

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT VISITOMAHA™



VISIT OMAHA - OMAHA'S TOURISM AUTHORITY - [VISITOMAHA.COM](https://www.visitomaha.com)

# VISITOMAHA™ STAFF DIRECTORY

## ADMINISTRATION

Deborah Ward  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dean Miller  
VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS

Jodie Jordon  
OFFICE MANAGER

## MEETING, SPORTS AND EVENT SERVICES

Erin Brungardt  
DIRECTOR OF CONVENTION SERVICES

Madonna Scott  
CONVENTION SERVICES  
AND HOUSING MANAGER

## MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Jasmyn Goodwin  
VICE PRESIDENT OF  
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Erin O'Brien  
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING

Megan Feeney  
MARKETING CONTENT MANAGER

Noelle Agenor  
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

Lynn Mace  
MARKETING RESEARCH ANALYST

Amy Cunningham  
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

## VISITOR SERVICES

Shannon Wiig  
DIRECTOR OF VISITOR SERVICES

Christine Eipperle  
VISITOR SERVICES MANAGER

## MEETING, SPORTS AND EVENT SALES

Cathy Keller  
VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES & SERVICES

Mark Rath, STS  
DIRECTOR OF SPORTS

Mattie Scheeter, CMP  
DIRECTOR OF SALES

Matt Heck  
SENIOR SALES MANAGER

Jessica Settje  
TOURISM SALES MANAGER

Jen Swanson  
NATIONAL SALES ACCOUNT MANAGER

Bryan Schlotterbeck  
RESEARCH ANALYST

Noah Huber  
SALES AND MARKETING  
COORDINATOR - SALES

Matt Duhs  
SALES AND MARKETING  
COORDINATOR - SPORTS

## VISIT OMAHA BRAND: THIS IS WHO WE ARE AS AN ORGANIZATION

### RELEVANT

We are committed to being consistent, accountable, transparent, perseverant, and dedicated to excellence.

#### ORGANIZATION:

- As an organization, we want to provide a valuable service to our partners and our community.
- When an organization is valued, it is supported.

#### STAFF:

- We want employees to know their contribution is valuable, and that their efforts contribute to the success of our organization.
- When employees feel valued and empowered, they are more productive, more invested, and happier.

### INNOVATIVE

We are committed to being creative, pioneering, collaborative, and problem solving.

#### ORGANIZATION:

- As an organization, we want to be creative and collaborative.
- When an organization is innovative in its approach, it stands out.

#### STAFF:

- We want each staff member to feel empowered to use their individual strengths to problem solve in unconventional ways.
- When employees are able to innovate, they feel more invested in outcomes.

### GRATEFUL

We are committed to being appreciative of both the big and small contributions that make our industry and our organization valuable to our community.

#### ORGANIZATION:

- As an organization, we are grateful for our partners who provide us a product to promote, grateful for a community that supports our efforts, and grateful that our industry contributes more than \$2 billion to our local community and supports jobs for 15,223 of our friends, family and neighbors.
- When an organization is grateful, it is respected and admired.

#### STAFF:

- We want each staff member to feel grateful for the efforts of their coworkers and be appreciative of each other's diverse strengths.
- When employees are grateful, it strengthens relationships, improves psychological and physical health, enhances empathy, and improves self-esteem.





## MISSION

To stimulate economic growth for our community by increasing visitation.

## ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Visit Omaha creates sustainable visitor demand for the community through: meeting, event, sport and leisure marketing; collaborative relationships; broad industry experience; and unprecedented product knowledge. Visit Omaha's efforts result in economic growth and job creation for our community.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We all felt it; 2023 was a year of growth. Hotel revenue hit another all-time high of \$271 million, 9% higher than last year. Demand for hotel rooms also hit a record, and 60% of all rooms available in our community for the year were filled. The last time hotel occupancy hit 60% was back in 2007 when there were 64 hotels and 7,700 rooms. In 2023, our industry supported 82 hotels with close to 10,000 rooms. Sixteen years' worth of growth despite a recession and a pandemic. The tourism industry has been through a lot but always seems to persevere and grow.



As you will read in this report, Visit Omaha's efforts also grew in 2023. The sales team secured \$122 million in meeting, convention and event business for the city and beat its hotel room night goal of 120,000 by 9%. The convention services team assisted 277 meeting groups in 2023, creating customized tours, providing promotions, and managing the hotel booking process. The marketing team completely redesigned the VisitOmaha.com website, providing a visually stunning and compelling promotional tool for all industry partners. They also launched a new web series featuring Omaha as a year-round destination, and increased Omaha's social media following by 8%, resulting in more than 205,000 people following Visit Omaha's Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn and YouTube platforms. The visitor services team completely remodeled the Omaha Visitors Center at 10th and Farnam to improve the flow of visitors, and created a small retail shop that sells OMAR the Troll dolls, among other unique items.

When you ask ChatGPT (an artificial intelligence tool) to define growth it states: "Growth typically refers to the process of increasing in size, quantity, or value. It can apply to various contexts, including economic, organizational, personal, or biological, and often implies development, expansion, or improvement." Artificial intelligence does a good job defining growth, but the real people working in the Omaha tourism community made growth a reality in 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Deborah Ward". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names clearly legible.

