



FY2015/16
**ANNUAL
REPORT**

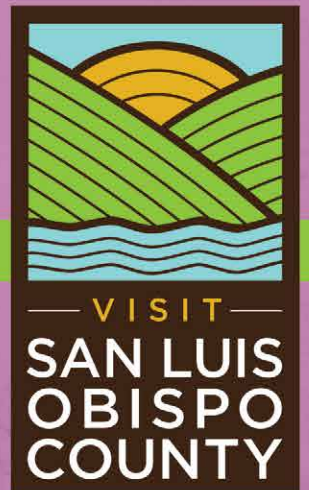


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the President & CEO	2
Our Vision	3
Strategic Plan	4
Board and Committees	5
Our Team	7
Impact of Tourism on Local Economy	9
Constituent and Member Programs	11
Travel Trade	13
Marketing	15
Website	17
SEO	18
Public Relations	19
Social Media	21
Film Commission	22
Sponsorship	23
Industry Education	24
Research	25
Strategic Partnerships	26
Looking Forward	28
FY2016/17 Budget	29
Appendix	30





DEAR STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS,

Fiscal 2015/16 was a productive year for Visit San Luis Obispo County, and we are excited to share with you the progress and results of our efforts. The passage of the Tourism Marketing District in June 2015 enabled the creation of substantial opportunities for the local tourism industry. Visit San Luis Obispo County (VSLC) launched a first-of-its-kind shoulder season marketing campaign designed to increase feeder market awareness of our destination throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, the Central Valley, Phoenix and Las Vegas. We crafted the first countywide tourism Crisis Communication Plan based on the threat of El Niño.

As the second largest economic driver in San Luis Obispo County, tourism spending reached \$1.58 billion in 2015, a four percent increase over 2014. Industry earnings generated by travel and tourism spending reached their highest number yet at \$510 million, a \$40 million increase YOY. In 2016, we contracted Coraggio Group to assemble a multi-year, countywide strategic plan, interviewing stakeholders over the course of several months to determine key initiatives. The strategic plan will provide our organization with a compass to navigate the next three years of the Tourism Marketing District.

In June 2016, we celebrated a big win in partnership with the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport and the Economic Vitality Corporation, as Alaska Airlines announced new nonstop service to San Luis Obispo from Seattle, beginning April 2017. Over the past year, our team has increased its digital marketing initiatives, leveraged its key strategic partnerships and strengthened its travel trade outreach. Our public relations program continues to increase its earned media coverage, and the San Luis Obispo County Film Commission is laying the groundwork for future economic impact. In addition, the introduction of quarterly Industry Educational Symposiums provides timely tourism industry information to our constituents and members.

Our continued focus moving forward is to: 1) create greater awareness of our county and its assets, and 2) increase demand for overnight stays. We understand key challenges lie ahead for our region, which include tourism infrastructure concerns, the pending closure of Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, illegal vacation rentals bypassing government regulation and affecting market share, and the possible economic downturn forecasted for 2018, among others.

While these challenges seem daunting, Visit San Luis Obispo County is well equipped with a sustainable funding model and a clear strategic plan for continuing to increase the economic impact of tourism on our county. Visit San Luis Obispo County is leading the countywide tourism charge, and we look forward to advancing the voice for our region and its stakeholders.

I am proud of what we have accomplished in year one, however, we still have a long way to go. As we continue making progress toward our mission of inspiring travel and increasing tourism revenue, positioning San Luis Obispo County as a preferred destination, I invite you to take a few minutes to read about our recent accomplishments.

All the Best,



Chuck Davison
President & CEO
Visit San Luis Obispo County

OUR VISION

A vibrant and prosperous San Luis Obispo County,
fueled by a collaborative and flourishing tourism industry

Our Mission

Inspire travel and foster our unique experiences to create life-long ambassadors and economic growth for San Luis Obispo County

Our Values

Future Focused: Delivering today with an eye on tomorrow

Collaboration: Our partnerships inform and support economic success

Drive: We bring enthusiasm to our initiatives and focus on results

Stewardship: We are mindful of our resources and the San Luis Obispo County brand

Our Brand Intention

Strategic: "They plan and execute."

Connector: "They bring people together."

Creative: "They innovate and think differently."

Inspiring: "They show us what's possible."

Essential: "We need them in order to succeed."

Our Position

In order to best support the tourism economy in San Luis Obispo County, VSLOC provides:

- High-quality and high-impact marketing initiatives scaled to reach key regional, national and global targets
- A long-term, collaborative and holistic approach that enables success for each tourism district and the county
- Strategic research and sharing of vital tourism knowledge to all of its stakeholders, partners and communities



STRATEGIC PLAN

Under the facilitation of Coraggio Group and with the active participation of stakeholders throughout the county, Visit San Luis Obispo County assembled a three-year Strategic Plan to align staff and stakeholders on the direction of the organization, its strategy and how the organization's success will be measured. The process, which spanned from April to June 2016, began with a stakeholder survey about the long-term direction of tourism in San Luis Obispo County. At the same time, Coraggio Group conducted telephone interviews with 20 stakeholders, including several lodging partners, local Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) representatives and city managers. Next, Coraggio held three two-day workshops. Each workshop included several hours spent with the Planning Team, consisting of VSLOC leadership, Michael Manchak from the San Luis Obispo Economic Vitality Corporation and Clint Pearce of Madonna Enterprises as the appointed board representative. These workshops were each followed by sessions with the Board Strategic Planning Task Force, as well as separate sessions with stakeholders.

Imperatives

Optimize our organizational capacity

Objectives:

- Increased employee engagement and satisfaction scores
- Ratio of administrative cost to economic impact

Initiatives:

- Align our organizational structure with our strategic plan
- Establish a continuous learning program for the VSLOC Team
- Evaluate and develop the tools, systems and technologies we need to succeed

Establish brand clarity and increased awareness through unified efforts

Objectives:

- Bi-annual growth of awareness in targeted visitor categories
- Bi-annual growth of awareness in targeted markets
- Bi-annual growth of awareness in targeted segments

Initiatives:

- Establish a unifying and emotionally resonant SLO County brand
- Produce and share data-driven strategic insights
- Inspire and activate tourism ambassadors

Build and expand strategic partnerships

Objectives:

- Balanced inventory of partnerships
- Inbound partnership opportunities
- Earned Partnership Value (EPV)

Initiatives:

- Develop a system for annual partnership planning
- Align resources to manage partnerships
- Identify, develop and activate relationships
- Work with our partners to identify and reduce duplication of efforts

Advocate for the development of critical tourism infrastructure

Objectives:

- Increased visitor volume
- Increased international visitor volume
- Draft of Tourism Infrastructure Master Plan completed
- Increased total air service

Initiatives:

- Develop long-term Tourism Infrastructure Master Plan
- Enable access to SLO County via increased transportation options
- Initiate feasibility study for conference center
- Advocate and educate to support international tourism readiness

Demonstrate value to our stakeholders, partners and communities

Objectives:

- Year-over-year growth in total stakeholder participation at VSLOC events/meetings
- Increased stakeholder satisfaction scores
- Year-over-year growth in local media coverage
- Deliver on objectives as stated in annual marketing plan
- Community engagement with countywide tourism

Initiatives:

- Develop an engaged and high-functioning tourism culture for SLO County
- Create an impactful annual marketing plan and timeline
- Develop and execute a local communication strategy
- Develop a plan for advocacy on behalf of stakeholders

BOARD AND COMMITTEES

FY2015/16 Board of Directors

Jay Jamison • Chair

Pismo Coast Village
Representing: Pismo Beach
Elected Designated RV Park Seat
(–June 2019)

Clint Pearce • Vice Chair

Madonna Inn
Representing: San Luis Obispo
Elected Designated At-Large Seat
(–June 2019)

