



# Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau

*Annual Report*  
Fiscal Year 2013-2014





Dear Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Partners:

Fiscal year 2013-2014 was a successful year for Yosemite/Mariposa County as a world-class destination. We are excited to share the results of our efforts and we are grateful for your continued support in helping us to achieve our mission.

Our comprehensive global marketing effort to promote our region as a four-season destination generated more than 27.2 million impressions and drove more than 153,000 visitors to YosemiteExperience.com. Strategic use of digital marketing resulted in a click-through rate of 440% above the industry average.

Hosting of international and trade familiarization (FAM) tours promoting off-season travel, extended stays, and a range of lodging options strengthened visitation year-round and helped to reach broad audiences.

In an effort to provide all partners with direct advertising opportunities, Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau expanded its cooperative marketing program to provide affordable exposure through print, online and digital ad campaigns. The introduction of a booking engine on the website generated more than 35,000 leads to more than 90% of all lodging properties registered in the county.

Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau took proactive measures to provide timely and accurate information to prospective visitors, lodging partners and merchants during the RIM Fire and Government Shutdown. What could have resulted in devastating economic losses to our community in fact produced incremental generation of Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) of more than \$127,000 compared to the previous year.

It is our great privilege to represent Yosemite/Mariposa County and bring visitors to experience the magic of this region. It is you, our lodging and community partners, whom we welcome visitors and provide the warm, friendly experience that makes a trip to Yosemite/Mariposa County a memorable one.

We thank you for your ongoing engagement and support.

Sincerely,

Like, Follow, Tweet  
@YosemiteNation:



*Terry Selk*

Executive Director, Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau is the branding, sales and marketing agency responsible for positioning Yosemite/Mariposa County as the destination of choice for leisure and group business for the economic benefit of the region.

## KEY STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- Stimulate economic impact for Mariposa County
  - Promote off-season overnight visitation
  - Educate customers and constituents
- Operate a fiscally sound and effective business
- Foster positive relationships with key stakeholders and partners

# Advertising

This year's advertising efforts delivered more than 27.2 million impressions and drove more than 153,000 visitors to the YosemiteExperience.com website. The 2013-2014 strategy consisted of a shift towards a 9-month off-season campaign across a broader range of both print and digital media than ever before. Messaging consistently highlighted four season accessibility, a range of accommodation types, and activities to promote longer stays.

## Traditional

The 2013-2014 print campaigns focused on highly illustrative and nostalgic imagery to capture attention in a photo-heavy environment.

Advertisements in *Sunset* and *Via* reached audiences throughout California while offering opportunities for co-operative advertising to lodging partners that were previously cost-prohibitive. As a result, more lodging partners were highlighted than ever before.



Yosemite Journal insert

Sunset Ad - Fall

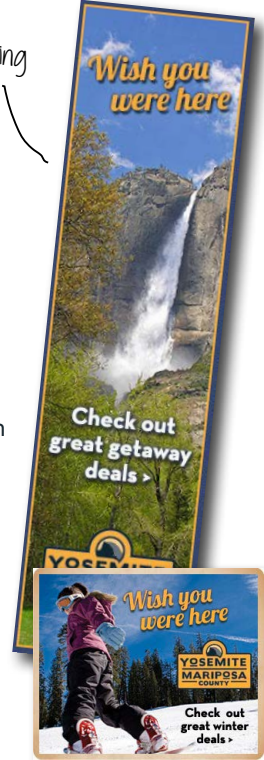
## Digital

With 84% of travelers\* indicating they rely on online tools over printed materials for trip planning the landscape for reaching potential visitors has decidedly become digital.

This year, Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau has gained relevant visibility with these planners through a variety of digital advertising campaigns on platforms such as VisitCA.com, MyYosemitePark.com, and Trip Advisor.

New in 2013-2014 were the implementation of DogTrekker.com and Weekend Sherpa, an newsletter targeted at driving spur of the moment weekend getaways from the Bay Area audience. With a click rate of just under 5%, Weekend Sherpa was a successful means of reaching potential off-season, short-term planners.

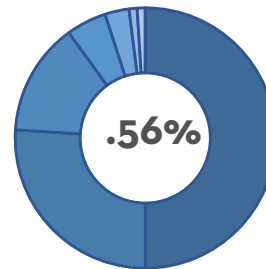
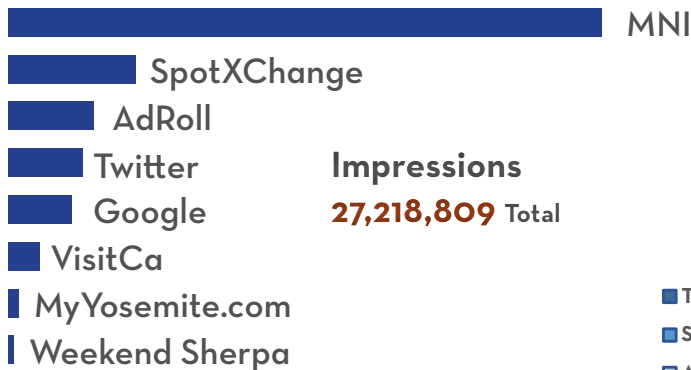
Search Engine Marketing (SEM) continues to be a strong contributor to the overall number of clicks for YosemiteExperience.com with a CTR of 2.18%.



