# 2023/2024

BISHOP TOURISM IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT





# A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. We are incredibly proud of the progress we've made and excited to share the positive outcomes of our efforts with our stakeholders. Your support is integral to our success—after all, what we achieve together is a reflection of your commitment and collaboration!

While tourism in our region has shown improvement over the past year, the travel industry has not yet fully recovered from the pandemic. International visitation remains below pre-2019 levels, though we are seeing a gradual return of international travelers. Bishop's strategic location near National Parks and iconic landmarks makes it an attractive destination for global explorers.

We are actively investing in programs through Visit California, High Sierra Visitors Council, and the US Travel Association to maintain and enhance brand awareness on a global scale. According to the US Travel Association, a full recovery is expected by the end of 2025.

To mitigate the slower recovery of international travel, we have intensified efforts to attract visitors from within California and neighboring states. We've developed new itineraries and created fresh content to spotlight events and activities tailored to diverse interests and age groups. We are committed to demonstrating that Bishop offers something for everyone, across all seasons and interests, ensuring that our destination remains top-of-mind for potential travelers.

We are beginning to see the effects of a cooling economy and shifting consumer sentiment. The intense "revenge travel" of 2022 and 2023 has diminished, and challenges like tight visa restrictions and a strong dollar are affecting international travel. To navigate these challenges, we must accelerate our promotional efforts to sustain and grow our market share. Our focus will be on reinforcing our marketing strategies and enhancing our appeal to ensure continued growth.

We will continue to closely monitor travel data and trends using tools like STR and Datafy. This data-driven approach helps guide our marketing strategies and ensures we remain responsive to changing market conditions.

Like the runner on the cover of this report, as we reflect on the past year, we draw inspiration to keep moving forward with renewed energy and determination. Our journey has been marked by significant achievements and valuable lessons, and we are excited to continue advancing with the same drive and enthusiasm. Together, we will build on our successes, tackle new challenges, and strive for even greater accomplishments in the future.

Thank you for your unwavering support and partnership as we press on toward our shared goals.

Sincerely,

Tawni Thomson

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# BTID BACKGROUND

Developed by Bishop lodging businesses and the Bishop Chamber of Commerce, the Bishop Tourism Improvement District (BTID) is an assessment district designed to provide specific benefits to payers, by funding marketing and sales promotion efforts for assessed businesses. The BTID was initially formed in 2014 for a five (5) year term, beginning January 1, 2015. The district was renewed for a 10-year term, January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2029.

The district includes all lodging businesses located within the boundaries of the Bishop City limits, including hotels, motels, hostels and short term rentals such as AirBnB. Assessment rate is currently 2% of gross sales and is collected by the City of Bishop at the same time and in the same manner as Transient Occupancy Tax. BTID funds are then forwarded to Bishop Chamber of Commerce on a quarterly basis. BTID funds are used for tourism promotion programs as outlined in the BTID Management District Plan. No proposed changes to boundary, rate or business classifications are proposed for this year.

The Bishop Chamber of Commerce will continue to serve as the BTID Owners' Association. The Owners' Association is charged with managing funds and implementing programs in accordance with this plan, and must provide annual reports to the Bishop City Council.

In California, TIDs are formed pursuant to the Property and Business Improvement District Law of 1994. This law allows for the creation of a benefit assessment district to raise funds within a specific geographic area. The key difference between TIDs and other benefit assessment districts is that funds raised are returned to the private non-profit corporation governing the district.

The Bishop Tourism Improvement District (BTID) clearly demonstrates a successful model of collaborative funding and strategic investment. Here's a breakdown of how the program creates a "win-win-win" situation:

- Lodging Partners: The increased marketing efforts lead to higher occupancy rates. This boosts
  revenue for local hotels and lodges, benefiting them directly from the increased number of
  visitors.
- 2. **City's General Fund**: Higher occupancy results in increased Transient Occupancy Taxes (TOT), which contribute to the city's general fund. This extra revenue supports various city services and infrastructure improvements.
- 3. **Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau (BACCVB)**: The additional lodging sales also boost the BTID budget, allowing BACCVB to invest more in marketing initiatives. This, in turn, supports further promotion of Bishop and attracts even more visitors.

By pooling resources and leveraging collective efforts, the BTID enables a broader and more effective marketing strategy than any single stakeholder could achieve alone. This collaborative approach ensures that the benefits are shared among the city, lodging partners, and the marketing body, creating a sustainable cycle of growth and investment.

It's true that Bishop's marketing budget might not be as substantial when compared to the advertising programs of well-known destinations like Big Bear, Lake Tahoe, Palm Springs and Mammoth Lakes. These areas often have larger budgets due to their higher profile and greater tourist traffic, which allows them to invest more in extensive marketing campaigns, amenities, and attractions.

For Bishop, it's essential to make the most of the budget by focusing on its unique qualities and attractions. Targeting specific niches, leveraging local influencers, and using cost-effective digital marketing strategies help maximize the impact. Emphasizing unique features, such as outdoor adventures, local culture, or hidden gems, can help differentiate Bishop from these larger, more heavily marketed destinations.

#### BTID ADVISORY BODY

The use of the assessment fund is based on recommendations of the Bishop Chamber of Commerce. The organization is governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors, elected by the Bishop Business community to set policy and provide oversight of staff. The Bishop Chamber holds monthly business meetings to review programs, discuss progress and monitor the budget. The Executive Director regularly presents public updates at Bishop City Council meetings.

<sup>\*</sup>A minimum of three Bishop Chamber Board members represent lodging businesses paying the BTID assessment. All BTID lodging owners and representatives are invited and encouraged to participate in program development.

