

# Annual Report

JULY 2024 - JUNE 2025



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# Executive Summary

Dear Partners and Stakeholders,

Fiscal Year 2024–25 brought a complex and dynamic set of market conditions for Santa Barbara’s tourism industry. Persistent economic uncertainty, shifting traveler behaviors and shorter booking windows added challenges to forecasting and long-term planning. Concerns about group business persisted as planners delayed commitments and budgets remained tight, while competition from neighboring destinations intensified — many offering significant incentives to attract both leisure and group visitors.

In response, Visit Santa Barbara (VSB) acted decisively to protect and grow our market share. We made strategic shifts to concentrate marketing efforts on our most reliable and resilient audience segments — particularly Los Angeles and the broader Southern California drive markets — where data showed the strongest potential for immediate impact. By proactively pivoting, we were able to address emerging needs within the community and sustain visitation during periods of softness in other segments.

Notable achievements include 4.1 million website users resulting in nearly 1 million referrals to local businesses, 485 million ad impressions from “The Santa Barbara Effect” campaign and strong presence in national media outlets like Westways, Los Angeles Times and Forbes. The Group Sales team booked nearly 24,000 definite room nights and hosted 95 clients on 16 FAM trips, reinforcing Santa Barbara’s appeal to both leisure and group travelers. A revitalized VSB membership program maintained 265 active members and offered 18 member and industry events throughout the year.

Looking ahead, VSB remains committed to balancing agile, near-term responsiveness with long-term strategic planning. By leveraging data, investing in core markets and telling Santa Barbara’s distinctive story, we aim to deliver measurable value to our partners and keep Santa Barbara firmly positioned as a premier destination in an increasingly competitive landscape.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our lodging partners, members, city and county collaborators and local businesses. The milestones in this report would not be possible without your continued support.

Here’s to another successful year in the Santa Barbara South Coast.

Kathy Janega-Dykes  
President/CEO  
Visit Santa Barbara



*Kathy Janega-Dykes*

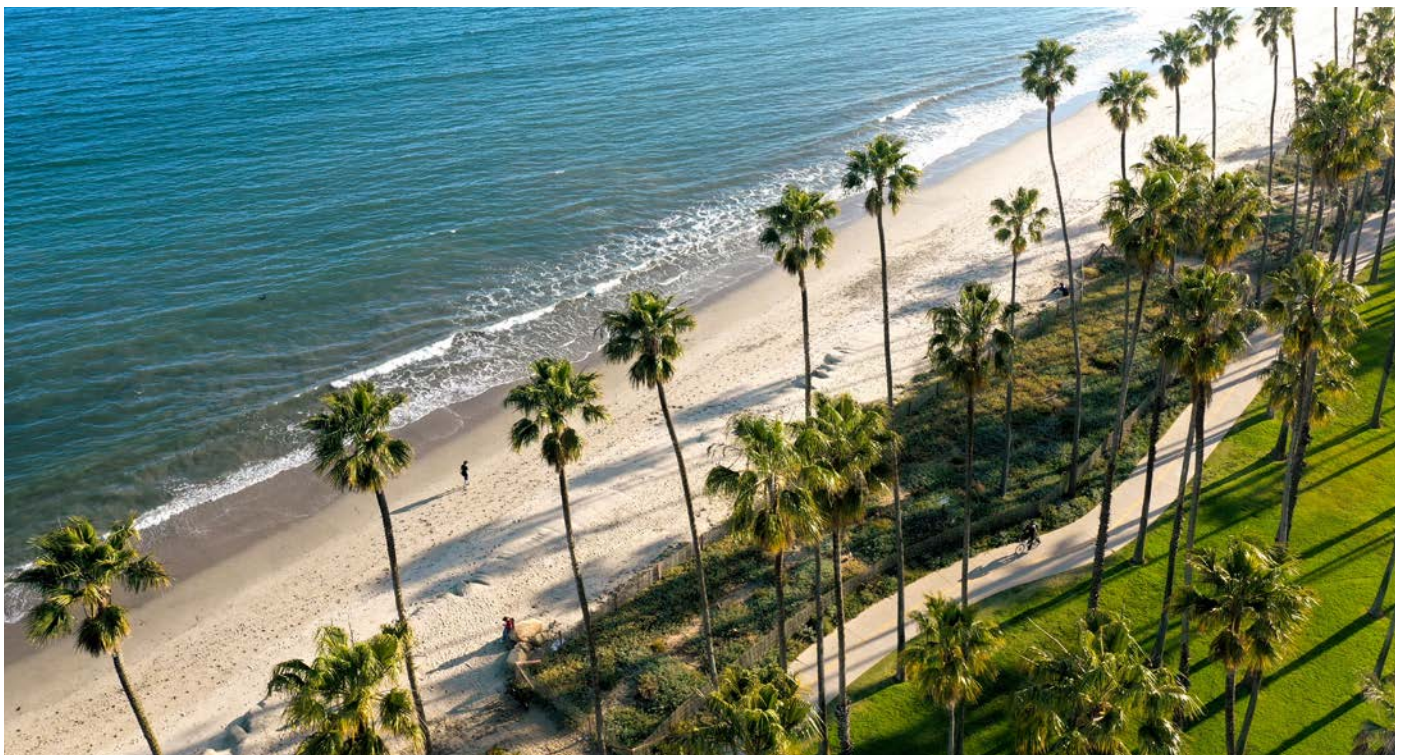
## About Visit Santa Barbara

Visit Santa Barbara 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 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.

