



FY
26

ANNUAL REPORT



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Dear Visit SLO CAL Investors, Partners & Stakeholders,



This has been a year of real momentum for SLO CAL. The reopening of Highway 1 reconnected our coastline and set the tone for a year of progress across the region. In 2025, SLO CAL welcomed a record 7.7 million visitors, generating \$2.37 billion in direct travel spending, supporting nearly 25,000 local jobs and contributing more than \$112 million in local tax revenue that helps fund essential services.

These achievements reflect the partnership and investment of our tourism community. From our local businesses and destination partners to our investors and stakeholders, your support allows us to build awareness of our destination, create economic opportunity and inspire travelers to experience all that SLO CAL has to offer.

One of the most significant milestones was the reopening of Highway 1 at Regent's Slide in January 2026, restoring access along California's iconic coastal route. Since then, our North Coast communities have seen a strong rebound in visitation, reinforcing what this connection means for travelers and local businesses. We are grateful to Caltrans and its transportation partners for their dedication and expertise in returning this important corridor to service.

Air service strengthened access to SLO CAL through the success of the SLO County Airport (SBP), which welcomed a record 811,905 passengers in 2025, an 8.7% increase from the previous year. This milestone reflects growing demand for travel and the important role regional air service plays in our visitor economy.

This year also marked the launch of our destination brand campaign "*Turns Well Taken*." The campaign brings our brand promise to life by highlighting the unexpected moments and meaningful connections found throughout the region. We also launched storytelling initiatives like "*Tapped into SLO CAL*" in partnership with Firestone Walker, including the creation of a dedicated pale ale, and collaborated with Visit California and local communities to encourage FIFA World Cup travelers to extend their California journeys.

On the sales front, we hosted our first meeting planner familiarization tour in a decade, bringing top planners to experience SLO CAL firsthand and generating interest in future group business. Looking ahead, new lodging inventory and a greater focus on meetings and groups position us to attract new visitation, support our industry partners and create lasting value for our communities.

Our commitment to stewardship, authenticity, inclusion and excellence continues to guide our work as we strengthen our destination and ensure tourism creates real value for our visitors and communities. With your continued partnership and support, we're excited to carry this momentum into another year of growth for SLO CAL.

Cathy Cartier

President & CEO, Visit SLO CAL

BOARD, COMMITTEES & TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AMAR SOHI

Chair | Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites
Atascadero
Appointed Atascadero Seat (— June 2027)

CLINT PEARCE

Vice Chair | Madonna Enterprises | Atascadero
San Luis Obispo
Appointed San Luis Obispo Seat (— June 2026)

MARK EADS

Past Chair | Embassy Suites | San Luis Obispo
Elected At-Large Seat (— June 2028)

AARON GRAVES

Secretary | EverlyGrove Hotel Brokers
Unincorporated Area
Elected At-Large Seat (— June 2026)

TONI LEGRAS-PRICE

Treasurer | Beachside Rentals | Unincorporated Area
Appointed Unincorporated Area Seat
(— June 2028)

HAMISH MARSHALL

AuzCo Developments | San Luis Obispo
Elected At-Large Seat (— June 2028)

HEMANT PATEL

805 Hospitality | Morro Bay | Paso Robles
San Luis Obispo | Unincorporated Area
Appointed Morro Bay Seat (— June 2026)

JEDIDIAH BICKEL

Shorebirds Hotel Group | Pismo Beach
Appointed Pismo Beach Seat (— June 2027)

SEAN DASMANN

The Agrarian Hotel | Arroyo Grande
Appointed Arroyo Grande Seat (— June 2027)

JIM HAMILTON

County of San Luis Obispo
Appointed County At-Large Seat (— June 2026)

KATHY KELLY

Digs Vacation Rentals | Paso Robles | Avila Beach
Cambria | Elected Designated Vacation Rental Seat
(— June 2028)

NIPOOL PATEL*

Lamplighter Inn & Suites | San Luis Obispo
Elected At-Large Seat (— June 2028)

PRAGNA PATEL-MUELLER

Samata Management, Inc. | San Luis Obispo
Elected At-Large Seat (— June 2026)

VICTOR POPP

La Quinta Inn & Suites | Paso Robles
Appointed Paso Robles Seat (— June 2027)

BRITTEN SHUFORD

PRG Hospitality Group, LLC | Cambria | San Luis
Obispo | Elected At-Large Seat (— June 2028)

KIMBERLY WALKER

Nomada Hotel Group | Paso Robles
San Luis Obispo | Elected At-Large Seat
(— June 2027)

OPEN SEAT | BED & BREAKFAST SEAT

Elected Designated Bed & Breakfast Seat
(— June 2024)

OPEN SEAT | GROVER BEACH

Appointed Grover Beach Seat (— June 2024)

OPEN SEAT | RV PARK SEAT

Elected Designated RV Park Seat (— June 2025)

* Resigned June 2026



MARKETING COMMITTEE

ASHLEE AKERS

Partner & Chief Strategy Officer | Verdin
(— May 2026)

JIM ALLEN

Director of Marketing & Communications
Hearst Castle (— June 2028)

TERRIE BANISH*

Director of Community Services & Promotions
City of Atascadero

JESSICA BLANCHFIELD

Founder, President, Director of Accounts | Archer &
Hound Advertising (— June 2028)

SHERIDAN BOHLKEN*

Director of Recreation Services
City of Arroyo Grande

JACQUI CLARK-CHARLESWORTH*

Tourism & Community Promotions Manager
City of San Luis Obispo

CHERYL CUMING*

Chief Administrative Officer | Unincorporated CBID

GORDON JACKSON*

Executive Director | Pismo Beach CVB

STACIE JACOB*

Executive Director | Travel Paso

LORI KELLER

President/Principal | Blu Hotel Management
(— June 2027)

KATHLEEN NAUGHTON

Executive Director | SLO Coast Wine Collective
(— June 2027)

COURTNEY PENE

Deputy Director, External Affairs & Administration
SLO County Airport (— June 2027)

JOEL PETERSON

Executive Director | Paso Robles Wine Country
Alliance (— June 2026)

LINDSEY ROBERTS

Director of Marketing | Peregrine Hospitality
(— June 2027)

LINDA PARKER SANPEI

CEO & Founder | Parker Sanpei Lifestyle Marketing
& PR (— June 2028)

LYNETTE SONNE

Founder & Herd Boss | FARMstead ED/SLO Co Farm
Trail (— June 2027)

JOHN SORGENFREI

President & Owner | TJA Advertising (— June 2028)

LEANN STANDISH

Executive Director | San Luis Obispo Museum of Art
(— June 2027)

JILL TWEEDIE

Founder & President | Breakaway Tours Wine & Events
(— June 2028)

KRISTA RUPP*

Executive Director | Visit Morro Bay (Started May 2026)

MICHAEL WAMBOLT*

Executive Director | Visit Morro Bay (Until March 2026)

* Destination Partners

BOARD, COMMITTEES & TEAM (CONT'D)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MATTHEW PONTES

Chief Executive Officer | County of
San Luis Obispo

DAWN ORTIZ-LEGG

Supervisor, District 3 | County of San Luis Obispo

MATTHEW DOWNING

City Manager | City of Arroyo Grande

JAMIE MARAVIGLIA

Councilmember | City of Arroyo Grande

JIM LEWIS

City Manager | City of Atascadero

MARK DARIZ

Mayor Pro Tem | City of Atascadero

MATTHEW BRONSON

City Manager | City of Grover Beach

KATHY MCCORRY-DRISCOLL

Councilmember | City of Grover Beach

ANDREA LUEKER*

Interim City Manager | City of Morro Bay

JOHN CRAIG

City Manager | City of Morro Bay

CARLA WIXOM

Mayor | City of Morro Bay

CHRIS HUOT

City Manager | City of Paso Robles

STEVE GREGORY

Councilmember | City of Paso Robles

JORGE GARCIA

City Manager | City of Pismo Beach

STACY INMAN

Councilmember | City of Pismo Beach

WHITNEY MCDONALD

City Manager | City of San Luis Obispo

ERICA A. STEWART

Mayor | City of San Luis Obispo

*July 2025–January 2026



TEAM



CATHY CARTIER

President & CEO



ANNIE BRAUNSCHWEIG

Chief Financial Officer



MOLLY CANO

Chief Marketing Officer



ASHLEE AKERS*

VP of Marketing & Communications



LISA MARIE BELSANTI**

VP of Communications



KRISTEN CARLSON

Director of Sales



WHITNEY CHANEY

Director of Community Engagement & Advocacy



MATT HALVORSON

Director of Destination Insights & Digital Innovation



EMILY RUDGE

Executive Assistant to the President & CEO



GRACE DOMINGUES

Senior Manager, Human Resources



JESSIE BORCHIN***

Operations Manager



ALEIGH HOGAN

Sales Manager



MAYLA LOHNES

PR & Communications Manager



ALYSSA MANNO

Partner & Events Manager



LAUREN MILLER

Marketing Design Manager



BROOKE WEISBECKER

Social Media Manager



MEGAN LEININGER

Marketing Operations Specialist



THERESA NAGAI****

Marketing Specialist

* Started May 2026

** Until April 2026

*** Until September 2025

**** Until January 2026

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2026

Vision

A vibrant and sustainable SLO CAL, fueled by a collaborative and flourishing tourism industry