2024/2025 BACCVB BOARD OF DIRECTORS							
<u>Name</u>	<b>Business Representation</b>	<u>Title</u>					
Sunil Lad *	Best Western Bishop Lodge	President					
	& Comfort Inn						
Robert Sharp	Eastern Sierra Community Bank	Vice President					
Sarah Freundt	Grocery Outlet	Treasurer					
Cheryl Underhill	Northern Inyo Hospital Foundation,	Immediate Past President					
	VFW, Lions, Altrusa, Eastern Sierra						
	Cancer Alliance, Elks						
Manuel Astorga	Astorga's Mexican Restaurant	Board Member					
Jason Brown	Laughing Parrot Productions	Board Member					
Tara Frank	Owens Valley Paiute-Shoshone	Board Member					
	Cultural Center						
Gary Gunsolley	Fly Fishing Guide	Board Member					
Lynn Hawks	Hawks Landing Gourmet Confections	Board Member					
John Marko *	Wayfinder Bishop	Board Member					
Jennifer McGuire	Individual Member	Board Member					
Niral Munshaw *	Vagabond Inn	Board Member					
Gayla Wolf	Honey Bee Photography	Board Member					
Debi Yerkes	Alex Printing	Board Member					

#### BTID KEY OBJECTIVES:

The BTID District Management Plan, developed by Bishop Hoteliers prescribes 80% of funds for sales and marketing; 10% for administration; 5% for visitor services/enhancements; and 5% for contingency/reserve.

# Sales and Marketing Programs may include:

- Year-Round Visitor Information Center in downtown Bishop operated by professionally trained staff;
- Membership with local, state and national tourism organizations, such as Visit California and High Sierra Visitors Council, and Brand USA to target key international markets to increase overnight visitation;
- Production or sponsorship of events that draw overnight visitors, particularly in the off seasons;
- Billboards along Highway 395 to promote responsible recreation, flights and events;
- Attendance of travel consumer shows to promote overnight visitation;
- Participation in educational and networking conferences, such as VisitCA, Caltravel, IPW and One West Tourism Alliance.
- Online marketing, including website with mobile and foreign language versions, search engine marketing, paid social media ads, banner ads promoting Bishop as a year-round destination;
- Engage professional companies such as Smith Travel Research (STR), VisaVue, Datafy and others to conduct research that will help guide marketing efforts and effectively remarket to increase overnight visitation;
- Print and digital advertising to promote overnight visitation to Bishop;
- Development and implementation of a public relations and communications strategy, inclusive of social media outlets and press release distribution designed to increase overnight visitation at assessed businesses;
- Sales and marketing blitzes for assessed businesses;
- Familiarization tours of assessed businesses; and
- Preparation, distribution and production of collateral promotional materials such as brochures, flyers and maps to promote overnight visitation.

# <u>Visitor Services/Enhancements may include</u>

- Visitor Center improvements and enhancements
- Trout stocking in Bishop Area waters to promote overnight visitation
- Visitor education through projects such as Climbing Ranger
- Comprehensive and integrated wayfinding signage

#### **OUR BRAND** – SMALL TOWN WITH A BIG BACKYARD

The brand for Bishop, CA, "Small Town with a BIG Backyard," captures the essence of what makes our town unique and appealing to both visitors and locals. This branding reflects Bishop's blend of charming, small-town character with its expansive natural surroundings.

#### **Community Charm:**

- **Population**: Approximately 11,000 in the greater Bishop area contributes to a close-knit and welcoming atmosphere.
- **Downtown**: Features family-run restaurants, galleries, and retail shops that offer a mix of traditional hospitality and modern amenities.
- **Local Highlights**: Includes a walking tour of murals, a historic movie theater, Native American Cultural Center, pioneer museum and a scenic park in the heart of town.

#### **Expansive Outdoors:**

 Public Land: 98% of Inyo County's land is publicly owned by the USFS, BLM, and the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, encompassing over 6 million acres available for recreation.

#### • Proximity to Attractions:

**Bishop Creek Canyon:** A mecca for hikers, anglers & photographers.

**Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest**: Home to some of the world's oldest trees.

**Mount Whitney**: The highest peak in the contiguous U.S.

**Alabama Hills:** Known for its striking rock formations and as a popular film location.

**Death Valley:** An amazing land of extremes.

**Mammoth Mountain**: Offers skiing, hiking, and spectacular views.

**Devils Postpile**: Famous for its unique columnar basalt formations.

Mono Lake: Notable for its unique tufa formations.

Eastern Entrance to Yosemite: Access to one of the most iconic national parks.

The brand "Small Town with a BIG Backyard" perfectly illustrates Bishop's balance of intimate, small-town charm with access to vast, breathtaking landscapes. It highlights the town's appeal as a gateway to a world of outdoor adventures and natural wonders.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION & PROGRAM APPROACH

#### **Digital Emphasis**

- Investment in Digital Infrastructure: Our commitment to building a robust digital
  communications framework has proven crucial. This infrastructure enables us to stay
  connected with our audience, adapt to changing trends, and position Bishop for
  ongoing success.
- Dynamic Website: Our website, <u>www.bishopvisitor.com</u>, is a central hub for promoting Bishop. It's regularly updated with new content, reflecting seasonal changes and current events. The ability to track and analyze data allows us to make real-time adjustments, ensuring our digital presence remains responsive and relevant.
- Partnership with Simpleview: We collaborate with Simpleview for expert management of paid social media ads and search engine optimization, ensuring that our digital marketing efforts are targeted and effective.

#### **Authenticity**

- Local Expertise: We utilize a "Dream Team" of local experts, including social media managers, writers, influencers, photographers, and videographers. These individuals bring genuine, first-hand experiences of Bishop's outdoor offerings and community.
- Authentic Voice: By relying on locals, we ensure that our content reflects true enthusiasm and deep knowledge of the area. This approach fosters an authentic connection with our audience compared to using external ad agencies.
- Diverse Online Presence: Our team creates and shares content across various platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, showcasing Bishop's unique charm and attractions.

