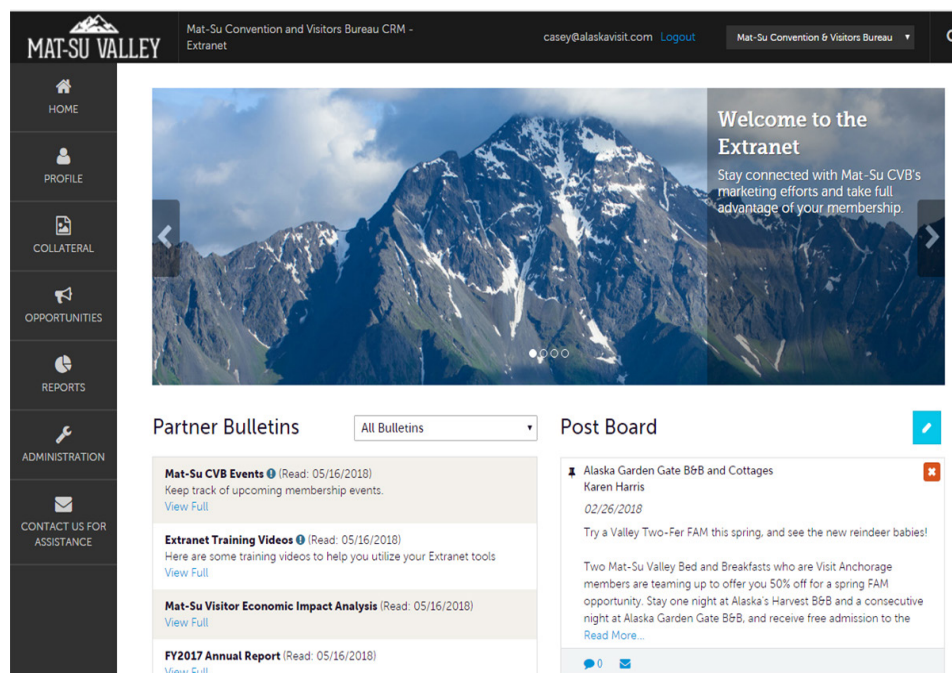
# Take control of your listings by visiting the Extranet

Have you taken advantage of the Mat-Su CVB Extranet, a virtual tool kit of marketing opportunities for members? If not, make sure you do today.

The Extranet is the online portal for members to take control of their listings, access leads generated by the Mat-Su CVB's web site, find key industry research and interact with other members through bulletins.

"I encourage every member to get on the Extranet and take advantage of these opportunities," Mat-Su CVB membership manager Justin Saunders said. "There's great information on the Extranet, and all of the leads are downloadable. These are visitors who are asking for more information – you don't want to miss them."

Members can log on at <https://mat-su.extranet.simpleviewcrm.com>. If you have problems, there are a series of training videos to walk you through the experience. The Extranet is useful for members who want to enhance their free online listing. Members can upload pictures, update their amenities and provide detailed



descriptions to make their listings stand out. You can also submit community events you are hosting through the Extranet, which then appear on the

calendar of events page.

For more information about the Extranet, contact him at 746-5032 or [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com).

# Increase your online exposure with digital advertising

Members looking for more exposure online can benefit from advertising packages on the Mat-Su CVB web site, [www.AlaskaVisit.com](http://www.AlaskaVisit.com). The Mat-Su CVB partners with Destination Travel Network (DTN) for web site advertising opportunities.

DTN is a partner of Simpleview, the company that designed and hosts the Mat-Su CVB web site. Representatives from DTN handle all ad sales, design and implementation. Ads range from text "spotlight" ads to banners ads on both desktop and mobile platforms.

"DTN is essentially an extension of the CVB, and they have affordable packages for members looking for more in the way of online marketing," said Mat-Su CVB Membership Manager Justin

Saunders. "They have packages available for every budget."

The web site represents the biggest marketing investment for the CVB, and members can take advantage of that by purchasing advertising. The Mat-Su CVB has an extensive paid search marketing campaign, and invests in search engine optimization efforts. In 2018, more than 130,000 high-potential visitors arrived at the Mat-Su CVB web site.