Mission

Inspire travel, foster our unique experiences and champion quality of life to create life-long ambassadors and economic growth for SLO CAL

Values

STEWARDSHIP

We value our people and care for our community and resources

AUTHENTICITY

We strive to embody the SLO CAL lifestyle of “people, place and pace”

INCLUSION

We engage and collaborate with an array of voices and perspectives

EXCELLENCE

We are ambitious in our work and prioritize initiatives to achieve results

FUTURE FOCUS

We deliver today with an innovative eye on tomorrow

Strategic Objectives

Enhance our organizational effectiveness

Amplify and steward the SLO CAL brand through unified efforts

Lead the county tourism industry in fostering a vibrant destination

Demonstrate value to investors, partners, stakeholders and communities

Visit SLO CAL (VSC) is a team of destination marketing professionals who work with, and on behalf of, its investors, partners, stakeholders and communities to promote SLO CAL® (San Luis Obispo County, California) to both domestic and international visitors. As the countywide nonprofit destination marketing and management organization (DMMO) for SLO CAL, VSC's goal is to collaborate with partners to build resident quality of life. Built on research with a strategy of continuous improvement, VSC aims to establish SLO CAL as a favorite West Coast destination known for its signature slower pace of life and unique mix of incredible, immersive guest experiences.

Objective 1: Enhance our organizational effectiveness

STRATEGIES

- Advance processes, procedures and workflows
- Implement upskilling opportunities and findings identified in the 2025 skills assessment and talent mapping exercise
- Celebrate, recognize and develop the VSC team
- Cultivate a values-centered culture reflective of the SLO CAL lifestyle

KEY RESULTS

- Finalize company standard operating procedures by November 30, 2025
- Develop and publish an updated 4-year VSC strategic plan, Strategic Direction 2030, by June 30, 2026
- Maintain or grow annual employee engagement and satisfaction scores over 2025 baseline by June 30, 2026
- Continuously evaluate and improve VSC's benefits, wellness offerings and career development opportunities to remain competitive with local market and industry standards

Objective 2: Amplify and steward the SLO CAL brand through unified efforts

STRATEGIES

- Continue to build on House of Brands marketing strategy
- Increase share of voice through integrated storytelling efforts
- Increase local adoption of SLO CAL nomenclature

KEY RESULTS

- Create and share eight paid partner participation opportunities to collaborate on VSC marketing efforts by September 30, 2025
- Update and execute second phase nomenclature strategy by January 31, 2026
- Produce and launch new paid SLO CAL brand campaign by February 28, 2026
- Develop and deploy a social-first content campaign designed to support, enhance and extend the reach of the brand platform through social and earned channels by April 30, 2026

Objective 3: Lead the county tourism industry in fostering a vibrant destination

STRATEGIES

- Champion improvements in intra-county transportation
- Finalize a Sustainable Tourism Strategy for SLO CAL
- Implement a Regional Tourism Industry Workforce Plan

KEY RESULTS

- Launch SLO CAL Welcome 2.0 by July 1, 2025
- Implement Regional Tourism Industry Workforce Plan by September 30, 2025
- Conduct visitor profile study to inform new brand strategy and address increased lodging inventory by October 31, 2025
- Continue collaborating with community partners to finalize and implement a roadmap for a regional sustainable tourism strategy by December 31, 2025

Objective 4: Demonstrate value to investors, partners, stakeholders and communities

STRATEGIES

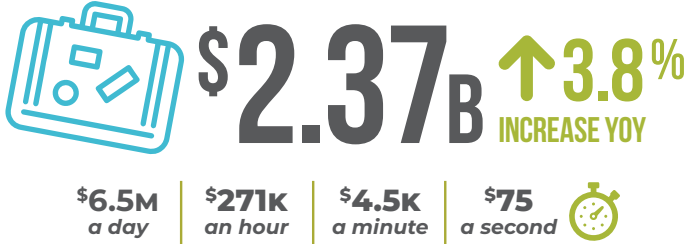
- Build awareness and deepen engagement of investors, partners and stakeholders
- Build local understanding of positive impact tourism has on community
- Advance efforts to educate, inform and collaborate with our investors, partners and stakeholders

KEY RESULTS

- Conduct annual lodging forecast to inform budget and direction by December 31, 2025
- Secure 50 local media stories to promote positive impacts of tourism by June 30, 2026
- Achieve a 3% year-over-year increase in investor, partner and stakeholder engagement by June 30, 2026

WHY TOURISM MATTERS

TRAVEL SPENDING



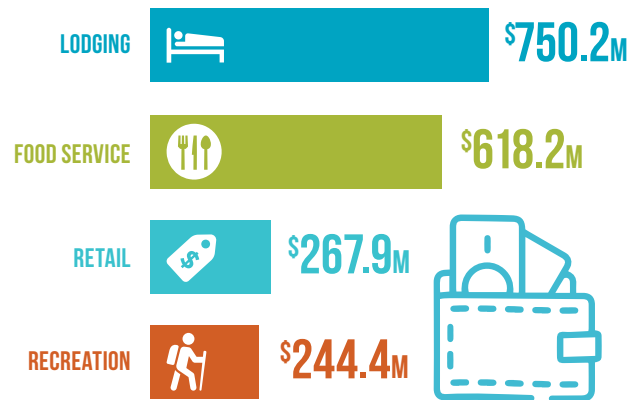
INDUSTRY EARNINGS



TOURISM PUTS



DIRECT SPENDING BY SECTOR

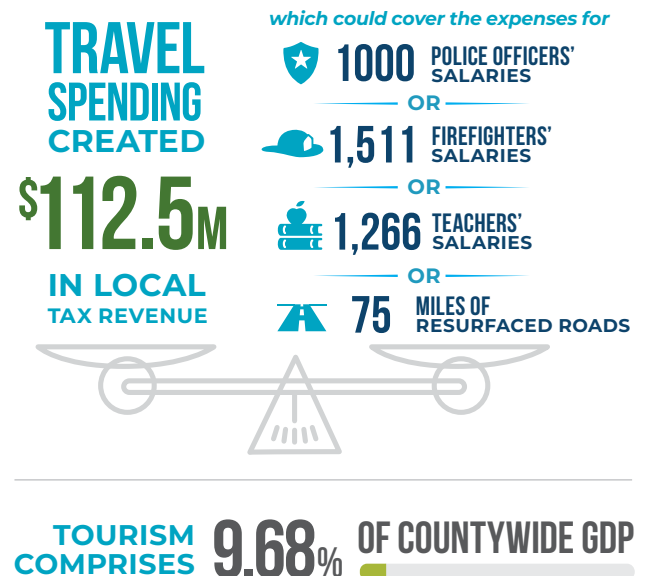


TOURISM CONTRIBUTES



WITHOUT VISITORS
EACH SLO CAL HOUSEHOLD
WOULD NEED TO SPEND **\$21,301**
AN ADDITIONAL
TO CREATE THE SAME ECONOMIC BENEFIT
for the community

WITHOUT STATE & LOCAL TAX REVENUE
GENERATED BY TRAVEL & TOURISM
EACH SLO CAL HOUSEHOLD WOULD
PAY AN ADDITIONAL
\$1,935 in taxes



Data based on 2025 calendar year. Source: Visit SLO CAL, "The Economic Impact of Travel in California" from Dean Runyan Associates, Bureau of Economic Analysis, United States Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Tourism Economics, County of San Luis Obispo Department of Public Works

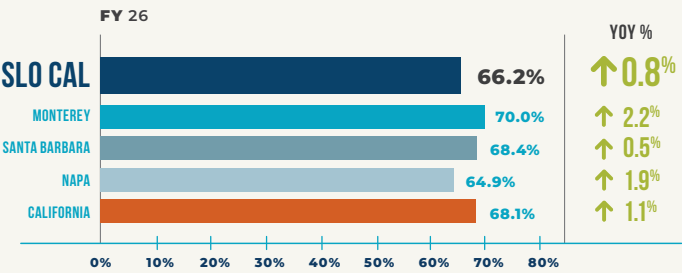
TOURISM DATA INSIGHTS

Visit SLO CAL (VSC) works with the San Luis Obispo region's local municipalities and the County of San Luis Obispo to secure data on transient occupancy tax (TOT) by community that segments the area's unique lodging mix (hotels and motels, short-term rentals, bed and breakfasts and RV parks). VSC continues to provide a weekly and monthly Smith Travel Research (STR) report to its partners while working with Tourism Economics to produce monthly business intelligence reports that combine an array of data from TOT, STR, AirDNA, Azira, VisaVue, Community Benchmark and the SLO County Airport. These reports give VSC's partners and stakeholders a countywide view of how the tourism industry is performing.