#### Outside



#### **Sustainability**

- Community and Environmental Stewardship: We aim to foster community cohesion and economic growth while preserving Bishop's unique guest experience and natural environment.
- **Support for Climbing Rangers**: In partnership with the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association (ESIA), we co-fund two Climbing Rangers who patrol local lands, educate visitors on Leave No Trace principles, and promote responsible recreation.
- **Encouraging Responsibility**: We advocate for sustainable practices among both residents and visitors, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the health of our landscape, community, and local businesses.

#### Informed Investments for Recovery and Growth

- **Data-Driven Decisions**: We use demographic, spending, and location data from Datafy to inform our marketing strategies. This helps us understand our guests' interests and behaviors, allowing us to tailor our efforts effectively.
- Marketing Investments: We allocate resources to a variety of regional and national publications, both print and digital. This includes producing and distributing visitor guides and brochures such as the Bishop Visitor Guide, EZ Hikes Brochure, Inyo County Fishing Map, Birding Hotspots, Treasure Map, Inyo County Backroads Magazine, and the Eastern Sierra Fall Colors Guide.

#### Information Center

- **Guest Services**: The Bishop Information Center is a vital component of our strategy. Our team of Guest Hosts provides excellent service, responding promptly to calls, emails, and walk-in inquiries.
- Increased Inquiries: As interest in Bishop grows, we have seen a rise in inquiries and the scope of information requests. Our Information Center plays a crucial role in managing this influx and delivering accurate, helpful information to prospective visitors.

This strategic approach integrates digital innovation, authenticity, sustainability, informed investment, and exceptional guest services, positioning Bishop as a desirable destination with a strong foundation for continued growth and success.

# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: DIGITAL

BISHOPVISITOR.COM EN	GAGEMENT
Increase	13%
Annual Visits  Top Tier Markets CALIFORNIA (83%) Los Angeles, San Jose, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, Las Vegas  UNITED STATES (92%) California, Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, Washington, Oregon, and Texas.  INTERNATIONAL (8%) Germany, UK, Canada, France, China, India, Australia, Mexico.	Top Pages (1-10)  1. Home Page 2. Lodging 3. Fall Colors 4. Fish Report 5. Webcams 6. Air Service 7. Itineraries 8. Night Sky 9. Events 10. Bristlecone
Event Counts (interactions) Partner Clicks Visitor Guide Downloads Fall Color Map Downloads Three Pages/Session E-News Converters	2.2 Million 111K 16K 6K 30K 2.5K

# **BISHOPVISITOR.COM**

Website metrics are an important way to measure the success of marketing efforts and guide campaign strategies.

International website visitors represented 8% of the 2023-2024 total, an increase of 4% over the previous year.

Last Year, we added Nevada into paid social and search campaigns and we're now seeing the visitors from Las Vegas show up online, downloading the app and in destination through Datafy data.

Over 70% of guests accessed the website from a mobile device.

The website is continually updated with new content, events, UGC and videos.

- BookDirect continues to provide a zero-commission booking engine for the hoteliers from bishopvisitor.com. This year there were 2,483 referrals, with an average of \$254/booking. Data shows guests are booking 42 days in advance.
- Inyo-Mono "Ale Trail" was recently added to the website.
- "Small Town, Big Characters" video featuring Craig London and the original "Leave No Trace" ethics is popular with locals and visitors. Over 80% have watched the video all the way through.
- New Eastern Sierra Tour (EST) video features 10 iconic stops between Death Valley and Yosemite. Over 75% of the viewers on YouTube watched the video to completion.
- New mobile-first website has been under construction for 7 months and is set to launch late summer 2024.

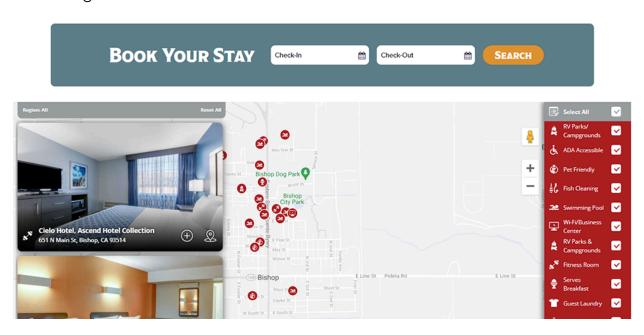
**Email Marketing** – We use Constant Contact for e-news communications with guests that have subscribed through the website, social media, in the Information Center and at travel/trade shows. The database grew 16% last year. We currently have 46K subscribers with an impressive open rate of 45% (industry average is 23%)

**Visit Bishop App** - The Visit Bishop Team worked with the pros at VisitWidget to develop our region's first advanced, cross-device application that creates an engaging and intuitive way for visitors to research, plan, and experience their visit. This app is popular with locals and visitors alike. The IOS and Android App is free to download and easy to navigate. Users can choose places to stay, see, eat, and shop and add them to their itinerary and map. A large touchscreen version is at the Bishop Airport. There's also an online widget that allows desktop users to engage.

Use of the Visit Bishop App increased by 89% last year. Engagement shows visitors staying over 2.5 minutes, with a total of 57K pageviews and 2K downloads.

Most engaged users are from:

- 1. Los Angeles
- 2. Sacramento
- 3. San Diego
- 4. Victorville
- 5. San Francisco
- 6. Las Vegas



# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: SOCIAL MEDIA

Overall the @VisitBishop Facebook Reach is now over 21M and 2M on Instagram. Our social team has done an amazing job with engagement. More than 10,000 comments and 300,000 reactions were closely monitored last year.

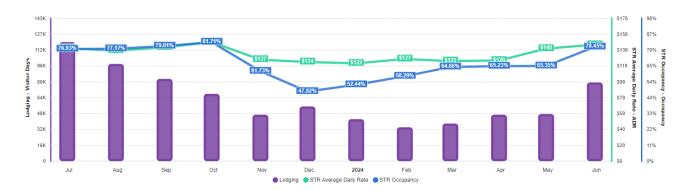
New targeted campaigns in San Francisco, Denver and other key out of state markets produced excellent results:

- 2,500 lead generations
- 1,500 clicks for air service
- 9.000 clicks for the Eastern Sierra Tour (EST)
- 400K new visitors

Increased efforts to grow YouTube are working well. Last year, we added TikTok videos and YouTube shorts, plus new longform videos generated by Alex Pollini, Shawn Reeder and Chris Lobreglio. We now have 130 videos on the Visit Bishop YouTube Channel that have generated 227K views and a watch time of 3,100 hours.