## The Organization's Mission

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



STRATEGY ONE

# Position and Amplify the Santa Barbara Brand to Target Markets



## PUBLIC RELATIONS

In 2024–25, VSB generated more than 800 media stories aimed at inspiring travel to the Santa Barbara South Coast through compelling storytelling and visuals, thanks to strategic pitching, media relations, press trips and partnerships. These stories landed across high-profile digital platforms spanning travel, lifestyle and news, reaching up to 10.1 billion unique visitors per month. Print and broadcast coverage had the potential to influence 150.6 million prospective travelers through magazines, newspapers and television segments.

During the devastating Los Angeles fires in January, VSB broadly distributed a list of evacuee rates offered by Santa Barbara South Coast lodging properties, resulting in 37 stories in national and regional outlets ranging from Condé Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure and The Points Guy to Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Magazine and Santa Barbara news media. For many in the local hospitality industry, LA-area residents are more than frequent visitors — they're considered part of our extended community. Connecting this audience with local resources was vital during a time of regional crisis.

### **What the Media Are Saying**

“With its views of the Pacific and Santa Ynez mountains, balmy weather, bursting floral gardens, and Spanish-style architecture, there’s a reason that Santa Barbara and Montecito is nicknamed ‘The American Riviera’—it is perhaps the most idyllic, topographically diverse coastline in the country.”

**Vogue Online, December 2024**

“No matter the season, ... Santa Barbara is easy to navigate and even easier to fall in love with. Its charm lies not just in its approachability, but in its blend of laid-back, small-town vibes and sophisticated culture.”

**Forbes, October 2024**

“A California destination jewel, Santa Barbara is inarguably one of the state’s most popular coastal regions, with good reason: The always-bustling State Street, wine tasting rooms set into beautiful Spanish-style buildings, and freshly caught seafood among them.”

**Eater Los Angeles, April 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**

“With its mild climate, blue sea, and relaxed energy, Santa Barbara is perfect for renewing body and mind amidst the waves, art, and wine. Here, the sea not only soothes, it inspires.”

**Esquire México Online, April 2025**

## Top Media Coverage Highlights

- National outlets shined a spotlight on the Santa Barbara South Coast in wide-ranging and engaging travel coverage. Among them were an “ultimate” Santa Barbara feature in [Forbes](#) (54.13 million Unique Visitors per Month), a regional travel guide in [Wine Spectator](#) (2.2 million print circulation, 1.4 million UVM) in partnership with the Santa Barbara Vintners, a hotel primer by [Elle Decor Online](#) (1.87 million UVM), an adventurous travel piece by [AAA Club Alliance Online](#) (1.3 million UVM), a luxe take on Montecito in [Observer Online](#) (821,534 UVM) and a design lover’s guide in [Modern Luxury Online](#) (141,621 UVM)
- Stories in contemporary media outlets included lively, curated South Coast travel guides in [Paste](#) (1.42 million UVM), [Brit + Co](#) (1.19 million UVM) and [Cool Hunting](#) (120,377 UVM), as well as a Summerland “girls weekend” story in [Matador Network](#) (548,941 UVM).
- Southern California media covered the South Coast with exciting new takes, such as an interactive feature on Summerland in [Los Angeles Times Online](#) (20.04 million UVM) and a **Westways** (4.9 million circ.) print story on the ARTS District with an accompanying TV segment on [KCAL-TV](#), CBS Los Angeles (32,131 viewers, 116 million UVM). [Angeleno](#) (31,519 UVM) ran a feature exploring Montecito, while [Eater Los Angeles](#) (1.07 million UVM) highlighted the region’s “most anticipated” restaurant openings.
- Highlights from drive- and fly-market publications: [Sunset magazine](#) (230,047 circ., 378,083 UVM) named Goleta a top travel destination in its annual travel awards. [Atlanta Homes & Lifestyles](#) (31,853 circ.) and [Simply Buckhead](#) (24,000 circ.) described the region’s appeal for affluent Atlanta readers in the nonstop flight market, while [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) (3.38 million UVM and 87,331 circ.) included Santa Barbara in a culinary round-up. [The Mercury News](#) (4.16 million UVM) and [Seattle Magazine](#) (52,188 circ., 61,009 UVM) positioned the South Coast as a winter escape. **San Francisco Chronicle** (236,218 circ.) ran a special summer section on Santa Barbara with features ranging from the art scene to wellness. [Texas Lifestyle Magazine](#) (4,000 UVM) extolled the joys of summertime travel to the “idyllic” South Coast.
- International coverage included a pair of in-depth **Le Figaro** features (101.7 million UVM) on area [hotels](#), plus [beaches and bohemian escapes](#) for the French market. In Latin America, [Travel + Leisure en Español](#) (30,000 circ., 38,408 UVM) explored Santa Barbara as “a paradise on the West Coast” in four separate stories. Additional high-profile features appeared in [The Irish Times](#) (100,951 circulation, 1.26 million UVM), as well as the U.K.-based [The Sun Online](#) (56.91 million UVM), [The Sybarite](#) (150,000 circ.) and [Citizen Femme](#) (75,531 UVM); [Qantas Magazine](#) in Australia (524K circ., 12.5 million UVM); and [National Geographic Traveler China](#) (460,002 UVM, plus Chinese news sites with more than 132.23 million UVM).

