

# Quarterly Report

JANUARY - MARCH 2025



## MARKETING

### “The Santa Barbara Effect” Campaign

Throughout the winter, Visit Santa Barbara (VSB) deployed a robust and seasonally tailored media plan across digital, social, video and print platforms. Anchored by “The Santa Barbara Effect” brand campaign, the effort spotlighted the South Coast’s signature experiences — from outdoor recreation and culinary delights to wine culture, wellness, the arts and the region’s distinct lifestyle — all designed to inspire relaxation and rejuvenation.

To drive visitation, VSB strategically targeted ZIP codes historically tied to lodging demand, with optimized outreach to high-performing audiences in California. The campaign also expanded to qualified traveler segments in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New York, Texas, Utah, Oregon, Washington and Washington D.C. National targeting included major metro airports and affluent ZIP codes aligned with competitive luxury lodging markets.

The winter season presented a unique challenge amid the devastating wildfires impacting the greater Los Angeles area — VSB’s largest feeder market. In response, the advertising team quickly adapted messaging to strike a thoughtful balance: offering support to affected communities while positioning Santa Barbara as a peaceful escape for Southern California audiences.

Despite the hurdles, VSB efficiently managed its \$833,892 paid advertising budget, driving significant gains in destination awareness and trip planning interest:

- The cost per 1,000 ads delivered was \$4.46, generating 141 million impressions
- The cost per 1,000 completed video views was \$15, generating 11.6 million completed video views
- The cost per website referral was \$0.49, generating 989,000 website referrals

### Celebrate the Unexpected 2.0

VSB unveiled the second installment of its award-winning *Celebrate the Unexpected* digital campaign, a refreshed four-part video series that captures the extraordinary, surprising moments that make travel to the Santa Barbara South Coast unforgettable. From savoring seaside delicacies to stumbling upon a hidden botanical paradise in the Montecito foothills, each episode invites viewers to step beyond the expected and create lasting memories — together.

Paired with curated itineraries, the series empowers travelers to craft their own unexpected adventures in The American Riviera®. Since launching in late December, the campaign has generated over 15 million impressions and 6.5 million completed views, supported by a robust \$117,000 paid media strategy spanning Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and TikTok — with added reach through Adara pre-roll advertising. The campaign will continue to run and inspire travel through the summer season.





## Weddings

To place a spotlight on the region's unparalleled beauty and romantic allure, VSB continued its paid media and content marketing campaign to position the Santa Barbara South Coast as the premier destination for weddings. Stunning visual assets and inspiring yet informative content were activated to showcase the diverse venues, exceptional service and unique experiences available to couples planning their special day. The campaign, strategically timed to reach couples during "engagement season," catered to two primary audience segments: California-based couples seeking a memorable ceremony and out-of-state visitors looking for the perfect destination wedding. With a budget of \$53,000, media partners Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok and Google served a series of digital, video and search ads to targeted audiences, delivering 10 million impressions and 41,000 clicks.

## Website

During the winter quarter, VSB's official destination website recorded 1.3 million sessions and welcomed 900,000 unique users. Visitors viewed 2 million pages, spending an average of two minutes per session, with an engagement rate of 44%.

To support evolving privacy standards, Osano — a new privacy compliance tool — was implemented in February 2025. As a result, user interactions may no longer be fully captured. Going forward, website metrics will be used to indicate directional trends rather than exact performance counts.

The website's content strategy this quarter focused on publishing and refreshing inspiring, timely and thoughtful itineraries centered around travel to the Santa Barbara South Coast. These efforts aided in driving 220,000 referrals to local hospitality businesses. By staying current with trending themes and optimizing content with relevant search keywords, VSB continues to maintain its position as a leading source for online destination content.

The editorial team focused on timely, seasonal content with a particular emphasis on positioning winter as a ideal time to visit. This strategic approach led to the publication of 24 new articles and the optimization of 66 existing pages — the highest volume of website updates in a single quarter to date. Newly published content performed especially well and included topics tied to dining, events, family-friendly experiences and seasonal travel planning.

In partnership with the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, specific efforts to highlight Goleta through GoGoleta.com garnered 5,800 users and 7,900 page views.