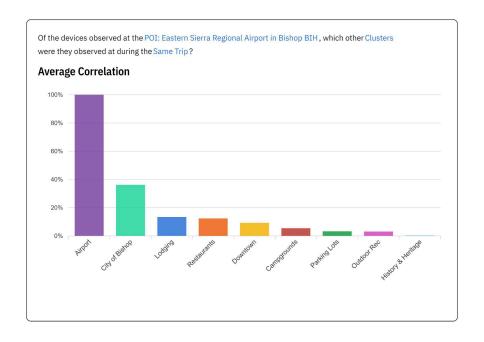
# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: DATA ANALYSIS



DATAFY uses geolocation data from mobile devices that allows us to examine visitor trends over the past five years. Simpleview is also analyzing this data to enhance our remarketing and target audiences for social and google advertising.

Some examples of data collected through Datafy help us understand information about travelers at Bishop Airport.





# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: OCCUPANCY & ADR

BACCVB subscribes to weekly occupancy reports provided by Smith Travel Research (STR). STR Reports for Bishop include data from 11 of the 19 downtown hotels, representing 79% of BTID room inventory. STR data includes small (13 rooms) and large (87 rooms) properties. STR data is also uploaded weekly to Datafy. We are confident the data is a solid representation of overall Bishop lodging trends.

Average Daily Rate (ADR) is a carefully monitored metric. Lodging rates vary in all communities according to demand, with higher rates during peak travel season and major events. Increasing ADR is a good indicator that BTID funded marketing programs are working to increase Bishop's status as a desirable destination.

According to Smith Travel Research, Bishop lodging occupancy for 2023 was 70.2%. Average Daily Rate was \$135, which represents a 6% increase over the previous year. All in all, Bishop's occupancy rate is on par with the High Sierra Region and state average. ADR is considerably lower than statewide average.

% BISHOP OCCUPANCY										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
January	35.5	42.1	50.2	43.2	58.3	54.9	48.4	61.0	62.6	54.2
February	53.7	42.3	52.0	54.2	63.2	57.3	53.4	68.5	67.6	58.0
March	53.7	57.0	59.4	61.1	65.8	47.2	61.5	66.6	70.7	65.2
April	55.9	52.6	60.4	57.6	65.8	27.1	65.4	65.3	69.4	65.6
May	61.0	63.0	64.6	69.8	68.6	38.3	70.2	68.5	68.8	65.7
June	74.6	81.5	81.2	81.0	81.7	66.2	86.1	82.1	79.4	78.8
July	81.5	84.4	86.9	86.3	84.8	71.0	82.9	79.0	76.9	79.5
August	74.5	81.1	84.9	78.8	86.7	69.3	66.9	78.5	77.2	
September	75.4	85.1	85.1	83.6	88.6	62.8	66.8	79.2	79.0	
October	64.6	77.9	85.6	81.6	86.0	73.8	78.1	81.1	84.0	
November	43.4	52.8	54.4	56.5	57.5	59.4	61.5	63.9	59.4	
December	46.1	46.9	47.8	52.3	54.1	44.8	61.8	57.0	47.9	
Annual Average	60.0	63.9	67.7	67.2	71.8	56.0	66.9	71.0	70.2	

AVERAGE DAILY RATE								YTD	
2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
\$94	\$100	\$106	\$108	\$114	\$110	\$120	\$127	\$135	\$136

# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: INFORMATION REQUESTS

The magazine style Bishop Visitor Guide is much more than a directory as it features in-depth articles and large photos to inspire travelers to explore the destination more deeply. It's been very well received, and we reprint 50K copies annually with a new cover, some new articles and updated member information. Please take the time to <u>Flip through the pages</u> of the new Bishop Visitor Guide, we are very proud of the publication and hope you are as well.

Search Engine Management (SEM) efforts focus on driving visitors to request a Bishop Visitor Guide via a form on <a href="https://www.bishopvisitor.com">www.bishopvisitor.com</a>. A completed request is considered a "conversion" for purposes of measuring SEM success. Last year 2,930 requests were received and fulfilled. 40% (1,170) were mailed, while 60% (1,760) requested a digital download. We continue to see the digital download option grow each year.

# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: ACCESS & TRANSPORTATION AWARENESS

- Trip Planning Menu on www.bishopvisitor.com is continuously updated to reflect current seasons/conditions and has links to CalTrans, Nevada DOT, weather, and wildfire smoke projections.
- Visitor Center Hosts are well trained to help guests with all transportation questions.
- Social media, e-news and the website inform visitors and locals about road conditions.
- The website travel planning resources have been enhanced with comprehensive seasonal guides, immersive travel experiences, accessible destinations guide and the new "Eastern Sierra Tour."
- "Fly to Bishop" messaging has been increased in print and social platforms and featured at Bay Area Travel Show.
- BACCVB Executive Director participates in monthly Eastern Sierra PIO group meetings.
- In-person outreach at US Travel Association International Travel Conference.
- Bishop was featured in California Road Trips Magazine, highlighting Bishop Airport as the new gateway to CA.
- We have created Interactive ArcGIS Story Maps for all landing pages.

#### STRATEGIC PROGRAM: MULTI SEASON TARGETED

#### **CAMPAIGNS**

Strategically targeted campaigns attract visitors that enjoy off-season activities such as photography, birding, fly-fishing, desert trail running, bouldering and high desert exploration.

We utilize niche publications and continually update social media campaigns, blogs and paid digital ads to fit the season.