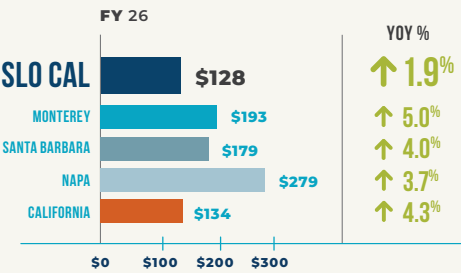


DATA REPORTING

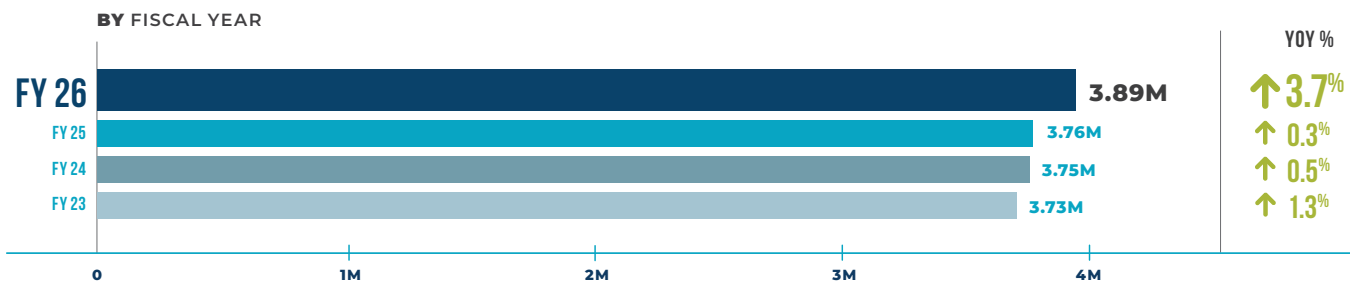
HOTEL OCCUPANCY OCC



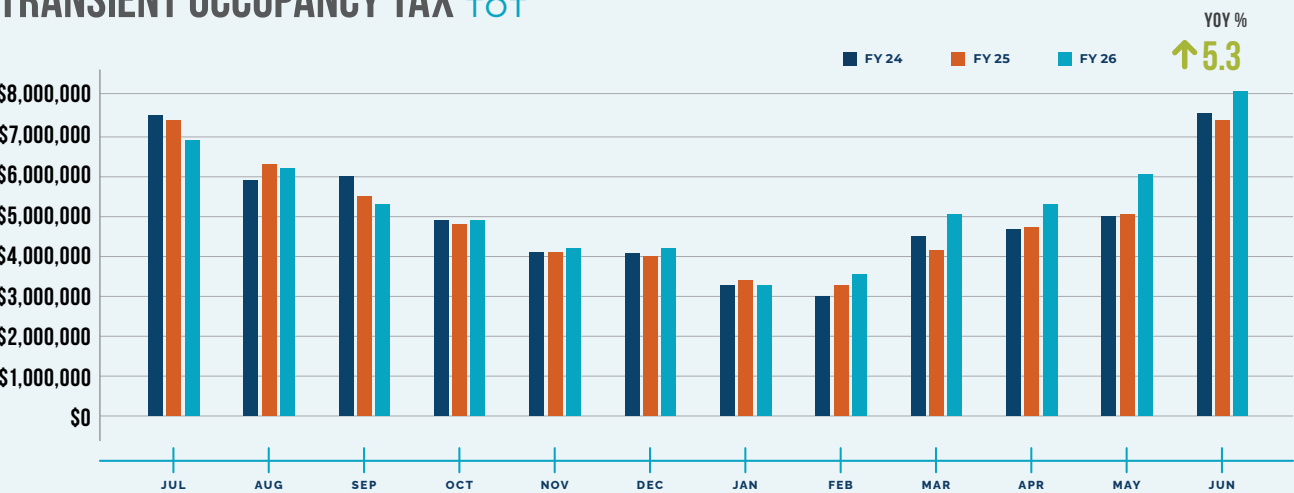
REVENUE PER AVAILABLE ROOM REVPAR



SLO CAL SUPPLY

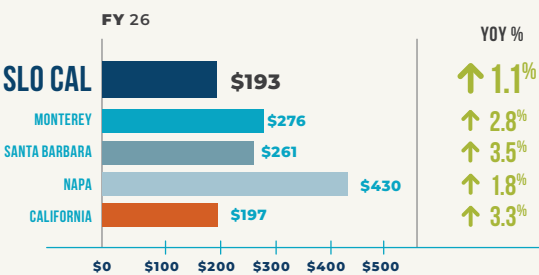


TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX TOT

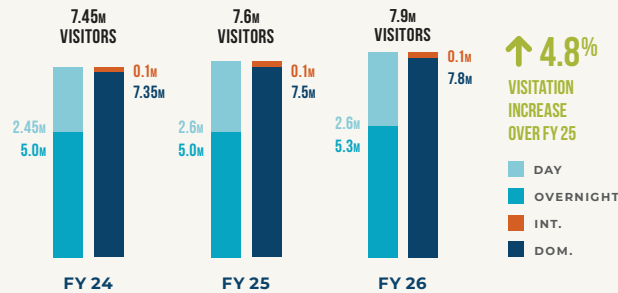


July 2025 – June 2026 Source: Visit SLO CAL, Tourism Economics, CoStar Group, STR, LLC. Based on unaudited tax revenues. Replication of other reuse of this data without the express written permission of STR, LLC is strictly prohibited. Data as of September 2026.