## Quick Hits

- **Vogue Online** (10.51 million UVM): [“Romantic Getaways in the USA That Are Perfect for Any Couple’s Trip”](#)
- **Travel + Leisure Online** (9.98 million UVM): [“These 8 Small Towns in California Look and Feel Just Like Europe”](#) (also ran in 21 media outlets including MSN Travel, Mercury News and Sacramento Bee Online, with a total reach of 598 million UVM)
- **National Geographic Online** (6.4 million UVM): [“Add a detour to your next vacation”](#)
- **AFAR Online** (1.43 million UVM): [“12 Beautiful Places to Spend Your Winter”](#)
- **U.S. News and World Report Online** (33 million UVM): [“The 15 Best Weekend Getaways from LA”](#)
- **Condé Nast Traveler Online** (5.78 million UVM): [“10 West Coast Road Trips to Take in Your Lifetime”](#)
- **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”](#)
- **Brit + Co.** (1.2 million UVM): [“The 50 Best Travel Destinations To Visit In 2025”](#)
- **Los Angeles Times** (26.4 million UVM): [“Best Beaches in Southern California”](#) (also featured on Spectrum News 1 TV show “LA Times Today,” 2 million viewers)
- **Family Vacationist** (14,314 UVM): [“Where to go this summer: Top family-friendly destinations and discounts for 2025”](#) (also ran in 60 national and regional news outlets including USA Today Online, with a total reach of 260.88 million UVM)





### Media Relations & Familiarization Trips

VSB's press trip program supported visits for 92 journalists in 2024-25, representing 69 domestic media and 23 international media. FAMs provided opportunities for writers, editors and videographers to report firsthand on the South Coast, introducing several to our region for the first time and providing invigorating experiences for returning visitors. VSB customized itineraries to showcase a range of neighborhoods, accommodations and attractions, resulting in travel stories published in regional, national and international outlets. VSB also partnered on individual and group press trips initiated by area businesses as well as Visit California, amplifying their PR efforts with South Coast activities and broader destination perspectives.

A notable collaboration was a luxury media group FAM for 11 global freelance writers in partnership with Visit California last fall. As a result of this visit, nine travel stories featuring the South Coast have been published to date in outlets ranging from Forbes Middle East, Esquire México and Italy's Posh magazine to Japan's culinary-focused Croissant, Australia's Qantas and Outlook Luxe India. Several more pieces are pending publication.



VSB also earned coverage for its Locals Lodging Promotion aimed at local residents by pitching and securing "staycation"-themed features in the Santa Barbara Independent and Santa Barbara Life & Style, as well as mentions in Sitaline, Noozhawk and Pacific Coast Business Times.

VSB networked with top-tier media, pitched stories and showcased the destination at out-of-market media trade shows. Among the media events attended by VSB were the International Media Marketplace in New York, IPW in Chicago, as well as several Visit California media events, including a dinner in Denver, media reception in Los Angeles and media mission to Cannes to reach international journalists focused on luxury. ❖

## MARKETING

### “The Santa Barbara Effect” Brand Campaign

Throughout the year, VSB executed a dynamic, seasonally tailored media strategy under the unifying “Santa Barbara Effect” brand campaign. Running across digital, social, video and print platforms, the campaign consistently spotlighted the South Coast’s signature appeal, highlighting outdoor adventure, culinary flavor, wine culture, wellness, the arts and an easygoing coastal lifestyle — all designed to inspire relaxation and rejuvenation.

Each season brought new opportunities and challenges. Summer efforts highlighted hallmark experiences and celebrated major moments, including the 100th anniversary of Old Spanish Days Fiesta. With the arrival of fall, the team navigated a saturated media environment shaped by election-year noise and holiday promotions, while leaning into the destination’s rich calendar of events to keep Santa Barbara top of mind. By winter, wildfires impacting the Los Angeles area — the region’s largest feeder market — prompted a swift and thoughtful messaging shift, offering support to affected communities while positioning Santa Barbara as a peaceful escape.

Throughout, media efforts were strategically optimized to reach high-performing California audiences and qualified travelers across key domestic markets. From flexible creative execution to agile market response, VSB remained focused on driving awareness, intent and visitation — all while reinforcing the year-round appeal of the American Riviera®.