- Weekly fishing reports by local guides are now featured on website
- Weekly fall color reports with photos were submitted to www.californiafallcolor.com
- Weekly wildflower reports with photos were submitted to Desert USA.com
- Weekly climbing conditions reports provided by Climbing Rangers were featured on the website and across social platforms.

#### YOSEMITE JOURNAL CAMPAIGN: MYYOSEMITEPARK.COM

- 10,343 Pageviews Las Vegas to Yosemite Road Trip
- 3,116 Pageviews Explore Bishop's Big Backyard
- 2,490 Targeted leads sent including name, email and mailing address
- 4,179 Engagements National Park Facebook



# **Explore the East Side**

If this road trip leans into superlatives, nowhere is that more true than the Eastern Sierra. Inyo County, made up of towns like Lone Pine. Bishop and Independence, is home to the lowest place in North America, the hottest ever recorded temperature and the world's oldest tree.

By Mikaela Ruland

A fter a stunning scenic drive through the park (pg. 80), check into the Oasis at Death Valley. This gorgeous, California-mission-style hotel complex is home to the historic Four Diamond fter a stunning scenic drive through is home to the historic Four Diamond Inn and the family friendly Ranch at Death Valley. Both properties underwent extensive renovations in 2018 and the inn now features 22 beautiful casitas alongside its famous gardens and vintage pool with an exquisite bar. At the Ranch at Death

towering above it all with the deepest valley below. The Alabama Hills have served as the backdrop for countless movies from the Lone Rapper to Iron Man. Visit the Museum of Western Film History in Lone Pline to learn more about the area's movie history that put Hollywood on the map hundreds of years ago, and to see artifacts and memorabilia from your favorite films.

Shoshone tribes from beautiful baskets to

Afterwards, stop at Mountain Rambler Brewery for dinner and a pint. It's the beginning of the Eastern Sierra Ale Trail, which connects Bishop to Yosemite and has six stops that you can visit along the way to earn a patch. If you're a wine drinker, Good Earth Yogurt combines the best of both

# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: UGC & INFLUENCERS

# VISUAL STORYTELLING FOR OUR DESTINATION

# USER GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

UGC offers the leading visual storytelling solution and plays an important role in our social media efforts. We have been filling our Crowdriff library with relevant up-to-date user generated content. UGC is invaluable as our guests trust their friends and family experiences more than those of paid spokespeople. Our social media team asks for permission for each and every image. These photos currently live on our website, are shared extensively on social channels, and show up from time to time on VisitCalifornia.com.

+159 Galleries 3410 Assets 30% Engagement 160k Views



"Earned Media" is a vital component of the destination development strategy. Sometimes this is called "free" advertising, but it's not really that at all. "Earned Media" is publicity that is not paid for, but is an article, BLOG or social post that's written by a third party. We understand the value of engaging and nurturing relationships with journalists, photographers and influencers.

We regularly facilitate familiarization tours (FAMS) for these important partners, but we don't write the stories for them. We invite them to visit our region, discover and report on their experiences. We do pay for lodging and meals if that type of support is requested.

Localhood Stories utilize Crowdriff sourced images to highlight our destination. Our social team submitted these to Visit CA and Google Travel with great results - 369K impressions with an interaction rate of 68% (up 24% over last year).



In May 2024, the Post IPW International Fam Tour included 20 attendees, plus two Visit CA Reps and a photographer. They rode by motorcoach from LA to Palm Springs, then Barstow and into the Eastern Sierra. Our Visitor Center Host met the bus in Lone Pine and provided a narrated trip to Bishop. The group was treated to a nice dinner at Whiskey Creek and an overnight stay at Wayfinder Hotel. Half of the group took an early morning drive up to Lake Sabrina and the full group was thrilled with their tour and program at the Owens Valley Paiute-Shoshone Cultural Center before moving north to Mono Lake, June Lakes Loop and

Mammoth. We've heard very positive feedback from the participants, and we are certain there will be great returns on this investment.

#### Some 2023-2024 Earned Media Projects:

- Becky Nesel/ @geobeckly
- Mike and Kristen Schoeck/@RunTheAtlas
- Amanda Ronzoni/ Italian Freelance Travel Journalist & Photographer
- Greg Vinci/ Freelance Travel Journalist & Photographer
- Hermann Global/Visit USA Parks



# **INFORMATION CENTER:** GUEST SERVICES

#### **BISHOP VISITOR CENTER BY THE NUMBERS**

#### 2020 #7302 | 2021 #13,453 | 2022 #17,058 | 2023 #18,871

Visitor inquiries by phone, email and in person continue to grow post-pandemic.

- Open year-round, hours vary by season. Open 6-7 days/week.
- One full-time and three part-time hosts provide outstanding service to guests and locals.
- Well trained, professional, courteous, and knowledgeable.
- Must handle a vast scope of inquiries in-person, by phone and email.



#### Hidden Gem en Route to Mammoth Mountain

Mar 2024 · Solo

I was an accidental tourist at the Bishop Visitor Center, but felt it was incumbent upon me to openly share the positive experience and embarrassment of riches that followed. Excited to ski a Mammoth for the first time following an epic snowstorm, I arrived with all the unchecked enthusiasm of surfer chasing a tidal wave. Sadly, I missed my ride due to a late-arriving flight, and would have been marooned at the Bishop airport but for Joe from the local Chamber of Commerce who rescued me. Upon arriving at the Bishop Visitor Center, I was warmly welcomed with sincere greetings, light hospitality, and an education about the local region that rivaled that given at visitor centers operated by the National Park Service. For example, I learned that this county boasts the highest point in the continental United States (Mount Whitney), the lowest point in the continental United States (Badwater Basin in Death Valley), and the oldest living organism in the world (Bristlecone Pine Trees, which are purportedly 5000 years old). I also got an outstanding healthy meal recommendation which I followed -The Rolling Chef 395 - where I am not exaggerating - I consumed the best burrito I have ever eaten in my life. I then walked it off by taking a safe stroll down Main Street where I observed many vibrant businesses bristling with activity like the famous Erik Schat's Bakkery. Simply put, I could not overstate the good fortune that ensued my unexpected stopover at the Bishop Visitor Center, and my "rescuer" Joe concluded my "stay" by later dropping me at my ride. I not only am recommending a stop here for friends en route from Southern California, but also vowing to come back!