"That means a member's ad is going to show up and be in front of people who are actively looking for information," Saunders said.

Members who want more information can contact DTN directly at [advertising@DTNads.com](mailto:advertising@DTNads.com) or by contacting Saunders at [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com).

## Stay connected to tell our story!



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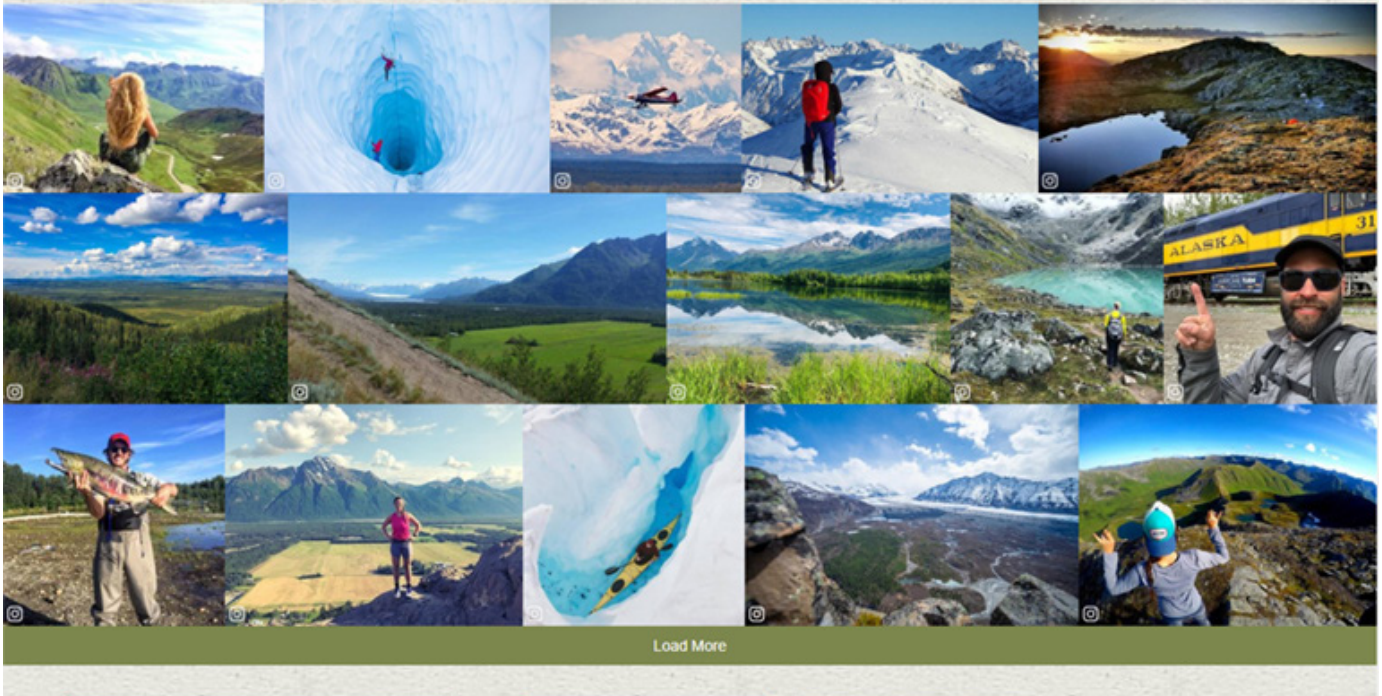
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## SHARE YOUR ADVENTURE! #YAHOO MATSU

Get out and explore the Mat-Su Valley, and then share your photos on social media. Tag us on Instagram @matsuvallyak, and use #YahooMatSu on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter for your chance to be featured in our gallery!



This is a gallery of user-generated content on our home page, [www.AlaskaVisit.com](http://www.AlaskaVisit.com). User-generated content is engaging and helps tell our story with dynamic imagery.

**YAHOO!**  
**Mat-Su**

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