Deborah Ward  
Executive Director, Visit Omaha

# WHAT OMAHA TOURISM LOOKS LIKE

TOURISM BRINGS FAMILIES  
CLOSER TOGETHER AND HELPS  
NEIGHBORHOODS GROW



**13.5 MILLION**  
TOTAL VISITORS

(6% increase over 2021)

7.3 MILLION DAY VISITORS  
6.2 MILLION OVERNIGHT VISITORS

TOTAL TAXES GENERATED  
**\$300 MILLION**

(13% increase over 2021)



\$125 MILLION - FEDERAL  
\$83 MILLION - STATE  
\$92 MILLION - LOCAL

## HOW VISITORS SPEND THEIR MONEY



25%	Food & Beverage	\$358M
22%	Hotels	\$323M
21%	Retail	\$314M
17%	Recreation	\$242M
15%	Transportation	\$225M

OMAHA VISITORS SPEND  
**\$1.46 BILLION**

(16% increase over 2021)



DAY VISITORS SPEND \$526 MILLION  
OVERNIGHT VISITORS SPEND \$936 MILLION

VISITOR SPENDING  
SUSTAINS  
**15,223 JOBS**

(4.9% increase over 2021)



**1 IN 30 JOBS SUPPORTED BY VISITOR SPENDING**

**\$742 PER YEAR  
TAX RELIEF**

Why is tourism important to local residents?

Taxes generated by visitor spending save each Douglas County household \$742 per year. Without tourism, your taxes would go up or the current level of government services would go down.



Source: 2022 Tourism Economics - An Oxford Economics Company



# ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

## NEW ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

In 2023, Visit Omaha relocated its administrative office to Midtown Crossing, offering the team a fresh environment following nearly two years of remote work during the pandemic. The new location provides easy accessibility for tourism partners, creates an inviting location to host clients, and increases visibility for our organization with exterior signage on both the south and west sides of the building. The open concept provides flexibility with several traditional offices, plug-and-go workstations, and smaller Zoom rooms, offering staff a variety of workspace options. The Omaha Visitors Center remains open near the corner of 10th and Farnam streets to welcome and assist visitors.

## FUTURE FUNDING FOR VISIT OMAHA

The City of Omaha and Douglas County solidified a new 10-year interlocal agreement to support the future of local tourism sales and promotion. This important partnership provides consistent funding for Visit Omaha through 2033. Under the agreement, Visit Omaha receives 2% of the Douglas County lodging tax collected by the state. The city agreed to allocate \$2.3 million in general fund money to Visit Omaha in 2024 with annual progressive increases of \$100,000 per year from 2025 through 2028 and a total of \$2.7 million yearly from 2029 through 2033. We want to thank the Mayor, Omaha City Council and the Douglas County Commissioners for their long-term support and confidence in our organization.

## LODGING TAX

The majority of Visit Omaha's funding comes from the hotel tax paid by visitors. Visitors pay an 18.16% tax every time they stay in an Omaha/Douglas County hotel; some designated entertainment districts have a higher hotel tax. Visit Omaha receives 2.5% of that hotel tax revenue to fund its operation. Visit Omaha projected it would earn \$4,910,610 in hotel tax revenue in 2023. The actual revenue came in at \$6,900,763, 41% more than projected. In fact, hotel revenue hit another all-time high in 2023 due to increased demand and higher hotel rates. In addition to the increased revenue, five budgeted positions remained unfilled. As you will see below, Visit Omaha used the additional hotel tax revenue to increase its advertising efforts.

## DESTINATION MARKETING CORPORATION

Visit Omaha oversees the Destination Marketing Corporation (DMC), a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization enabling Visit Omaha to provide incentives aimed at attracting meetings, sports, and event groups to select Omaha as their event destination. In 2023, the DMC disbursed \$207,418 in incentives to 22 groups and events that were hosted in Omaha. The economic impact that was generated by these 22 groups amounted to \$44,960,240, signifying that for every \$1 invested in incentives by the DMC in 2023, \$217 was spent by these groups in Omaha.

### CITY OF OMAHA BUDGET FOR VISIT OMAHA

	Budgeted	Actual
Douglas County Lodging Tax (2%)	\$4,017,660	\$5,684,242
City of Omaha Occupation Tax (.5%)	\$892,950	\$1,216,521
City of Omaha	\$2,200,000	\$2,200,000
OCVB Private Funds	\$132,000	\$412,976
Destination Marketing Corporation	\$316,066	\$312,533
Reserve	\$1,000,000	
<b>Total Operating Budget</b>	<b>\$8,558,676</b>	<b>\$9,826,272</b>

### 2023 EXPENSES BY DEPARTMENT

	Budgeted	Actual
Convention Sales & Services	\$3,382,393	\$3,119,853
Marketing & Communications	\$3,257,370	\$4,553,976
Visitor Services	\$476,101	\$325,447
Administration	\$1,126,746	\$1,067,883
Destination Marketing Corporation	\$316,066	\$295,729
<b>Total Operating Budget</b>	<b>\$8,558,676</b>	<b>\$9,362,888</b>

*\*DMC expenses include convention subsidies paid to groups in 2023, MeetingMax housing expenses, commissions paid to hotels, and airport information kiosk expenses.*

# MEETING, SPORTS AND EVENT SALES

In 2023, the sales team sent 417 meeting and event leads to Omaha hotel partners. These leads represented 430,024 hotel room nights worth \$369 million for our local economy. Leads represent potential business that the Visit Omaha sales team qualifies and forwards to venues and hotels to determine their interest in pursuing the opportunity.

