

# Quarterly Report

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2024





## MARKETING

### “The Santa Barbara Effect” Campaign

Throughout the summer, Visit Santa Barbara (VSB) executed a dynamic media plan featuring seasonally tailored digital, social, video and print advertisements, highlighting the abundant travel experiences unique to the Santa Barbara South Coast. The “Santa Barbara Effect” brand campaign seamlessly inspired travelers to relax and rejuvenate by showcasing signature experiences—outdoor recreation, culinary delights, wine culture, arts, wellness and the region’s signature lifestyle. Special emphasis was placed on spotlighting hallmark events, including the centennial celebration of Old Spanish Days Fiesta, an iconic Santa Barbara festival.

To effectively drive summer visitation, VSB strategically targeted potential travelers in ZIP codes known for generating visitation to the area’s lodging properties. Advertisements were optimized to reach high-performing California audiences and expanded to attract qualified travelers from Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New York, Texas, Utah, Oregon, Washington and Washington D.C. Nationwide targeting also included major metro airport ZIP codes to capture active travelers and individuals within higher-income brackets.

Overall, VSB’s paid advertising efforts exceeded the 2024-2025 Annual Business Plan performance targets. With a paid advertising budget of \$736,735, VSB successfully boosted destination awareness and trip planning interest in Santa Barbara:

- The cost per 1,000 ads delivered was \$2.67, generating 122 million impressions
- The cost per 1,000 completed video views was \$18, generating 12.3 million completed video views
- The cost per website referral was \$0.48, generating 909,000 website referrals

## Website

VSB's official destination website, SantaBarbaraCA.com, saw significant growth metrics across key performance indicators, including 8% increase in users, 6% increase in sessions, 8% increase in page views and just a slight 7% decrease in overall referrals to business, in large part due to seasonality and budget shifts.

SantaBarbaraCA.com recorded a total of 1.5 million sessions and welcomed 1.3 million unique users to the website. These users collectively viewed 2.3 million pages, reflecting a high level of interest in the content. On average, visitors spent about 2 minutes and 15 seconds per session and the engagement rate for users was 46%.

With continued efforts to publish and refresh inspiring, timely and thoughtful itineraries centered around travel to the Santa Barbara South Coast, VSB maintained its position as a top source for online destination-related content by remaining up-to-date on trending themes and kept content relevant with key search words. The editorial team focused on content themes that promoted end-of-summer, seasonal and holiday happenings in the Santa Barbara South Coast, with an emphasis on the fall season being one of the most intriguing times to visit. The combined endeavors yielded an impressive outcome of 30 new articles and 74 optimized pages.

In partnership with the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, specific efforts to highlight Goleta through GoGoleta.com garnered 5,000 users and 11,060 page views.

## Social Media

VSB's social media reach was strategically deployed across eight popular platforms, amassing over 466,000 active followers and driving 1.5 million organic impressions. VSB capitalized on high-performing posts related to annual festivals and events. While all platforms inspired travelers with a daily dose of Santa Barbara, Instagram led the pack with 500,000 impressions. Short-form video content kept audiences wanderlusting for The American Riviera®, garnering over 1 million organic video views highlighting accommodations, dining and seasonal attractions. More than ever, followers were eager to learn and engage with Santa Barbara content, totaling 691,324 engagements.

Key summer successes were additionally attributed to a newly launched local content creator program. Partnering with three local creators, the team collectively produced and shared 32 short-form videos between Instagram and Tiktok. From polo and shopping to vegan cuisine, coastal sunrises and everything in between, over 160 images were created to help keep the destination media library fresh and to showcase the variety of experiences Santa Barbara offered to travelers.



In collaboration with the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, Goleta was highlighted through the Go Goleta social media channels garnering 40,000 impressions through 13,000 active followers on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

### **Third Night Free Promotion**

The Third Night Free Lodging promotion continued to be a highly effective tool for increasing non-commissioned, direct bookings and encouraging longer stays in the Santa Barbara South Coast. Over 20 diverse properties, from luxury to mid-tier and budget accommodations offered an extra night free with a three-night booking, complemented by additional lodging discounts and exclusive offers.

To drive visibility, a comprehensive advertising approach was deployed, including targeted consumer emails through TravelZoo, Dunhill Deals and Luxury Link, as well as paid social media outreach and promotional placement on VSB's website and social channels. This multi-channel strategy resulted in 49,000 referrals to participating hotels. The well-planned media investment of \$207,000 achieved an effective cost per referral of \$4.49.

