



ANNUAL REPORT 2019

TRAVEL
TACOMA
MT RAINIER
tourism & sports

Tacoma | Mt Rainier | Crystal Mountain | Lakewood | Puyallup
Sumner | Fife | Gig Harbor | DuPont

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LETTER FROM THE CEO

Tourism Partners,

It takes some effort to think back in time from where we are now, but 2019 was the peak of a decade-long run of growth in almost every sector of the economy, including tourism and hospitality. Tourism numbers broke through the roof, hotels and restaurants had record years, and Travel Tacoma was merging with Tacoma Sports under the banner of Mountain City Sea. We began that process in 2018 – you might remember the twin annual reports – and it was fully realized in 2019.

Having us all under one roof, literally and metaphorically, did a lot of good in 2019 for us and for Pierce County. The economies of scale and alignment of mission allowed our combined organization to focus on generating room nights from all angles: meetings and events, sports, and individual leisure tourism. The focus on room nights was all encompassing – it still is – and has only grown since then.

“The focus on room nights was all encompassing – it still is – and has only grown since then.”

The look back at 2019 gives us something else as well: a high-water mark. It reminds us what was once possible, and what will be possible again. We don't look back with sentimentality or nostalgia, but with a renewed sense of thankfulness and purpose.

Thankfulness, to be working with the team here at Travel Tacoma, alongside you in the tourism and hospitality communities in Pierce County. Purpose, to be trusted with the mission to bring visitors, whether they're leisure visitors, athletes, spectators, event attendees, or meeting delegates, to a destination that I think we all agree can be transformative. As you read through this report about a time that is behind us, I hope you join me in seeing it as a standard to measure what's ahead of us.



Dean Burke

President and CEO

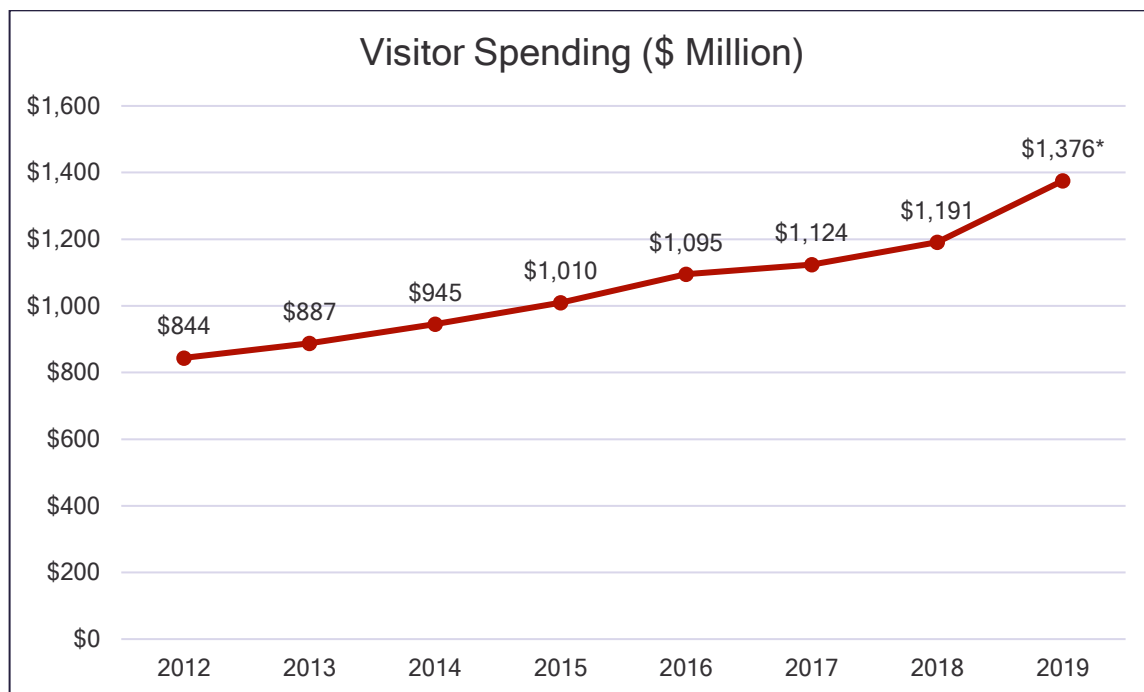
Travel Tacoma – Mt. Rainier Tourism and Sports