The team secured 169 meetings and events for future years that will utilize 128,223 hotel room nights and bring more than \$122 million into our community. Of the definite bookings, 72% represented new business for Omaha. Citywide business, meetings or events that typically use the convention center, made up 59% of the room nights and single-property and multiple-property made up the remaining 41%.

The team also hosted 75 site visits during 2023. Thirty-three were awareness visits for meeting planners wanting to explore Omaha as a potential meeting destination. The other 42 visits were for clients who were trying to decide between Omaha and another city for their meeting. After those competitive site visits, 22 clients chose Omaha – a 52% conversion rate. Nine additional clients are still determining if Omaha will host their meeting.

The following pieces of business secured in 2023 stand out as major wins for the city.

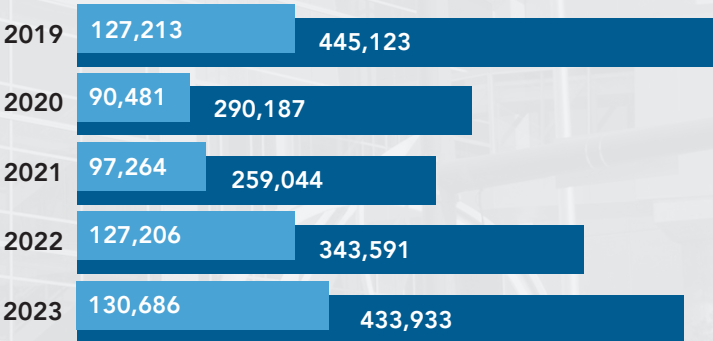
- BBI International, an organization that produces the largest ethanol conference in the world, will meet in Omaha in 2025, 2027 and 2029. This conference will rotate between Omaha and Minneapolis for six years, a three-year piece of business worth over \$5.6 million.
- The 2024 Society of Government Meeting Professionals National Education Conference will bring 250 meeting planners to Omaha for a 3-day conference. This provides Omaha an opportunity to showcase the city to organizers who are responsible for planning a variety of different types of government meetings throughout the year. In addition to the conference, Visit Omaha will host a one-day citywide tour for attendees.
- The United States Department of Defense Intelligence Conference will meet in Omaha in October 2024, a meeting that will bring \$2.9 million into our community.

## MEETING SALES (EXCLUDES MOTORCOACH)

417	HOTEL LEADS SENT
430,024	ROOM NIGHT LEADS
128,223	ROOM NIGHTS BOOKED
75	SITE VISITS
169	GROUPS CONFIRMED DEFINITE

## HOTEL ROOM NIGHT LEADS BOOKED VS. SENT

(Meeting Sales, Sports & Motorcoach)



Hotel Room Nights Booked      Hotel Room Night Leads Sent  
(Qualified business leads sent to partners)



## VISIT OMAHA PROMOTES HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AT IMEX AMERICA IN LAS VEGAS

Visit Omaha expanded its presence at the three-day IMEX international tradeshow in Las Vegas that attracted more than 5,000 attendees in 2023. The Visit Omaha booth focused on providing those attendees an opportunity to unwind and relax with either a foot or back massage. The activation allowed the Visit Omaha team to connect directly with more than 337 planners with potential meeting business for Omaha. In addition, Visit Omaha and our partners made presentations to 56 planners, educating them about the city's new development and meeting attributes.



## NATIONAL EDUCATION FAMILIARIZATION TOUR

In September of 2023, the Visit Omaha team hosted the Trust for Insuring Educators' 50th Annual Meeting. The three-day event allowed Visit Omaha to showcase the city as a meeting destination to representatives of 35 national education associations.

CHI Health Center Omaha hosted the 2023 meeting, allowing attendees to experience the convention center. Attendees also visited attractions including The Durham Museum, Hot Shops Art Center, Lauritzen Gardens, Charles Schwab Field Omaha, and Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium. The University of Nebraska-Omaha's Peter Kiewit Institute and Gallup created educational sessions for the group, and the Omaha Marriott Downtown at The Capitol District provided accommodations. One highlight was breakfast featuring guest speaker Willy Theisen, the founder of Godfather's Pizza, who shared his love for Omaha and stories from his life as a successful entrepreneur.



## SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023, the Visit Omaha team helped secure more than \$76 million in sports business for the city, 28% represented new business for Omaha.

The new events included:

- USA Wrestling Girls Folkstyle Nationals for March 2023
- Adidas GOLD and 3SSB Tournament for Girls for July 2023
- Omaha Hockey Club Stockyard Classic for November 2023
- NCAA Women's Volleyball First/Second Rounds for November 2023
- USA Triathlon Multisport National Championships for 2024 and 2025
- Omaha Sports Commission Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference for 2024 and 2025

Visit Omaha also partnered with ConnectSports to bring 17 sporting event planners to the city for a three-day familiarization tour and focus group. Hosted at the Hilton Omaha, planners toured CHI Health Center Omaha, Baxter Arena, and Union Bank & Trust Sports Complex. In addition, they heard presentations on the upcoming Tranquility Park Multi-Sport Complex and the new Elkhorn Athletic Association Sports Complex. Close to half (49%) of the planners had never been to Omaha. After their three days in the city, 94% of the planners indicated they would include Omaha the next time they sent out an RFP (Request for Proposal).

