

2025

# ANNUAL REPORT



**MAINE.**

FORGED BY NATURE™



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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. Through the integration of its Destination Management Plan — first introduced in 2023 — MOT works to balance the visitor economy with stewardship of Maine's natural resources and cultural assets, while continuing its core commitment to marketing the state as a premier travel destination. 2025 marked a pivotal year for the Office of Tourism. A bold new brand platform launched. New markets opened. And programs deepened their focus on inclusive, authentic storytelling — ensuring that Maine's welcome extends to all.

## VISION

Maine ignites a sense of curiosity & adventure that inspires generations.

## MISSION

The Maine Office of Tourism markets the state in ways that work to preserve and celebrate the authentic character of Maine and foster collaboration to pursue economic vitality.

## POSITION

The Maine Office of Tourism was established to administer a program to support and expand the tourism industry and promote the state as a tourist destination.

### SECTION 1

## 2025 TRAVEL TRENDS & INDUSTRY CONTEXT<sup>†</sup>

The travel landscape in 2025 continued to shift in ways that validated the direction Maine's marketing has been headed — and opened new opportunities for the state to reach audiences it has never fully engaged.

### TRAVEL BECAME MORE INTENTIONAL

Across nearly every major industry trend report, one theme dominated: travelers are choosing destinations with greater purpose and personal meaning. Travelers aren't just looking for a place to go — they're looking for a trip that says something about who they are. Today's travelers are looking to immerse themselves in local culture and feel a sense of belonging. Brand positioning and authentic storytelling matter more than ever, and destinations that can articulate a clear, distinctive identity have a significant competitive edge. *Maine. Forged by Nature was built precisely for this moment.*

### THE OUTDOORS HAD A MOMENT

Demand for nature-based travel continued its strong trajectory in 2025, with interest in national and state parks, trail experiences, and outdoor recreation rising significantly — Airbnb reported a 35% increase in demand for nature-based experiences, for example. At the same time, travelers increasingly sought less-crowded alternatives to overrun destinations, looking for places with space, authenticity, and access. Maine — with its vast and varied natural landscape, working waterfront communities, and comparatively uncrowded coastline and interior — was ideally positioned to capture this demand.



***Maine. Forged by Nature  
was built precisely  
for this moment***

## CULINARY TOURISM AS A TRIP DRIVER

Food and local culture continued to rank among the top motivations for high-spend travelers. Hands-on culinary experiences were among the most-booked activities globally, and food-focused content consistently outperformed in digital engagement. Maine's extraordinary food identity — from its lobster shacks and oyster farms to its farm-to-table culture and award-winning chefs — remained one of the state's most powerful and differentiated assets.

## AI IS RESHAPING HOW TRAVELERS PLAN

AI became a mainstream planning tool in 2025. More than half of travelers (51%) used AI in their trip planning process, and 61% found AI tools valuable when deciding where to go (Hilton; TTRA). Critically, AI is shortening the booking funnel — compressing the time between inspiration and itinerary. For destinations, this means that content quality, digital accuracy, and discoverability — for both people and algorithms — have become foundational marketing assets. MOT's investments in VisitMaine.com, SEO, and the integration of AI-powered tools like Mindtrip reflect this shift directly.

**51%**

of travelers used AI in their trip planning process

**61%**

found AI tools valuable when deciding where to go



## DIVERSE TRAVELERS ARE CHOOSING MORE CAREFULLY

Research from MMGY, Booking.com, and other sources underscored the importance of visible, verifiable welcome signals for underrepresented travelers. Black U.S. travelers frequently screen destinations for safety and representation before booking. 59% of LGBTQ+ travelers have experienced discrimination while traveling, making inclusivity signals a real factor in destination choice. Travelers with disabilities make decisions based on the quality and specificity of accessibility information — not generic claims. MOT's Inclusive Creator Program, sports marketing partnerships, and earned media strategy were all calibrated to address these realities head-on, giving Maine a visible, authentic presence with audiences that have historically been underserved by destination marketing.

## SPORTS & EVENTS DRIVE ITINERARIES

Sports-based travel continued to grow as a primary trip motivator — particularly for younger audiences. 57% of travelers said they were likely to attend a local sporting event while traveling, rising to 68% among Gen Z and Millennials. The anticipation of FIFA World Cup 2026 was already influencing the travel calendar by mid-2025, with analysts noting that host-city travelers priced out of match markets would be looking for compelling nearby alternatives. Maine's emerging sports partnerships — including with Hearts of Pine — represent a timely play for this growing segment.