### **Los Angeles Wildfire Crisis Support**

In January 2025, a series of destructive wildfires impacted the Los Angeles metropolitan area, forcing many residents to evacuate their homes. In response, VSB launched a series of supportive social media posts and a dedicated landing page on SantaBarbaraCA.com on Jan. 8. The page featured hotel discounts from participating South Coast lodging partners, as well as helpful resources and special offers from local businesses.

Promoted through VSB's social media channels — reaching 212,070 accounts — and discoverable via organic search, the page generated 9,997 sessions by Feb. 11, with a 50.68% engagement rate and an average session duration of just over two minutes — underscoring its effectiveness as a trusted resource for evacuees.

VSB was grateful for the opportunity to support its neighbors during such a difficult and uncertain time.

### **Social Media**

VSB's social media presence was strategically deployed across eight major platforms, reaching nearly 500,000 active followers and generating 1.7 million organic impressions through 215 total posts. This reflects consistent reach and output compared to the previous quarter, while continuing to spotlight Santa Barbara's outdoor experiences, cultural offerings, hospitality and scenic beauty. Instagram led performance once again, delivering 1.4 million impressions and 335,000 engagements. Short-form video content remained a top performer, driving over 1.4 million organic video views — a 24% increase from the previous quarter.

Overall, VSB's social media content generated 768,000 organic engagements and 65,000 website referrals. Prioritizing timely, visually compelling and shareable content continues to inspire and convert followers into future travelers.

In collaboration with the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, Goleta was highlighted through the Go Goleta social media channels garnering 50,000 impressions through 13,000 active followers on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

### **Third Night Free Promotion**

The Third Night Free lodging promotion continued to support non-commissioned, direct bookings and encouraged longer stays in the Santa Barbara South Coast. Nearly 28 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.

For campaign visibility, a comprehensive advertising approach was deployed, including targeted consumer emails through TravelZoo, Dunhill Travel Deals and Luxury Link, paid social media outreach and promotional placement on VSB's website and social channels. Strategic targeting and seasonal messaging delivered through a \$281,000 multi-channel media investment resulted in over 45,000 referrals to participating properties.

### Locals Lodging Promotion

VSB's seasonal lodging promotion continued its successful run through the winter, encouraging locals and their visiting friends and family to stay in 18 area accommodations with a 30% discount on staycations from November 2024 through February 2025. Designed to fill vacant rooms during the shoulder season, VSB positioned this campaign as a unique opportunity for the community to delight in their hometown and experience the activities and amenities vacationers from around the globe travel to Santa Barbara for. To help spread the word, VSB invested \$23,000 in paid media, which generated 3,600 referrals to participating hotels.

### Airline Partnership

To inspire travelers to choose the Santa Barbara Airport, VSB partnered with Southwest and Delta Air Lines to promote convenient nonstop flights from Sacramento, Oakland, Las Vegas, 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 24 million impressions and generated 107,000 link clicks to airline booking sites — all achieved with a \$44,000 paid media investment.



### 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 1.4 million impressions and 23,000 referrals for eight partners through tactical digital marketing programs including digital, native, social and newsletter ads. Revenue for the winter quarter totaled \$8,014. ❀



## PUBLIC RELATIONS

### What The Media Are Saying

“Between its mountainous backdrop and dreamy coastline, Santa Barbara is the definition of picture-perfect.”

**Observer, January 2025**

“Good luck not being entranced by a stay in Santa Barbara, aka America’s Riviera, where laid-back luxe has been perfected...”

**PureWow, January 2025**

“Santa Barbara isn’t a playground for the rich and famous; it’s a place where people from all walks of life can find relaxation and enrichment.”

**Paste, March 2025**

“Santa Barbara offers an enviable combination of outdoor pursuits with luxury accommodations and exquisite food and wine options — all with unparalleled views.”

**AAA The Extra Mile, March 2025**

### Top Media Coverage Highlights

During the devastating Los Angeles fires in January, VSB quickly put together a list of Santa Barbara South Coast lodging properties offering evacuee rates and shared it with the media. As a result, regional accommodations were included as a resource in 28 national and regional stories, as well as nine stories in local media outlets, with a cumulative potential reach of 1.04 billion Unique Visitors per Month and 32 million print readers. Among the influential media sources that ran the list were [Condé Nast Traveler](#), [Travel +Leisure](#), [AFAR](#), [Variety](#), [The Points Guy](#), [Matador Network](#), [Los Angeles Times](#) and [Los Angeles Magazine](#).