JP Patel • Secretary

Best Western Plus Colony Inn
Representing: Atascadero
Appointed Atascadero Seat
(–June 2017)

John Arnold • Treasurer

Holiday Inn Express
Representing: Paso Robles
Appointed Paso Robles Seat
(–June 2018)

Noreen Martin • Past President

Martin Resorts
Representing: San Luis Obispo
County Unincorporated Area
Elected Designated At-Large Seat
(–June 2017)

Kathleen Bonelli

Paso Robles Vacation Rentals
Representing: Paso Robles
Elected Designated Vacation Rental Seat
(–June 2019)

James Davison

Pelican Inn & Suites
Representing: San Luis Obispo
County Unincorporated Area
Appointed SLOC Unincorporated Area Seat
(–June 2019)

Mark Eads

SeaVenture Beach Hotel
Representing: Pismo Beach
Elected Designated At-Large Seat
(–June 2019)

Aaron Graves

Burton Inn
Representing: Cambria
Elected Designated Bed & Breakfast Seat
(–June 2018)

Jim Hamilton

County of San Luis Obispo
Representing: County of
San Luis Obispo
County At-Large Appointee
(–June 2017)

Sam Miller

Holiday Inn Express
Representing: Grover Beach
Appointed Grover Beach Seat
(–June 2018)

Nipool Patel

Lampighter Inn & Suites
Representing: San Luis Obispo
Appointed San Luis Obispo Seat
(–June 2017)

Rachel Lima

Hampton Inn & Suites
Representing: Arroyo Grande
Appointed Arroyo Grande Seat
(–June 2018)

Val Seymour

The Front Street Inn & Spa
Representing: Morro Bay
Appointed Morro Bay Seat
(–June 2017)

Roger Wightman

Sandcastle Inn
Representing: Pismo Beach
Appointed Pismo Beach Seat
(–June 2018)

FY2015/16 Marketing Committee

Ashlee Akers

Vice President, Client Services
Verdin

Jim Allen

Director of Marketing and Communications
Hearst Castle

Terrie Banish

Deputy City Manager – Outreach/Promotions/Events
City of Atascadero

Molly Cano

Tourism Manager
City of San Luis Obispo

Cheryl Cuming

Chief Administrative Officer
Unincorporated County Business Improvement District (CBID)

Amanda Diefenderfer

Destination Manager
Travel Paso Robles Alliance

Christen Goldie

Revenue and Marketing Director
The Apple Farm

Gordon Jackson

Executive Director
Pismo Beach Conference and Visitors Bureau (CVB)

Lori Keller

Vice President of Strategy and Marketing
Martin Resorts

Heather Muran

Executive Director
San Luis Obispo Wine Country Association

Jennifer Porter

Executive Director
Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance

John Sorgenfrei

President & Owner
TJA Advertising

FY2015/16 Advisory Committee

Jim Copsey

Interim City Manager
City of Grover Beach

David Buckingham

City Manager
City of Morro Bay

Dan Buckshi

County Administrator
County of San Luis Obispo

Lynn Compton

Supervisor
County of San Luis Obispo

Thomas Frutchey

City Manager
City of Paso Robles

Jim Guthrie

Councilmember
City of Arroyo Grande

Erik Howell

Councilmember
City of Pismo Beach

Jim Lewis

City Manager
City of Pismo Beach

Katie Lichtig

City Manager
City of San Luis Obispo

Tom O'Malley

Mayor
City of Atascadero

Steve Martin

Mayor
City of Paso Robles

Jan Marx

Mayor
City of San Luis Obispo

Rachelle Rickard

City Manager
City of Atascadero

Mariam Shah

Councilmember
City of Grover Beach

John Heading

Councilmember
City of Morro Bay

Dianne Thompson

City Manager
City of Arroyo Grande

OUR TEAM

Chuck Davison *President & CEO*



- Leads the VSLOC team, advancing the initiatives of the Strategic Plan to position the organization for success
- Manages board, committee, community, strategic partner and agency relations



Brendan Pringle

Office Manager

- Provides general support to the President & CEO and office management for the VSLOC team
- Serves as the board and committee liaison, manages projects between multiple departments and contract requirements for VSLOC



Michael Wambolt

Director of Travel Trade

- Leads the Travel Trade Department, representing VSLOC at tradeshows and sales missions throughout the country and internationally, and hosting FAMs in the county
- Advances domestic and international awareness of the county in the meeting and conference and the travel and leisure segments

(Open)

VP of Marketing



Kylee Jepsen

Sr. Communications Coordinator & Film Commission Liaison

- Coordinates the communications arm of VSLOC, hosting and meeting with journalists and highlighting the experiences of the region in news releases
- Serves as the Film Commissioner assisting scouts and filmmakers in the planning and permitting process

(Open)

Digital Manager

Research

Research Agency

BCF

Marketing Agency



Pam Roberts

Membership & Travel Trade Sales Coordinator

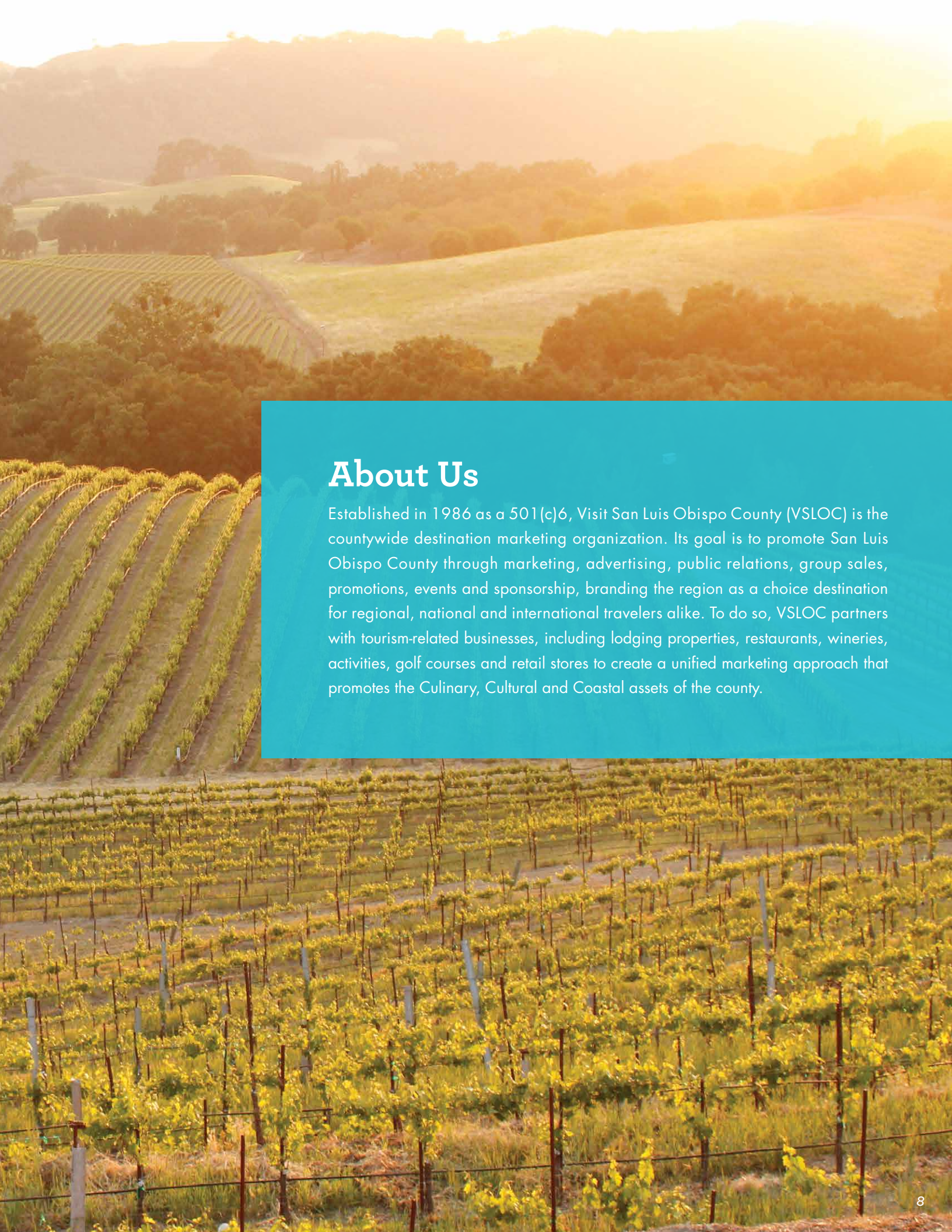
- Coordinates the member services arm of VSLOC, providing support to existing members and activating new non-lodging members
- Supports the Director of Travel Trade in executing sales strategies for market segments