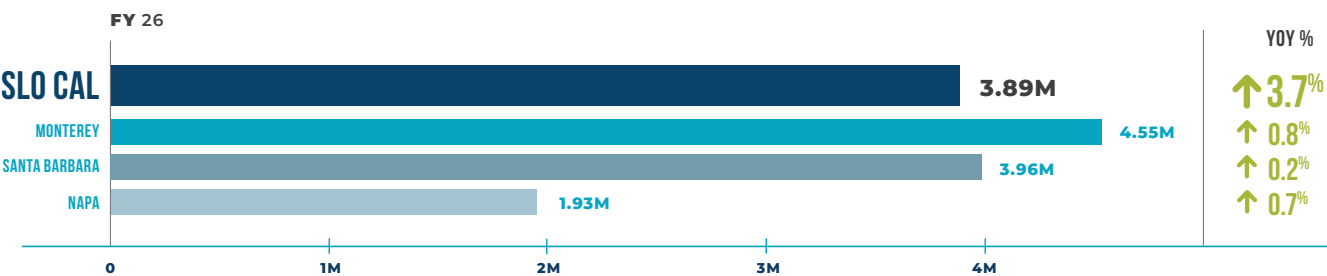
AVERAGE DAILY RATE ADR



VISITOR VOLUME



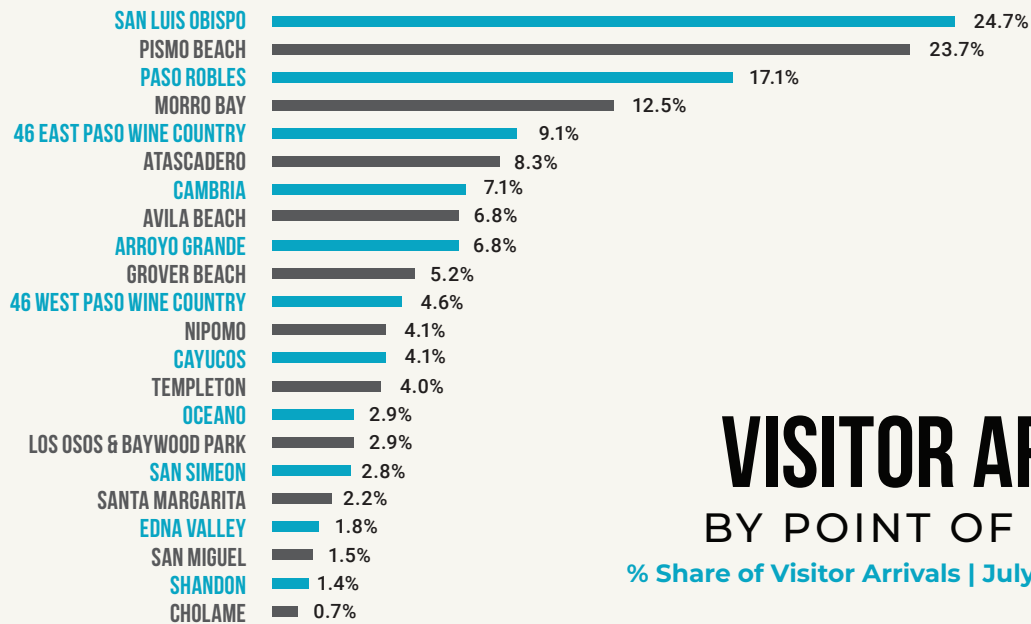
COMPETITIVE MARKET SUPPLY



ARRIVALS AND VISITATION

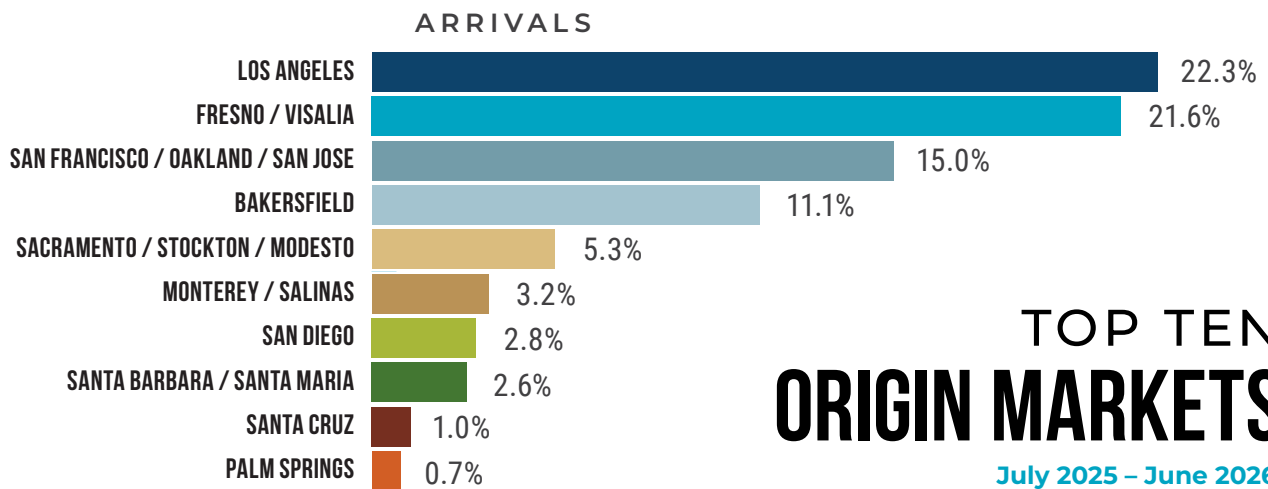
In partnership with Azira and Tourism Economics, Visit SLO CAL (VSC) provides its partners and stakeholders with insights on visitor arrivals to SLO CAL (San Luis Obispo County), covering key points of interest (POI), arrival times, origins, cross-visitation, length of stay and campaign lift driven by paid media and organic traffic, informing and assessing VSC's advertising efforts.





VISITOR ARRIVALS BY POINT OF INTEREST

% Share of Visitor Arrivals | July 2025 – June 2026



TOP TEN ORIGIN MARKETS

July 2025 – June 2026

CROSS-VISITATION

1.4

COMMUNITIES PER
UNIQUE ARRIVAL

July 2025 – June 2026

LENGTH OF STAY

1.9

DAYS

July 2025 – June 2026

Sources: Azira and Tourism Economics. Data as of September 2026. POI boundaries were updated in FY 25 for greater geographic accuracy; data is not directly comparable to previous years. Percentage share of visitors and origin markets represents data from tracked devices and does not estimate total devices or total visitors.

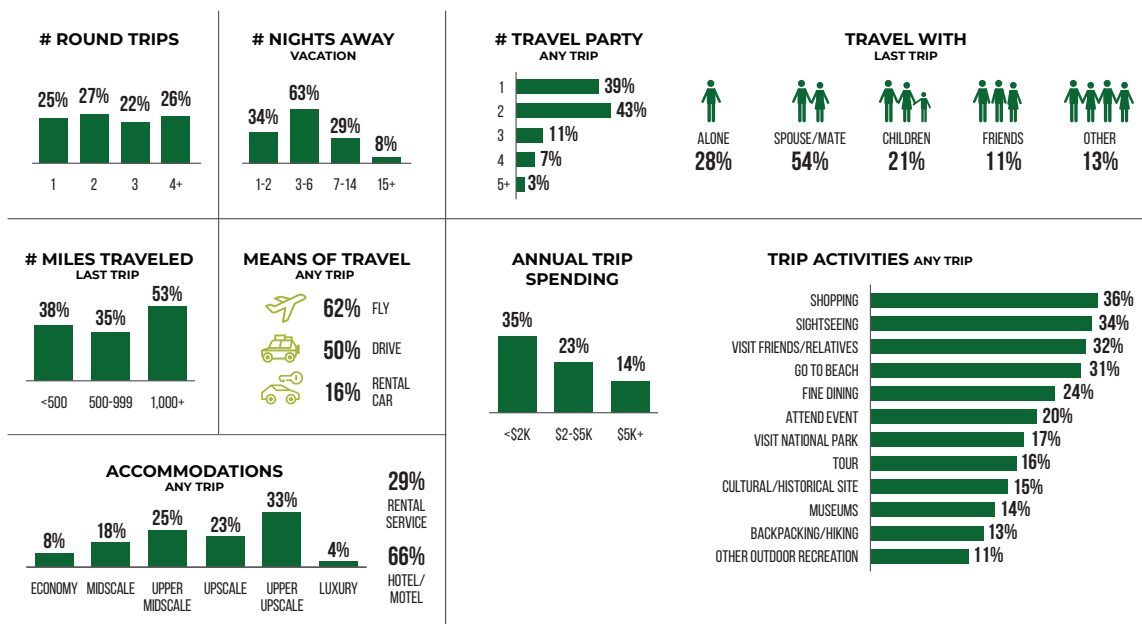


VISITOR PROFILE STUDY

In summer 2025, Visit SLO CAL (VSC) engaged research firm Heart+Mind Strategies to explore how current and prospective visitors have evolved since the 2021 Visitor Profile Study, surveying 3,000 travelers online across California and key fly market Designated Market Areas (DMAs). The findings directly informed VSC's marketing approach, shaping a new audience framework that evolves the Purposeful Traveler into four segments—Core, Lean, Swing and Uninterested—and sharpening focus on the region's greatest growth opportunity: converting high-propensity travelers into first-time visitors. Spontaneity emerged as a defining trait across these segments, reinforcing the storytelling direction behind *"Turns Well Taken"* and giving rise to a refined target audience, the Spontaneous Traveler, which will anchor VSC's marketing focus in FY 27.

The study found that SLO CAL visitation climbed to 54%, up from 46% in 2021, though the destination continues to trail larger California competitors in familiarity, favorability and intent. Perception improves dramatically after a visit, landing on par with top competitors and underscoring that SLO CAL's core opportunity lies not in appeal but in conversion, turning awareness into a first trip. SLO CAL also earns a strong reputation for warmth, with 88% of travelers describing the region as welcoming. Visitor profiles reveal a base that is evolving, slightly younger, more multicultural and more likely to travel with kids while remaining fiercely loyal, with nearly four in five visitors returning. Trips are increasingly spontaneous, with 69% booked within a month of travel, and drive markets across California represent the strongest opportunity for growth. Families stood out as a particularly high-value segment, outspending other visitor types across lodging, dining and entertainment while visiting more communities and participating in a broader range of activities throughout the county.

THE SPONTANEOUS TRAVELER: DEMOGRAPHICS



Source: MRI-SIMMONS SPRING 2025 Market-by-Market; Visited California base



INTEGRATED STORYTELLING



Throughout FY 26, Visit SLO CAL (VSC) advanced its integrated approach to marketing, weaving authentic storytelling across paid, owned and earned channels. From the craft-driven county exploration of *“Tapped into SLO CAL”* to the invitation to slow down and savor the unexpected in *“Turns Well Taken,”* these productions elevated SLO CAL's voice, deepened brand resonance and showcased the region's breadth of experiences. Each effort was rooted in the values of people, place and pace, reinforcing the destination's distinct identity while driving partner engagement and cross-visitation.

“TURNS WELL TAKEN”

In February 2026, VSC introduced *“Turns Well Taken,”* the brand's new campaign built around the idea that every detour, back road and spontaneous moment can lead to an unforgettable SLO CAL experience. Told from the traveler's perspective, the campaign features visitors sharing their own stories, reflecting the authenticity, charm and welcoming nature that define the destination. True to the destination's unhurried spirit, the campaign champions the freedom to travel without a fixed itinerary and to embrace the surprises along the way. *“Turns Well Taken”* positions SLO CAL as a destination best discovered off-script, one unplanned moment at a time.