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# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: SEARCH ENGINE &

# PAID SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Online advertising efforts are managed closely and monitored for productivity and cost-effectiveness by our social media team and the Simpleview agency. Year over year growth is impressive.

- Paid search impressions = 12M (400% YOY)
- Paid social impressions = 16M (up 91% YOY)
- Paid digital delivers 2,400+ clicks per month to partners including Bishop lodging, dining, events, and United Airlines.
- Air Service campaign delivered 20K clicks
- Responsible Recreation messaging generated 8.4K clicks
- Average click-through rate with our paid media is 4.5%
- Cost per click is \$0.40, well below the industry average of \$1.50

#### Sponsored



#### Bishop CA Attractions - Find Top Sights & Experiences

Discover Many Attractions in **Bishop, California** & Find More Information Here. Get Info on the **Bishop Visitor** Site & Experience Many Amazing Attractions. Far Away From City Life. Small Town, Big Backyard. Picturesque Landscapes. Great Climate Year-Round.

#### **Bristlecone Pines**

Experience the Oldest Living Things In The World in Bishop, CA.

#### Bouldering

Browse Bishop's Top Areas To Rock Climb & Boulder.

#### **Events in Bishop**

Browse Local & Annual Events in Bishop on the Official Website.

#### Restaurants in Bishop

Browse the Dining Opportunities. Fuel Up for a Day of Adventure.

#### Things to Do in Bishop

Explore All the Local Things to Do. Explore a Variety of Itineraries.



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Recharge and rejuvenate in nature when you visit Bishop, California. Not sure where to stay? We have all the options right here ....See more



Book Your Stay in Bishop
Discover the perfect acco...

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⇔ Share

# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: EVENT SUPPORT

Several events draw thousands of participants to Bishop each year. BACCVB is proud of our work to support longstanding events and attract new ones. Our staff continues to keep in contact with organizers, offering marketing and planning support.

#### **Event Promotion:**

- Events Page on www.bishopvisitor.com/events includes a list view of events and traditional calendar view.
- The events list is continually updated, representing a significant contribution of staff time. A typical month has 35+ events on the web calendar.
- Paid social and search campaigns drive traffic to the events page. Google ads campaign for events had 5K clicks and 196K impressions.

**Event Development & Support:** BACCVB hosts and supports a diverse range of events in our community. Some are for locals; some are for visitors and many are for both. BACCVB is lead organizer on some events (Blake Jones, Christmas, Media Reception). For other events, BACCVB provides varying types of support like marketing, volunteers, and equipment.

- Christmas Parade/Tree Lighting
- Railroad Express
- Blake Jones Trout Derby
- Trout Opener Media Reception
- SWCIFF Trout Rodeo
- CHSRA State Finals Rodeo
- VCMC Dual Sport Rally
- Eastern Sierra Pride

- Flash Foxy Climbing Festival
- AAC Fall Highball
- California Hawking Club
- 4th in the Park
- Eastern Sierra Tri-County Fair
- Downtown Markets
- Millpond Music Festival and More...

**New Events:** Host staff worked with the Tahoe Trampers, a Lake Tahoe senior hiking group to coordinate a group trip in mid-September. They are expected to bring up to 70 senior hikers to Bishop for hiking, nature appreciation, and local history.

BACVB Executive Director has been working for several years with organizers of the US Highpointers Club for their event in summer 2025 that will draw 200-300 participants.

#### STRATEGIC PROGRAM: BISHOP CLIMBING RANGERS

The Climbing Ranger Program, established in the fall of 2019, has been instrumental in addressing overuse and irresponsible recreation in the Bishop area. This initiative is a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders, including the Bishop Area Climbers' Coalition, USFS, BLM, Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, private foundations, and BACCVB.

Our organization plays a significant role in supporting this program, contributing \$13,500 annually. This funding ensures that two full-time Climbing Rangers are on duty during the peak climbing season from November to April.

The Climbing Rangers' efforts include:

- Educational Outreach: Conducted various educational activities, including the distribution of a popular Leave No Trace (LNT) reel, which garnered over 171,000 views. They also hosted a Gym to Crag Trivia Hour in three Los Angeles gyms, engaging with over 200 participants.
- Monitoring and Surveys: Carried out 144 patrols across key climbing areas such as
   Owens River Gorge, Tablelands, Buttermilk Country, Pine Creek, Druid Stones, and
   Mezzanine. They engaged with 1,820 climbers and 84 non-climbers, and completed
   311 dispersed camping surveys. They also organized 22 Climber Coffees at the PV
   Pit Campground.
- Community Engagement: Organized and participated in several events, including the No Man's Land Film Festival, which was a successful fundraiser with over 100 tickets sold, and the Flash Foxy Climbing Festival, where they provided two LNT climbing ethics talks. They also led a Fish Slough Field Trip, collaborated with the LADWP Watershed Program, and participated in a 5th Grade Snow School.
- **Stewardship and Awareness**: Engaged in five stewardship events, including a Cultural Education Stewardship Day, and conducted Earth Day tabling events on three occasions to promote environmental stewardship.

Overall, the Climbing Ranger Program's multifaceted approach to education, monitoring, and community involvement has made a significant impact on promoting responsible recreation and preserving the recreational assets of the Bishop area.

# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: TRAVEL TRADE SHOWS

Consumer travel and outdoor recreation shows have been a key component of our destination marketing efforts for many years. These events effectively attract new visitors to Bishop and increase awareness of Bishop's brand. These events allow us to personally connect with 16,000+ travel consumers in several key markets.