TOURISM IMPACT

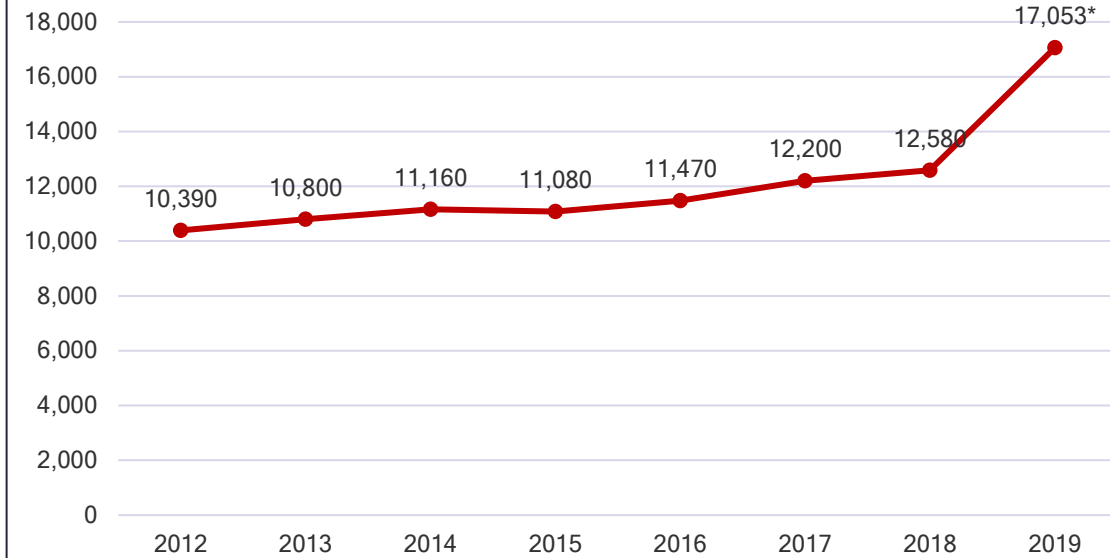
Each year, the Department of Revenue reports tax information that is collected and interpreted by a third party to determine visitor spending and the number of visitors to Pierce County, as well as tourism-related employment and earnings.

As you'll see below, this data shows that tourism continues to bring a lot of money into the local economy by employing locals; by visitors spending money at local businesses such as restaurants, hotels, retail, etc.; and by taxes paid by visitors that end up going to fund local schools, emergency response, roads, etc.

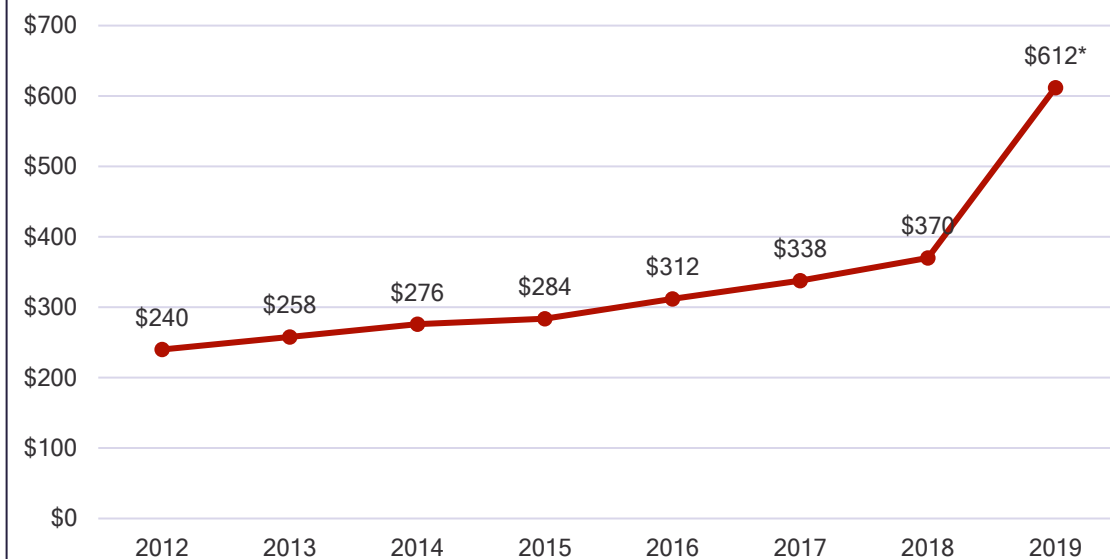
- **2019 Visitor Spending:** \$1,376,000,000
- **2019 Visitor Volume:** 9,177,034