Jordan Carson

Marketing Coordinator

- Coordinates consumer and industry social media efforts for VSLOC, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and the VSLOC blog
- Provides support to the VP of Marketing, including the coordination of monthly promotions, content development and sponsorship events



About Us

Established in 1986 as a 501(c)6, Visit San Luis Obispo County (VSLOC) is the countywide destination marketing organization. Its goal is to promote San Luis Obispo County through marketing, advertising, public relations, group sales, promotions, events and sponsorship, branding the region as a choice destination for regional, national and international travelers alike. To do so, VSLOC partners with tourism-related businesses, including lodging properties, restaurants, wineries, activities, golf courses and retail stores to create a unified marketing approach that promotes the Culinary, Cultural and Coastal assets of the county.

IMPACT OF TOURISM ON LOCAL ECONOMY

In 2015, tourism continued to keep San Luis Obispo County's local communities economically vibrant, growing at a rate 4 percent higher than that of 2014. With the formation of the new Tourism Marketing District, Visit San Luis Obispo County is unifying the county brand and promoting its unique lodging mix, leading to greater awareness and travel to the area.

FY2015/16:

ADR:
\$144.00

RevPAR:
\$100.64



Room Nights Available:
3,239,832 (3.1% increase)

FY2014/15:

ADR:
\$135.64

RevPAR:
\$95.63



Room Nights Available:
3,141,633



Tourism spending:

\$1.58B

in SLOC for 2015



Travel & tourism earnings:

\$510M

(up \$40M from 2014)



17,870 Jobs

(up 4.5% over 2014)

Tourism accounts for more than **10% of total** employment in the county

Areas of Employment Include:

- Accommodations
- Arts
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Food Service
- Entertainment
- Retail



TOT:

\$35,924,681

(7.0% increase over FY2014/15)

\$132M

*in local & state
tax receipts*

Travel spending created **\$59.1M in local tax revenue**. Equal to:



886
police officers



69 paved miles
of 2-lane roads



1,052
firefighters

CONSTITUENT AND MEMBER PROGRAMS



2016/17 Visitors Magazine: Themes: Culinary, Cultural and Coastal

- New "Ask a Local" section features local-insider tips on favorite activities in the region

In addition to digital copies, 45,000 San Luis Obispo County 2016/17 Official Visitors Magazines were distributed in/to:

- California Welcome Centers in San Francisco, Merced, Pismo Beach and Oxnard
- San Jose International Airport, Santa Barbara Airport, Burbank/Bob Hope Airport & San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport
- Local lodging facilities
- Trade and travel shows
- Meeting planners, tour operators and travel agents
- Film industry professionals
- Inquiring media

Digital copies are available to download from the home page of the VSLOC website.



This Month in San Luis Obispo County Newsletter

- Distributed on a monthly basis to a database of over 36,000 subscribers (a 26% increase YOY)
- Updated format highlights details on monthly promotions, giveaways and deals, video content, blog posts, an overview of events happening throughout the county and more
- The "Deals of the Month" section includes specials and opportunities from both lodging and non-lodging members, and provides partners with additional opportunities to grow awareness of their business



Crisis Communication Plan

In 2015, Visit San Luis Obispo County created a first-of-its-kind crisis communication plan for the San Luis Obispo County tourism industry. The plan addresses:

- How to effectively respond to a crisis that may negatively impact tourism in the county
- Tools for connecting with key organizations and affected communities
- The role of VSLOC as the communications command center and the voice for the tourism industry
- How VSLOC will assist the county teams in communications, assuring safety for visitors

Visit San Luis Obispo County and Cal Poly partnered again in 2015 to promote Poly Parent Adventures. This program offers parents of new students special value-added deals and packages.

- 45 wineries, lodging, restaurants and activity partners participated
- Marketed through email blasts and branded materials, driving traffic to the VSLOC website

Annual Community Guides

Visit San Luis Obispo County continued distribution of its annual guides, including a Community Event Directory, Holiday Guide and Pet-Friendly Guide.

Countywide Promotions

Annual calendar of monthly promotional campaigns provides lodging constituents and members with a unique opportunity to spotlight their local businesses and drive additional awareness and traffic to their establishments.

Month	Promotion	Example of Members Who Benefit
January	Restaurant Month	Restaurants
February	Romance Month	Lodging Partners, Spas, Adventure Activities, Wellness
March	Film & Arts Month	Museums, SLO Film Festival, Film Locations, Entertainment
April	Pet-Friendly Month	Lodging Partners, Wineries, Breweries, Restaurants, Events, Attractions
May	Bike Month National Travel & Tourism Month	Activity Partners, Regional Transit
June	SLO County Great Outdoors Month	Coastal Adventure Activities, RV Parks and Camping
July	Historic Markers, Buildings & Monuments Month	Missions, Museums, Historical Sites, Film Locations
August	SLO County Family Travel Tips	Lodging Partners, Wineries, Breweries, Restaurants, Activities
September	CA Wine Month	Lodging Partners, Activities, Wineries, Restaurants
October	Culinary Harvest Month	Artisan Products, Restaurants, Wineries, Breweries, Hard Cider Producers, Distilleries
November	Golf & Stay Month	Golf Courses, Lodging Partners, Spas
December	Holidays	All Members

TRAVEL TRADE

visit
California

California

DREAM

365

365

Brand USA/
Visit California
Chinese FAM
(11/3/15)

Visit California
Australian
SuperFAM
(11/12/15)

Visit California UK
SuperFAM
(9/26-9/28/15)

Sep

Oct

Nov

Dec

Jan

2015

2015

2015

2015

2016

CalSAE Seasonal
Spectacular
(12/3/15)

Smart Meetings
Northern California
Event
(1/6/16)

NTA Travel Exchange
(1/31-2/4/16)

Travel Trade

In an effort to raise awareness of the county, uncover emerging markets and cultivate relationships, Visit San Luis Obispo County attended NTA Travel Exchange, Go West and US Travel Association's IPW meeting with a total of 150 domestic and international buyers.

Meetings & Conferences

Visit San Luis Obispo County's increased focus on the meeting and conference market in FY2015/16 included attendance at CalSAE's Seasonal Spectacular, Smart Meetings Northern California, MPI Northern California Expo and MPI Sacramento/Sierra Nevada. During these shows, VSLOC pitched the county to dozens of meeting planners representing meeting sizes ranging from ten-person board meetings to 500-person staff incentive groups. From these shows, VSLOC produced 101 leads and contacts, and will use these to foster future meeting and conference business, including facilitating a sales mission into Northern California in November 2016.

FY2015/16 delivered a resurgence of travel trade priorities, including the re-establishment of the Director of Travel Trade position and the development of a sales plan and consistent sales strategy. Building upon new and current relationships, the department focused on creating awareness within the key segments of international and domestic tour and travel, as well as the meeting and conference market. Through participation in tradeshow, hosting industry familiarization (FAM) trips, leveraging strategic partnerships and working with industry associations, VSLOC was able to elevate the sales efforts of San Luis Obispo County as a destination.