- International Sportsmen's Expo, Sacramento, January 18-21, 2024
- Bart Hall, Long Beach, January 25-28, 2024
- Travel & Adventure Show, Los Angeles, February 2-3, 2024
- Bart Hall, Del Mar, February 15-18, 2024
- Pacific Coast Sportfishing Show, OC Fairgrounds, March 7-10, 2024
- Travel & Adventure Show, Bay Area, March 16-17, 2024
- US Travel Association IPW Conference, Los Angeles, May 3-7, 2024

#### International Tourism: US Travel Association IPW Conference

IPW is a premier event connecting US destinations with domestic and international tour operators, travel agents, and media. International tourists are highly valuable, often spending three times more than domestic travelers and contributing to a longer stay with a lower environmental impact. This aligns with our strategy of attracting high-quality guests.

The IPW event in May 2024 at the Los Angeles Convention Center was notably successful, boasting the largest attendance ever with 5,700 delegates. Bishop's presence was prominent with representation in two booths on the convention floor and a standout CA Plaza featuring a High Sierra climbing wall.

Key highlights of our participation include:

- High Engagement: We conducted over 90 preset one-on-one meetings with tour operators and travel media from countries including the UK, Netherlands, Germany, India, Vietnam, France, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Romania, Mexico, Canada and the US.
- Effective Promotion: Our dual booth presence and the interactive High Sierra climbing wall attracted significant attention and engagement from attendees.

This strategic involvement at IPW has enhanced our visibility and facilitated valuable connections with international and domestic travel professionals, furthering our goal of attracting high-value visitors.

#### STRATEGIC PROGRAM: REGIONAL PROMOTION

#### Eastern Sierra Tour (EST)

Visit Bishop, in collaboration with Mono County Tourism and Inyo County, has developed an exciting new branded itinerary called the "EST Itinerary." This itinerary showcases ten "must-see" venues between Death Valley and Yosemite, emphasizing California's extreme features: the lowest, highest, hottest, coldest, driest, and oldest.

#### Key Features of the EST Itinerary:

- **Promotion**: The EST Itinerary was prominently featured at IPW in 2023 and 2024, and will be highlighted at the Travel & Adventure Shows in 2025.
- Marketing Materials: To promote the itinerary, new print materials and a distinctive decal
  with a QR code have been created. Scanning the QR code directs users to a dedicated
  website.
- Website and Multimedia: The dedicated <u>website</u> includes a professionally produced <u>video</u> and an interactive <u>Storymap</u>, providing an engaging and informative experience for visitors.

The EST Itinerary aims to attract both international and domestic travelers who are eager to explore California's unique and extreme landscapes.

# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: TROUT STOCKING

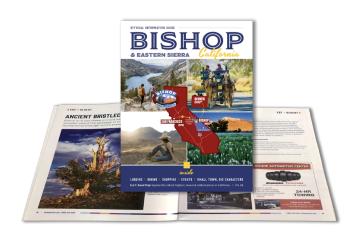
Trout fishing continues to be an important draw for visitors to Bishop. Lodging owners, guests and community leaders have urged us to increase trout stocking to supplement the efforts of California Department of Fish and Wildlife. In winter months, we purchase trout from Wright's Rainbows for Pleasant Valley Reservoir and the Owens River. In summer, BTID funds are matched, as we partner with Bishop Creek Canyon resort owners to stock extra fish in the lakes & streams. If we're advertising to attract anglers, we know we better invest in the fish.

- July 3, 2023 Lake Sabrina. South Lake, Intake II, Bishop Creek
- August 9, 2023 Lake Sabrina. South Lake, Intake II, Bishop Creek
- September 14, 2023 Lake Sabrina. South Lake, Intake II, Bishop Creek
- September 29, 2023 Lake Sabrina. South Lake, Intake II, Bishop Creek
- February 19, 2024 Pleasant Valley Reservoir and Owens River
- March 20, 2024 Pleasant Valley Reservoir and Owens River

# STRATEGIC PROGRAM: VISITOR PUBLICATIONS

Print brochures and maps remain an important way to attract new visitors and encourage them to spend more time in our region. We worked with regional partners to create and update several key publications. These guides are distributed at travel shows, area visitor centers and businesses along HWY 395. Digital versions are also available on our website.

- Updated <u>Bishop Visitor Guide</u>
- Hidden History Brochure
- Birding Hotspots Brochure
- Backroads Motor Touring Guide
- Inyo County Treasure Map
- Eastern Sierra Fishing Map
- Eastern Sierra Fall Color Map Guide
- Inyo Co. Warm Water Fishing Map
- E-Z Hikes
- Winter Hiking Trails



#### STRATEGIC PROGRAM: MAJOR MEDIA ADVERTISING

Some BTID funds have been invested in national and regional major media publications. Many of the publications are very niche-specific, targeting climbers, OHV users, bird watchers, trail runners, yoga enthusiasts or anglers.

# Total distribution reached through the media below is at least 15,000,000.

- Adventure Sports Journal
- CA Road Trips Magazine
- CA Visitors Guide
- CA Climber
- Climbing Magazine
- Daily Independent/Prospector
- Eastern Sierra Fishing Guide
- Fish Taco Chronicles
- Hemispheres
- Living Bird

- Bishop Bouldering Guidebook
- S&S Off Road Magazine
- Scenic 395 Magazine
- Ultra Runner Magazine
- Outside Digital Campaign
- True West Magazine
- Western Outdoor News
- Yosemite Journal

Note: All of the publications offer digital versions as well as the printed magazines