Jobs Created by Tourism in Pierce County



Earnings Created by Tourism in Pierce County (\$ Millions)



**In 2019, the Washington Tourism Alliance transitioned from using Dean Runyan Associates for tourism data to Tourism Economics. While there is a continuity of the type of data being reported, the methods used to interpret it may have changed.*

Source: Dean Runyan and Tourism Economics

HOTEL INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE

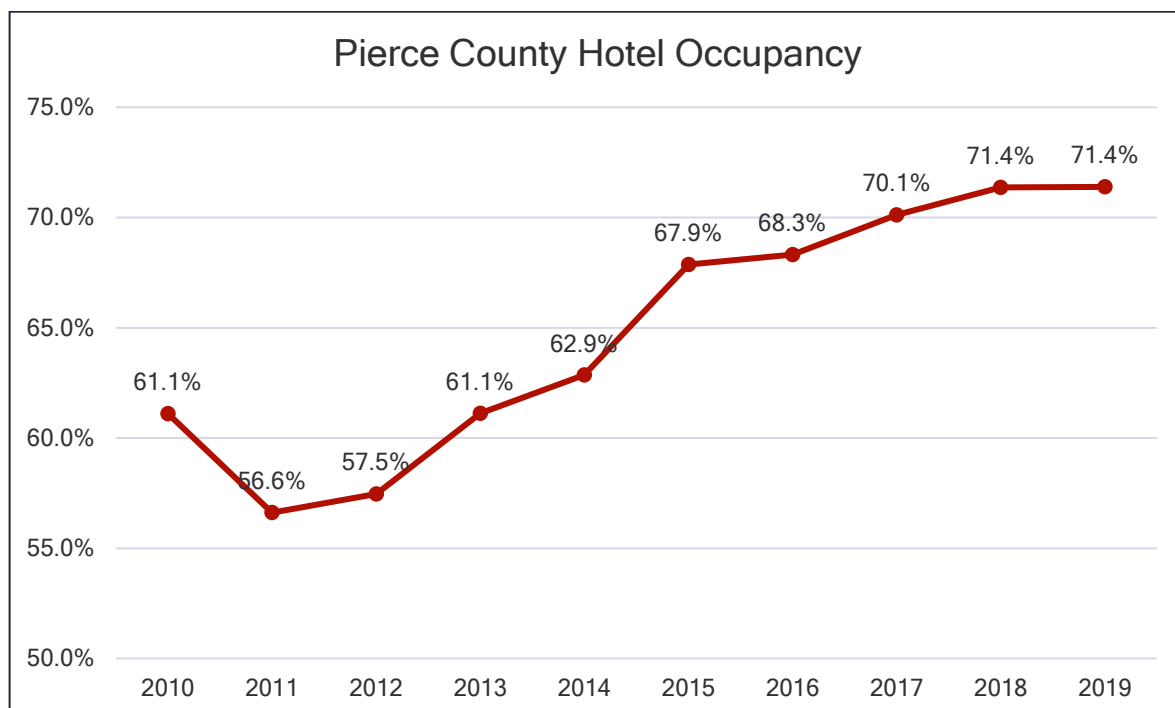
Hotels in Pierce County report their own performance data (occupancy, average daily rate, revenue per available room, overall revenue, and demand) to STR, a third party that collects the data and reports it in aggregate to Travel Tacoma. With that data, we track overall hotel performance.

2019 marked the continuation of a 10-year national economic growth cycle that began in 2010, making it one of the longest growth cycles in the country's history. However, the growth from 2018 to 2019 had slowed to minimal, and marked the lowest year-over-year growth within the cycle. Nationally, occupancy remained flat at 66.1%.