MNI Ad - Spring

Trip Advisor - Winter

## Online Media Results



- Twitter
- SpotXChange
- AdRoll
- Google
- VisitCA
- MyYosemite.com
- MNI
- Weekend Sherpa

## Clicks

**440%** Above industry average



**Banner click rate is .16%**

**60%** Above industry average

\*Source: WACVB Education & Research Foundation by Destination Analysts, Inc.



# Trade

Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau strives to build partnerships and find new opportunities through trade shows and international outreach. In 2013-2014, these relationships were successfully leveraged to better serve our partners.

## International Offices

With nearly 25% of Yosemite visitors originating from a foreign market, it is imperative that Yosemite/Mariposa maintain high visibility in feeder markets to California. Under the umbrella of Visit California, the Bureau has contracted with representation offices in Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom. Activities include representation of the destination to the travel, media and consumer trades. The offices train front-line travel agents, develop itineraries and programs with tour operators, pitch story ideas and coordinate cooperative promotions with airlines, tour operators and non-tourism sector companies.

In 2013-2014, the Bureau hosted one of the most important FAM tours in its history when 29 senior-level decision-makers from tour operators, airlines and other retail travel sales channels visited the area for three days resulting in several new tour and travel programs for 2014-15 and beyond.

## International Highlights



Attendance at the outdoor Telegraph Show (UK)



International Tour Operators FAM (CA Cup Invitational)



"48 Hours in" Campaign (Germany)



Ray's Outdoors Promotional Campaign (Australia)

## Co-Op Programs

Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau created a marketing co-op program primarily to enable lodging partners and merchants with lower marketing budgets to take advantage of advertising opportunities. The program consisted of 15 programs including *Sunset* and *Via* magazine full page ads, online banner ad placement of major outlets such as Orbitz, Expedia and Travelocity, and several monthly newsletters. The cost for partners ranged from \$50.00 to \$1,500.

The program attracted all levels of participants:

- Balanced Rock Foundation
- Delaware North Companies (DNC)
- Little Valley Inn
- The Redwoods in Yosemite
- Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite
- Yosemite Bug Rustic Mountain Resort
- Yosemite Scenic Wonders Vacation Homes
- Yosemite West Vacation Homes
- Yosemite Ziplines and Adventure Ranch



Co-op Partners



## Consumer Trade Shows

The Bureau participates in two major consumer trade shows per year, the Bay Area travel and Adventure Show in Santa Clara and the LA Travel and Adventure show in Long Beach.

The Bureau partners with the surrounding regions; Madera, Mammoth, Mono, and DNC to create a "Yosemite Experience Pavilion" that consists of 10 booths and a rock wall attraction. The pavilion has won "Best in Show" three consecutive years.

Both of the shows are held in late winter and the primary focus and engagement with consumers is to educate them that the area is open year-round and the best time to visit is in the off-season. Collateral from the county's hotels, vacation rentals, shops and restaurants are on display at the Bureau's booth to provide consumers with information.



"Best in Show" Three Consecutive Years!

# Communications

Google it, tweet it, like it, share it, and repeat! We are starting conversations, planting seeds, and inspiring trip planners on multiple communication channels.

## Websites

**YosemiteExperience.com** keeps visitors up-to-date on upcoming events and activities in Mariposa County as well as provides detailed information on local attractions, dining and lodging. This year, YosemiteExperience.com generated more than 35,000 leads to more than 90% of featured lodging properties. The majority of referrals (56%) were to vacation rental properties.

**Yosemite.com** continued to evolve in 2013-2014 and remains one of the top ranked sites on all Google searches for Yosemite, with well over a million page views per year. Site changes implemented this year helped maintain that standing by making the site faster. New staff resources have been identified to contribute to content and site management.



YOSEMITEEXPERIENCE.COM

**279,818** Total Sessions

**1,040,385** Pageviews



YOSEMITE.COM

**348,316** Total Sessions

**1,159,936** Pageviews

## Newsletter

The monthly "Insights" newsletter provided information to potential travelers in various segment markets on a regular basis. With an average open rate of 17% and average click-through rate of 12% the newsletter performed above typical industry standards.



