



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Love Catalina Annual Presentation to Avalon City Council**

#### *Tourism Authority Shares Audited Financials and Reports on Success Measures*

At the Avalon City Council meeting of November 28, 2023 Love Catalina CEO Jim Luttjohann presented highlights of the fiscal year-end (FYE) financial audit along with reporting on key metrics of the Catalina/Avalon tourism economy and tourism promotion efforts. An annual report from the tourism authority is mandated in the City of Avalon municipal code.

FYE City of Avalon Tourism Driven Revenues were down by 0.2 percent at \$18,164,055 and were well above pre-COVID-19 levels.

Overall, the reporting demonstrated a good year and sound financial management. Highlights included significant success achieved against the goal of increasing hotel occupancy during the off-season, specifically in the months of October through December 2022 and the months of January through March 2023. Based on third-party data from Smith Travel, all those months set records for hotel occupancy and annualized FYE occupancy achieved 68.2 percent, also a record and very near the long-range goal of 70 percent. The FYE Hotel Occupancy +68 percent was above the average of 62 percent. Catalina Island fell below all destinations in its comparison set for annualized occupancy.

Short Term Rentals occupancy also showed another strong year of occupancy compared to pre-COVID-19 levels with increased occupancy setting records in September 2022 and February 2023. The FYE annualized occupancy was 57 percent, down slightly from the prior year, but well above pre-COVID-19 levels. Short Term Rental Occupancy of 57 percent, while above average, was below all destinations in our comparison set.

Luttjohann shared images of the year's top-performing ads, along with social media and public relations achievements.

Post audit adjusted tourism promotions details shared included:

Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) allocated to Love Catalina was \$1,822,100 (including a TOT true-up owed by the City of Avalon at year-end of \$434,228). Total Tourism Promotion expenditures were \$2,045,000. FYE TOT per visitor acquisition was \$1.69 (\$1,822,100 / 1,078,154 visitors) up from \$1.18 last year. The City of Avalon ordinance

allocates TOT funding at 22 percent for Tourism Promotion and Music. While Love Catalina's total fiscal year budget was \$2.283 million, the year closed with \$2,352,535 in revenue. Total expenses were \$2,469,000 of which the ordinance requirement for tourism promotion was \$2,045,000 including \$45,000 for music-related expenses.

Luttjohann also listed ways in which Love Catalina fulfills other responsibilities in partnership with the City of Avalon including leadership of the Island Connectivity Group, Annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks, Film Liaison duties, Cruise Industry relations and recent purchase of Crescent Avenue's sound system and additional holiday decorations.

Luttjohann noted the total salaries and benefits of \$673,510 equating to 28.6 percent of the total expenditures FYE. That is up from just under 25 percent, due in large part to state-mandated wage increases, but, according to DMAWest, is still below the industry average by budget of 29.4 percent. Luttjohann closed with a reminder that Love Catalina aspires to be fully transparent and in keeping with that, stated that all audited financial documents, tax forms, annual reports and organizational documents are available both online at [LoveCatalina.com](http://LoveCatalina.com) or on request.

#### **About Love Catalina Island Tourism Authority:**

With 230 members, the non-profit organization Love Catalina Island Tourism Authority is the champion of the island's business community. The organization fosters a successful economy through the promotion of the island as an attractive destination for travel with a focus on sustainability. For more information, please visit [www.LoveCatalina.com](http://www.LoveCatalina.com) and join the conversation on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/lovecatalinaisland](https://www.facebook.com/lovecatalinaisland)), Instagram (@lovecatalinaisland), and Twitter (@lovecatalina\_).

#### **About Catalina Island:**

A picture-perfect island paradise just 22 miles off the coast of Southern California, Catalina is a beautiful, dynamic, eclectic destination with a rich history, wide open spaces, and fresh ocean breezes. Catalina offers 25 lodging properties and 300 vacation rentals, including bed and breakfast inns, seaside condominiums, charming bungalows and hotels. The Island boasts 33 palate-pleasing restaurants, lively seaside bars, and an abundance of on- and off-water activities and amenities. Also, home to eight marine sanctuaries and the Catalina Island Conservancy (with 48,000 acres of pristine protected wilderness), these island treasures offer endless year-round outdoor recreation possibilities. Catalina Island is the perfect getaway all visitors will love. For more information, please visit [www.LoveCatalina.com](http://www.LoveCatalina.com).