Campaign metrics reflect performance from February 2026 – June 2026.

3
VIDEOS
24M
VIDEO VIEWS
210K
LANDING
PAGE VIEWS

“TAPPED INTO SLO CAL”

In April 2026, VSC launched *“Tapped into SLO CAL,”* a five-episode video series created in partnership with Firestone Walker Brewing Company. The series follows Firestone Walker Brewmaster Matt Brynildson's journey to craft a beer that captures the spirit of SLO CAL, weaving craft, community and place together into a single story. That journey came to life in a small-batch SLO CAL Pale Ale, unveiled at the 2026 Firestone Walker Invitational Beer Fest and poured for a limited time at the Firestone Taproom and Emporium. Paid media amplified the series for both local and visitor audiences, extending its reach well beyond the county. By connecting a beloved local craft to the county's broader identity, the series strengthened SLO CAL's positioning as a place where community and craftsmanship come together naturally.

Campaign metrics reflect performance from April 2026 – June 2026.

5
VIDEOS
8.8M
VIDEO VIEWS
68K
LANDING
PAGE VIEWS



PAID MEDIA

Visit SLO CAL (VSC) continues to leverage its partnership with The Shipyard, an independent full-service advertising agency, for creative assets and media buys. In the first half of FY 26, VSC retired *“The Land of...”* brand creative and launched *“Turns Well Taken,”* brought to life through a multichannel paid media strategy that positioned the brand at key touchpoints across the traveler’s planning and booking journey. A cooperative campaign with Sojern extended partner reach and increased targeting toward road trippers following the Highway 1 reopening, while a Visit California co-op with Expedia built awareness among FIFA World Cup soccer fans.

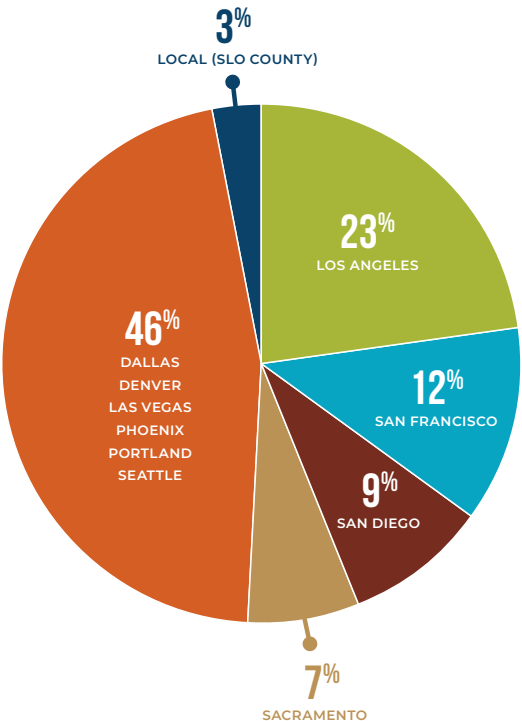
Local visibility remained strong through integrated messaging across television, radio, social media and movie theaters countywide. Together, these paid media efforts kept SLO CAL top of mind throughout the traveler’s journey, strengthening demand and reinforcing the destination’s competitive edge across key markets.

FY 26 PAID MEDIA MIX & BUDGET ALLOCATION

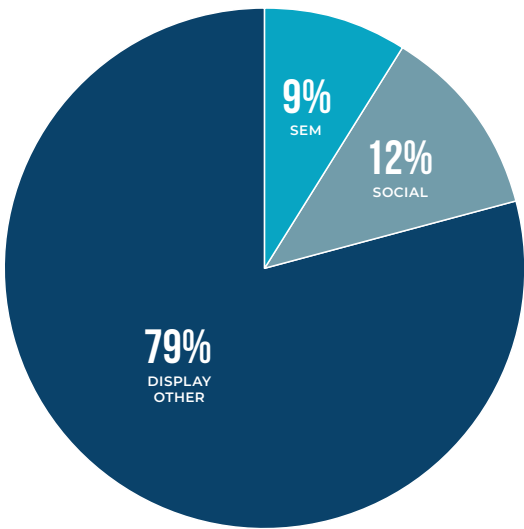
PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT



PAID MEDIA BY MARKET



BREAKDOWN BY CHANNEL





OWNED MEDIA

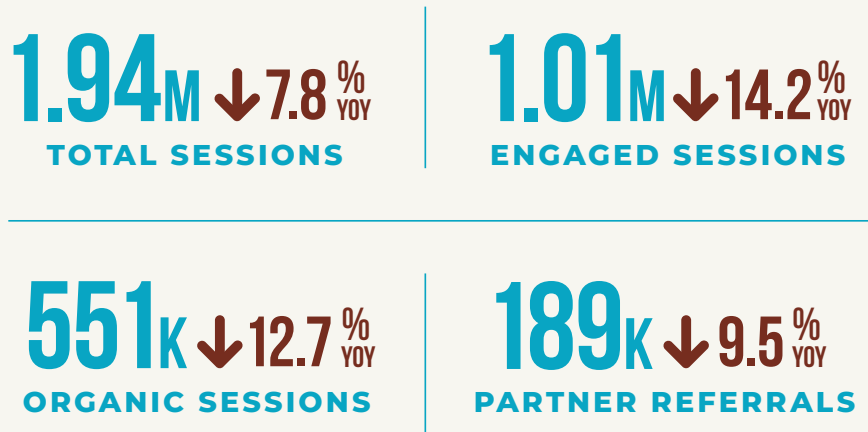


Visit SLO CAL (VSC) sharpened its owned media strategy in FY 26, aligning its website, social media, email marketing and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to deepen engagement and strengthen partner connection. Data guided each step, keeping results measurable across every channel.

WEBSITE | SLOCAL.COM

Search itself changed shape in FY 26. Google’s AI Overviews now appear on roughly a third of desktop search queries, and third-party research shows click-through rates fall by more than half when an AI-generated answer appears above the organic results. It’s a shift playing out across the travel industry, not just at VSC. Rather than wait it out, VSC began building toward what comes next: FY 26 marked the start of a complete digital ecosystem redesign spanning the website, CRM and email systems, with strategic planning for the next iteration of slocal.com already underway.

VSC also worked to make sure SLO CAL content is positioned for how travelers now search. In a three-week sample, AI models cited SLO CAL content nearly as often as it was clicked directly from Google search results. That’s a sign that discovery is moving beyond the traditional results page, and that VSC’s content is already showing up in the new places travelers look. Site-wide, FY 26 priorities included new interactive mapping functionality, a digital asset management system and a full website evaluation and action plan, alongside continued investment in storytelling content to boost share of voice.



OWNED MEDIA Continued

SOCIAL MEDIA

VSC continued its partnership with Pensara to refine and expand its social media approach, moving into Social Strategy 2.0. Grounded in VSC's core brand pillars of people, place and pace, this next phase builds on past successes by adapting content for changing platform algorithms, growing visual search habits and evolving audience expectations.

As travelers grow weary of overly polished, aspirational content and look for something more real, VSC recalibrated its approach to prioritize authentic, experience-driven and relatable storytelling. Rather than generic destination showcases, organic social content now brings the *"Turns Well Taken"* spirit to the feed through real-time event coverage and spontaneous discovery moments. To reach younger audiences with a more unpolished, discovery-driven style, VSC expanded its presence on TikTok, growing published content by nearly 90% year over year. VSC also introduced a refined framework for partner collaborations, giving regional voices a wider platform and encouraging cross-visitation across the county.

Despite a challenging global environment in which social engagement has softened industry-wide, VSC's organic performance remained resilient. The channel's strategy widened visibility through popular formats like multi-slide carousels and narrative reels, keeping VSC's results above industry benchmarks. Looking ahead to FY 27, this refined approach positions VSC to protect long-term brand consistency and content authenticity while deepening audience connection across every channel.

FY 26 ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS ACROSS ALL PLATFORMS

6.6M ↑ **9%** YOY
TOTAL IMPRESSIONS

14.8k ↑ **67%** YOY
AUDIENCE GROWTH

3.3% ↓ **1.2%** YOY
ENGAGEMENT RATE

CONSUMER NEWSLETTER

In FY 26, VSC redesigned the newsletter layout featuring a clearer visual hierarchy and expanded use of color to better reflect the SLO CAL brand. The refreshed design allows readers to scan content more easily and quickly find trip inspiration and key calls to action.

VSC also continued expanding interest and location-based segmentation to deliver more customized content to its newsletter audience. This was combined with ongoing A/B testing, with a particular focus on interactive content and presentation, resulting in increased engagement.