**17%** Open rate

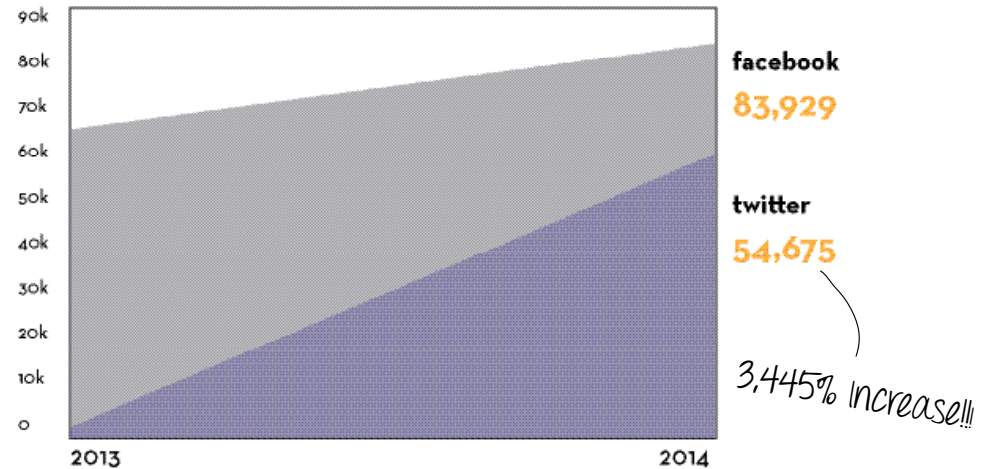
**12%** Click rate

## Social Media

Retaining and growing an active community on social media remains an important tool for reaching vast audiences. Family, friends, and colleagues influence 48% of the average trip-planning decisions about where to travel. Comments, shares, and retweets help spread the word through an individual's social network about why our destination should be on their "must-see" list.

YosemiteNation continues to grow rapidly, reaching vast audiences. **Twitter increased by an astonishing 3,445%**. Facebook increased by more than 29%. Instagram has 1,152 followers, a 75% increase. Pinterest followers increased by more than 47%.

FAN GROWTH



**11,574** clicks from Twitter to YosemiteExperience.com



**37,734,000** Facebook impressions



Partnered with Marmot, Thrifty Rental car, and Zeal Optics to provide giveaways on our Facebook page to increase engagement and build constituencies.

# Public Relations & Media

Publicity efforts by Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau included hosting travel writers, journalists and social media gurus from around the world and helped promote Mariposa County's off-season attributes.

**800,000,000** Million in domestic media impressions

**\$9.25** Million in media coverage

**45+** Journalists Hosted

## Media Visit Highlights

In addition to hosting more than 45 individual journalists, the Bureau also hosted the Nokia Influencers familiarization (FAM) tour, that included visits from 15 social media "influencers" and resulted in a more than 900 Twitter mentions.

### Additional FAM Highlights:

- **Clayton Clark, KMPH-TV**—Visit to Badger Pass
- **Jolie Loeb, Our Man on the Ground** – Stayed at the Redwoods at Yosemite
- **AAA Colorado** – Writer Will McGough visited the area as part of a larger trip coordinated by Visit California.
- **Society of American Travel Writers** – Bay Area chapter annual meeting, included more than 35 attendees.



*"The Bureau has been very helpful in promoting our business. They share information about our area at regional and international trade shows and they have arranged for several journalists to stay at our bed & breakfast."*

—Jon Pierre and Lois Moroni  
Restful Nest Bed & Breakfast



## Crisis Communications

A year like 2013-2014 serves as a stark reminder of why public relations remains an important resource for communicating our message with immediacy and substance. During the Rim Fire and Government Shutdown crises, our ability to connect with media with speed and accuracy mitigated the long-term effects of these potentially devastating situations.

Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau's ability to proactively respond to economic disasters in the region helped mitigate the prospective loss of significant TOT and, in fact, even helped generate \$127,000 more in tax collections than in the previous year.

The Bureau plays a pivotal role in dispensing accurate information to travelers in times of disaster, monitoring all appropriate resources and collectively communicating updates to lodging partners and constituents, international media and tour operator outlets and travelers.



## Events Promoted

- Art, Wine, and Wheels Festival
- Bay Area Travel and Adventure Show
- Butterfly Festival
- California Restaurant Month - **NEW IN 2014!**
- CoyoteFest in Coulterville
- John Muir Festival
- LA Travel Show
- Mariposa Air Fair and Adventure Day
- Mariposa County Fair
- Mariposa Civil War Days
- Spirit of Yosemite Fest at the California Academy of Sciences





# Community Engagement

Our ability to promote Yosemite/Mariposa County as a destination of choice is dependent on having a vibrant community that is welcoming to people from all over the world. Tourism is Mariposa County's largest economic force, providing more revenue and jobs than any other industry.