The campaign maximized outreach, engaged new audience groups and maintained strong interest among returning visitors. Backed by a \$3.1 million paid advertising budget, annual results exceeded nearly all performance metrics outlined in the 2024–25 Annual Business Plan, successfully

increasing awareness and facilitating trip planning to Santa Barbara.

A few metrics fell slightly below target due to a deliberate shift in strategy to prioritize website referrals. The campaign delivered impressive results across all major KPIs:

- 485 million impressions at a cost of \$6.45 CPM
- 41.2 million completed video views at \$17 per 1,000 views
- 3.8 million website referrals at a cost of just \$0.48 per click



## SantaBarbaraCA.com

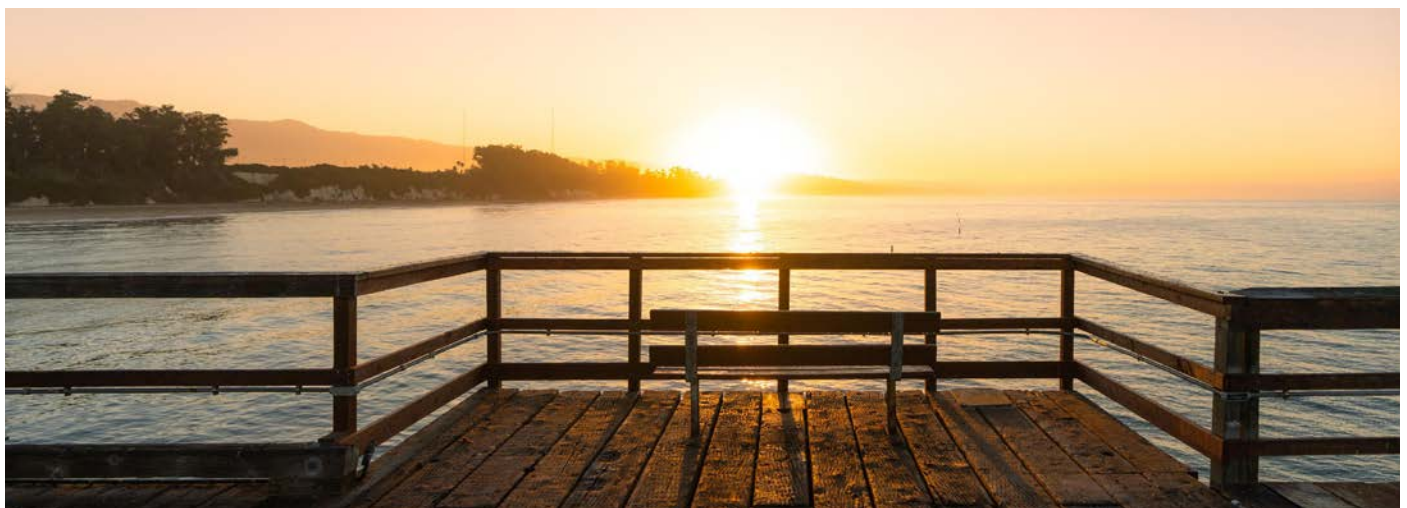
VSB's official destination website remained the region's most influential digital platform for travel inspiration and planning, drawing 4.1 million users, 5.1 million sessions and 8.3 million pageviews this fiscal year. Engagement held steady, with visitors spending over two minutes per session on average and a 43% engagement rate. More than 973,000 referrals were made to local businesses, underscoring the website's ability to guide travelers from inspiration to real-world experiences — helping to connect them with the hotels, restaurants, shops and attractions that make the South Coast so special.

Throughout the year, content development and optimization remained a priority. The team produced 36 new itineraries, 64 event-driven articles and 9 new landing pages, while enhancing 251 existing pages to support SEO and ensure content stayed relevant, timely and reflective of the South Coast's distinctive mix of lodging, dining, cultural and outdoor experiences.

While overall site performance remained strong, evolving privacy regulations and internal resource constraints impacted full potential. The implementation of Osano, a new privacy compliance tool which launched in February, limited visibility into user behavior — particularly in California, the site's largest tracked market — where an estimated 19% of users now opt out of data tracking. As a result, key performance indicators such as lodging referrals are increasingly directional. Current metrics show tracked lodging referrals decreased by approximately 20% year-over-year. However, this decrease does not reflect a shift in priority — driving lodging referrals remains central to VSB's content strategy and storytelling efforts.

VSB also maintained a direct line to high-intent travelers through email marketing, delivering 1.2 million newsletters to opted-in consumers. These curated emails, featuring stories, seasonal events and travel inspiration, generated 30,000 unique clicks and an impressive 57% open rate.

In partnership with the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, targeted efforts to promote Goleta through GoGoleta.com further contributed to regional visibility, drawing 19,300 users and 41,000 pageviews.





