

MAINE.

2023 ANNUAL REPORT





CONTENTS

03. 2023 Key Accomplishments

05. Plan Implementation - Core Activities

09. Accolades

10. Regional Marketing Grant Highlights

14. Maine Film Office





MAINE OFFICE OF TOURISM

The Maine Office of Tourism (MOT) is a state agency within the Department of Economic and Community Development that leads, convenes and advances the state's tourism economy by providing resources and education to strengthen the tourism industry, fostering a culture of stakeholder collaboration and developing strategy and best practices to promote and enhance the Maine experience for all.

We remain committed to our core purpose of marketing the state of Maine as a travel destination. The integration of our Destination Management Plan in 2023 supports the long-term success of the state tourism industry by balancing the visitor economy with stewardship of our natural resources and culture—the qualities that have always drawn people to Maine.





2023 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS





ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Visitor Days increased by 3.9%
- Direct Tourism Spending increased by 4.9%
- Occupancy Rate increased by 1%
- Visitor Satisfaction increased by 3%
- Off season travel accounted for 44% of visitors, up +3.4% points from 2022
- Maine attracted 15,267,000 visitors in 2023, down 0.6% from 2022

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

After a year of strategic planning with industry and community stakeholders and exploration of evolving traveler preferences, in Spring 2023 MOT introduced a **Destination Management Plan** to ensure the sustainability of Maine’s tourism industry into the future and balance the industry’s growth with residential quality of life and the inherent qualities that have always drawn visitors to Maine.

The Destination Management Plan identifies five imperatives to guide development of MOT’s marketing initiatives and other industry support programs:

1. Optimize Long-Term Economic Impact
2. Promote Destination Stewardship

3. Advance Destination Development
4. Prioritize Collaboration and Stewardship
5. Enhance Organizational Effectiveness

The plan includes key initiatives for each imperative and an implementation process to track progress and results. At the core of the plan is MOT’s commitment to act as catalysts and advocates for the things that make our state unique, with programs and initiatives focused around nine **Stewardship Principles**.

MAINE TOURISM BRAND “REFRESH”

The Maine Office of Tourism (MOT) launched a refreshed brand and new look at our **Quarterly Stakeholder Update** webinar in June 2023. The updated brand was developed with input from Maine tourism stakeholders and an exploration of evolving traveler preferences. With the brand refresh, MOT has realigned our brand to better match the needs of today’s travelers. The new marketing campaigns align with the Destination Management Plan, which focuses on stewardship of Maine’s tourism industry and the state’s environmental and cultural assets. Details of the brand refresh and examples of the summer marketing campaign are posted at **MOTPartners.com**.





PLAN IMPLEMENTATION - CORE ACTIVITIES

OPTIMIZE LONG-TERM ECONOMIC IMPACT

PAID MEDIA ACTIVITIES

- Invested **\$10,183,512.60** in domestic media buys.
- Promoted Maine to key drive/fly domestic travel audiences in New England, mid-Atlantic and southeastern states through targeted advertising and as exhibitors at in-market consumer travel shows in Boston, Chicago, New York and Washington, DC., as well as in Canada at shows in Montreal and Toronto.
- Expanded media reach to include a national audience through strategic media partnerships based on Behavioral Targeting and Emerging Markets research. Custom content partners included *National Geographic*, *Atlas Obscura*, *Outside Inc.*, *Nativo* and *Brand USA*; digital partners *Smithsonian*, *Sojern*, *Trip Advisor* and *Expedia*; social media partners *Tripscout*; and audio partner *Pandora*.
- Allocated \$300,000 to targeted marketing in eastern Canada through Brand USA. The program included a Spring 2023 campaign and a campaign which began in June and continued into the Fall, with elements active through Spring 2024. MOT's domestic media buy also included locations in eastern Canada.