Direct financial support was provided to the Mariposa Chamber of Commerce for County's Visitor Centers to help provide coverage during increased periods of visitation.

Yosemite/Mariposa County joined the hundreds of other communities across the nation in celebrating tourism impact to their respective area via the US Travel annual National Travel and Tourism Week. The Bureau celebrated their first ever involvement with "Tourism Works" buttons for front line hospitality staff along with "thank you" signs along each of the four corridors into the county, and the distribution of an informational flyer about tourism's economic impact in the county.



## Youth Support

The Bureau has assisted local youth with support and opportunities to succeed. Below is a snapshot of youth programs we supported:

o **Mariposa County Multi-Media Class** – Purchased one high quality video camera and engaged students to produce a promotional video for Coulterville.

o **Sierra Quest Academy** – Hired students from Sierra Quest Academy to assist in a variety of projects.

o **Mariposa Bears Cheerleading Squad** – Team mailed travel planners to prospective visitors as a fundraiser.



## Partnerships

Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau values working with its state and regional partners. Joint marketing efforts with other destination marketing organizations such as Mammoth Lakes, Yosemite Sierra, Tuolumne, and Calaveras Counties in selected cooperative programs helps to strengthen Mariposa County's visibility around the world.

The Bureau's participation in a variety of regional, state, and national board's including the High Sierra Visitors Council, Gold Country Visitors Association, Yosemite Gateway Partners, SYTA (Student/Youth Travel Association) and YARTS Advisory Committee all help ensure Yosemite Mariposa County is represented in broader marketing opportunities available through these group channels.

## Public Affairs

Townsend Public Affairs, on behalf of the Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau, submitted an Integrated Regional Water Management Program Grant Application. As part of the State's commitment of resources to address the drought, this application seeks funding for water availability and sustainability projects.

The water projects will serve residents and visitors to historic Coulterville, Yosemite West and Fish Camp with water well and line improvements.

Caltrans Transportation Planning Grant was awarded in the amount of \$100,000 for Phase 1 of the project that will provide funding for the "Town of Mariposa Transit Center Feasibility Study." This project will result in improved connectivity and mobility within the central historic district, through links with transit, parking availability and enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access and safety.



# Board of Trustees

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DNC Parks and Resorts at Yosemite

**Jonathan Farrington**  
Vice Chairman  
DNC Parks and Resorts at Yosemite

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The Redwoods in Yosemite

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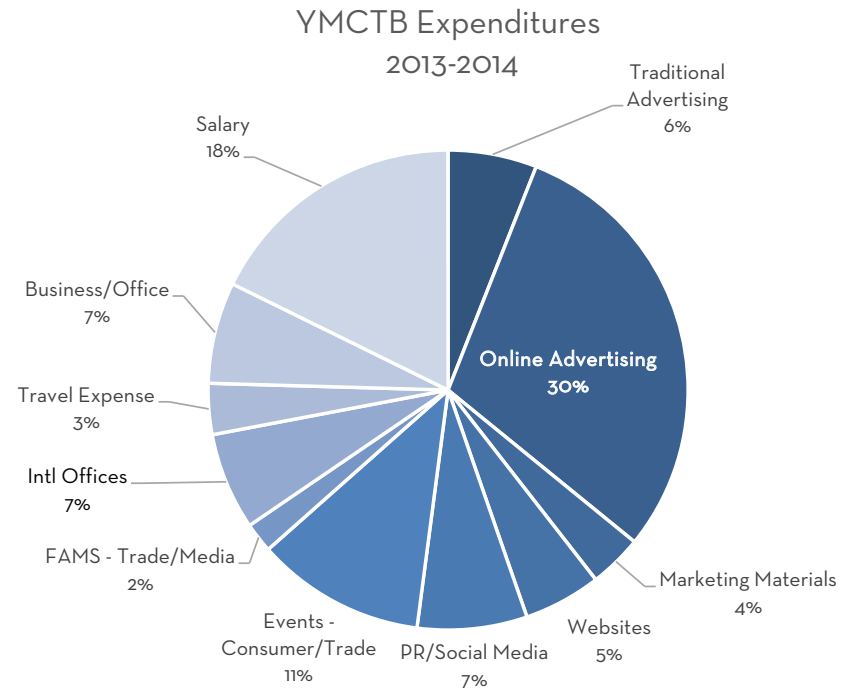
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Mariposa County Chamber of  
Commerce

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Yosemite Resorts

**Sara Zahn**  
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**Scott Gediman**  
Yosemite National Park

**Candy O'Donel-Browne**  
Community Member



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