995 ↑ **59.2%** YOY
E-NEWSLETTER SIGNUPS

1.99% ↑ **15.5%** YOY*
E-NEWSLETTER CLICK RATE

41.4% ↑ **29.8%** YOY*
E-NEWSLETTER OPEN RATE

**FY 26 figures above reflect only the consumer newsletter sends.*

VISITOR MAGAZINE

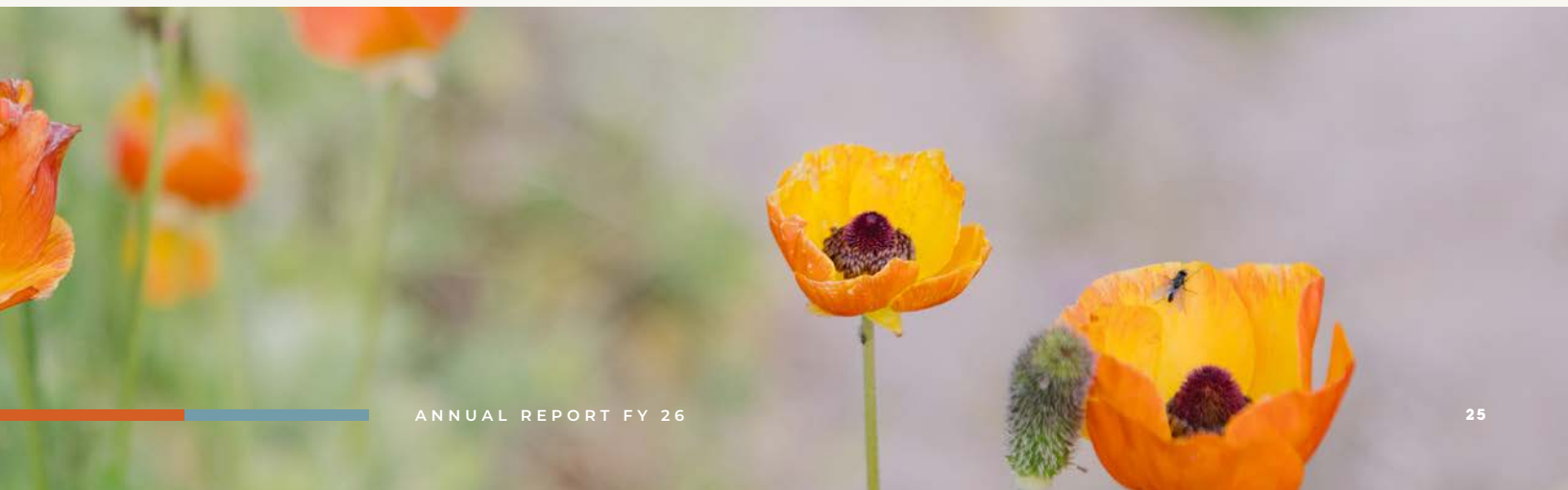
In FY 26, VSC built on the momentum from last year's edition, with advertising sales remaining strong. The focus was on refreshing the content with story highlights, including ways to play outside in SLO CAL, an extensive wine guide and itinerary-style road trip ideas. Additionally, VSC outsourced distribution fulfillment, increasing staff efficiency while keeping costs low.

The magazine serves in-market guests and inspires travel to the region through direct mail-to-consumer efforts, as well as promotional placement in key drive-market destinations.

43.1k ↑ **3.2%** YOY
VISITOR MAGAZINES DISTRIBUTED

5,311 ↑ **38%** YOY
DIGITAL EDITION READS

1,725 ↓ **10%** YOY
CONSUMER ORDERS





EARNED MEDIA



In FY 26, Visit SLO CAL (VSC) partnered with domestic PR agency TURNER Public Relations and Visit California, working with local destination partners, investors and stakeholders on targeted pitches, in-market meetings, co-op opportunities and familiarization (FAM) tours. VSC represented SLO CAL at key industry events, including Brand USA Travel Week in London, Visit California's Outlook Forum and U.S. Travel's IPW, and hosted media missions in Los Angeles and Phoenix. Locally, VSC pitched top-tier reporters on signature events, including both the SLO CAL Open and National Travel and Tourism Week, during which SLO CAL celebrated a record year in visitation. The Firestone Walker Brewing Company partnership also generated local coverage, spotlighting the debut of the SLO CAL Pale Ale and the region's distinct character.

VSC also partnered with See Monterey to host San Francisco-based creator Camille Scherr, whose scenic content along Highway 1, from San Luis Obispo to Monterey County, supported the Highway 1 reopening and "Turns Well Taken" campaigns, repositioning the coastal route as a flexible, no-rush road trip in its own right.

TURNER also secured a visit from a Sacramento-based creator, whose family stops in Paso Robles, San Simeon and Pismo Beach positioned SLO CAL as an easy, family-friendly escape from FIFA World Cup crowds in San Francisco and Los Angeles.



TOTAL

448 ARTICLES

\$17.9m AD VALUE EQUIVALENCY

2.7b IMPRESSIONS





PARTNERSHIPS & EVENTS



In FY 26, Visit SLO CAL (VSC) identified new partnership opportunities, deepened existing relationships and expanded visibility through events and sponsorships. The highlights below reflect VSC's continued investment in delivering value to its partners.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES & SLO CAL CONNECTION

VSC onboarded 342 new partner accounts in FY 26, extending partnership opportunities to more local tourism businesses. The partner portal, SLO CAL Connection, also saw stronger engagement, with active logins up 15% year over year.

More than 1,135 unique partner accounts benefited from VSC's promotional efforts this year, including blog mentions, social media features, inclusion in marketing campaigns, FAM tours, events and other key programs. Additionally, partners can now track these benefits directly through SLO CAL Connection.

IN-KIND EVENT SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

VSC continued its In-Kind Sponsorship program in FY 26, supporting six local events selected through the application process, with each event promoted across VSC's owned channels: social media, blog content, the website and newsletter features.

"SLO CAL CRAFTED" PROGRAM

VSC expanded its *"SLO CAL Crafted"* initiative this year, partnering with the Cal Poly Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship Small Business Development Center to launch the Crafted Connections networking and education series. The four-part event series, designed specifically for makers and small local businesses, engaged current and new partners while giving them access to valuable resources. The series covered social media and PR, alongside peer-to-peer conversation and dedicated networking time.

PARTNERSHIPS & EVENTS Continued

SLO CAL SUMMIT

VSC's annual SLO CAL Summit returned to the Embassy Suites in San Luis Obispo in November 2025, selling out with over 260 attendees, including government officials, local partners, investors, stakeholders and hospitality leaders. Cathy Cartier marked the 10th anniversary of the formation of the Tourism Marketing District, highlighting its major accomplishments and impact, while Molly Cano provided an update on VSC's marketing programs, including the launch of the new brand campaign, *"Turns Well Taken."* Speakers included Caroline Beteta, president & CEO of Visit California, who shared state-level updates, and Mike Dabadie, CEO & founding partner of Heart+Mind Strategies, who spoke on SLO CAL's visitor profile. Dabadie then joined Dr. Ryan Olson of the University of Virginia for a fireside chat on human flourishing. A panel on autonomous innovation featured Ron Price, president & CEO of Visit Phoenix, and Mike O'Shaughnessy, deputy aviation director of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. The two shared their experience bringing Waymo to Phoenix. The evening closed with a networking reception and *"SLO CAL Crafted"* showcase, including a pop-up market with eight vendors.

SPARTAN RACE

VSC served as the host sponsor for Spartan Race at Santa Margarita Ranch in November 2025. The two-day event drew 8,772 racers and spectators, with only 618 of them local by zip code, underscoring its draw as a visitor event. Spartan's promotion of the SLO CAL region across paid and owned channels generated 6.9 million combined impressions, views and engagements. VSC, alongside co-op sponsors the City of San Luis Obispo and the City of Atascadero, also ran an on-site activation with photo ops, lawn games and a giveaway to collect visitor data and build brand awareness.

SLO CAL OPEN

VSC continued another year as title sponsor of the SLO CAL Open, hosted by the World Surf League (WSL) at Morro Bay and Pismo Beach. Both events served as tour stops in the 2025–26 North America Qualifying Series: a Regional QS 2000 in Morro Bay (December 4–7, 2025) and a Regional QS 2000 plus Pro Junior competition in Pismo Beach (January 19–25, 2026). Together they drew surfers from around the world.

The two events combined for a strong paid media investment, with 4.3 million impressions across WSL platforms; 54,000 views of event pages, live streams and results; and 52,600 in social media and YouTube engagement. Coverage extended to 82 press mentions across print, radio, online and TV, generating a strong earned media return as well.

COMMUNITY EVENT ACTIVATIONS

VSC exhibited at five local events this year: the Arroyo Grande Harvest Festival, Open Farm Days Farmer Marketplace in Paso Robles, the Downtown SLO Farmers' Market during Cal Poly's Open House, SLO County Airport's Girls in Aviation Day and the Firestone Walker Invitational Beer Fest. At each, VSC team members handed out swag, engaged visitors and locals and collected newsletter signups. At the Firestone Walker Invitational Beer Fest, VSC debuted the SLO CAL Pale Ale created with Firestone Walker Brewing Company, pouring it for the first time alongside swag giveaways and conversations with attendees.