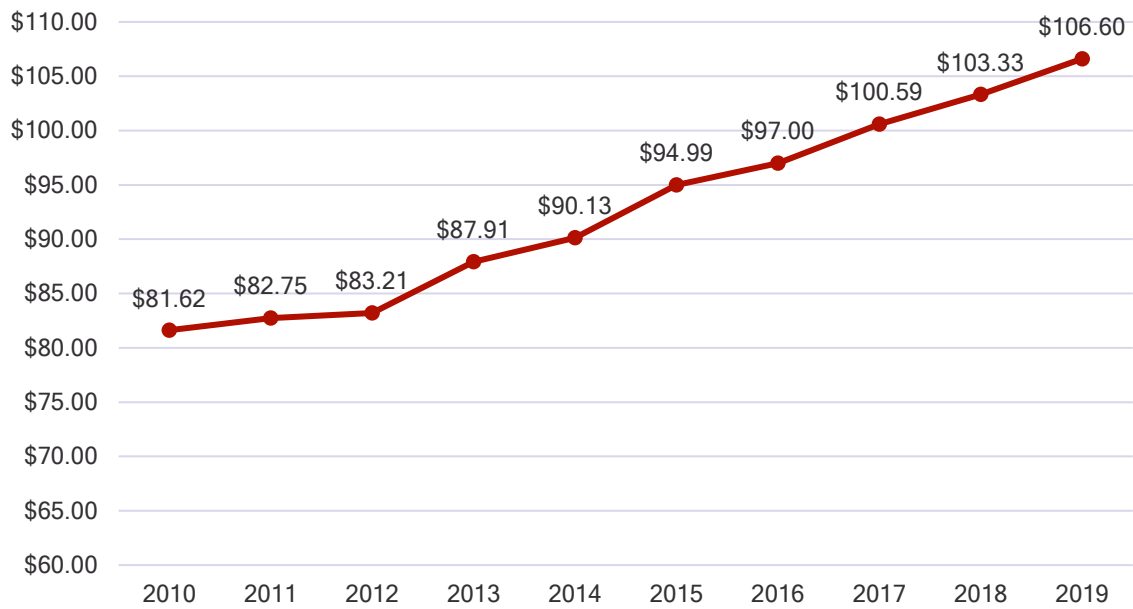
In Pierce County, occupancy also remained flat at 71.4%. We continued to see growth in all other metrics we track, including Average Daily Rate (ADR), Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR), demand, and overall revenue.

Hotel demand in Pierce County in 2019 rose to a record 1.58 million rooms sold.

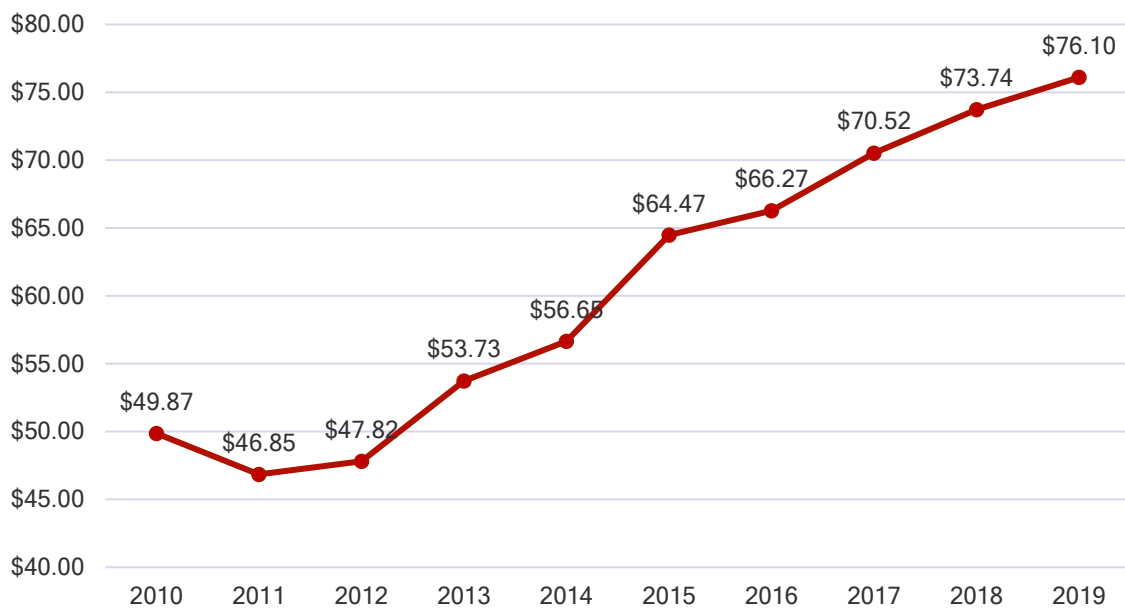
- **2019 Hotel Occupancy:** 71.4% (even year-over-year)
- **2019 Hotel Demand:** 1.58 million rooms sold (up 0.6% year-over-year)
- **2019 Hotel Revenue:** \$168 million – (up 3.7% year-over-year)