EARNED MEDIA ACTIVITIES

- Provided monthly media updates and story ideas to a list of **510 media contacts** and **fulfilled 539 requests** for information or images/videos **from national/international travel media** members.
- Refreshed content on [VisitMaine.com](https://www.visitmaine.com) with **36 new articles** and updated **132 pages and articles**.
- Maintained and **grew the social media** channels for **@VisitMaine** by
 - Instagram: more than 10,100 followers
 - Facebook: more than 12,400 followers, with a total reach of more than 54,300,000
 - X: exceeded 498,000 impressions
 - Pinterest: total audience reached more than 399,000
- **Shared more than 60 social media posts** supporting the regions, grant recipients and Maine business events, activities and programs.
- Prioritized **diversification of travelers** to and within Maine
 - Hosted a BIPOC-focused ski press trip to Sunday River in January 2023
 - Implemented an influencer campaign with Travel Mindset that featured LGBTQ+ and BIPOC digital content creators
 - Ensured that the FeedFeed campaign in which Maine's food culture was highlighted included a BIPOC content creator
- Worked with **112 businesses** in Maine to host **57 travel media and international tour operators** that resulted in editorial coverage:
 - **270 trackable articles with a combined readership of 133B**
 - **14.6M coverage views**



INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

- Collaborated with Discover New England on reinvigorated post-pandemic outreach to international travelers from the UK, Ireland, Germany and France, including:
 - **IPW, San Antonio, TX** – MOT met with international operators and receptives in 84 appointments and attended networking events for delegates from France and the UK.
 - **Brand USA Travel Week, London, UK** – MOT collaborated with New Hampshire in meetings with 32 European tour operators.
 - **German Sales Mission** – MOT participated in a six-day sales mission to southern Germany and Switzerland, conducting 13 operator training and 25 desk-side visits.

INDUSTRY ACTIVITIES SUPPORT

- **Supported regional and community tourism marketing** and product development with a total of **\$644,500 in grants** awarded to fund 21 Enterprise Grants, 21 Communities Grants and two Special Event Grants, in addition to \$200,000 in grant funding for each of Maine's eight **regional tourism marketing organizations** (*see regional highlights, p. 11-13).
- Provided a series of **free in-person and online Destination Optimization training sessions** for businesses and organizations to help maximize their online exposure and conversion from Google searches by optimizing their business profile on Google. Five in-person and two virtual training sessions were offered in April and May. The 2-hour workshops were led by an SEO expert from MOT's marketing agency, Miles Partnership, and included the opportunity for businesses to follow up with a **one-on-one support** call. Recordings of the virtual training sessions are posted on MOTPartners.com, and free support services will be available through 2024.

PROMOTE DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP

- Launched a **Culinary Tourism** marketing program with quarterly newsletters featuring Maine foods from the land and sea, all prepared by chefs from Maine or with ties to Maine. The inaugural issue was deployed in Summer 2023.
- Supported Four Directions Development Corporation's development of a **Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Initiative** with over \$270,000 in grant funding through 2023, plus technical support. The Office of Tourism continues to explore opportunities to support the Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Initiative in developing product and in outreach to introduce travelers to the unique and authentic experiences they can provide.
- Hosted the **Adventure Travel Trade Association** conference held in Portland and leveraged impact by planning and executing stewardship experiences for 23 media and travel trade attending the pre-conference multi-day adventures.

ADVANCE DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

- Fielded **marketing campaign shoots** during Winter and Fall 2023 in four different regions to develop content that promotes Maine as a **year-round destination** and encourages exploration of a range of Maine experiences and locations.
- Worked with Maine-based photographers to add an additional **909 new images/videos** to the MOT library to enhance marketing and PR efforts through maintenance of a robust inventory of tourism assets. Many of these images included the **collaboration with the eight tourism regions** so that the assets could be shared with each regional entity.
- Promoted community solar eclipse events with a dedicated web page on **VisitMaine.com** and distribution of 30,000 **solar eclipse** glasses at Maine Visitor Centers and to communities within the path of totality.



PRIORITIZE COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

- Fielded a spring social media and search engine marketing (SEM) campaign that ran May 9 – June 20 to inspire interest in working in the tourism industry and **help meet the need for summer seasonal hospitality** workers. The social media campaign targeted students, new college graduates, retirees and other active job seekers in Maine with ads running on Instagram and Facebook, as well as paid search, connecting to [VisitMaine.com/jobs](https://www.visitmaine.com/jobs) for an overview of Maine’s tourism/hospitality industry and links to industry job boards.
- Partnered with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry on a **photo shoot** to secure assets to include **Maine farms, farmstands and farm stores** in support of the brand pillar Feast of the Earth.
- Supported Ski Maine and Maine Campground Owners Association MECOA presence at targeted trade shows.
- Added **four new members to the PR Partners Program**
- Created a strategy for improved **communication of MOT** services and expanded **opportunities for engagement** for Maine tourism businesses.

ENHANCE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

- Invested in support services for MOT staff to create a process for prioritizing and developing **implementation strategies** for the Destination Management Plan.
- Invested in Zartico software for **enhanced visitor tracking and research** that facilitates visitation measurement at a more granular level than previously available and identifies areas of interest with potential for increased visitation.