### **Airline Partnership**

To inspire travelers to choose Santa Barbara Airport, VSB partnered with Southwest and Delta Airlines to promote convenient nonstop flights from Sacramento, Oakland, Las Vegas, Denver, Atlanta and Salt Lake City. The paid social media campaign, designed to showcase both the ease of travel and the captivating experiences awaiting visitors on the Santa Barbara South Coast, delivered outstanding results. Through a series of engaging ads, the campaign resulted in 26.8 million impressions and generated 91,000 link

clicks to airline booking sites—all achieved with a \$59,000 paid media investment.

In addition to paid media support, VSB collaborated with Southwest Airlines on The *Summer of Go* sweepstakes, which ran from July 30 to Aug. 5, offering participants the chance to win a robust prize package including a two-night stay, dining experiences, a sunset cruise, massages and other activities throughout Santa Barbara. The campaign reached approximately 400,000 people and generated 19,800 entries, with a 6% conversion rate. All metrics surpassed standard industry benchmarks.

As part of the inaugural Passenger Appreciation Week, a secondary sweepstakes in partnership with the Santa Barbara Airport showcased Southwest's service to and from Las Vegas. The promotion drew over 10,000 entries, with participants consenting to receive promotional materials from all partners, enabling effective retargeting for future marketing efforts.

### **Partner Advertising Program**

VSB delivered substantial value to industry partners by extending marketing dollars and high-value opportunities for South Coast Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) lodging properties and VSB members to expand their reach among potential travelers to the Santa Barbara South Coast. VSB delivered 2.9 million impressions for 15 partners through tactical digital marketing programs including digital, native, social and newsletter ads. Revenue from the partner advertising program for the summer quarter totaled \$23,610.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

### What the Media Are Saying

“For most people, a mention of Santa Barbara conjures images of the American Riviera’s sunny beaches and swaying palm trees. And though the city of Santa Barbara has no vineyards, there are dozens of tasting rooms, and starting or ending the trip beachside adds layers of allure for any curious traveler.”

#### Wine Spectator, September 2024

“Known for being Santa Barbara’s more laid-back neighbor, Goleta is a stop not only for the annual monarch butterflies migration, but for food enthusiasts as well.”

#### Sunset Travel Awards, September 2024

“Together with other unique communities in the region, from posh Montecito and its sister Summerland to family-friendly Goleta and unsung Gaviota, the sublime Santa Barbara South Coast is a region that deserves more attention as a whole...”

#### Citizen Femme, August 2024

“It’s no wonder that Santa Barbara has the gleaming reputation that it does. It truly has everything that makes a Texan’s vacation perfect.”

#### Texas Lifestyle Magazine, August 2024



### Top Media Coverage Highlights

- The 2024 **Sunset Travel Awards** named Goleta as one of four attractions in the “Destinations” category and “a must-stop along the iconic 101.” The magazine featured stories in [print and online](#) (230,047 circulation, 378,083 Unique Visitors per Month), as well as in a separate [travel directory](#).
- **Wine Spectator** (2.2 million circulation, 1.4 million UVM) featured a spectacular [multi-page cover story](#) on Santa Barbara County in its fall issue, with a breakout section on activities in the South Coast.
- **Elle Decor Online** (1.87 million UVM) took a deep dive into [“The 10 Best Places to Stay in Santa Barbara,”](#) showcasing hotels of varying price points, from luxe to family friendly.
- **Eater LA** (1.1 million UVM) explored [“How to Spend a 24-Hour Staycation in Santa Barbara,”](#) revolving around great eats.
- **The Chicago Tribune** (87,257 circulation, 6.2 million UVM) used Santa Barbara as the centerpiece for a feature on [how to travel with siblings as an adult](#). The story was picked up by 71 other outlets across the U.S., with a cumulative reach of 11.64 million potential readers.
- **The Daily Herald** (130,000 circulation, 1.4 million UVM), suburban Chicago’s largest daily newspaper, [explored Santa Barbara from the perspective of locals](#) who are formerly from the Windy City.
- **Citizen Femme** (75,531 UVM), the premier U.K. website aimed at female travelers, published [an extensive travel guide to the South Coast](#), recommending places to stay, eat and explore in each city.