### Top Media Coverage Highlights Continued

- **Paste** (1.42 million UVM) published an in-depth Santa Barbara [travel guide](#) that captures the city’s relaxed elegance, from coastal treasures to culinary and cultural gems.
- **Westways** magazine (4.9 million print circulation) dove into the city’s ARTS District in a dedicated feature that invited readers to “Get Your Art On.” An accompanying “Westways Weekender” **KCAL-TV** [segment](#) expanded on the story (32,131 viewers, 116 million UVM).
- **AAA Club Alliance Online** (1.3 million UVM) presented a fresh take in a [story](#) titled “Unexpectedly Santa Barbara,” which described the region’s mix of outdoor adventure, luxury amenities and delectable cuisine.
- **Observer Online** (821,534 UVM) delivered a luxe insider’s [guide](#) to Montecito, and included the South Coast in two lifestyle roundups: [top U.S. wellness destinations](#) and [most romantic California escapes](#).
- **San Antonio Magazine** (60,000 circ., 45,041 UVM) encouraged readers to recharge in the South Coast, [celebrating](#) the area’s wellness-centric vibe.
- Santa Barbara also stirred up spring buzz, with **Good Housekeeping Online** (22.6 million UVM) recommending the city as an [April getaway](#), while **LA Family Travel Online** (5,500 UVM) and **MSN Online** (127.2 million UVM) suggested spring breakers head to the shore for [family fun](#), outdoor escapades and [kid-friendly attractions](#).



### Top Media Coverage Highlights Continued

- The South Coast received [some love](#) in advance of Valentine’s Day, with **Forbes Online** (74.3 million UVM) and **Veranda** (1.1 million UVM) [endorsing](#) the destination for couples’ getaways.
- Chocolate-themed [coverage](#) added a sweet touch, with **Forbes Online** (88.2 million UVM) and **LuxeBeat** (16,300 UVM) [spotlighting](#) Santa Barbara as a top destination for indulgent retreats.
- **Qantas Magazine** (524,000 circ., 12.5 million UVM) crowned the region “the ultimate gourmet getaway,” lauding wine country indulgences and standout dining of Santa Barbara and Montecito in a [two-page print story](#) that also ran online.
- Mexico’s **Milenio** (103,605 circ., 20.6 million UVM) published a [feature](#) exploring the cultural link between Santa Barbara and Puerto Vallarta as sister cities, inviting travelers to bridge the two coastal worlds.

### Quick Hits

- **Cosmopolitan Online** (24.8 million UVM): [“We Ranked the 35 Best Girls’ Trip Destinations in the U.S. to Book for Your Next Bestie-cation”](#)
- **World Atlas** (4.76 million UVM): [“7 Charming California Towns For The Perfect Getaway”](#)
- **PureWow** (4.1 million UVM): [“21 Amazing Weekend Trips from Los Angeles to Book Right Now”](#)
- **Brit + Co** (1.2 million UVM): [“14 ‘Stunning’ U.S. Cities To Add To Your Travel Bucket List In 2025”](#)
- **Mommy Poppins** (597,400 UVM): [“Spring Break 2025: 31 Fun Things To Do in Los Angeles”](#) (includes Santa Barbara)

## Media Relations and Familiarization (FAM) Trips

This past winter, VSB contributed to 122 media placements through targeted pitching, press hosting and partnerships. Coverage ranged from destination-focused features in national lifestyle websites and drive-market outlets to seasonal round-up stories on Spring Break and Valentine's Day. The potential audience reach was more than 3.4 billion unique visitors per month online, as well as more than 130 million print readers and TV viewers.