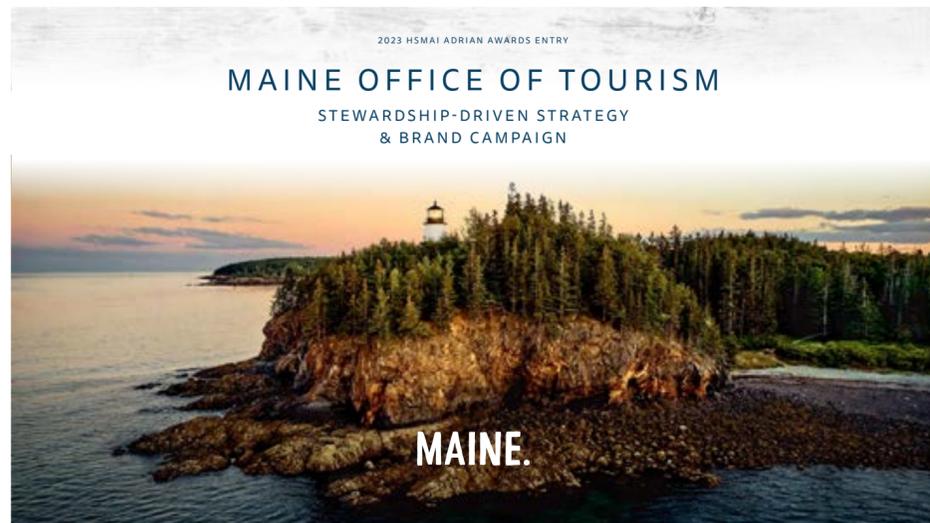
ACCOLADES

HSMAI AWARD

The Office of Tourism received a 2023 Bronze Adrian Award from the *Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI)* in the Brand Campaign category. Entries were evaluated for their marketing objectives, creativity, quality, content and results.

The award-winning entry outlined the Office of Tourism’s Stewardship-Driven Strategy and Brand Campaign, citing nature and outdoors as not just assets of Maine’s tourism economy, but as two critical cornerstones of the state’s core identity that prompted a strategic planning process to guide MOT as it expands its mission to include destination stewardship. The process provided real-time findings that influenced the development of a strong new brand and campaign creative with stewardship at its heart.

The full entry submission deck with examples of the campaign and brand is posted on [MOTPartners.com](https://www.motpartners.com) under Advertising.





REGIONAL MARKETING GRANT

HIGHLIGHTS FY2023



AROOSTOOK COUNTY TOURISM (ACT)

- **Visitor Spending:** \$255,011,000 in economic impact – up 3.5% from 2022
- **Direct Spending:** \$169,599,300 – up 5.5% from 2022 (accommodations, transportation, groceries, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, etc.)
- **Visitors:** 332,400 – up 17.5% from 2022
- **Visitor Days:** 1,238,700 – up 12.1% from 2022
- **Room Nights:** 240,700 – up 20.2% from 2022

ACT curated 12 new itineraries and 24 articles for [VisitAroostook.com](https://www.visitarostook.com). Each itinerary/article was linked out to various social platforms and transformed into rack cards and print advertorials, tripling its accessibility to visitors. This digital itinerary and article content type contributed to a record number of 3,232,296 impressions and a reach of 969,049 on Facebook alone. This marked a 132% year-over-year increase. ACT also began an “always on” approach for social media ads, which has proven successful and is still in effect today.

DOWNEAST ACADIA REGIONAL TOURISM (DART)

- **Visitor Spending:** \$1,752,319,600 in economic impact – up 11.7% from 2022
- **Direct Spending:** \$1,210,496,800 – up 12% from 2022 (accommodations, transportation, groceries, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, etc.)
- **Visitors:** 2,036,300 – down 2.9% from 2022
- **Visitor Days:** 10,498,000 – up 7.5% from 2022
- **Room Nights:** 2,030,600 – up 2.5% from 2022

For 2022/23 DART extended its Maine Public Radio campaign to year-round, promoting regional events, outdoor recreation experiences, arts, scenic byways and culinary standouts and added *Weekday AM Drive* and *Maine Calling* spots during peak summer weeks. A Google Ads campaign also proved to be successful with a 4-month ad span averaging 2.5 million impressions and 7,900 average clicks, resulting in a direct correlation between promotion spending, regional guidebook orders and overall website traffic.