## 2023 TRADESHOWS AND EVENTS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Jan 8-11	Columbus, OH	PCMA Convening Leaders
Jan 29–Feb 1	Baltimore, MD	CESSE CEO Meeting
Feb 2-8	Detroit, MI	ABA Marketplace
Mar 6-9	National Harbor, MD	Destination Showcase
Mar 26-30	Louisville, KY	ConferenceDirect APM
Mar 27-29	Branson, MO	Select Traveler
May 3-6	Denver, CO	HelmsBriscoe ABC
May 4-5	Des Moines, IA	MPI Heartland Annual Meeting
May 8-11	Kansas City, MO	Sports ETA Symposium
June 22	Chicago, IL	Association Forum Honors Gala
June 24-28	Montreal, Quebec	PCMA EduCon
June 23-26	Niagara Falls, NY	MRN Summit
July 11-13	Detroit, MI	CESSE ACESSE23
Aug 5-8	Atlanta, GA	ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition
Aug 22-24	Minneapolis, MN	Connect Marketplace
Aug 23-25	Phoenix, AZ	Maritz Activate
Aug 28-30	Grand Rapids, MI	ACES 2023 Conference
Aug 29–Sep 1	Nashville, TN	ConferenceDirect CDX
Sep 11-14	Orlando, FL	Maritz Elevate
Sep 28	Washington, D.C.	ASAE Summit Awards
Sep 27-29	Cedar Rapids, IA	Small Market Meetings
Oct 2-5	Palm Beach, FL	Sports Link & Teams
Oct 3-4	Columbus, OH	Destination Celebration
Oct 5-6	Indianapolis, IN	Destination Celebration
Oct 16-19	Las Vegas, NV	IMEX America
Oct 17-19	Gering, NE	Nebraska Tourism Conference
Oct 24-26	El Paso, TX	Sports ETA 4S Summit
Nov 12-15	Baltimore, MD	ASAE Alliance Partnership Summit & Leaders Retreat
Nov 14-15	Milwaukee, WI	Destination Celebration
Nov 29-30	Chicago, IL	Holiday Showcase
Dec 3-6	Lake Charles, LA	US Sports Congress

# MEETING, SPORTS AND EVENT SALES

## OMAHA ON MICHIGAN AVENUE

During Association Forum's Holiday Showcase tradeshow event, Omaha advertising was prominently featured on three large outdoor windowpanes at the entrance of the Hilton Chicago, which is located on Michigan Avenue. In addition, Omaha partnered with Gallup to sponsor an educational session on leadership during the conference. More than 180 executives participated.



## 2023 STR

### OCCUPANCY (%)

2023	60.0%
PERCENTAGE CHANGE	+3.5%

### ADR

2023	\$125.93
PERCENTAGE CHANGE	+4.4%

### SUPPLY

2023	3,586,733
PERCENTAGE CHANGE	+0.08%

### DEMAND

2023	2,153,788
PERCENTAGE CHANGE	+4.3%

### REVENUE

2023	\$271,224,345
PERCENTAGE CHANGE	+9.0%

Source: STR, previously known as Smith Travel Research, Inc.  
Duplication or any re-use of this data without the express written permissions of STR is strictly prohibited.

## MOTORCOACH & MILITARY REUNION HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023, Visit Omaha developed new motorcoach tour experiences that included visits to Big Mama's Kitchen and Catering, Mio Italiano, Joslyn Castle, and St. Cecilia Cathedral. In December, the city welcomed 10 bus tours from Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota and Texas to experience the holidays in Omaha.

Visit Omaha also raised awareness of its offerings to military reunion planners by developing a military reunion guide and participating in a panel discussion at the Military Reunion Annual Summit in Niagara Falls, NY.

Visit Omaha provides step-on guides for motorcoach tours. These are Visit Omaha-trained experts who "step on" the bus to provide guided tours of the city. In 2023, we provided 27 guided tours for motorcoach groups.

**51** GROUP TOUR LEADS SENT

**3,909** GROUP TOUR ROOM NIGHTS LEADS

**2,463** GROUP TOUR ROOM NIGHTS BOOKED

**32** GROUP TOURS BOOKED

## FOUR CITY ALLIANCE PARTNERSHIP

Omaha partnered with Birmingham, Ala., Buffalo, N.Y., and Memphis, Tenn., to host 10 client events in Chicago and Washington, D.C., throughout the year. The events brought together more than 85 association executive directors and meeting planners to raise awareness of the four cities as meeting destinations. Clients enjoyed the shared hosting format, as they appreciated learning about multiple destinations at one event.

## CALL CAMPAIGN

To prospect for new business opportunities, Visit Omaha's call campaign targeted over 7,300 regional and national organizations to find out if they had business for Omaha. The 2023 call campaign resulted in 164 qualified prospects and 59 organizations requesting additional information about Omaha.