### “Celebrate the Unexpected” Campaign

To promote spring and summer visitation to the destination, VSB produced an episodic video series titled, “Celebrate the Unexpected.” Composed of four 45-second and eight 12-second videos, the biweekly series followed two unexpected duos on unforgettable adventures through the Santa Barbara South Coast. Each story played on the differences between the two travelers as they traded roles and convinced each other to embrace unique adventures that resonated with their distinct personalities, highlighting that there’s something for everyone to enjoy when visiting The American Riviera®. Promoted across Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, TikTok, Adara and Connected TV, the campaign was supported with a paid media budget of \$334,000, which generated 51.3 million impressions and 14.3 million completed video views.

### Weddings

To capitalize on the region’s unparalleled beauty and romantic allure, VSB deployed a paid media and content marketing campaign to position the SantaBarbara South Coast as the premier destination for weddings. Stunning visual assets and inspiring, yet informative content were leveraged to showcase the diverse venues, exceptional service and unique experiences available to couples planning their special day.

The campaign targeted two core audiences: California-based couples seeking a memorable ceremony and out-of-state visitors looking for an ideal destination wedding. With a budget of \$110,000, media partners Instagram, Pinterest and Google served a series of paid search and social ads to targeted audiences, delivering 20 million impressions and 101,000 clicks back to [SantaBarbaraCA.com/wedding](https://www.SantaBarbaraCA.com/wedding).

## Social Media

VSB's social media presence continued to connect with travelers across seven platforms — Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Pinterest, YouTube, LinkedIn, Threads and X\* — highlighting what makes the South Coast so special, from coastal beauty and local flavor to unique places to stay. This fiscal year, organic content generated 5.9 million impressions, 9.6 million views\*\* and 3 million engagements. The team managed a community of 510,000 active followers, a 4% increase from the previous year.

More than 1,500 organic posts were shared across platforms, with an increased focus on short-form video that captured the region's natural beauty, outdoor adventures, local flavors, cultural experiences and more. Lodging remained a key priority, with the team dedicating in-house resources to producing lodging-specific videos, helping travelers picture themselves here before they've even packed a bag.

Instagram continued to be the fastest-growing platform, with TikTok a close second. Native, platform-specific content drove the most engagement — especially casual storytelling on TikTok, where a carousel of local boutiques reached over 151,000 views in just three months. Seasonal storytelling also resonated, including the "European Vacation in California" reel, which showcased Santa Barbara's Spanish Colonial architecture and generated more than 158,000 views across platforms.

In collaboration with the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, Goleta was also promoted through the Go Goleta social media channels, garnering 220,000 impressions and 20,000 video views from an audience of 13,000 followers across Instagram, Facebook and X.

## Local Content Creator Program

VSB launched a local content creator program to collaborate with Santa Barbara-based digital storytellers, bringing fresh perspectives and authentic voices to our social media channels. This initiative focused on producing high-quality photography and video content that reflects the diversity and vibrancy of the destination. Budget allowed for partnerships with four local creators: Sarah Chorey (@eatthiscalifornia), Dorrian Reeve Schuyler (@\_explorian), Christina Rinaldi (@christinasantabarbara) and Abdon Mora (@abdonmora).

Together, the program yielded 18 high-quality videos shared across Instagram, TikTok, Facebook YouTube and Threads, generating 770,768 organic impressions on Instagram alone. In addition to the final video content, the campaign produced more than 400 new photos, video b-roll and extended usage rights — providing a robust library of assets that go well beyond organic reach. These visuals are now being repurposed across paid media, further extending the campaign's impact and maximizing value across multiple channels and departments.

## Partner Advertising Program

VSB delivered substantial value to industry partners by extending marketing dollars and creating high value opportunities for TBID lodging properties and VSB members to expand their reach among potential travelers to the Santa Barbara South Coast. Over 8.6 million impressions and 127,158 clicks — a 24% increase YOY — were delivered to 27 participating partners through tactical digital marketing programs including digital, native, social and newsletter placements. Annual ad revenue totaled \$93,321. ❀

\*VSB will discontinue use of X (formerly Twitter) next fiscal year to focus on higher-performing platforms that better inspire travel and support local businesses.

\*\*During Q4, Meta discontinued use of impressions in organic reporting and now reports solely on view counts.

STRATEGY TWO

# Grow Overnight Demand for the Destination



## GROUP SALES

The past year presented a few challenges for the group sales team. Final production totaled 23,781 room nights, marking a 13% decrease in room nights from the previous year. Notably, total contracts increased by 2%, while room nights declined by 13%. Room night production was also affected by staff turnover which resulted in several months of recruiting and training, as well as some large anomalous programs from the prior fiscal year.

On a more positive note, ADR showed healthy growth of 10%, which brought total confirmed revenue within 6% of the prior year's figure. A total of 23,937 group room nights came to market, representing 98% of the prior year's actualized total of 24,436.

Looking ahead to 2025-26, 19,435 room nights have already been sold, reflecting strong demand and a 22% improvement in definite position as compared to this point last year. Long-term bookings continue to grow, offsetting some of the shortfall for in-the-year for-the-year business.

The overall group budget for 2024-25 remained flat to the prior year which necessitated the team to efficiently maximize resources, minimize acquisition costs and maintain high productivity.