GREATER PORTLAND & CASCO BAY

- **Visitor Spending:** \$2,771,745,300 in economic impact – up 14.9% from 2022
- **Direct Spending:** \$1,566,110,300 – up 14.4% from 2022 (accommodations, transportation, groceries, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, etc.)
- **Visitors:** 2,917,900 – up 14.8% from 2022
- **Visitor Days:** 13,872,800 – up 20.2% from 2022
- **Room Nights:** 2,539,600 – up 8% from 2022

The Greater Portland region focused on content development in 2022/23. Projects with social media influencers offered the opportunity to reach families and Black travelers. Family-related travel posts reached 1,628 likes, 430 comments, and over 3k views across social media platforms. A partnership with Black Travel included 25 Black influencers and media as first-time visitors, who shared 50+ posts about their positive experiences in Maine. A redesign of the consumer newsletter, reaching over 5k consumers saw a consistent open rate of 39%, an increase in engagement, raising click thru rates to over 6%.

KENNEBEC VALLEY TOURISM COUNCIL (KVTC)

- **Visitor Spending:** \$830,010,200 in economic impact – down 6.6% from 2022
- **Direct Spending:** \$553,723,700 – down 2.7% from 2022 (accommodations, transportation, groceries, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, etc.)
- **Visitors:** 905,000 – up 9% from 2022
- **Visitor Days:** 4,901,700 – up 19.6% from 2022
- **Room Nights:** 603,800 – up 3.1% from 2022

The KVTC launched the official Explorer App for the region – in the first 6 months, nearly 2,000 users installed and kept the app on their device. A new website, [VisitKennebecValley.com](https://www.visitkennebecvalley.com), was launched and 12 consumer emails were sent to a subscriber list of 29,154, a 16% increase in subscribers, with a 36.86% open rate. Facebook ads performed very well with a focus on lead generation and landing page views versus link clicks and reach in the previous period. Ad results increased by 263%, and costs decreased by 68%.

MAINE BEACHES ASSOCIATION (MBA)

- **Visitor Spending:** \$3,970,318,800 in economic impact – down 2.8% from 2022
- **Direct Spending:** \$2,630,442,700 – down 2.8% from 2022 (accommodations, transportation, groceries, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, etc.)
- **Visitors:** 3,796,100 – down 20.7% from 2022
- **Visitor Days:** 14,323,700 – down 23.7% from 2022
- **Room Nights:** 2,851,200 – down 2.5% from 2022

The MBA produced 30-second television spots on select streaming channels, targeting the greater Boston, Worcester and Manchester, NH DMAs. The ad was aired more than 472K times reaching more than 105K households and had a 98% watch rate. Paid social media campaigns during both Fall and Spring reached more than 1.8M, directed over 46K clicks to the website [TheMaineBeaches.com](https://www.themainebeaches.com), resulting in an increase in traffic of over 25% from the prior year.

MAINE LAKES & MOUNTAINS TOURISM COUNCIL

- **Visitor Spending:** \$1,821,233,500 in economic impact – up 2.6% from 2022
- **Direct Spending:** \$1,168,406,700 – up 3.6% from 2022 (accommodations, transportation, groceries, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, etc.)
- **Visitors:** 2,199,300 – up 13.6% from 2022
- **Visitor Days:** 11,349,000 – up 28.8% from 2022
- **Room Nights:** 1,457,800 – down 4% from 2022

Regional guidebook distribution was a key component of our 2022/23 efforts, with over 38K guidebooks disbursed and a 28% increase in total views of the digital guidebooks and regional maps. Two multi-regional projects occurred with a Fall video shoot highlighting the Lakes & Mountains, Greater Portland & Casco Bay and the MidCoast & Islands along with a late Spring social media influencer trip bringing greater awareness to shoulder season travel and the procurement of high-quality images and video assets for future marketing campaigns.



MAINE'S MIDCOAST & ISLANDS

- **Visitor Spending:** \$1,680,219,500 in economic impact – up 10.9% from 2022
- **Direct Spending:** \$1,112,892,100 – up 10.1% from 2022 (accommodations, transportation, groceries, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, etc.)
- **Visitors:** 2,056,600 – up 2.1% from 2022
- **Visitor Days:** 10,082,600 – up 2.5% from 2022
- **Room Nights:** 1,841,000 – up 13.3% from 2022

Maine's MidCoast Chamber Council focused its efforts on the creation and promotion of an online map planning tool that included Lighthouses, State Parks, Easy Walking Trails & Information Centers, resulting in 700K impressions. The region also printed and distributed 50K guidebooks, more than any other previous year and over 15K downloads and over 2M impressions resulting from promotion of the digital version.