### Top Media Coverage Highlights Continued

- **Texas Lifestyle Magazine** (4,000 UVM) ran a lengthy travel feature on [“two idyllic California towns,”](#) showcasing hotels, restaurants, activities and festivals in Santa Barbara and Montecito.
- **Simply Buckhead** (24,000 circulation, 8,502 UVM), aimed at residents of the affluent Atlanta community, explored Santa Barbara through the lens of [“nature and nourishment,”](#) including whale watching, wine tasting and more.

### Quick Hits

- **Los Angeles Times** (26.4 million UVM): [“Best Beaches in Southern California”](#) (also on Spectrum News 1’s TV show [“LA Times Today,”](#) 2 million viewers)
- **U.S. News and World Report Online** (33 million UVM): [“The 15 Best Weekend Getaways from LA”](#)

- **Fodor’s Online** (2.64 million UVM): [“A Wino’s Guide to the 20 Best Wineries in California”](#)
- **National Geographic Online** (9 million UVM): [“Summer doesn’t have to end yet with these fall getaways”](#)
- **Observer** (1.09 million UVM): [“The Best Coastal Destinations for a Fall Getaway Out West”](#)
- **Condé Nast Traveler Online** (5.78 million UVM): [“10 West Coast Road Trips to Take in Your Lifetime”](#)
- **Atlanta Journal-Constitution** (92,707 circulation, 3.38 million UVM): [“Summer Travel: Bring your appetite to these culinary destinations”](#)
- **The Irish Times** (100,951 circulation, 1.26 million UVM): [Santa Barbara travel and wellness feature](#)
- **The Sybarite, U.K. luxury travel magazine** (150,000 circulation): [“American Dreams”](#)

## Media Relations and Familiarization (FAM) Trips

The public relations (PR) team garnered impressive results, having a hand in generating 385 media placements through targeted pitching, media hosting and collaborative partnerships. Coverage spanned multi-page features in magazines and newspapers and included a rebroadcast of a Santa Barbara segment on “The Jennifer Hudson Show.” Together, these stories reached a potential audience of over 12 million broadcast viewers and print readers, along with travel and lifestyle websites with an average of more than 2.61 billion unique visitors per month.



The PR team hosted 22 press trips for journalists and representatives from outlets ranging from People magazine, Matador Network and Moon Travel Guides to regional media such as Seattle Magazine, PaperCity Dallas, Houston’s Chron.com and The Independent (U.K.).✦





## GROUP & TRAVEL TRADE SALES

### Group

The group sales team converted \$2.7 million in new contracts this quarter, aligning closely with \$2.7 million in confirmed bookings and assists for the same period in 2023. This year's contracts reflected a substantial 7% year-over-year increase in average daily rate, of which 1,032 room nights and \$367,000 in definite revenue will be actualized by the end of 2024, providing a meaningful boost to short-term demand.

VSB hosted five site inspections and two familiarization (FAM) trips, engaging with a total of 14 clients this quarter. FAM trip highlights included guided walking and e-bike tours through Santa Barbara, a private cooking class with a local chef and curated experiences at a variety of hotels, wineries and local restaurants.

Beyond Santa Barbara, the sales team represented the destination at several key industry events, including CEMA (Corporate Event Marketers Association) in Seattle, GPS in Salt Lake City, Northstar Destination CA in Huntington Beach, Meetings & Incentives Worldwide in Chicago, SITE Chicago, SITE Northern CA, Destinations International in Tampa, Florida and MPI Sacramento Sierra Swinging Soiree. Additionally, the team presented a webinar for Hummingbird Meetings, hosted a client dinner in Chicago in collaboration with other California DMO's and produced a San Jose Earthquakes VIP event along with hotel partners and 20 clients.

Locally, the sales team expanded its network by attending several key events, including El Encanto, a Belmond Hotel's "Christmas in July" celebration, the annual Tech Topia event and the State of the County gathering. The team also hosted a Hotel Sales Meeting, which brought together 16 sales professionals and featured a presentation from the Santa Barbara County Vintners Association.

### Travel Trade

VSB received four requests for Travel Advisor toolkits and assisted seven agents in creating customized itineraries for upcoming visits. Additionally, VSB hosted a representative from Bonotel, coordinated with Rosewood Miramar Beach to entertain four travel advisors and held strategic meetings with Visit Greater Palm Springs and Visit Santa Ynez Valley. These meetings focused on collaborative efforts to promote Santa Barbara as part of multi-city itineraries. As part of the partnership with Visit Santa Ynez Valley, each team spent a day exploring the other's destination to identify key features for cross-promotion.