Visit California
French FAM
(2/5-2/6/16)

TUI Travel
Agency FAM
(4/25/16)

Visit California/NTA-
Approved Chinese
Receptive FAM
(5/28-5/29/16)

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

2016

MPI Northern
California Expo
(2/9-2/10/16)

Go West
(2/21-2/25/16)

2016

MPI Sacramento/
Sierra Nevada
Tradeshow
(3/15/16)

2016

Visit California
China Sales
Mission
(4/8-4/18/16)

2016

US Travel
Association's IPW
(6/18-6/22/16)

2016

Sales Missions

In April, for the first time ever, Visit San Luis Obispo County participated in Visit California's China Sales Mission. Over the course of 10 days, VSLOC's Director of Travel Trade, Michael Wambolt, held 88 one-on-one appointments with travel companies, tour operators and travel agents from Eastern, Southern, Southwestern and Northern China. The mission included visits to four of the largest travel companies: Spring International, Galaxy Tours, Caissa and Ctrip. During these visits, Wambolt was able to meet with CEOs and product managers, gaining a better understanding of Chinese tourist trends.

FAM Tours

Visit San Luis Obispo County also worked with several partners to host multiple travel trade-specific FAMs. These FAMs included UK and Australian SuperFAMs, Chinese and French FAMs, a TUI Travel Agency FAM and a Chinese receptive FAM, representing over 20 million dollars in buying power.

MARKETING

Shoulder Season Campaign

One of the driving forces behind the Tourism Marketing District was the push for an aggressive shoulder season marketing campaign. Visit San Luis Obispo County worked closely with Catalyst Marketing Company to craft a multi-channel strategy for reaching target markets during the off-season. Prior to launching this campaign, VSLOC worked with a local media company to procure new photo and video assets for use in static ads and all-new pre-roll advertising. Media exposure featured new creative, delivered across a palette of traditional and non-traditional media. Sophisticated placements were highly targeted geographically, behaviorally and contextually, and placement strategy was optimized to maximize results.



Digital Marketing Strategy

With the approval of the Tourism Marketing District, new funding provided a first-of-its-kind opportunity to create a regional marketing campaign showcasing San Luis Obispo County as a travel destination. Due to the size of the budget and the need for measurable results, digital marketing was chosen as the focused advertising mechanism for the campaign, allowing Visit San Luis Obispo County to target consumers by lodging type and preference, geographic area, demographics and psychographics, among other specifics.



TripAdvisor

- Destination Marketing Organization program with destination sponsorship page on the TripAdvisor website
- Users looking for the county on the TripAdvisor website were directed to VSLOC's page



Weekend Sherpa "Takeover" (February)

- Blog and email takeover of Weekend Sherpa — a popular online outdoor enthusiast publication
- Guest interview of the publisher on KFOG radio (Bay Area) about San Luis Obispo County



Results



50M
media impressions



408K
SEM impressions



2.1M
social media
impressions



80K clicks
to landing page
(www.VisitSLOCounty.com)

Print Co-Op Advertising



American Way

A 10-page advertorial feature in the April 2016 issue of American Way, the in-flight magazine of American Airlines.

Co-Op Partners: San Luis Obispo TBID, Pismo Beach CVB, Unincorporated CBID, Morro Bay Tourism Bureau, Atascadero TBID, Avila Beach Tourism Alliance, Travel Paso Robles Alliance and Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance.

Distribution: 16 million



California 2016 Official Visitor's Guide

Co-Op Partners: San Luis Obispo TBID, Morro Bay Tourism Bureau, the City of Arroyo Grande, Unincorporated CBID, the Pismo Beach CVB and Allegretto Vineyard Resort.

Print Distribution: 500,000

Online Distribution: 3.5 million

California's Central Coast Visitors Map

Partnership with Certified Folder and the Central Coast Tourism Council (CTCC) to produce their main collateral piece.

Distribution: 200,000



Website

FY2015/16 marks the **three-year anniversary** of the Visit San Luis Obispo County website, VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com.



VSLOC Blog

The Visit San Luis Obispo County blog also had its highest traffic year. By creating articles in listicle (an article in the form of a numbered or bullet-pointed list), Q&A, itinerary and other engaging formats, visitation to the VSLOC blog grew 48%. A few of the most shared blogs included:

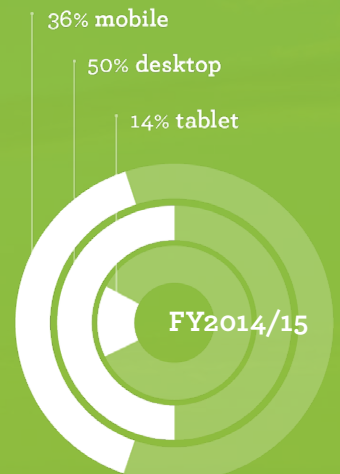
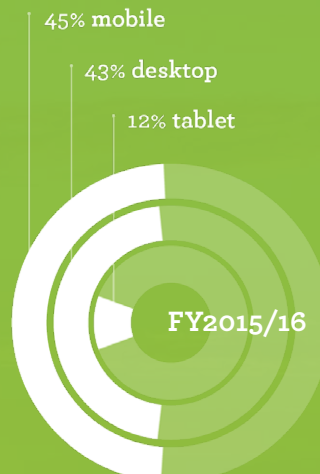
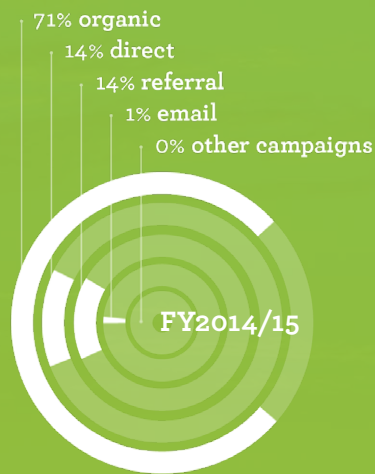
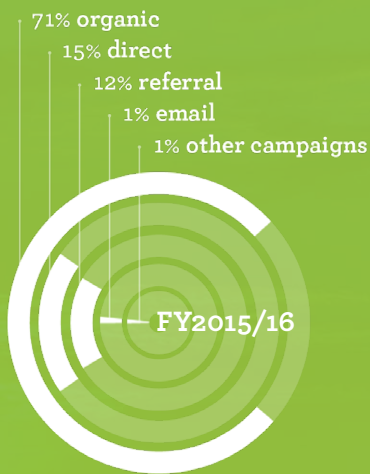
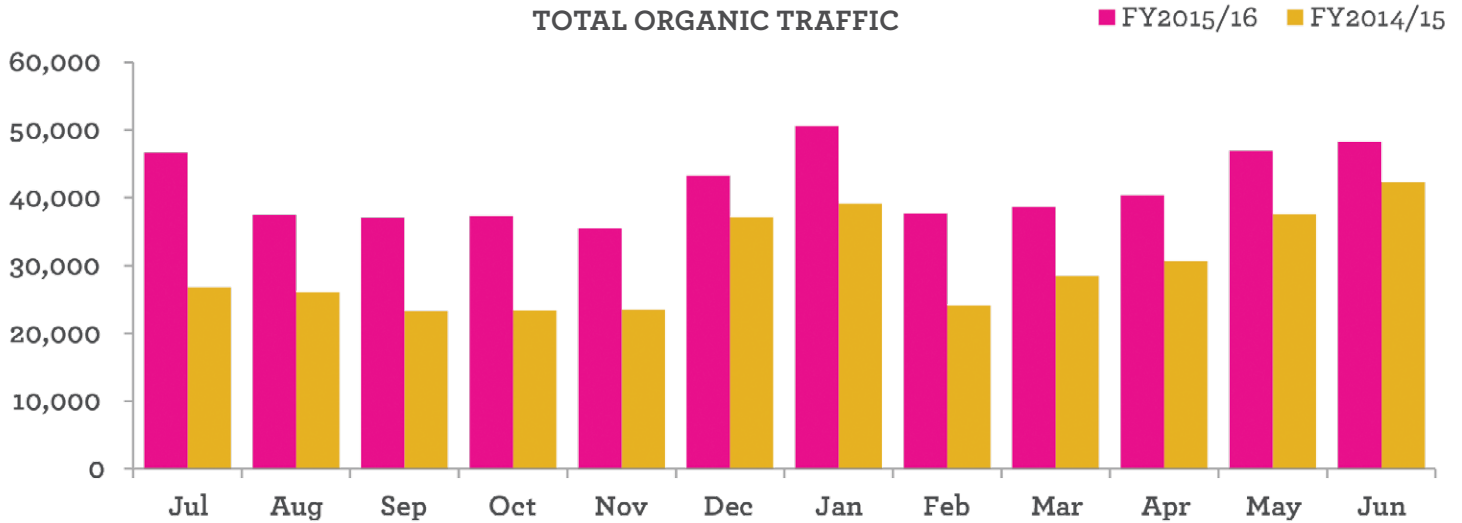
- "2016 Community Summer Concert Guide" (554 shares)
- "Mother's Day Activities in SLO County" (366 shares)
- "Meet Chef Chris Beckett, Executive Chef of Fish Gaucho in Paso Robles" (336 shares)
- "Cayucos in Thomas Cook Travel Magazine" (2,100 shares)
- "Choose your Own Adventure: The Cambria Story" (289 shares)