#### **Bishop Tourism Improvement District**

Financial Statement FY 2023-24

REVENUE		
BTID Assessment (Received 7/1/23-6/30/24)	\$	601,298
City of Bishop Marketing Services Contract	\$	75,000
County of Inyo Project Grants	\$	28,550
Inyo County Marketing Co-Op	\$	39,695
MLT Airport Survey Co-Op	\$	6,668
Visitor Guide Advertising	\$	300
Souvenir Sales (Gross)	\$	63,071
Trout Stocking Co-Op	\$	10,000
<u>Visitor Events Income</u>	\$	31,592
TOTAL VISITORS BUREAU INCOME	\$	856,174
EXPENSES		
Marketing Staff Expense	\$	254,524
Organic SM Content Creation & Management	\$	130,507
Paid Social Media & Search Ads	\$	67,934
E-newsletter	\$	6,827
Major Media Publications	\$	66,774
Travel & Sport Shows	\$	42,135
Outdoor Advertising	\$	46,871
Brochure Production & Distribution	\$	52,311
Visit Bishop App	\$	6,487
Crowdriff-UGC Content & Galleries	\$	13,404
CHSRA State Finals Rodeo	\$	9,792
HMS Global/Visit USA Parks Online	\$	10,000
Blake Jones Trout Derby	\$	8,027
Trout Opener Media Reception	\$	2,870
Photography/Video Production	\$	17,649
Group Hospitality/ VCMC Dual Sport	\$	3,589
Familiarization Tours	\$	5,466
QR Code Signs/Decals/Stickers	\$	5,224
Website	\$	13,597
Book Direct	\$	6,900
www.californiafallcolor.com	\$	4,000
Visitor Center COGS	\$	32,483
Analytics-Datafy/STR	\$	16,164
Total Sales & Marketing	<b>\$</b>	823,535
Co-Sponsor Climbing Ranger Program	\$	13,500
Bishop Airport Enhancements	\$	675
Supplemental Trout Stocking	\$	52,725
Total Visitor Service/Enhancement	\$	66,900
Administration/Operations Expense	\$	57,282
Mark Mark Mark Mark Mark Mark Mark Mark	*	1202
Contingency/Renewal	\$	-
		44.46.17 27.55

TOTAL VISITORS BUREAU EXPENSES FOR 2023-2024 \$ 947,717

FROM RESERVES \$ (91,543)

# LOOKING AHEAD....

# **CONTINUE** SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

- Digital Marketing build on successful social media and digital ad campaigns.
- Consumer Travel and Sport Shows continue all shows from 2024, add Denver Travel & Adventure Show.
- Bishop Information Guide the Bishop Visitor Guide magazine has just been updated and reprinted. This publication is a cornerstone of our overall destination marketing program. We will begin charging \$5 to mail hard copies and include a \$5 discount coupon for the souvenir shop.
- **Bishop Airport** continue to push "Fly to Bishop" campaigns, and local promotions for passenger air service.
- Video Projects continue to build video for social media projects.
- **Groups** continue to provide support for existing, new groups and events.
- Eastern Sierra Fishing Map remake a map that includes waters in Inyo & Mono County, update and reprint.
- Fall Color Map update and reprint, collaboration with MLT, Inyo County and Mono County.
- Outdoor Advertising continue to fund permits for Bishop Creek Canyon sign and oval logo sign at Golf Course. Discontinue billboards unless LADWP wishes to fund responsible recreation co-op program.

#### **EXPAND CAPACITY**

**NEW WEBSITE:** We've been working with Hatchback Creative since January to rebuild <a href="www.bishopvisitor.com">www.bishopvisitor.com</a>. The new site will be a mobile-first design with modernized features. Set to launch late summer 2024.

**NEW BUILDING:** The existing building that houses the Bishop Visitor Information Center is insufficient to meet the needs of our guests. A larger, more modern, and structurally sound building is necessary to properly serve visitors. We will work with the City of Bishop, Inyo County and other partners to find a suitable new space.

**NEW TEAM MEMBER:** The time has come to add a member to our dedicated Visit Bishop Team. We were ready to do this in 2020, but the pandemic placed a hold on the plan. With so many expanding opportunities (Bishop Airport, Small Business Resource Center, new and returning events, CA Jobs First and more), we must expand our capacity to best serve our community.

# **ALIGNED ADVOCACY/REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

We are actively engaged with regional partners including the City of Bishop, County of Inyo, High Sierra Visitors Council, Inyo Associates, LADWP, USFS, BLM, CalTrans, ESIA, CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife and other stakeholders. We work collaboratively for the betterment of our community.

We will continue to learn from industry experts such as Crowdriff, Simpleview, Datafy, Expedia, TripAdvisor, Visit California, CalTravel, One West Tourism Alliance and Brand USA. They provide good information about domestic and global travel trends, forecasts and best practices that we can apply right here in our own backyard.

#### International Tourism: US Travel Association IPW Conference

The collaboration with High Sierra Visitors Council and Mono County has been working very well and we are hopeful to continue the international promotions at the IPW Conference for 2025 in Chicago and beyond.

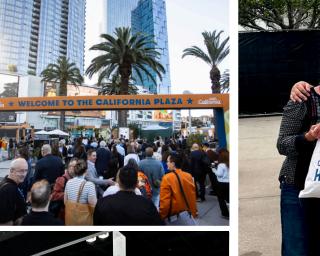
















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# **BUDGET** APPROACH

- District Management Plan allocates 80% of BTID funds for sales and marketing; 5% for Visitor Services/Enhancements; 10% for administration and 5% for contingency/renewal. \*Since the cap for contingency has been reached, that 5% may be allocated to other budget categories (Visitor Service/Enhancement).
- Revenue is conservatively projected.
- BACCVB will continue to seek funding from other sources including the City of Bishop, County of Inyo, business community, and event co-sponsors.
- BACCVB will continue to seek fundraising opportunities.
- County of Inyo and Visit Bishop have formed a partnership to create a unified
  Destination Marketing and Positive Public Relations Campaign together. Inyo
  County marketing budget is held separately from the BTID and Bishop Chamber
  budgets.
- Continue engaging volunteers to minimize staff expenses to enhance projects/events.
- Budget to remain flexible. Will evaluate quarterly and adjust as necessary.