Outside of Santa Barbara, the sales team participated in the Connections Luxury California Forum in Newport Beach, attended by 40 California-focused buyers and attended Prost Desert Cities in Rancho Mirage, attended by 230 travel advisors and buyers.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The community partnerships department led a diverse lineup of events, training sessions and networking opportunities designed to strengthen connections with members and cultivate deeper community engagement. Through these initiatives, the department not only fostered collaboration within the local hospitality industry but also encouraged active participation in community-building efforts, supporting both professional development and meaningful partnerships.

### Membership

This quarter, VSB rolled out a new tiered membership program, offering varying levels of benefits available to TBID properties, hospitality businesses and non-visitor-facing companies providing services to the travel industry. The program was developed through a comprehensive year-long process that involved focus groups, board presentations, member feedback and research on membership offerings from other destination marketing organizations throughout California and the U.S. at large. The launch proved highly successful, generating \$133,530 in membership revenue, a 37% increase in total revenue earned year-over-year, resulting in 250 members that renewed or joined in the first quarter.

New members joining the organization this quarter included Crown Point Vineyards, Vacation Rentals of Santa Barbara, Ventura Rental, Music of the Spheres, Sun Outdoors Santa Barbara RV Resort, TruNorth Jets, Inc., Santa Barbara Channel Charters, Yellow Bird Music, The Red Piano, Fig Mountain Brewing Company, Amtrak San Joaquins, Italian Pottery Outlet and 28 Vic.

### Workforce Development

To support the staffing needs of local hospitality businesses and elevate visitor experiences across the Santa Barbara South Coast, VSB maintained its focus on workforce development. In partnership with seven local organizations, VSB co-hosted the State Street Job Fair in September, featuring 56 businesses and drawing over 500 attendees.

### Member Events and Trainings

In July, members enjoyed a delightful and delicious New Member Open House at Menchaca Chocolates Factory Shop. Attendees had the opportunity to build their own custom chocolate bars and paint specialty chocolate boxes, adding a creative twist to the event. They also had the chance to connect with fellow members while getting an inside look at the chocolate-making process, guided by husband-and-wife duo, Pete and LeAnne Iverson.



The Lunch and Learn series continues to engage members with dynamic and relevant topics. Maren Beneke, leisure sales manager, led an insightful session focused on travel trade and leisure sales. She covered industry terminology, strategies for collaborating with tour operators and agencies and practical tips to tap into the growing leisure travel market.

In August, the Santa Barbara Historical Museum hosted the session, with director of education, Emily Alessio offering a captivating look into the history of Old Spanish Days Fiesta. Her presentation highlighted the role tourism played in shaping Santa Barbara's longest-running festival. Attendees also enjoyed a guided tour of *Project Fiesta*, an exhibition featuring photographs, films, posters, costumes and memorabilia, providing a unique glimpse into the festival's vibrant legacy.

This quarter's Meet and Mingle event was hosted at El Zapato, offering members a fun and casual setting to network and connect. The whimsical, shoe-shaped home—designed by Jeff Shelton and inspired by elements of Gaudí, Dalí and Dr. Seuss—served as a one-of-a-kind backdrop for the event. Attendees enjoyed light bites, lively conversation and wine generously provided by Sunstone Winery.

Additionally, VSB continued its monthly *I Am Santa Barbara* training, certifying 42 members as Santa Barbara Ambassadors. This 60-minute training equipped members with historical insights, knowledge of destination offerings and strategies to address guest inquiries effectively, enhancing the visitor experience. Attendees praised the training for its thorough coverage of Santa Barbara's history, culture and hospitality offerings, and expressed enthusiasm for discovering new insights about the destination. Several attendees expressed gratitude for the experience, noting that the training was already proving useful in their hospitality roles.

In total, eight member events and training sessions were held this quarter, attracting nearly 100 participants. These gatherings provided valuable opportunities for professional development, networking and collaboration within the local hospitality community. The diverse lineup of events ensured members had access to relevant industry insights, best practices and strategies to enhance both individual and organizational success.