Booking.com Partnership

In January, Visit San Luis Obispo County contracted with Booking.com as the VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com website booking engine, replacing its previous JackRabbit referral tool. The free Booking.com solution provides detailed reporting, mobile functionality and a revenue-share model in which 40% of commission revenue is returned to VSLOC for additional marketing programs.

SEO

TOTAL ORGANIC TRAFFIC



TRAFFIC SOURCES

DEVICE BREAKDOWN

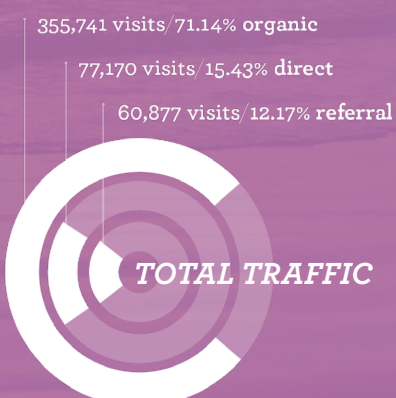
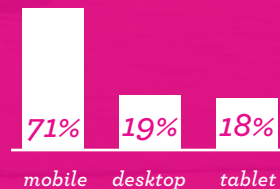
FY2015/16 Snapshot: Total Website Statistics

- 500,023 visits and 378,610 unique visitors
- 1,486,237 pageviews
- 2.97 pages per visit & 2:17 time on site

FY2015/16 - 2014/15 Year Over Year Snapshot

- Unique visitors increased by 39%
- Pageviews increased by 25%
- Organic search traffic increased by 37%
- Referring traffic increased by 20%

TRAFFIC INCREASE



15,986 visits



586 visits



225,771 visits



59,610 visits

Over the past year, the website continued to see record traffic due to:

- Search engine optimization (SEO) efforts
- Direct response advertising
- Active social media presence
- A new landing page to coincide with shoulder season campaign

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Visit San Luis Obispo County enjoyed regional, national and international PR exposure in FY2015/16, with more than 50 million media impressions.



Press Kit

This year, Visit San Luis Obispo County developed a first-of-its-kind countywide press kit. This visually appealing collateral piece serves as a valuable communication mechanism for working with press and media. In addition to highlighting the Culinary, Cultural and Coastal assets of the county with itinerary recommendations, the press kit also describes the economic impact of tourism for San Luis Obispo County.

Visit California Media Receptions

Throughout FY2015/16, VSLOC had the opportunity to attend five media events in partnership with Visit California. At these events, more than 300 media contacts were introduced to San Luis Obispo County.

- **San Francisco Media Event** (September 2015)
- **New York Media Event** (March 2016)
- **Texas Media Boot Camp** (April 2016)
- **Vancouver Media Luncheon** (May 2016)
- **Calgary Media Hour** (May 2016)

Media FAM Tours/Hosted Media

In addition to the international FAMs hosted by Visit San Luis Obispo County, we also worked with several partners to host multiple media-specific FAMs and journalists. These FAMs included Visit California Chinese, French and Australian FAMs, a SAVOR Media FAM and a North American Travel Journalists Association (NATJA) FAM throughout the year.

Press Releases

Visit San Luis Obispo County is the leading resource for visitor information in San Luis Obispo County. VSLOC distributed eight major press releases to PR Newswire on topics ranging from holiday season and pet-friendly activities to culinary and cultural scenes. In total, these releases received more than 160,000 views.



In October, Visit San Luis Obispo County contracted with WebDAM for a new digital asset management system. This sophisticated system houses photo and video assets collected from various communities, making it convenient to find and credit images.

IPW 2016 Media Marketplace

Visit San Luis Obispo County contracted with PR professional Jeanne Sullivan to represent San Luis Obispo County at the IPW Media Marketplace on June 20. There, Sullivan met with 34 different travel writers, pitching the superb offerings of and news about San Luis Obispo County tourism, as well as providing media leads for the VSLOC communications team.

Visit California “Average Joes” Ad

Visit California’s new “Average Joes” commercial, which features a “bubblesmith” in front of Morro Rock, began airing in the US and internationally in October 2015. The commercial is San Luis Obispo County’s first appearance of this magnitude on the international TV stage, the result of VSLOC’s strong partnership with Visit California. National spots have aired on several channels, including A&E, ABC Family, Animal Planet, Bravo and ESPN, as well as during programs like “Good Morning America” on ABC and “The Today Show” on NBC. The commercials have been deployed digitally through Hulu, Yahoo!, ABC, NBC and YouTube.