SALES

In FY 26, Visit SLO CAL (VSC) placed a greater strategic focus on growing the county's group and meetings segment. VSC expanded its trade show presence with meetings-focused events, such as Connect Marketplace in August 2025, and continued to strengthen relationships with planners through Smart Meetings' Epicurean Experience and North Star Meetings' Destination California, connecting with qualified meeting planners sourcing incentive travel, corporate meetings and wellness retreats. The year's centerpiece was VSC's meeting planner FAM tour in August 2025, the first hosted in a decade, which brought planners to experience SLO CAL firsthand and generated strong momentum for future group business.

On the travel trade side, VSC entered new territory by attending the American Bus Association Marketplace in January 2026, a trade show dedicated to tour and travel operators that is a natural fit for SLO CAL's hotel product. The timing was ideal with Highway 1 reopening in January of 2026, VSC could once again promote the iconic coastal route as a reestablished pathway for touring itineraries throughout the state. VSC also showcased the destination at U.S. Travel's IPW in May 2026 and Brand USA Travel Week in October 2025, two premier events for cultivating relationships with domestic and international tour operators and increasing visitation to SLO CAL.

VSC continued to deepen its international travel trade relationships through a robust slate of FAM tours. Over the year, VSC hosted six FAM tours in partnership with Visit California, engaging top decision-makers from Canada, China, Korea, the UK, Ireland, Italy and Australia. Each tour provided firsthand experience of SLO CAL, sharpening each country's ability to sell the destination and reinforcing SLO CAL's presence across key international markets.

Together, a full calendar of trade shows, sales missions and FAM tours reflects VSC's expanded, multipronged approach to sales in FY 26, which strengthened SLO CAL's position in the group and meetings market while sustaining momentum on the international travel trade front, particularly as Highway 1 reopens key pathways for touring throughout the state.

2025

AUGUST

VSC Meeting Planner Tour (FAM)
Connect Marketplace

SEPTEMBER

North Star Destination California
Site SoCal Networking Luncheon

OCTOBER

Brand USA Travel Week
Smart Meetings: Epicurean Experience

NOVEMBER

UK Reverse Sales Mission (FAM)
Alidays Italy Familiarization Tour (FAM)

2026

JANUARY

American Bus Association Marketplace

MARCH

Bonotel Exclusive Travel Familiarization Tour (FAM)
VCA UK, Canada, Korea Office Familiarization Tour (FAM)

APRIL

VCA China Familiarization Tour (FAM)

MAY

U.S. Travel's IPW

JUNE

Visit California Australia/Delta Familiarization Tour (FAM)

177
APPOINTMENTS

6
TRADE SHOWS

545
LEADS*

559
BUYERS TRAINED

7
FAMS

**Lead: A connection or opportunity provided to local investors and partners to book business, promote their company or host travel buyers and meeting planners to experience their product.*



FILM SLO CAL



Film SLO CAL (FSC), the official film commission for the county and a division of VSC, supported another active slate of productions in FY 26, spanning national commercials, streaming projects, music videos and independent shoots across the region. Momentum got a boost from Sacramento: California expanded its film tax credit program in 2025, adding new eligible production categories, softening several restrictions and increasing available funding. FSC spent FY 26 working to position SLO CAL to capture that opportunity. The program is still early in its rollout, but the added interest from productions and scouts has been encouraging.

FSC also delivered on all three of its FY 26 key results: FSC refreshed its microsite with updated location assets and resource content, held a location FAM tour and permitting partner mixer alongside the SLO International Film Festival, and shared produced video footage filmed in SLO CAL to its LinkedIn page. Strengthening the commission's digital infrastructure and raising its visibility with the industry drove all three efforts.



51 PRODUCTIONS



34 LEADS*



85 FILMING DAYS



\$789k ESTIMATED
SPEND IN SLO CAL

*Lead: A connection or inquiry from a filmmaker, production company or industry professional seeking information about SLO CAL as a filming location.



ADVOCACY

In FY 26, Visit SLO CAL (VSC) deepened established partnerships, backed local coalitions with data and testimony, and stayed focused on the issues carrying the most weight for SLO CAL's tourism economy, including Highway 1, last-mile transportation and the policy decisions shaping the region's future. Tourism depends on functioning infrastructure, a supported workforce and policies shaped with both visitors and residents in mind. VSC's advocacy work is built around protecting that balance by holding seats on state and national industry boards, participating in legislative hearings and engaging in community conversations to ensure the industry's priorities are represented.

TOURISM ADVOCACY PARTNERSHIPS

In FY 26, VSC's board seats, chamber memberships and committee participation across SLO CAL carried over unchanged from FY 25, keeping the organization at the table with CalTravel, U.S. Travel and local business and government affairs committees. VSC deepened that engagement at CalTravel's Advocacy Day in May 2026, where VSC representatives were nominated to lead a district group and met with staff from Senator John Laird's office, met directly with Assemblymember Dawn Addis and other elected officials outside SLO CAL's district. These meetings advanced support for tourism-friendly legislation, including SB 917 (expanding winery sales at farmers markets), SB 963 (streamlining the coastal development appeal process) and SB 690 (protecting small businesses from costly online privacy lawsuits). VSC carried this advocacy to the national level at U.S. Travel's Destination Capitol Hill, where the team met directly with Congressman Salud Carbajal on the region's federal priorities.

LEGISLATIVE ENDORSEMENTS & ADVOCACY SUPPORT

In FY 26, VSC secured several legislative endorsements and expressions of support for tourism across SLO CAL. Highlights include a certificate of recognition from Assemblymember Addis's office, public recognition of VSC's partnership on the Avila Roundabout timeline and a proclamation from the County Board of Supervisors honoring National Travel and Tourism Week.

HIGHWAY 1 ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT

In FY 26, VSC's sustained advocacy for Highway 1 kept the corridor's reopening front and center for state and regional decision-makers. VSC continued regular conversations with its destination partners to align media campaigns supporting the corridor's economic recovery. In addition to marketing, VSC collaborated with Caltrans to officially celebrate the January 2026 reopening with a press event featuring Assemblymember Addis, Senator Laird, representatives from Congressman Jimmy Panetta's office and local lodging partners. VSC also raised Highway 1 directly with Congressman Carbajal at U.S. Travel's Destination Capitol Hill, keeping the corridor's long-term needs in front of decision-makers at every level of government.

AB 1008 ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT

FY 26 marked the successful conclusion of a multiyear advocacy campaign to expand the availability of Type 47 liquor licenses across SLO CAL. VSC brought SLO CAL-specific data directly to the county's elected leadership and the state legislative delegation, providing the research needed to advance the issue at the state level. That advocacy helped secure Assemblymember Addis's authorship of the bill, which became AB 1008. Signed into law and effective January 2026, AB 1008 authorizes up to 10 additional on-sale general (Type 47) licenses in SLO County. By removing a long-standing barrier to new licenses, the bill is expected to support new restaurant openings, expand SLO CAL's dining and hospitality offerings and strengthen visitor spending tied to food and beverage. It is a clear example of advocacy translating into economic opportunity for the region.

EXPERIENCE SLO CAL 2050

Experience SLO CAL 2050 is VSC's 30-year strategy for the destination, built to grow the visitor economy without losing sight of the people who call SLO CAL home. The work is organized around three pillars: Industry Advancement & Advocacy, Infrastructure & Investment and Experience Development, all aimed at strengthening the region for residents and visitors.

ITEMS VISIT SLO CAL ADVOCATED FOR IN FY 26

COUNTYWIDE TRAIL SYSTEM

In FY 26, VSC took a step toward better promotion of SLO CAL's outdoor experiences by establishing an administrative account on AllTrails to manage the region's trail database. VSC compared the database with trail lists published on county and city websites and, where gaps existed, developed a standard operating procedure for destination partners to upload trails to AllTrails if they choose. VSC will continue to use its marketing channels to raise awareness of lesser-known trails and encourage year-round exploration and cross-visitation.

SLO CAL WELCOME 2.0 – CUSTOMER SERVICE & HOSPITALITY TRAINING

VSC officially launched SLO CAL Welcome 2.0 on July 1, 2025, its reimagined customer service and hospitality training platform. Built on stakeholder feedback gathered in the prior year, the new platform offers improved usability and enriched content at a lower cost, giving frontline teams practical tools to deliver strong customer service across the region. VSC introduced the relaunched program to the industry through press and marketing activities beginning in September 2025, building awareness among local tourism businesses.