Pierce County Average Daily Rate (ADR)



Pierce County Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)



Source: STR

TRAVEL TACOMA BY THE NUMBERS

Goals and Actuals

Throughout the year, Travel Tacoma works to achieve contracted goals, and regularly track and report on our progress against those goals. These are the results for 2019:

Sales and Servicing

Meetings and Booked Events	2019 Actual	2019 Goal
Sales Booked Room Nights	19,799	19,000
Service Requests Booked	24	15
Total Combined Economic Impact	\$19,122,901	~

Convention Services	2019 Actual	2019 Goal
Customer Surveys Rated as 4 or Better	94%	80%

Marketing

Digital	2019 Actual	2019 Goal
New Website Visitors	413,214	250,000
New Social Media Followers	4,636	~
Overall Social Media Followers	34,667	39,000

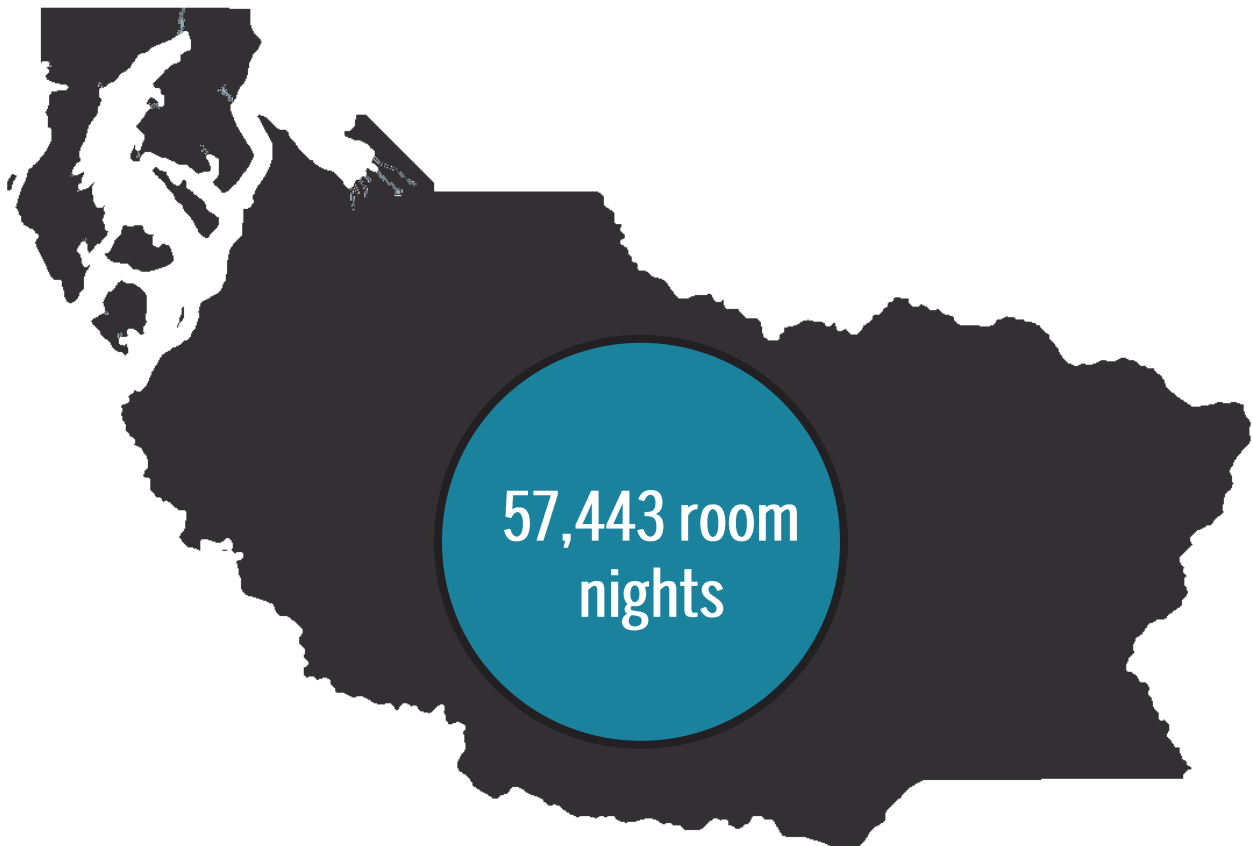
Media Relations	2019 Actual	2019 Goal
Published Articles	477	200