THE MAINE HIGHLANDS

- **Visitor Spending:** \$1,060,001,500 in economic impact – up 5.4% from 2022
- **Direct Spending:** \$654,941,700 – up 5.7% from 2022 (accommodations, transportation, groceries, restaurants, shopping, entertainment, etc.)
- **Visitors:** 1,023,400 – up 16.8% from 2022
- **Visitor Days:** 6,233,700 – up 6.6% from 2022
- **Room Nights:** 1,056,900 – up 11% from 2022

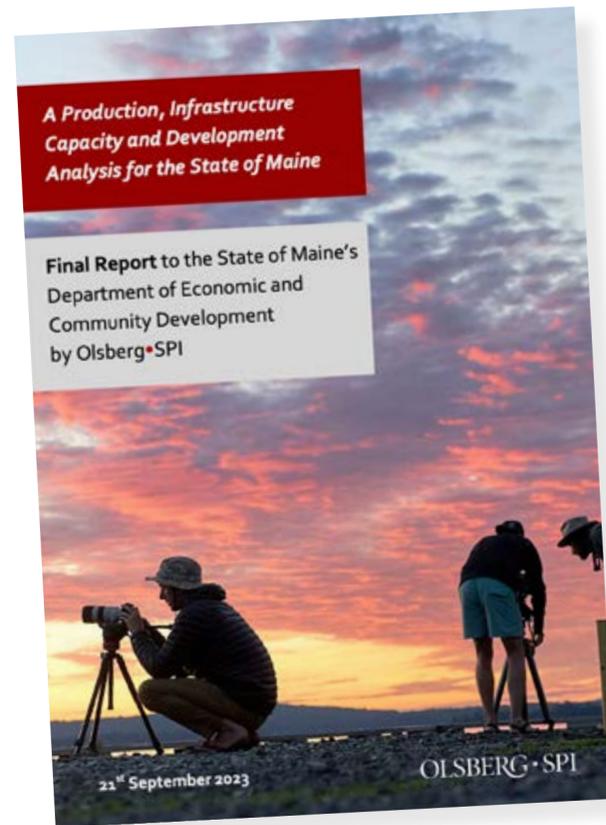
The Maine Highlands regional organization focused on boosting paid and earned media in 2022/23. PR outreach resulted in a total of 57 pieces of coverage, over 6.02M views, and engagement over 6.16K. Highlights included stories from *Outside*, *Explore*, *Travel*, *Backpacker*, *Conde Nast Traveler* & *Travel + Leisure*. Headlines ranged from "20 Best Lake Towns in the United States" to "6 Summer Hikes that can't be missed" and "These 10 Places have the Darkest Skies for Stargazing in the US."





MAINE FILM OFFICE

In 2023, the Maine Film Office contracted with Olsberg SPI to conduct an analysis of the visual media (VM) sector to provide strategic insight and advice for sector growth. This analysis specifically looked at the Maine screen production sector's current strengths, weaknesses, constraints and capacity gaps in key areas of production, as well as recommending opportunities and actions for future growth. The completed analysis has been posted online at [FilmInMaine.com](https://www.filmmaine.com) under Reports.



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The Maine Film Office director, Karen Carberry-Warhola, retired in August of 2023.

Steve Lyons, director of the Maine Office of Tourism & Film, convened initial meetings in September with nine newly appointed members of the Maine Film Commission, an advisory board that assists with advancing film production in the state.

Other key stakeholder engagement activities:

- Provided a platform and facilitated input from film industry and visual services businesses regarding proposed changes to the Visual Media Incentives Program through an online survey and in-person and virtual input sessions. The survey was sent to several hundred industry members utilizing lists from the Maine Film Office crew database of over 400 industry listings on the FilmInMaine.com; 27 stakeholders interviewed by Olsberg SPI; and the 200+ members of the Maine Film Association.
- Director Lyons moderated an in-person listening session in November and two virtual sessions held in November and December. Thirty-two film industry stakeholders attended the in-person session and approximately 40 participated in the virtual sessions.

Information from the Olsberg Report and the stakeholder input process will be provided to the new Maine Film Office director and the Maine Film Commission for strategic planning.





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