## VIRTUAL EVENTS

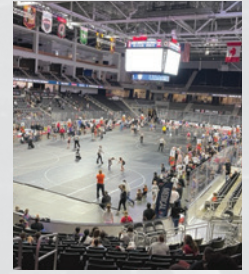
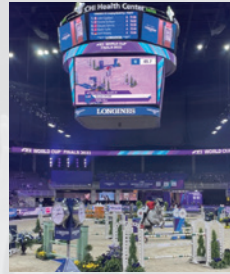
Virtual outreach continued to play a part in the Visit Omaha sales strategy in 2023. The Visit Omaha team hosted a virtual presentation to more than 80 Maritz Global Events associates as part of our new partnership with the organization. Maritz is a third-party planning company with more than 1,600 clients.



# CONVENTION AND EVENT SERVICES

Once a meeting or event is confirmed, the Visit Omaha services team is responsible for working with organizers to coordinate details before, during and after the event to increase attendance and satisfaction. In 2023, the Visit Omaha services team assisted 227 groups including the following large city-wide groups:

- OneHockey World Hockey Tournament U9 and U10
- HorsePower Brands Annual Event
- Nebraska School Activities Association Annual High School Wrestling Tournament
- Asics Presidents' Day Classic Volleyball Tournament
- USA Wrestling Girls Folkstyle Nationals
- Scooter's Coffee House GROW Conference
- FEI World Cup
- American Public Works SNOW Conference
- Adidas GOLD & 3SSB Tournaments (Boys in April / Girls in July)
- HDR Engineering Business Group Conference
- American Jail Association Annual Conference & Expo
- Midwest Basketball Showcase
- BBI International Fuel Ethanol and Workshop Expo
- American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers Annual International Meeting
- HDR Engineering Fall Business Group Conference
- Farm Bureau Financial Services Sales Conference
- National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Region 7 & 9 Meeting
- American Biological Safety Association Annual Conference
- American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges Annual Conference
- Nebraska Association of School Boards State Education Conference



The services team is also responsible for Housing, an amenity Visit Omaha provides to assist and simplify the process of obtaining hotel accommodations for groups. In 2023, the Visit Omaha team assisted the following groups with housing:

- USA Wrestling Girls Folkstyle Nationals
- FEI World Cup
- RecruitLook Hoops
- American Jail Association
- Nebraska Association of School Boards

In addition, the services team conducted five planning visits for three events set to take place in Omaha in 2024: American Farm Bureau Federation; Society of Government Meeting Professionals; and USA Triathlon. They also conducted planning visits for two 2025 events: Lutheran Women's Missionary League; and American Baptist Churches. Each group will have a significant economic impact, contributing more than \$14 million to our local economy.

The services team also traveled to Minneapolis for the Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP) 2023 National Education Conference. While there, Omaha was officially announced and actively promoted as the designated host city for the 2024 SGMP conference.

Collaborating closely with the U.S. Custom Harvesters, the services team created five exclusive tours and experiences for the spouses and children of the conference attendees. These tailored experiences included cocktail tastings and a tour of Joslyn Castle for the spouses, and children enjoyed guided tours of The Durham Museum, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium, and an engaging Amazing Bubble Show hosted by Omaha Children's Museum.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Visit Omaha strategically partners with organizations that help enhance Omaha's presence on the national stage and heighten awareness of the city as a meeting destination.

- As a Corporate Partner with **ASAE**, Omaha is positioned alongside high-profile destinations such as Louisville, Phoenix and Ft. Lauderdale. The partnership provides Omaha with increased access to 21,000 association executives and industry partners.
- **Maritz Global Events**, a third-party planning company with more than 1,600 clients.

- The partnership with the **Professional Convention Management Association** provides increased access to more than 7,000 meeting planner members.
- The Visit Omaha partnership with **HelmsBriscoe** helps drive short-term meeting business into the city. HelmsBriscoe is a third-party planning organization that matches meeting planners to destinations.
- The partnership with **Conference Direct**, a third party planner, taps into the organization's 400 associates to help sell Omaha to their clients.



# MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

## ADVERTISING AND ROI

In 2022, Omaha visitation reached new heights as “revenge travel” after the pandemic inspired people to seek out new experiences away from home. Aiming to keep the momentum going in 2023 and attract even more visitor dollars to the city, the Visit Omaha marketing team spent more money advertising than ever before – \$2.3 million. Marketing campaigns promoted Omaha’s unique year-round tourism experiences and renowned dining scene and featured entertaining neighborhoods throughout the city. The ads targeted five cities – Chicago, Des Moines, Kansas City, Minneapolis and Sioux Falls. Research shows the advertising paid off with a 5% year-over-year increase in visitation from those targeted cities. According to Placer.ai, an independent analytics tracking firm, more than 2.7 million people from those target markets visited Omaha in 2023 – 130,253 more than 2022’s impressive numbers. An average overnight visitor spends \$152 while in Omaha, which means those 2.7 million travelers spent \$410 million in our city. This equates to a \$410 million return on a \$2.3 million investment.

Visit Omaha promotional efforts include broadcast and streaming television and radio, print, social media, and digital advertising. In 2023, the Visit Omaha ads were seen more than 141 million times, triple the number of times the commercials were seen in 2022.