VSB hosted press trips for 19 journalists, ranging from Southern California-based media to Canadian and Mexican freelancers. Travel expert Emily Kaufman, also known as "The Travel Mom," who's frequently tapped to appear on TV news segments, filmed a Santa Barbara travel package giveaway for her followers on Facebook. VSB also attended IPW in New York, meeting with more than two dozen journalists in desksides, from editors at major travel outlets to freelance writers. ❀



## GROUP & TRAVEL TRADE SALES

### Group

Group sales converted \$1.3 million in new contracts this winter, reflecting a decrease from \$2.9 million in definites and assists the same period in 2024. This quarter saw an increase in contracted programs, with 31 secured compared to 25 during the same period last year, along with a solid 3.3% year-over-year growth in ADR. The average group size this quarter was 108 room nights — a 65% decrease compared to the same period last year, when the average was 306 room nights. The same season last year was unusually strong, driven in part by a three-week program that generated 2,812 room nights and \$1.2 million in room revenue.

To drive short-term demand, VSB hosted six site inspections and two familiarization (FAM) trips. The meeting planner FAM included guided tours and experiences at local hotels. For the wedding FAM, the sales team presented Santa Barbara as an ideal wedding destination as well as hosting a trolley tour and scenic sunset cruise for the group. Virtually, VSB presented a webinar on meetings in Santa Barbara for Meetings & Incentives Worldwide.

Trade shows included Smart Meetings West in San Diego, MPINCC ACE in Monterey, Prestige Midwest Summit in Arlington, Texas, MPI Sacramento/Sierra Crab Feed and PCMA Convening Leaders in Houston. VSB and Santa Barbara County Vintners Association general manager Phil Carpenter hosted a five-course wine pairing dinner in Los Angeles for clients and hospitality partners. In Orange County, VSB and partners hosted 14 clients for a cooking class at Sur La Table Newport Beach. The sales team also presented sports capabilities of Santa Barbara to the Australian Olympic Planning Team. Additional proactive sales took place with SITE Chicago, PCMA NorCal, CALSAE, MPI SoCal and NorCal chapters.

Local networking events for sales included the VSB Tourism Summit, the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce Awards Dinner, Candle Bar 111, The UCSB Athletic Department and a quarterly hotel sales meeting at the Courthouse Distillery with presentations from Beach Bliss Santa Barbara and the Santa Barbara Culinary Experience.



### Leisure Sales & Travel Trade

In partnership with Visit California, VSB hosted three FAM trips, welcoming a total of 18 buyers representing Korea, Canada and the Middle East. Clients enjoyed trolley tours, local restaurants and hotels, as well as wine tastings, sailing and cultural walking tours. The team attended the Select Traveler Conference in Owensboro, KY, completing 28 meetings with East Coast and Midwest buyers. Additionally, VSB presented virtually to Connections Luxury California-focused buyers and traveled to Los Angeles for Visit California's Outlook Forum for updates on international markets and travel trends for 2025. Networking events this winter included Prost Desert Cities in Palm Springs and the Global Business Travel Association in Costa Mesa. Locally, the sales team also hosted a reception for the Los Angeles Business Travel Association at the El Encanto, A Belmond Hotel, entertaining their 27-member board of directors.

Catherine Lopez continued to grow in her new role, touring 16 partner hotels and meeting their teams. VSB is currently also collaborating with Visit Santa Ynez Valley and Visit Greater Palm Springs to develop FAM and FIT itineraries for multi-city visits to California. ❖

### COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

This winter, the Community Partnerships department delivered a dynamic mix of events, educational programs and networking opportunities that celebrated Santa Barbara's cultural richness and industry expertise. From spotlighting historical milestones to exploring innovative partnership opportunities, these initiatives engaged members across sectors, deepened community connections and equipped participants with valuable insights to enhance their role within the local hospitality landscape.

### Membership Update

VSB welcomed a diverse group of new members to the community, reflecting the breadth and vibrancy of the local hospitality and tourism landscape. New additions included iconic establishments like Arnoldi's Café and Chumash Casino, unique cultural attractions such as the Susan Quinlan Teddy Bear & Doll Museum and the Couture Pattern Museum, as well as new lifestyle and wellness offerings like Pilates & Or and Crush Courts Pickleball Social Club. We're also pleased to welcome Pacific Crest Hotel, Bliss Beach, Santa Barbara Fine Art and The Ellwood at Goleta Beach — each contributing to the rich tapestry that makes the Santa Barbara South Coast a premier destination.