## Site Tours & Client Meetings

Throughout the year, the group sales team remained highly active in cultivating relationships with hotel partners and engaging with clients through different partner events. Frequent FAM trips were brought in to showcase the Santa Barbara South Coast. September welcomed eight planners to see luxury properties; November hosted six luxury buyers and nine HPN specialists to a "Master Class"; March brought another 10 luxury buyers; and June invited clients to see the deluxe properties. An additional wedding-themed event introduced 45 planners to the destination.

The team also traveled with partners from local hotels to entertain clients at VSB events: including pickleball in West Hollywood and Scottsdale, a professional soccer game in San Jose, professional baseball games in Chicago and New York, a charter cruise on the Sacramento Brew Boat, a cooking class in Orange County and numerous sales calls and client meals in Phoenix, Boston, Washington D.C., Colorado Springs, Denver and Atlanta.

A new initiative in 2024-25 involved partnering with the Santa Barbara County Vintners Association to bring together clients and hotel partners for elevated wine pairing dinners. Along with Phil Carpenter from the Santa Barbara County Vintners Association, the team hosted dinners in Las Vegas at Esther's Kitchen and in Los Angeles at A.O.C. and Republique. Additional sales missions, in partnership with Visit California, included events where the Santa Barbara story was showcased to planners in Minneapolis, Chicago, Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

### **Trade Show Participation**

Third-party trade shows remained a valuable source for generating new business leads. The VSB sales team represented the destination at key events including IMEX, CALSAE, CEMA, Meetings & Incentives Worldwide, NorthStar's Destination California, Destination West and Boutique Meetings events. VSB also participated with Smart Meetings in their Northeast and Southern CA events and with Prestige in Seattle, Texas and Phoenix. VSB selected several new shows to uncover fresh leads from unknown planners by attending GPS in Salt Lake City and Atlanta, Connect Spring Marketplace and the HPN Annual Summit. By maintaining an active presence at a diverse array of trade shows, the group sales team expanded its reach and deepened VSB's connections within the professional meetings community.

### **Industry Events & Affiliations**

DMO Alliances continued to deliver strong value for the sales team. Participation in regional DMO groups in Southern California, Northern California and the Midwest introduced our sales team to new clients and created opportunities through joint client events and networking in collaboration with other California destinations. VSB also invested strategically in sponsorships with Prestige, HPN, HelmsBriscoe, CALSAE, SITE, PCMA and MPI, increasing brand visibility among prominent meeting planners. ❖



## TRAVEL TRADE SALES

### Educating the Travel Trade

Familiarization trips and targeted sales missions played a vital role in educating travel advisors about the unique offerings of the Santa Barbara South Coast. Sixteen FAM trips were conducted over the year, providing immersive, firsthand experiences to 95 clients. These included seven Canada-based representatives on a reverse sales mission, nine receptive tour operators based in Korea and Los Angeles, 45 luxury wedding professionals attending a three-day Kinetic retreat hosted by El Encanto, and a retreat for the Los Angeles Business Travel Association board of directors.

VSB and Santa Barbara Hotel Collection joined Visit California's Pan-Euro Mission, completing 45 appointments with qualified buyers from Germany, France and the United Kingdom. VSB traveled to Australia to educate buyers on sports-related itineraries, and also continued its partnership with Black Diamond for the first six months of the year, allowing additional outreach to advisors and operators in the U.K.

### Trade Show Participation

VSB traveled to Cannes for the International Luxury Travel Mart, a three-day event consisting of one-on-one appointments and networking. The team also represented the destination at Connections Luxury Americas in West Hollywood and Connections Luxury International in Newport Beach, meeting with more than 40 luxury buyers at each event.

Additional shows included the AAA Travel Conference, Brand USA Travel Week in London, Go West and Select Traveler. These collective efforts drew over 8,200 buyers and provided extensive promotional opportunities for the Santa Barbara South Coast.

At IPW, U.S. Travel Association's premier international trade show with 6,000 delegates from 17 countries, VSB partnered with the Santa Barbara Hotel Collection and Margerum Wine Company to conduct 81 client meetings and participated in numerous networking events in Chicago.

A highlight of IPW was an intimate dinner hosted by VSB, where guest Lisa Rosner of Margerum Wine Company presented a curated wine selection to eight travel advisors. The following evening, the team continued relationship-building at a Chicago Cubs game with four clients.

Prior to the trade show, VSB took part in the Cal Cup golf tournament in Santa Barbara and the Santa Ynez Valley, which offered networking opportunities with owners and principals from 45 international tour operators.

### Building Relationships

To strengthen ties with key drive markets, the team participated in several Prost networking events in Southern California and Palm Springs. Engagement with more than 150 business travel professionals also took place through events hosted by Los Angeles Business Travel Association and Global Business Travel Association.