Visit Omaha’s year-round campaign also included promotion through Epsilon, a digital platform that customizes ads based on consumer preferences and tracks actual visitation and spending by customers reached by Visit Omaha advertising. From March through October 2023, Visit Omaha spent \$313,000 on digital advertising with Epsilon. Results show 48,000 people who saw the advertisements then traveled to Omaha and spent a total of \$12 million while they were in the city. This meant for every dollar Visit Omaha spent advertising on this one digital platform, visitors spent \$39 in our community. Visitors, inspired by advertising to travel to Omaha, spent 35% of their money shopping in our retail stores, 21% eating in our restaurants, 19% buying groceries, 13% getting gas, 10% at our hotels, and 2% visiting Omaha attractions.



Visit Omaha’s giant blue push pins were rebranded in 2023. These pins can be found throughout the city “marking” top Omaha attractions.



View video at [visitomaha.com/weekend/](https://visitomaha.com/weekend/)





## OMAHA SAVINGS PACK

The Omaha Savings Pack continues to be a successful partnership between Visit Omaha and seven local attractions. The Savings Pack offers out-of-town visitors exclusive digital discount coupons to top attractions when they download the free web application.

In 2023, the Savings Pack was promoted in Chicago, Des Moines, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and Sioux Falls through a multi-media campaign. Downloads and coupon redemptions increased by more than 4% year-over-year. App downloads increased 68% from Illinois and were up close to 7% from Minnesota. In 2023, visitors who used the app's digital coupons at three different attractions were eligible to claim a free Omaha Savings Pack water bottle at the Omaha Visitors Center. Fifty-one water bottles were claimed.

2023 Savings Pack Partners:  
Lauritzen Gardens, Lee G. Simmons Wildlife Safari Park, Omaha Children's Museum, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium, Strategic Air Command And Aerospace Museum, The Amazing Pizza Machine, The Durham Museum

**2,563** DOWNLOADS

**1,616** REDEMPTIONS

**49** NUMBER OF STATES

Top Redemption States:  
Iowa, South Dakota,  
Nebraska, Kansas,  
Minnesota



## OMAHA CRAFT BREW PENNY PACK

The Omaha Craft Brew Penny Pack is a partnership between Visit Omaha and 13 local craft breweries. The pack provides "buy one, get one for a penny" discounts to out-of-town visitors as an incentive to visit. To capitalize on the excitement generated by the 2023 NCAA Men's College Basketball tournament, Visit Omaha joined the madness by running television ads during the tournament in Kansas City, Chicago, Des Moines, Minneapolis and Sioux Falls promoting the Penny Pack. By the end of the tournament, Visit Omaha commercials were seen more than 379,000 times on platforms such as Direct TV, CBS Sports Stream, TBS, Samsung TV Plus, PLUTO TV, and FUBO TV. During the two-week campaign, the Omaha Craft Brew Penny Pack was downloaded 180 times. For comparison, the pack is downloaded, on average, 154 times in a month.

Penny Pack users also receive a free Penny Pack flight glass when they redeem their digital coupon at the Omaha Visitors Center. There were 153 flight glass redemptions in 2023.

2023 Penny Pack Partners:  
Benson Brewery, Brickway Brewery & Distillery, Infusion Brewing Co., Brewery & Taproom, Kros Strain Brewing, Lucky Bucket Brewing Co., Monolithic Brewing, Nebraska Brewing Company, Pint Nine Brewing Company, Scriptown Brewing Company, Site-1 Brewing, Soaring Wings Vineyard & Brewing, Upstream Brewing Company, Vis Major Brewing Company

**1,707** DOWNLOADS

**1,389** REDEMPTIONS

**45** NUMBER OF STATES

Top Redemption States:  
Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas,  
Missouri, Minnesota

## 2023 OMA TOURISM AWARDS

The Omaha Metropolitan Area (OMA) Tourism Awards is a partnership between Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawattamie counties recognizing the best tourism businesses in each county. The public nominates and votes for their favorite businesses in four categories: Best Hotel, Best Restaurant, Best Attraction, and Best Retail Business.

In 2023, there were 1,671 nominations and a record 18,456 votes cast across the three counties. Winners were highlighted on billboards and in promotional videos on social media during National Travel & Tourism Week in May. The Douglas County winner promotional videos were viewed 44,272 times on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn & YouTube.



# MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Visit Omaha has developed three engaging characters to help promote tourism: Bob the Bridge, OMAR the Troll, and OMAR's little sister, OMAI. Each plays a unique role to inspire and entertain Omaha visitors and locals.

## BOB

The Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, or "Bob," is a one-of-a-kind 3,000-foot pedestrian bridge that magically floats over the Missouri River, connecting Nebraska and Iowa. Bob offers beautiful downtown views, opportunities to go "Bobbing" (standing in two states at the same time – the state line runs right through Bob), and anyone can become a marathoner on Bob. Walk across Bob and back and you have just finished a 0.9k, and yes, the decimal is in the right place.