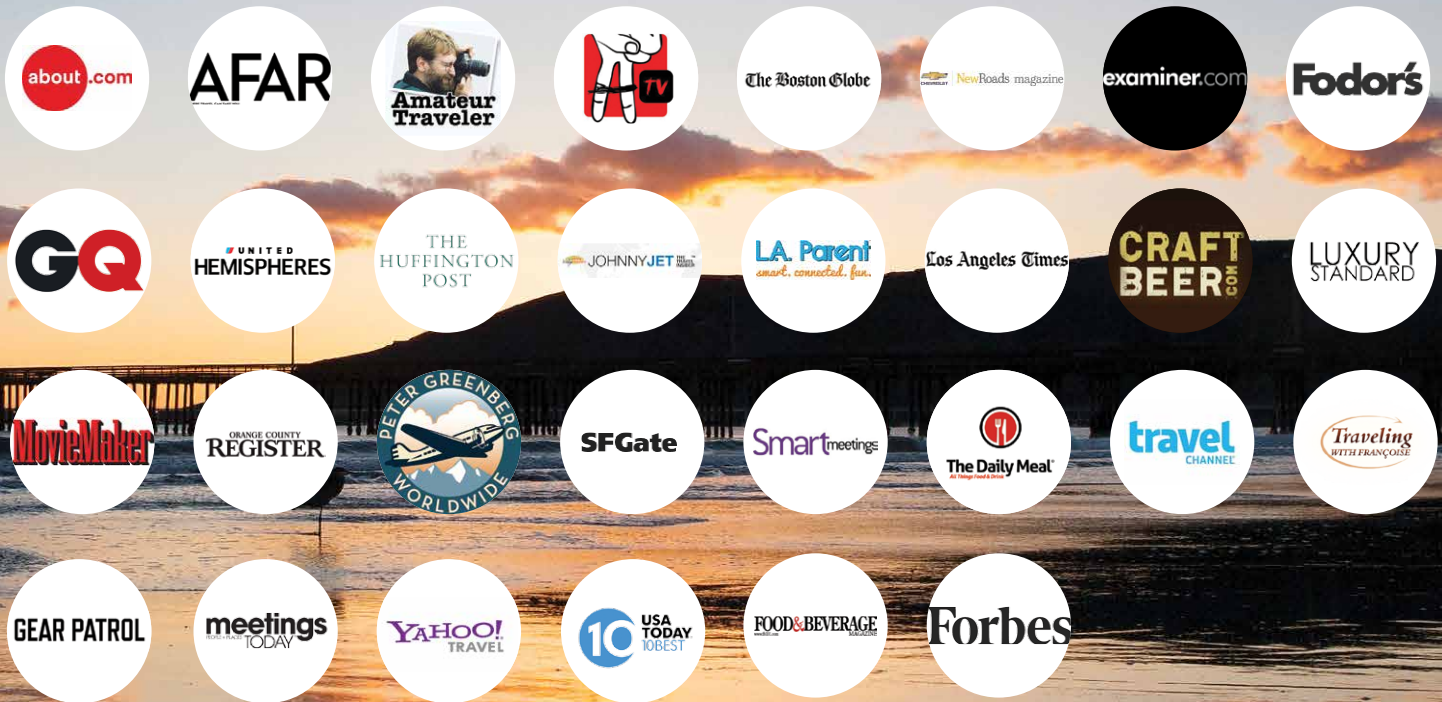
Earned Media Coverage

The following are just a few of the media outlets that featured the beautiful assets of San Luis Obispo County

Local



National



International



Visit San Luis Obispo County leveraged their growing social media audience by using scheduled posts, boosted posts, daily themed hashtags and accompanying hashtags, blogs and promotional giveaways. By strategically posting user-generated photos and custom content, VSLOC has positioned itself to consumers as the destination for all things Culinary, Cultural and Coastal in San Luis Obispo County.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Daily themed hashtags include:

#MoveItMonday – Featuring outdoor activities

#TastyTuesday – Featuring all things food

#WineWednesday – Featuring SLO County wines

#TravelThursday – Featuring a specific location/activity in San Luis Obispo County

#FanFriday – Featuring a unique, user-generated landscape photo

#ScenicSaturday – Featuring a destination or unique outdoor activity

#SundayFunday – Featuring a leisurely activity

Additionally, VSLOC used local DMO hashtags and these supporting hashtags to increase traffic and awareness:

#VisitSLOCounty #SLOCounty #CentralCoast #California #VisitCalifornia

16,569 likes
4.6M impressions
127K engagements

Facebook

5,636 followers
729 posts

Instagram

677 followers
802 pins

Pinterest

6,421 followers
569K impressions
6,753 tweets
5,687 engagements

Twitter

114,015 visitors

Blog

FILM COMMISSION

The San Luis Obispo County Film Commission, a department of Visit San Luis Obispo County, reported a significant increase in the number of filming days in the 2015 calendar year. As of December 31, 2015, the Film Commission recorded:

100+ project leads that came through the Film Commission office

- Feature films
- Television programs
- Commercials
- Catalog shoots
- Music videos
- Documentaries

271 filming days and a \$6.3M economic impact for San Luis Obispo County

80+ productions including:

- Redwood Kings (*Animal Planet*)
- American Pickers (*History Channel*)
- Diablo feature film
- Nitro Circus
- Reading Rainbow
- Keeping Up With the Kardashians (*E!*)
- Commercials/still shoots for Mazda, Mitsubishi, Chevy, Toyota, Audi, SAS Airlines, Amtrak and Pottery Barn
- "Average Joes" TV commercial
- Awesomeness TV



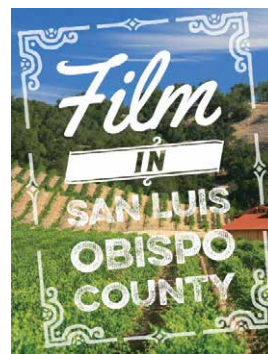
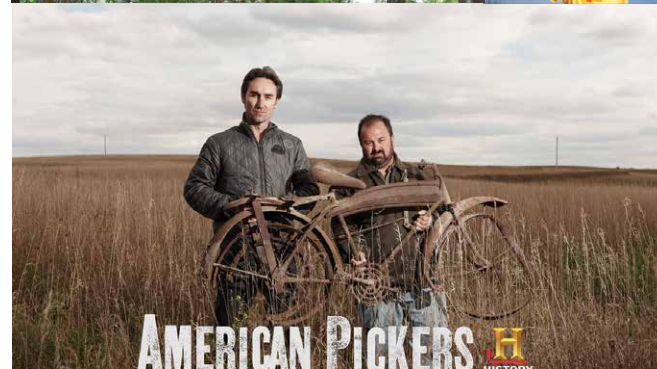
- Host to 20+ film producers and location managers for a full-day Film Scout FAM Tour of the county
- Raised awareness of the county's filming locations to industry professionals
- Generated valuable leads for the Film Commission

Major Film Industry Conferences

- AFCI Locations & Global Finance Show
- FLICS Film in California Conference

Film Liaisons in California Statewide (FLICS)

The San Luis Obispo County Film Commission is a proud partner with FLICS. VSLOC attended the Film in California Conference (organized by FLICS), where they had access to over 500 filming professionals. FLICS offers various opportunities throughout the year for Film Commissions to broaden their reach statewide and nationally.



SPONSORSHIPS

Developing partnerships and sponsorships that align with the organization's mission is a key component to marketing San Luis Obispo County as a destination and showcasing its key Culinary, Cultural and Coastal assets.



Sunset SAVOR the Central Coast

Visit San Luis Obispo County invited wine and food lovers to embark on the culinary journey of a lifetime at the sixth annual Sunset SAVOR the Central Coast. The event included an exciting schedule, jam-packed with new events, tasting experiences, culinary headliners and adventure tours. Throughout the four-day event, attendees indulged in the unspoiled Central Coast lifestyle and enjoyed countless delicious moments.

Total economic impact:
\$3.47M

Average length of guest stay: 2.64 days

Average party size: 3.43 persons

Total economic impact from attendee spending:

\$1.16M

Economic impact from operations/preparation:

\$1.91M

Impressions generated by media coverage:

511M

Total dollars spent by attendees:

\$779,000

Estimated local sales tax generated:

\$53,277

Publicity value:

\$78.8M



5,063

total unique attendees

Local/Non-local split:

59.3%/40.7%

(15% increase in non-local attendance over 2014)



47% of attendees had an average household income of over \$100,000



56% of attendees were 45-64 years of age



26% of attendees were 25-44 years of age



- Visit San Luis Obispo County provided \$30,000 to sponsor the May 18, 2016 start in Morro Bay.
- VSLOC created a 30-second television commercial, which was viewed on NBC Sports as well as the online Tour Tracker, a half-page ad in the program guide and other representation.



INDUSTRY EDUCATION

Visit San Luis Obispo County is dedicated to providing the latest industry information, research and resources to its lodging constituents and members. VSLOC distributes key information and updates through several channels, including quarterly educational symposiums, weekly “This Week in San Luis Obispo County” email blasts and new industry social media channels on Facebook and Twitter.

Industry Educational Symposiums

In November, VSLOC launched its quarterly Industry Educational Symposium series. Complimentary to all lodging constituents and members, the symposium series is designed to cover important and timely industry topics, which are focused on:

- 1) Perfecting operational effectiveness
- 2) Increasing revenue

Topics:

- Vacation Rental Advocacy
- Water Conservation during the Drought
- TripAdvisor Resources
- Booking.com Travel Trends & Innovation
- Impact of Filming on the Economy
- Yelp Resources

Visit San Luis Obispo County’s New Industry-Oriented Social Media Channels

Visit San Luis Obispo County has rolled out two new social media channels to inform constituents and industry partners about relevant tourism news and updates.