Two travel trade newsletters were sent out reaching approximately 7,000 contacts with each edition. These efforts, combined with strategic collaborations and event participation, significantly expanded the organization's industry presence and helped spotlight Santa Barbara's distinctive travel experiences. ❖

## ADVERTISING

### Third Night Free Lodging Campaign

The Third Night Free campaign, an evergreen lodging property offer, achieved its goal of boosting non-commission, direct bookings to extend overnight stays to the Santa Barbara South Coast. The campaign features properties spanning luxury, mid-tier and economy categories, offering a complimentary night on a three-night stay, along with supporting lodging discounts and offers. In 2024-25, 28 participating properties generated 15,164 room nights booked, a remarkable 14% increase to the prior year's bookings.

A robust advertising strategy encompassed paid consumer emails through Travelzoo, Dunhill Travel Deals and Luxury Link. In an effort to reach new audiences, cost-per-click ads were introduced and gleaned positive metrics, as newsletters began to see some audience fatigue. Paid social media and organic promotion across VSB's website, email and social media platforms generated 170 million impressions, 969,000 pageviews and 191,500 referrals\* to participating lodging partners. A media spend of 1.1 million yielded a cost per referral of \$8.02.

*\*Due to privacy settings implemented on SantaBarbaraCA.com in February 2025, the complete number of referrals generated are not able to be tracked. Metrics are inclusive of website users who opted in to receive website tracking cookies and meant to show directional trends.*

### Locals Lodging Campaign

VSB continued an in-market lodging promotion encouraging locals and their visiting friends and family to stay at one of 19 participating accommodations with a 30% discount on staycations from November 2024 through May 2025. Designed to fill vacant rooms during the shoulder season, the promotion was framed as a chance for residents to celebrate their hometown and enjoy the same experiences that draw visitors from around the world. The campaign generated 58,000 pageviews and 11,975 referrals\* to participating partners. To drive interest within the community, VSB invested \$60,000 in media across social, print and digital, which generated a cost-per-referral of \$10.22. ❖



STRATEGY THREE

# Champion Positive Visitor Experiences





## AIR SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

### Airline Partnership

VSB continued its efforts to drive demand for nonstop air service to the region, partnering with Southwest® and Delta Air Lines® to highlight the convenience of flying into Santa Barbara Airport — and the wonders that await upon arrival. Strategic advertising efforts spotlighted key origin markets, with Southwest campaigns running in Sacramento, Oakland, Las Vegas and Denver, and Delta promotions timed to support new service from Salt Lake City and Atlanta. The campaign delivered strong results, generating 101.2 million impressions and 412,000 link clicks to airline booking platforms, with a total paid media investment of \$211,357.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

### Hospitality Workforce Development

In collaboration with seven local organizations, VSB co-hosted State Street Job Fairs in September and May, attracting 121 local businesses and more than 800 job seekers pursuing various hospitality roles.

VSB also sustained its partnership with the Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce on the Hospitality Inspiration Campaign. This initiative focuses on attracting and retaining talent within the hospitality industry. VSB showcased local success stories through paid advertisements across various platforms, directing audiences to a dedicated website with motivational content and current job openings. Over the past year, the campaign generated 1.9 million digital impressions and 41,600 website sessions.

### Ambassador Training

The *I Am Santa Barbara* training program continued to elevate visitor experiences by empowering frontline hospitality staff with in-depth destination knowledge. Delivered as free, 60-minute sessions — either at the VSB office or onsite — these trainings covered tourism's economic impact, local history, destination highlights, hospitality best practices and how to navigate sensitive topics. Participants consistently praised the program's knowledgeable presenters, engaging content and comprehensive local information. In 2024-25, six sessions successfully certified 75 Santa Barbara Ambassadors, who also had the chance to win gift certificates for local experiences, enabling them to firsthand experience the attractions and services they promote.

## Community Events

Over the past year, VSB actively supported the region's vibrant cultural calendar by providing financial sponsorship and in-kind marketing support for a variety of events. VSB promoted community happenings through SantaBarbaraCA.com, social media, newsletters and public relations outreach. Sponsored events included the Goleta Lemon Festival, Santa Barbara Culinary Experience, UCSB Alumni and Parents Weekend, World of Pinot Noir, NatureTrack Film Festival and Pianos on State Street, among others. Beyond these, VSB also offered promotional support via these channels for other local events and festivals that align with the Santa Barbara brand.

In September, the VSB team participated in the Battle of the Brands (formerly the Hospitality Summer Games), competing against local hotels in challenges such as bed-making, mini-golf, a cake competition and a talent show. This event not only fostered camaraderie and boosted morale, but also resulted in the [donation of seven bicycles](#) to LEAP Central Coast as a service of goodwill to the community. ❖



STRATEGY FOUR

# Strengthen the Organization's Effectiveness



## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

### Strengthening Member Engagement

The Community Partnerships department actively engaged with VSB members through a variety of gatherings, trainings and educational sessions. The focus remained on strengthening existing relationships while actively seeking new partnerships and collaborations to create powerful synergies within the community.

This year, VSB's membership program underwent a strategic restructure, introducing new benefit tiers and added value for members, along with a modest price increase. As a result, VSB ended the fiscal year with 265 total members, including 34 new additions. This reflects a 4% decrease in membership compared to the previous year, attributable to the program transition. It is anticipated that membership levels will stabilize in the coming fiscal year as the updated structure continues to gain traction.