According to Datafy, a company that tracks visitation using cell phone data, in 2023, Bob welcomed 173,614 walkers, runners and cyclists. Among them, 56,751 (more than 30%) traveled over 60 miles to visit Bob, most coming from Kansas City, Des Moines, Lincoln, Sioux Falls and Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Bob provides a setting for memorable moments and maintains a witty online presence with humorous videos (think Dad joke humor) at [BobTheBridge.com](https://www.bobthebridge.com) and on social media @bobtbridge on Instagram and X (formerly Twitter). Some of Bob's 2023 digital stats include:



## OMAR

OMAR the Troll, a blue 300-pound, 4-foot bronze statue, lives beneath Bob – but never in his shadow. His walking stick has special signage directing visitors to [OMARtheTroll.com](https://www.OMARtheTroll.com), which tells his entertaining origin story. QR codes placed along Bob provide access to special videos about OMAR.

The paperback book, "OMAR Finds a Home," is available for purchase online and at the Omaha Visitors Center and tells the story of how OMAR found his home in Omaha. In November 2023, the team created an OMAR plush doll, a squeezable (and packable) 12-inch-tall version of the original.



## OMAI

OMAI (pronounced Oh-My) is OMAR's little sister. OMAI invites families to track her down through a troll-inspired scavenger hunt. [OMAIAdventure.com](https://www.OMAIAdventure.com) maps out ten area attractions OMAI might be visiting at any given time. Families can also look for OMAI's footprints around the city. Each set of footprints includes a QR code. Scan the code and watch animated videos that show more about each spot. Families can pick up a different commemorative button at each location, and, at any point, stop at the Omaha Visitors Center to pick up a free OMAI backpack. It's like the one OMAI carries – and the perfect place to display the pins.

529,656 VIDEO VIEWS

42,658 PAGE VIEWS

4,600 SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

1,234,210 SOCIAL IMPRESSIONS  
number of times a post is seen

7,583 WEBSITE VISITS

557 VIDEO VIEWS

47 BOOKS PURCHASED

1,074 BACKPACK PICKUPS

316,848 VIDEO VIEWS

27,299 WEBSITE VISITS

456 QR CODE SCANS



# VISITORS GUIDE

Visit Omaha creates and distributes the official Omaha Visitors Guide annually. The print magazine features spectacular photography and valuable information, inspiring readers to visit Omaha and its local attractions, events, restaurants, and hotels.

The cover of the 2023 Omaha Visitors Guide featured a beautiful photo of the reimagined Gene Leahy Mall at The RiverFront. The new downtown development has been an inspiration for novice and professional photographers, and 2023's cover image was captured by Malay Dalal who shared his image for our use.



148,140	TOTAL GUIDES DISTRIBUTED
124,401	DISTRIBUTED THROUGH VISITOR SERVICES OMAHA VISITORS CENTER, AIRPORT, AND KIOSKS
18,480	DISTRIBUTED THROUGH HOTEL BROCHURE RACKS
5,259	REQUESTED ONLINE OR BY PHONE
345	DOWNLOADS FROM WEBSITE

# PUBLIC RELATIONS

In 2023, Visit Omaha continued its proven partnership with KETV Channel 7 to produce weekly "Welcome to the Weekend" and "Now Serving Omaha" episodes. The segments for the Omaha television station's #1 morning and noon newscasts highlight the city's weekend activities and local restaurants, respectively. With television and online viewing, "Welcome to the Weekend" and "Now Serving Omaha" reach 48 million people annually.

Media outreach focused on promoting the \$8 billion in development throughout the city as well as the impact special events have on Omaha's economy.

596	MEDIA MENTIONS
241,060,391	REACHED BY MEDIA COVERAGE
\$2,317,902	PUBLICITY VALUE

\*Numbers reflect media coverage generated by Visit Omaha only

# VISITOMAHA.COM

Visit Omaha's promotional efforts drive potential visitors to VisitOmaha.com, the city's official tourism website.



In 2023, VisitOmaha.com, the city's official tourism website, was redesigned to add more inspiring and engaging content. Notable highlights of the redesign include the "What Type of Traveler are You?" feature at the top of the homepage. It provides personalized itineraries and suggestions based on a visitor's interests. Scroll down and you'll see a Neighborhood Map offering a convenient view of where Omaha's entertaining neighborhoods are located. Explore each and watch a video with just a click.

A new listing "Quickview" feature provides a brief overview of a business without leaving the page, and when you do click to another page, you'll see sleeker, more attractive listing pages that showcase tourism partners with vibrant photography, independent reviews, and in some cases virtual tours.

2,219,338	WEBSITE SESSIONS 41% increase YOY*
5,074,163	WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS 66% increase YOY*
31,862	GDPR COMPLIANT DATABASE GDPR compliance means Visit Omaha only sends promotional emails to people who have agreed to receive them.

\* Percentage increase is determined using Google BigQuery for 2023 data (as of March 2024) and Google Universal Analytics for 2022 data.

# MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

## NOW SERVING OMAHA

The Now Serving Omaha video web series showcases the diverse and exciting food scene in Omaha. The series highlights local restaurants and their creative takes on classic cuisines, covering everything from steaks and Reuben sandwiches to coffee, burgers, tacos, vegan options, craft beer, and farm-to-fork dining.

Three new videos were added in 2023 featuring Omaha's steak, seafood, and ramen restaurants. The Now Serving videos were played on digital platforms, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. All 15 Now Serving Omaha videos were viewed more than 2.5 million times in 2023.