These new channels keep lodging constituents and members in-the-know about items such as VSLOC’s annual Tourism Exchange, quarterly Industry Educational Symposiums, emergency notifications, countywide initiatives, travel trade updates and more.



Exchange.VSLOC



Exchange_VSLOC

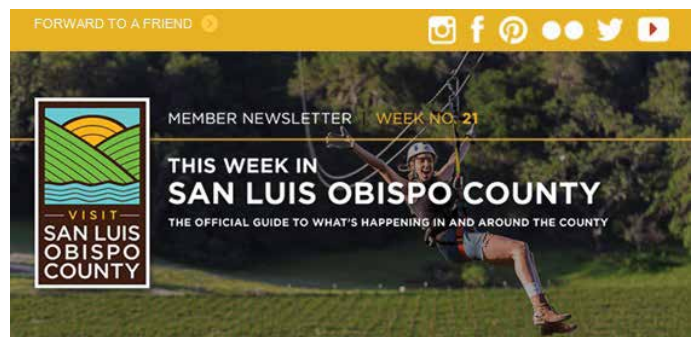


SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
TOURISM EXCHANGE
20/16

On May 6, more than 150 lodging constituents and members joined Visit San Luis Obispo County at the historic Fremont Theatre in San Luis Obispo to celebrate the countywide impact achieved by the TMD in its first year.

Topics & Speakers:

- **Major Initiatives for the VSLOC Tourism Marketing District:**
Chuck Davison: VSLOC President & CEO
- **Feeder Market Awareness Study Results:**
Pat Merrill: Partner at Merrill Research
- **2017 Lodging Forecast:**
Brandon Feighner: Director at CBRE Hotels, Valuation and Advisory Services
- **State of Tourism in California:**
Caroline Beteta: Visit California President & CEO



This Week in SLO County

Every Thursday, Visit San Luis Obispo County delivers “This Week in San Luis Obispo County” to its lodging constituents and members providing information on up-to-date industry trends, intelligence and local events. It also shares industry articles, market and regulation updates, along with other valuable tourism industry information.

RESEARCH

In 2016 Visit San Luis Obispo County funded groundbreaking new research intended to inform the development of Visit San Luis Obispo County's brand and future marketing campaigns.

Research Project



Visit San Luis Obispo County worked with Merrill Research on two distinct market research projects to define existing and potential visitors.

Local destination marketing organizations had the opportunity to "buy-in" to the projects, allowing them to add specific questions about their communities to the survey. The outcome of the study will be used to develop VSLOC's marketing program in the years to come, as well as provide a comparison of San Luis Obispo County to its competitive markets.

Project 1: Share of Wallet Study and Demographic Study

Objectives:

- Build understanding of the customer share-of-wallet spent when visiting San Luis Obispo County (SLOC)
- Build understanding of the consumer share-of-wallet when visiting SLOC competitor destinations
- Develop demographic and psychographic profile of current and potential visitors to SLOC and competing markets

Methodology:

- 1000 respondents (500 California Residents/500 Non-California Residents) were surveyed, including San Luis Obispo County visitors, prospects and fence-sitters

Project 2: Feeder Market Awareness Study

Objectives:

- Understand awareness levels of SLOC in regional markets
- Gather thoughts and attitudes related to why people would or would not visit

Methodology:

- 1254 respondents from San Francisco, Central Valley, Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix, Las Vegas and Seattle were surveyed on their awareness and perception of San Luis Obispo County

STR. Smith Travel Research Reports

Visit San Luis Obispo County initiated a subscription to weekly and monthly STR reports. The lodging reports provide an overview on 11 segments of San Luis Obispo County, as well as a comparison of SLOC to Monterey/Salinas, Santa Barbara/Santa Maria and California as a whole.

VisaVue® Travel


This year, Visit San Luis Obispo County began its participation in a Visit California co-op to receive VisaVue® Travel data on both domestic and international travelers to San Luis Obispo County. The reports offer key information on travelers and their spending by market segment or merchant category code.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

In its effort to provide a unified voice to the countywide tourism industry, Visit San Luis Obispo County has strengthened several strategic statewide and regional relationships to grow sales and increase awareness.

Industry Relations

 – Visit California is a nonprofit organization with a mission to develop and maintain marketing programs—in partnership with the state’s travel industry—that keep California top-of-mind as a premier travel destination. Visit San Luis Obispo County has continued to cultivate its relationship with Visit California. President & CEO Chuck Davison is a member of Visit California’s Research Committee and has worked diligently to put San Luis Obispo County on the map with the organization. This has directly led to many tour operator FAM and media FAM leads, along with other special opportunities.

On September 19, Awesomeness TV aired an episode that highlighted the Oceano Dunes, which was produced in partnership with Visit California. The episode reached an aggregate base of 24 million subscribers and engaged several hundred thousand viewers.

California is the top U.S. destination for Chinese visitors, welcoming over 1 million visitors in 2014, who collectively spent \$2.5 billion in the Golden State. VSLOC recognizes the importance of reaching this tourism demographic and has taken advantage of Visit California’s market strategies to welcome Chinese visitors both now and in the upcoming year. VSLOC Director of Travel Trade Michael Wambolt attended one of Visit California’s China Ready presentations in November, and in April, he traveled to Beijing and Shanghai on their annual China Sales Mission. In May, VSLOC President & CEO Chuck Davison pitched San Luis Obispo County in Beijing,

Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong during Visit California’s 12-day China CEO Mission. As part of the CEO Mission, Davison represented San Luis Obispo County at the Beijing International Travel Exhibition (the largest Beijing trade show), the Pan China CA Advisory Board Meeting, the China Southern Airlines Executive Summit and Press Conference, and Vinexpo Hong Kong. In addition, Davison was introduced to China National Tourism Administration (CNTA)’s Chairman Li, and Deputy Chief of Mission U.S. Embassy Beijing, David H. Rank, and was also included in a 20-page Global People Magazine supplement that featured SLO County.

Visit California also featured San Luis Obispo County in their “Average Joes” TV commercial, which began airing nationally and internationally in the fall.

On February 22-24, 2016, in San Francisco, Visit San Luis Obispo County and its partner communities were represented at Visit California’s Outlook Forum, California’s premier tourism marketing conference. In conjunction with this event, Visit California held its Poppy Awards, a biennial contest that honors the best and brightest of California tourism promotion. Out of only ten winners selected, VSLOC won a Poppy Award for Best PR Campaign, in partnership with Black Ink PR. Two other San Luis Obispo County DMOs joined Visit San Luis Obispo County in winning Poppy Awards of their own: the San Luis Obispo Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) and the Unincorporated County Business Improvement District (CBID).

Other Industry Relations



Brand USA

Brand USA leads the nation's global marketing effort to promote the United States as a premier travel destination.

VSLOC partnered with Brand USA on a multi-channel program in Canada that included an Expedia landing page focused on driving lodging room nights and works with Brand USA as a national partner in tourism.



Destination Marketing Association of the West (DMA West)

DMA West is a regional membership organization of more than 145 DMOs. As a participating member of DMA West, VSLOC has access to their online resource & educational summits.



U.S. Travel Association

U.S. Travel is the leading force that grows and sustains travel, and protects the freedom to travel. VSLOC is a participating member.



CalTravel

CalTravel protects and enhances the interests of California travel and tourism through advocacy, collaboration and education. VSLOC attended the annual CalTravel Summit in May 2016.



Central Coast Tourism Council (CCTC)

VSLOC partnered with CCTC to attract international tour groups and media FAM tours to the county throughout the year.



Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI)

DMAI is the global trade association for official destination marketing organizations, providing cutting-edge educational enrichment and networking opportunities. VSLOC President & CEO Chuck Davison attended this year's annual DMAI CEO Summit in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

VSLOC President & CEO Chuck Davison is a board member of the CCTC. In March, VSLOC sponsored the closing reception for CCTC's Retreat and Planning Conference at Hearst Castle.

Local Partnerships

In addition to partnering with local DMOs and chambers, VSLOC has strategic partnerships with the following:



Economic Vitality Corporation (EVC)

The EVC is a regional nonprofit, economic development organization committed to developing a vibrant and sustainable economy throughout San Luis Obispo County.

VSLOC President & CEO Chuck Davison chairs the Uniquely SLO Cluster group, advocating additional air service and working with the business community to promote the lifestyle that tourism creates in San Luis Obispo County. EVC President Michael Manchak was integral in the development of VSLOC's Strategic Plan as part of the Planning Team.



San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport

VSLOC continues to serve as a strategic partner of the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport to attract visitors. New service this year included an additional flight from the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport to Phoenix on American Airlines.

After years of discussion with Alaska Airlines, new air service from San Luis Obispo to Seattle will begin in April 2017. This was a big win for San Luis Obispo County tourism and key in the effort to bring more regional flights to target markets.



California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly), San Luis Obispo

VSLOC partnered with Cal Poly on several opportunities, including the Poly Parent Adventures previously noted.

VSLOC President & CEO Chuck Davison is a member of the Local Economic Development Committee on Cal Poly's President's Council of Advisors.

VSLOC President & CEO Chuck Davison also guest lectures at Cal Poly about destination marketing organizations, analytics and tourism research, and served as a guest judge for "Dragon's Den," a project that encouraged students to work together on the development of a new tourism product.



Amtrak

Amtrak featured VSLOC's 2016 San Luis Obispo County Visitors Magazines at the Fullerton Railroad Days consumer event.

The event drew more than 15,000 attendees, and 400 Visitors Magazines were distributed.

LOOKING >>> *FORWARD*



Visit San Luis Obispo County Announces New Marketing Agency-of-Record

In April 2016, Visit San Luis Obispo County announced their new marketing agency partnership with BCF Agency, effective July 1, 2016. BCF will use market research and a multi-year strategic plan to create an impactful new brand for Visit San Luis Obispo County, ultimately resulting in a marketing campaign geared towards promoting the region in the shoulder season, during off-peak months.

BCF is a tourism destination marketing firm based in Virginia Beach, Virginia, that specializes in working with destinations, hotels, resorts and travel-related experiences throughout the United States. With previous work that includes the widely recognized “Virginia is for Lovers” campaign, as well as Aspen, Colorado’s campaign, BCF was chosen from 14 national agencies that submitted and pitched for the business. For 60 days prior to the start of their contract, BCF had professionals in the market working hand-in-hand with the organization to begin crafting a marketing strategy that would convey San Luis Obispo County’s unique destination position.

New Branding

In 2016, Visit San Luis Obispo County completed consumer research for its core target markets (Primary Designated Marketing Areas (DMAs): San Francisco, Los Angeles and the Central Valley; Secondary DMAs [based on direct air service]: Phoenix, Las Vegas and Seattle). Due to the lack of a developed and well-known destination brand, the research findings will be used to influence the development of a Visit San Luis Obispo County rebrand. VSLOC’s new agency of record (AOR), BCF, will create a comprehensive brand identity, including naming, visual identity, photography and video style guide, along with brand messaging architecture in the coming months.

New Website Features

In the coming year, VSLOC will develop and launch a new engaging web experience. Visit San Luis Obispo County’s website agency, Simpleview, will develop and build the new website in cooperation with the AOR, BCF. The new site will include improved functionality and new features not currently available, and is expected to launch in 2017.



A SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY EXPERIENCE

Visit San Luis Obispo County is partnering with local restaurant, winery, brewery, distillery and activity partners to take SAVOR on the road, creating SAVOR – A San Luis Obispo County Experience at food, wine and lifestyle events in key regional feeder markets. These roadshow experiences begin with the San Diego Bay Wine and Food Festival in November 2016 and will continue on into 2017, with additional shows being announced soon.

SAVOR – A San Luis Obispo County Experience will feature a large destination experience tent showcasing some of the best wine, beer, craft spirits and culinary delicacies of San Luis Obispo County with a goal of encouraging those attending to plan a trip to San Luis Obispo County to experience the destination firsthand.

FY2016/17 Budget

Estimated cost of providing activities in the next fiscal year:

\$3,281,339

Estimated amount of contribution from non-assessment sources:

\$165,000

Estimated amount of surplus or deficit revenue carried over from the previous fiscal year:

Reserves:

\$142,656

Cash Carry-Over:

\$60,464

32.36% Marketing-Digital

23.61% Marketing-Advertising

12.73% Travel Trade

8.15% Industry Research & Resources

6.83% General & Administrative

6.31% Communications

6.15% Marketing-Events

2.07% Marketing-Promotions

1.78% Film Commission



Appendix

Method and Basis of Levying Assessment

The annual assessment rate is one percent (1%) of gross short-term (stays 30 or fewer consecutive days) room rental revenue. With the passage of the TMD on June 10, 2015, implementation of the assessment began July 1, 2015, and continues for five (5) years through June 30, 2020. The County and each city are responsible for collecting the assessment from lodging businesses within their respective jurisdictions on a monthly or quarterly basis, including any delinquencies, penalties and/or interest. Within thirty (30) days of receipt, the County and each city then forward the assessments collected to the Tourism Marketing District managed by VSLOC.

Proposed Boundary, Zone or Classification Changes

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

Assessed Funds from FY2015/16:

City of Arroyo Grande.....	\$71,501
City of Atascadero	\$83,372
City of Grover Beach.....	\$21,303
City of Morro Bay	\$238,059
City of Paso Robles	\$338,895
City of Pismo Beach	\$712,887
City of San Luis Obispo	\$565,095
SLO County Unincorporated Area	\$710,490

*Collections remitted from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016. Please note that funds are typically remitted 30-60 days after the month they are collected.

San Luis Obispo County Tourism Marketing District

Developed by Visit San Luis Obispo County, the San Luis Obispo County Tourism Marketing District (SLOCTMD) is a new countywide cooperative effort to collectively market all that the county has to offer for the benefit of assessed lodging businesses. The assessment district provides specific benefits to payors by funding marketing, advertising, promotions and sales efforts for assessed businesses.

The SLOCTMD provides an opportunity for lodging businesses throughout the county to collaboratively engage in marketing, advertising, sales and promotional efforts. This joint effort helps foster synergy among the county and businesses, and ensures Tourism Marketing District (TMD) dollars are spent in the most streamlined manner possible. It aims to establish San Luis Obispo County as a premier Central Coast tourism destination and a leader in the California tourism community.

The core focus of the SLOCTMD is twofold: to put more heads in beds and to increase the average daily rate charged for those beds.

To that end, the programs funded by the SLOCTMD have two specific goals: (1) to increase awareness of San Luis Obispo County as an overnight destination, and (2) to increase lodging demand for the destination and lengthen visitors' average stay (leading to boosted lodging sales and revenue).

FY2015/16 Budget:

General & Administrative	\$130,967.00 (4.71%)
Industry Research & Resources	\$266,978.00 (9.61%)
Travel Trade	\$268,102.00 (9.65%)
Communications	\$123,733.00 (4.45%)
Marketing-Advertising.....	\$627,869.00 (22.59%)
Marketing-Promotions	\$26,079.00 (0.94%)
Marketing-Events.....	\$177,008.00 (6.37%)
Marketing-Digital	\$593,942.00 (21.37%)
Film Commission	\$25,894.00 (0.93%)
Carryover	\$538,594.00 (19.38%)



www.VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com