## TRAVEL TRENDS JULY - SEPTEMBER

Accommodations Employment	Summer (Q1) 2024 vs. 2025		
	Summer 2024	Summer 2025	% Change
Santa Barbara County	5,200	5,200	0%

Santa Barbara South Coast TBID Hotel Performance	Summer (Q1) 2024 VS. 2025		
	Summer 2024	Summer 2025	% Change
Occupancy	78%	80%	3%
Average Daily Rate (ADR)	\$393.46	\$399.34	1%
Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)	\$306.32	\$318.31	4%
Demand (Room Nights)	370,939	382,799	3%
Supply ( Room Nights)	476,468	480,240	1%
Gross Revenue	\$145,950,657	\$152,867,535	5%

Airline Passenger Volume	Summer (Q1) 2024 vs. 2025		
	Summer 2024	Summer 2025	% Change
Santa Barbara Municipal Airport	343,563	397,390	15%

Weather at Santa Barbara Municipal Airport	Summer (Q1) 2024 vs. 2025		
	Summer 2024	Summer 2025	% Change
Average High Temperature (°F)	76.3	74.2	N/A
Total Precipitation (Inches)	0.3	0	N/A
Days of Precipitation	3	0	N/A



## About Visit Santa Barbara

Visit Santa Barbara (VSB) is a nonprofit 501(c)(6) organization jointly funded by the City of Santa Barbara, the County of Santa Barbara, the South Coast Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) and by a membership of hospitality-related businesses. As the official destination marketing organization for the Santa Barbara South Coast, VSB is contracted by the City of Santa Barbara to market the area nationally and internationally as a premier destination for leisure and business travel. VSB's Board of Directors is composed of business owners and professionals who have the experience and willingness to serve the community beyond the scope of their demanding work schedules. Their volunteer responsibilities include steering company policy, building relationships with local government, interpreting the needs and interests of the community, shaping how VSB delivers upon its mission and influencing the organization's future evolution.

## Our Mission

We inspire overnight travel to the Santa Barbara South Coast in order to enhance the community's economy and quality of life.



# 2024-2025 Board of Directors

- Rebecca Anderson**, Lotusland
- Jens Baake**, Acme Hospitality Group
- Warner Anderson**, WA Event Management
- Leslie Brickell**, Residence Inn by Marriott Santa Barbara Goleta
- Greg Broussard**, Santa Barbara Hotel Collection
- Bradley Cance**, The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara
- Michael Cohen**, Santa Barbara Adventure Company
- Chris Cline**, Hotel Santa Barbara
- Amanda Cruz**, Santa Barbara Museum of Art
- Rick Fidel**, Rosewood Miramar Beach
- Treg Finney**, Mar Monte Hotel
- Andrew Firestone**, StonePark Capital
- Ed Galsterer**, Santa Barbara Inn
- Dan Glaeser**, Montecito Bank & Trust
- Christopher Hastert**, Santa Barbara Airport
- Babett Hirzel**, Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront
- Councilmember Mike Jordan**, City of Santa Barbara
- Trevor Large**, Fauver, Large, Archbald & Spray LLC
- Kristen Miller**, Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce
- Warren Nocon**, Hotel Californian
- Samantha Onnen**, Santa Barbara Airbus
- Tom Patton**, Ramada by Wyndham Santa Barbara
- Councilmember Luz Reyes-Martín**, City of Goleta
- David Sigman**, Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club
- Tim Snider**, Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard
- Ben Sprague**, Earl Warren Showgrounds



# Visit Santa Barbara Staff

## ADMINISTRATION

**Kathy Janega-Dykes**, President/CEO

**James Minton**, CDME, Vice President of Strategic Planning

**Jennifer Reyes**, Executive Assistant

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**Noelle Buben**, Director of Community Partnerships & Events

**Catherine Lopez**, Community Partnerships Manager

## MARKETING

**JessyLynn Perkins**, Director of Marketing

**Carly Hopkins**, Creative Manager

**Olivia Barroca**, Digital Marketing Manager

**Shantel Adams**, Web Marketing Manager

**Taylon Faltas**, Content Manager

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

**Karna Hughes**, Director of Public Relations

**Anna (Jacobson) Naughton**, Public Relations Manager

**Brooke Holland**, Public Relations Manager

**Whitney Wisner**, Public Relations Coordinator

## MEETINGS & TRAVEL TRADE

**Beth Olson**, CDME, Director of Sales

**Catherine “Cat” Puccino**, Director of National Accounts

**Maren Beneke**, Leisure Sales Manager

**Mark Feldman**, Sales Representative, Northern California

**Suzy Kay**, Sales Representative, Southern California

VISIT  
**SANTA BARBARA**

500 East Montecito Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93103  
(800) 676-1266 | (805) 966-9222