**3** NEW NOW SERVING VIDEOS

**15** TOTAL NOW SERVING VIDEOS

**2.5** MILLION VIDEO VIEWS

**93,947** PAGE VIEWS

## OMAHA RESTAURANT WEEK

After a three-year hiatus due to the pandemic and its aftereffects, Omaha Restaurant Week returned for the first time since 2019 thanks to encouragement from restaurants and diners.

Organizing and managing Omaha Restaurant Week continues to be an opportunity for Visit Omaha to promote the local dining scene to visitors and residents. Branded as the "10 Tastiest Days of the Year," participating restaurants offer unique multi-course meals at a fixed price of \$20, \$30, \$40 or \$50 per dinner. Restaurants agree to donate 5% of Restaurant Week menu sales to Food Bank for the Heartland. The 2023 event spotlighted the creations of skilled chefs at 34 local restaurants in September and may have been the most diverse Omaha Restaurant Week yet; 40% of participating restaurants were new on the scene, having opened in 2020 or later.

Visit Omaha creates and manages OmahaRestaurantWeek.com and the brand's Facebook, X and Instagram pages. The team promoted the event using radio, digital, social and billboard advertising, and generated close to \$600,000 worth of media coverage leading up to the event.

**\$6,982** DONATIONS TO FOOD BANK FOR THE HEARTLAND

## WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Omaha's Welcome to the Neighborhood video series provides inspiration and practical insights about distinctive attractions and experiences in neighborhoods throughout the city. These videos live on VisitOmaha.com and were shared on social media and other digital platforms. In 2023, the neighborhood videos were watched almost one million times.

**718,679** VIDEO VIEWS

**276,371** WEBSITE VIEWS

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Visit Omaha's social media network includes Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Pinterest and LinkedIn. The Visit Omaha team also manages social media accounts for Bob the Bridge and Omaha Restaurant Week.

In 2023, the team's strategy evolved to significantly increase engagements across platforms. Engaging users is vital, as comments, likes/loves, and sharing greatly expands Visit Omaha's reach.

The team also leveraged Instagram by collaborating with tourism partners to create social media content and video reels, which are short-form videos on Instagram. Visit Omaha and the partners would each share the same content on their Instagram page increasing the number of people reached.

The Visit Omaha team saw an 8% increase in social media followers due to 2023 initiatives. This increase means more online users are subscribing to Omaha's tourism message.

**204,613** TOTAL FOLLOWERS

**130,954** FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

**49,171** INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

**21,847** TWITTER FOLLOWERS

**2,256** LINKEDIN FOLLOWERS

**385** PINTEREST FOLLOWERS



# VISITOR INFORMATION



Downtown Omaha Visitors Center - 306 S. 10th Street



Airport Visitor Information Kiosk



Visitor Information Kiosk

Visit Omaha operates three visitor information centers. The primary Omaha Visitors Center is located downtown at 306 S. 10th Street. In partnership with the Council Bluffs Convention & Visitors Bureau and Sarpy County Tourism, Visit Omaha oversees two visitor information kiosks at Omaha's airport – one in the north terminal and one in the south terminal. The airport kiosks provide regional information featuring three counties and two states. Members of the Kiwanis Club of Omaha Golden K staff the airport kiosks, and volunteers recruited by Visit Omaha help staff the downtown visitors center. In addition, Visit Omaha has three mobile visitor information kiosks located at CHI Health Center Omaha, Boys Town, and Union Bank & Trust Sports Complex.

In 2023, the visitor services team assisted 51,211 visitors at the Omaha Visitors Center and at the two Omaha airport information kiosks, an 18% increase in visitors over the last year. To accommodate more visitors, the team added shifts and expanded its hours at key events, such as the Berkshire Hathaway Annual Shareholders Meeting and the NCAA Men's College World Series. Helping Visit Omaha accommodate the growth in visitation is our team of experienced and dedicated volunteer ambassadors, who provide engaging information and customized recommendations to ensure visitors have a memorable experience. Visit Omaha tracks these recommendations as partner referrals. In 2023, volunteer ambassadors made nearly 8,000 referrals to local attractions, restaurants, and shops, helping to increase visitation to – and spending with – local tourism partners.

In 2023, the visitor services team launched three new initiatives to enhance the visitor experience:

- The Omaha Visitors Center was renovated to optimize traffic flow, maximize space, and better serve visitors. The refresh was completed in time to welcome Berkshire Hathaway Annual Shareholders Meeting attendees, and teams, coaches, and fans of the NCAA Men's College World Series.
- In November 2023, the team launched the Visit Omaha retail store in time for the holidays. The store offers a collection of unique Visit Omaha-branded merchandise, such as local handcrafted ornaments displaying the Omaha skyline, baseball bat mugs, and an OMAR the Troll doll.
- The team launched a local gift display section at the Omaha Visitors Center to encourage exploration and support local businesses within the community. The area showcases businesses including local art galleries, souvenir shops, and restaurants.

**10,217** WELCOMED AT THE  
OMAHA VISITOR CENTER

**40,994** WELCOMED AT AIRPORT  
INFORMATION KIOSKS

**7,964** PARTNER REFERRALS

**4,694** KIOSK MATERIALS  
DISTRIBUTED

**50** VOLUNTEER  
AMBASSADORS



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