### Signature Events & Member Engagement

Held on January 30 at Cabrillo Pavilion, VSB's annual Tourism Summit brought together 168 attendees, including members, elected officials and local media. The event featured a compelling keynote by Isaac J. Collazo, Vice President of Analytics at STR Inc., who provided valuable insights into national hospitality trends and performance data. A panel of local business leaders followed, offering perspectives on how these broader trends are shaping the Santa Barbara South Coast. The program was framed by vibrant networking receptions before and after the presentations, and raffle prizes and exclusive experiences, generously donated by hospitality partners, added an extra layer of excitement to this highly anticipated annual event.

The Annual General Meeting and Luncheon on May 29, attended by nearly 200 guests, commemorated the centennial anniversary of the 1925 Santa Barbara earthquake — a pivotal event

that profoundly influenced the city's distinctive Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. Hosted at the Santa Barbara Historical Museum, the event featured a dynamic conversation between renowned local historian Neal Graffy and Santa Barbara native and hospitality advocate Andrew Firestone, offering guests a unique blend of history and personal insight. Attendees also explored the Arts & Culture Marketplace and sampled local wines in the museum's charming courtyard. The event garnered significant media attention from [Noozhawk](#), [KEYT](#), [KCLU](#) and [Pacific Coast Business Times](#).

The Community Partnerships team hosted 10 engaging Lunch & Learn sessions throughout the year, covering a wide range of topics including leisure sales, member advertising opportunities, the Channel Islands & Whale Heritage Area, wildfire preparedness for the hospitality industry, sustainable tourism practices, maximizing membership with VSB and a special focus on the Centennial of the 1925 earthquake. One standout session was the festive Holiday Showcase, which highlighted holiday-themed offerings from VSB members and featured product sampling along with food and beverages. The entire series drew a total of 360 attendees — a 52% increase over the previous year — and received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

The Meet & Mingle and Open House events allowed members to explore local venues, discover area offerings and build connections with fellow businesses and VSB staff. Each event featured light bites, beverages, interactive activities and prize giveaways, creating a welcoming and engaging atmosphere. Over the course of six unique events held at a variety of member locations, a total of 169 participants took part in these meaningful networking experiences. ❀

## TRAVEL TRENDS FY 2024-25

Accommodations Employment			
	2023-24 Avg.	2024-25 Avg.	% Change
Santa Barbara County	5,025	5,109	2%

Santa Barbara South Coast TBID Hotel Performance			
	2023-24	2024-25	% Change
Average Occupancy	70%	71%	2%
Average Daily Rate (ADR)	\$326.58	\$336.55	3%
Average Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)	\$230.78	\$241.70	5%
Total Demand (Room Nights)	1,318,860	1,354,104	3%
Total Supply ( Room Nights)	1,893,478	1,908,653	0%
Total Gross Revenue	\$438,577,210	\$462,135,149	6%

Airline Passenger Volume			
	2023-24 Total	2024-25 Total	% Change
Santa Barbara Municipal Airport	1,314,660	1,486,968	13%

Weather at Santa Barbara Municipal Airport			
	2023-24 Avg.	2024-25 Avg.	% Change
Average High Temperature (°F)	70.4	69	N/A
Total Precipitation (Inches)	25.5	7	-72%
Days of Precipitation	46	24	-48%



# 2024-25 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
- Ed Galsterer**, Santa Barbara Inn
- Dan Glaeser**, CalPrivate Bank
- Babett Hirzel**, Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront
- Trevor Large**, Fauver, Large, Archbald & Spray LLC
- Warren Nocon**, Hotel Californian
- Samantha Onnen**, Santa Barbara Airbus
- Tom Patton**, Ramada by Wyndham Santa Barbara
- David Sigman**, Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club
- Tim Snider**, Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard
- Ben Sprague**, Earl Warren Showgrounds

## *Ex Officio Advisors*

- Chris Hastert**, Santa Barbara Airport
- Councilmember Mike Jordan**, Santa Barbara City Council
- Councilmember Luz Reyes-Martín**, Goleta City Council
- Kristen Miller**, Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce



# 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

**Aleah Elisara**, Community Partnerships Manager

## MARKETING

**JessyLynn Perkins**, Director of Marketing

**Carly Hopkins**, Creative Manager

**Shantel Adams**, Digital Marketing Manager

**Taylon Faltas**, Content Manager

**Lela Brodie**, Social Media Marketing Manager

**Casey LaHonta**, Research & Analytics Manager

**Emily Lauderdale**, Web Marketing Manager

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

**Karna Hughes**, Director of Public Relations

**Anna Naughton**, Public Relations Manager

**Brooke Holland**, Public Relations Manager

**Dani DeVries**, Public Relations Manager

**Whitney Wiser**, Public Relations Associate

## SALES

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

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

**Amy Esnault**, Group Business Development Manager

**Catherine Lopez**, Business Development Manager

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

VISIT  
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