THE BUSINESS OF GENERATING ROOM NIGHTS

Travel Tacoma – Mt. Rainier Tourism and Sports maintains a constant, direct focus on generating hotel room nights throughout the year, through all channels of our business: Meetings and Conventions; Sports; and Individual Leisure Marketing.

Through our work developing and attracting sporting events, working to host meetings, events, and conventions, and attracting leisure visitors, **Travel Tacoma directly generated 57,443 room nights in 2019**. This is the **minimum** number of room nights we booked, bid for, recruited, sold, or otherwise ensured happened. Not included are those visitors who were influenced or inspired to visit Pierce County by Travel Tacoma's marketing activities. You can read more about those on page 14, below.

Those room nights that were directly generated by Travel Tacoma equate to just over 3.6% of all the hotel rooms sold in Pierce County in 2019.



THE BUSINESS OF GENERATING ROOM NIGHTS

Meetings and Conventions

While we report on meetings and events that came to Pierce County in a given year, the effort to bring them here often began years ago. Likewise, in any given year, Travel Tacoma's sales team spends a significant portion of its efforts booking future business at the Greater Tacoma Convention Center and other Pierce County venues. Therefore, in this report, we'll make the important distinction between our results for 2019 in terms of "business realized" and "future business booked."

Business **Delivered** in 2019

- Room nights: 20,188
- Meetings and events: 295
- Attendees: 125,182
- Economic impact: \$20,044,634

Future Business **Booked** in 2019 (2019-2024)

- Room nights: 19,835
- Meetings and events: 332
- Projected attendees: 130,422
- Projected economic impact: \$18,982,403

Highlights from 2019

- Signature Equipo Vision – 921 room nights
- American Public Works Association – Washington State Chapter – 1,030 room nights
- Washington State Governors Industrial Safety & Health Advisory Board – 1,100 room nights
- The Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers – 1,100 room nights

THE BUSINESS OF GENERATING ROOM NIGHTS

Sports

Business **Delivered** in 2019

- Room nights: 35,844
- Number of events: 48
- Attendees: 182,890
- Estimated direct spending: \$13,200,000

Highlights from 2019

- Tacoma - Charity Choice (Gymnastics) has been a large anchor gymnastics event for the South Sound for many years now. It executed in 2020 and is at-risk for 2021
- WIAA Events are always large room night events – All combined 2019 State Championships, in the South Sound, brought 8,523 room nights
- Tacoma Dome - WSWA Folkstyle Wrestling brought 714 room nights
- Rainier Challenge Soccer Championships, Boys and Girls, over two weeks in Puyallup brought 2,149 room nights
- Junior Olympic Track & Field Regionals in brought 3,671 room nights to Tacoma and Lakewood
- Revolution July JiuJitsu Tournament in Tacoma brought 1,517 room nights
- Fort Steilacoom Invitational (Cross Country) in Lakewood brought 1,189 room nights
- USA Cycling Cyclocross National Championships at Fort Steilacoom in Lakewood closed the year with 4,218 room nights in December