TALENT ATTRACTION, DEVELOPMENT & CAREERS

Building on the Regional Tourism Workforce Plan developed with the workforce working group, VSC continued to advocate for the industry and raise awareness of hospitality career opportunities in FY 26 through speaking engagements, SLO CAL Welcome and other community outreach. VSC put the plan into action by participating in SLO Partners' Hospitality Bootcamp and collaborating with Cal Poly, continuing outreach aimed at changing perceptions and sparking interest in hospitality careers across SLO CAL.

STEWARDSHIP IN TOURISM

In FY 26, VSC developed a sustainable event toolkit in collaboration with community partners, including ECOSLO, to establish best practices for eco-conscious event planning. The toolkit, available on VSC's website, provides resources for anyone planning an event in SLO CAL to reduce its environmental impact. It's a direct output of VSC's sustainable tourism strategy, giving partners practical tools they can use right away.



FY 26 FINANCIAL RESULTS

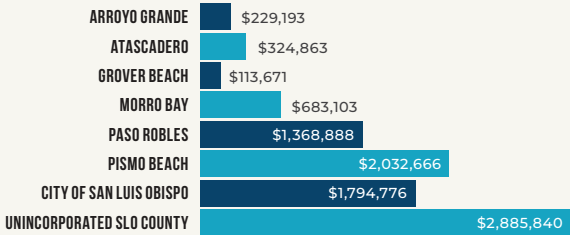
METHOD OF BASIS OF LEVYING ASSESSMENT

The annual assessment rate is 1.5% of gross revenue from short-term lodging stays (stays of 30 or fewer consecutive days). The county and each city collect this assessment from lodging businesses in their jurisdiction monthly or quarterly, including any delinquencies, penalties and/or interest. Within 30 days of collection, the county and cities transfer these assessments to the Tourism Marketing District managed by VSC.

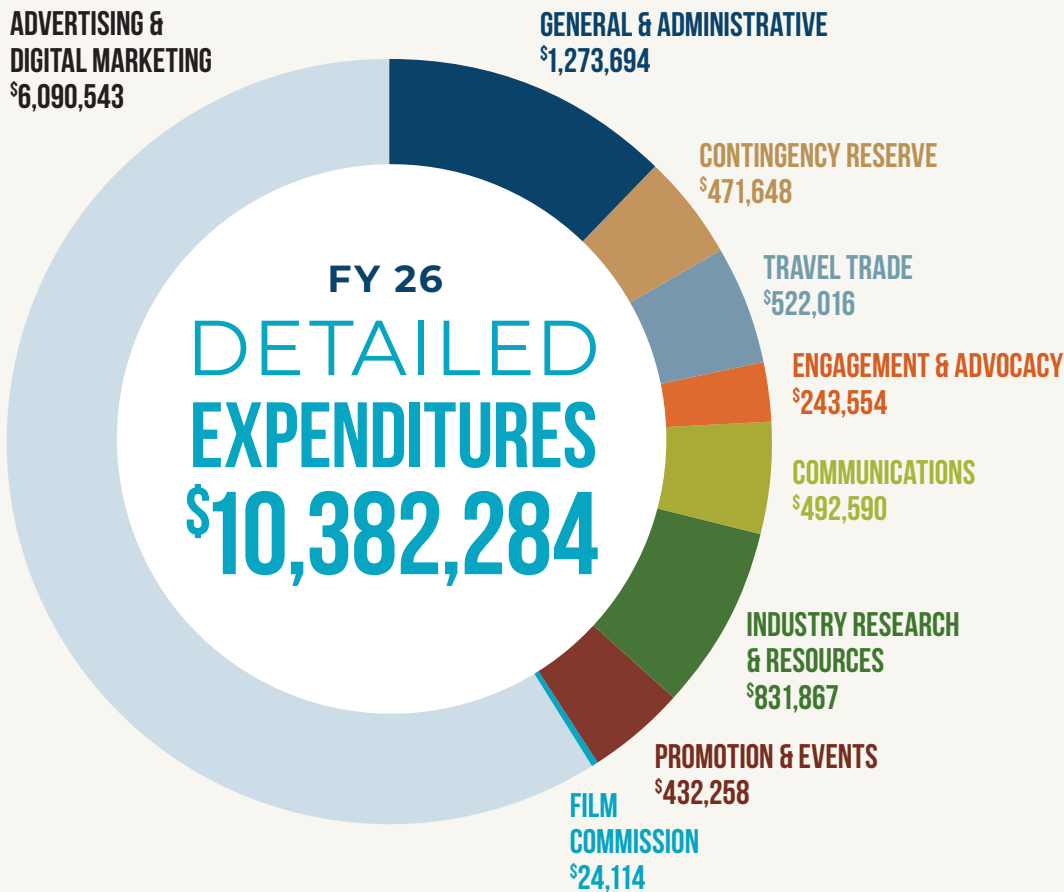
PROPOSED BOUNDARY, ZONE OR CLASSIFICATION CHANGES

There are no proposed boundary, zone or classification changes for the coming year.

FY 26 TOTAL ASSESSED FUNDS*: \$9,433,001



**Collections remitted from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, including adjustments made for current year remittances that varied from accrued amounts.*



FY 27 BUDGET

ESTIMATED COST OF
PROVIDING ACTIVITIES
IN THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR

\$10,289,166

ESTIMATED CONTRIBUTION
FROM TOURISM MARKETING
DISTRICT ASSESSMENT

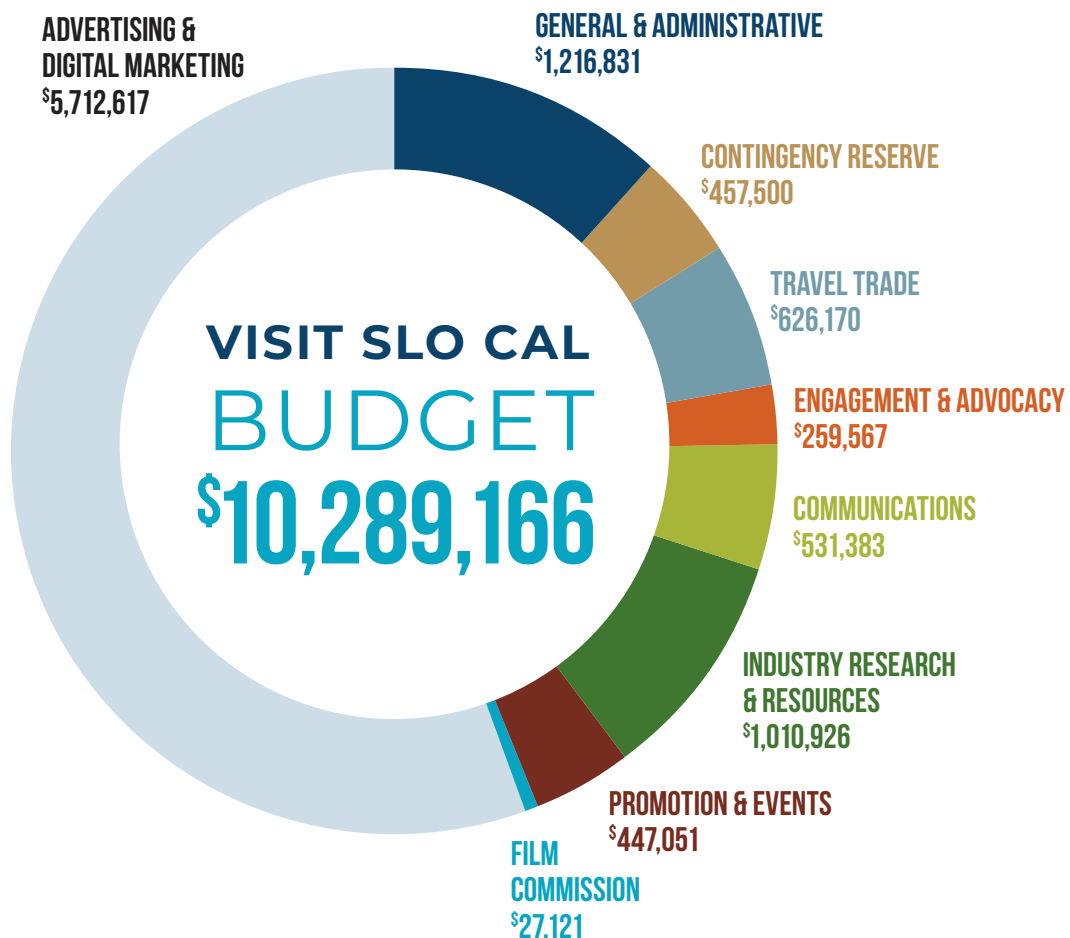
\$9,240,000

ESTIMATED CONTRIBUTION
FROM NON-ASSESSMENT
SOURCES

\$319,403

ESTIMATED PRIOR YEARS'
CUMULATIVE SURPLUS CARRIED
FORWARD TO FY 27

\$1,371,476









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