## Events & Trainings

Held on Jan. 30 at the Cabrillo Pavilion, VSB's annual Tourism Summit welcomed 168 attendees, including members, elected officials and local media. The event featured a keynote address by Isaac J. Collazo, Vice President of Analytics at STR Inc., who delivered an engaging presentation on national hospitality trends and data insights. A panel of local business leaders further explored how broader tourism trends are impacting the Santa Barbara South Coast. The program was bookended by lively pre- and post-event networking hours, offering valuable opportunities for industry peers to connect. Raffle prizes and exclusive experiences, generously provided by hospitality partners, added to the event's energy and excitement.

This winter's Lunch & Learn series offered unique, behind-the-scenes experiences that highlighted Santa Barbara's cultural and community assets. On Feb. 18, members gathered at Old Mission Santa Barbara to commemorate the Centennial of the 1925 Earthquake, featuring presentations by Friar Joe Schwab and historian Neal Graffy, along with exclusive access to the Mission's archive library. On March 11, the Santa Barbara Zoo hosted an engaging session focused on community partnerships, guest engagement and accessibility, with insights from zoo leadership and a special animal encounter. Both events provided meaningful networking opportunities and complimentary lunches for attendees.

VSB fostered member connections through two vibrant networking events this winter. On Feb. 13, members gathered at Pali Wine Co. in the Funk Zone for a festive Valentine's-themed Meet & Mingle featuring interactive games, local wine and exciting raffle prizes. The momentum continued on March 18 with a creative Member Open House at Candle Bar 111, where attendees enjoyed hands-on candle pouring, light bites and non-alcoholic cocktails while exploring custom product offerings and networking with fellow local businesses.

Sixteen members earned their certification as Santa Barbara Ambassadors through the ongoing *I Am Santa Barbara* training program. Designed to enhance frontline hospitality knowledge, the one-hour session provided attendees with rich historical context, an in-depth look at local attractions and practical tips for delivering standout guest experiences across the Santa Barbara South Coast.

In total, VSB's events and training sessions engaged more than 300 participants, reflecting strong member interest in continued learning and connection. From thought-provoking industry discussions and hands-on cultural experiences to engaging networking gatherings and ambassador certification, each program empowered members with valuable tools, fresh insights and meaningful community ties — all in support of a stronger, more informed hospitality network. ❖

## TRAVEL TRENDS JANUARY - MARCH

Accommodations Employment	Winter (Q3) 2024 vs. 2025		
	Winter 2024	Winter 2025	% Change
Santa Barbara County	4,833	4,967	3%

Santa Barbara South Coast TBID Hotel Performance	Winter (Q3) 2024 vs. 2025		
	Winter 2024	Winter 2025	% Change
Occupancy	63%	64%	2%
Average Daily Rate (ADR)	\$260.54	\$278.34	7%
Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)	\$164.69	\$178.39	8%
Demand (Room Nights)	297,491	301,599	1%
Supply ( Room Nights)	470,613	470,567	0%
Gross Revenue	\$77,507,270	\$83,946,418	8%

Airline Passenger Volume	Winter (Q3) 2024 vs. 2025		
	Winter 2024	Winter 2025	% Change
Santa Barbara Municipal Airport	282,223	313,832	11%

Weather at Santa Barbara Municipal Airport	Winter (Q3) 2024 vs. 2025		
	Winter 2024	Winter 2025	% Change
Average High Temperature (°F)	65.1	65.3	0%
Total Precipitation (Inches)	18.74	6.09	-68%
Days of Precipitation	27	17	-37%



### 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  
**Amada Cruz**, Santa Barbara Museum of Art  
**Rick Fidel**, Rosewood Miramar Beach  
**Treg Finney**, Mar Monte Hotel  
**Andrew Firestone**, StonePark Capital  
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**Trevor Large**, Fauver, Large, Archbald & Spray LLC  
**Kristen Miller**, Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce  
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# Visit Santa Barbara Staff

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

**Jennifer Reyes**, Executive Assistant

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**Aleah Elisara**, Community Partnerships Manager

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**Brooke Holland**, Public Relations Manager

**Dani DeVries**, Public Relations Manager

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## MEETINGS AND TRAVEL TRADE

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

**Amy Esnault**, Group Business Development Manager

**Catherine Lopez**, Business Development Manager

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