THE BUSINESS OF GENERATING ROOM NIGHTS

Individual Leisure

Business **Delivered** in 2019

- Room nights: 1,411
- Individual campaigns: 6

Highlights from 2019

In addition to overall destination marketing, social media marketing, email marketing, etc., the Travel Tacoma marketing team ran specific campaigns with room night deliverables. Among those:

- **The Great Race** – A road rally of more than 100 classic, collector vehicles brought drivers, supporters and fans to Lakewood and Tacoma - 513 room nights
- **Attraction Pass** – Bundling some of Pierce County's top attractions into one pass – 115 room nights
- **Group Leisure Tour Operators** – Attended tour operator trade shows, and followed up with contacts to book FAM tours and develop collateral for the group tour operator market - 183 room nights
- **TripAdvisor** – Placing digital ads and sponsoring landing pages for Tacoma, Puyallup, Lakewood, Fife, Gig Harbor, Sumner and DuPont on the world's number-one tool for trip planning – 429 room nights

ACTIVITIES ON BEHALF OF TOURISM

Meetings and Conventions Program Highlights

- **Fam Tours** – Hosted regional familiarization tours and site visits at the Greater Tacoma Convention Center with planners to recruit and persuade business decisions.
- **Meetings and Conferences** - Participated in one-on-one appointments with meeting planners at more than seven industry conferences.
- **Client Events** - Outbound sales efforts including sales calls and hosted client events in the mid-west and east coast.
- **Sponsorships** - Sponsored industry events and conferences to build destination exposure and interest.

Sports Program Highlights

- **Organizers and Governing Bodies** - Worked with event organizers and national governing bodies (WIAA, NCAA and others) to identify ideal locations, venues, and timing for upcoming events. This included working with public and private partners to organize site tours.
- **Bids** - Submitted bids to targeted events, reviewing and assessing each for sustainability, ability to generate a target number of room nights, potential growth, and return on investment.
- **Regional Partnerships** - Continued a multi-venue, multi-agency regional partnership that seeks to attract high-level NCAA events by highlighting the combined assets of the entire South Sound area.

THE INFLUENCED AND THE INSPIRED

Some Travel Tacoma marketing activities happen outside the scope of measured marketing campaigns. They still generate room nights, but we do not report them because they can't be quantified or tracked. This is the influenced layer, or the inspired layer, and it exists in every market, whether it is tourism or the retail sale of athletic shoes.

When deciding where to take a trip, whose ad did the visitor respond to? Which Instagram photo put them over the top and convinced them to visit Mount Rainier? What blog post gave them that nudge to see Sumner in the Holiday season, or make a weekend out of a visit to the Washington State Fair? Which article in a magazine compelled them to stay at McMenamins when they were here for a show at the Tacoma Dome?

Travel Tacoma's marketing activities fit squarely and intentionally in line with the things we know to be factors in travel decision making. So we know are a part of the decision, but to what degree can never entirely be known.

We don't attempt to estimate these. We don't claim them in our totals. We simply acknowledge their existence here.

Individual Leisure Program Highlights

- **Visitor Guide and Meeting Planner Guide** – Developed and distributed publications to encourage visitors to stay longer and explore further, and entice meeting planners to see Pierce County as the ideal destination for their events.
- **Email Marketing** - Distributed monthly e-newsletters to both potential visitors, and meeting planners who have expressed interest in Tacoma and Pierce County
- **Media Hosting** - Hosted travel media and social media influencers working on travel stories and content featuring Pierce County as a travel destination.
- **Web Content Development** – Expanded the hub of our online destination: www.traveltacoma.com. Our leisure marketing efforts, including advertising, social media, and email, directed visitors to the site to help them plan and book their visits.
- **Social Media Engagement** – Grew our social media following by posting inspiring content and engaging followers and influencers.
- **Advertising** – Placed digital and print ads in publications targeting regional leisure travelers as well as meeting planners and event organizers.

2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Eisenhower + Carlson, PLLC

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Chambers Bay

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Hotel Murano

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Laurie Beck- Past Chair

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