<sup>†</sup>Sources: State of the American Traveler, Longwoods, Expedia, Hilton, Booking.com, Skyscanner, Airbnb, AARP, MMGY, ITA/NTTO, Tourism Economics, Travel & Tourism Research Association



SECTION 2

# 2025 STATEWIDE ECONOMIC RESULTS

Maine's tourism economy delivered a clear story in 2025: fewer visitors, but more valuable ones. Direct tourism spending reached a new high, spend per visitor grew meaningfully, and lodging revenues increased — all while total visitor volume moderated from 2024's elevated baseline. The result is a destination demonstrating exactly the kind of resilience that MOT's Destination Management Plan was designed to cultivate economic growth grounded in quality visitation, not just volume.

## THE BIG PICTURE

<p>TOTAL DIRECT TOURISM SPENDING</p> <p><b>\$9.37 BILLION</b></p> <p>+1.4% vs. 2024 — a new record high</p>	<p>TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT</p> <p><b>\$16.56 BILLION</b></p> <p>+1.2% vs. 2024</p>	<p>SPEND PER VISITOR PER TRIP</p> <p><b>\$662</b></p> <p>+6.1% vs. 2024 — reflecting a meaningful shift toward higher-value travelers</p>
<p>TOTAL VISITORS</p> <p><b>14,149,700</b></p> <p>-4.4% vs. 2024</p>	<p>VISITOR DAYS</p> <p><b>66,716,800</b></p> <p>-0.8% vs. 2024</p>	<p>ROOM NIGHTS</p> <p><b>11,614,000</b></p> <p>-6.0% vs. 2024</p>

Source: Downs & St. Germain Research, CY2025, 2025 Economic Impact & Visitor Tracking Report, December 2024–November 2025

## JOBS & COMMUNITY IMPACT

Tourism's reach extends well beyond the hospitality industry:

- **Total Jobs Supported:** 108,800 (including 73,100 direct tourism/hospitality jobs and thousands of indirectly supported positions in sectors from healthcare to education to retail)
- **Total Wages Supported:** \$5.23 billion
- **Every 130 visitors to Maine supports one Maine resident's job**
- **Household Tax Savings:** \$2,040 per Maine household — meaning tourism's economic contribution reduces the tax burden for every resident, whether they work in the industry or not
- **State & Local Taxes Generated:** \$1.26 billion

A typical overnight visitor staying in paid accommodations spent **\$3,057 per trip** — with daily spending of \$650 per travel party, of which \$209 went to accommodations alone.

## WHO VISITED MAINE

Maine's visitors are loyal, high-earning, and highly satisfied — a profile that reflects well on both the destination's appeal and the effectiveness of MOT's targeting strategy:

- **Median age: 52 | Median household income: \$107,700 | 28% earn \$150,000+**
- **40% traveled as a couple | 29% as a family | 74% married or partnered**
- **18% were first-time visitors to Maine; 38% had visited more than 10 times** — underscoring the state's exceptional repeat visitation rates
- **Out-of-State Visitors: 11,397,800 (-8.8%) | Maine Resident Visitors: 2,751,900 (+19.6%)**

## WHERE VISITORS CAME FROM

Boston remained Maine's single largest feeder market at 17.6% of all visitors, with Portland-Auburn second at 12.5% and New York third at 8.4%. Massachusetts, New York, New Hampshire, Florida, and Connecticut rounded out the top origin states. Notably,

# 20% OF VISITORS FLEW TO MAINE IN 2025

an 11% increase year over year, reflecting the growing importance of air access markets beyond the traditional drive market.

## SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION

Summer remained the peak season at 53.6% of all visitors (+2.3% from 2024). Winter accounted for 27.9% and fall 18.5%. The winter comparison was most affected by the eclipse baseline — 2025 winter visitation was down 9.7% vs. 2024, but still above 2023 levels, indicating continued long-term shoulder season growth.

## DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRESS

The Downs & St. Germain (D&SG) report tracks four measures of success aligned directly to the Destination Management Plan — and 2025 showed meaningful movement on most of them:

- **Increased length of stay:** Average length of stay grew from 4.5 nights (2024) to 4.7 nights (2025) — up across both paid and unpaid accommodation visitors.
- **Increased per-visitor spend:** Spend per trip grew 6.1% to \$662 — a consistent upward trend across four consecutive years (\$563 in 2022 → \$594 → \$624 → \$662).
- **Increased diversity of visitors:** Non-white visitor share fell slightly from 13.0% in 2024 to 11.5% in 2025 — a noted area for continued focus through inclusive marketing and the Inclusive Creator Program.
- **Increased shoulder season visitation:** Fall proportion held steady (+0.4 pts); winter declined due to eclipse comparison rather than structural trend.

## VISITOR SATISFACTION & LOYALTY

Maine's post-trip numbers remain exceptional:

**98%**

**of visitors were satisfied**  
with their trip — 73% were  
very satisfied

**96%**

**would recommend Maine**  
to friends and family — 83%  
would definitely recommend it

**95%**

**will return to Maine**  
— 80% will  
definitely return

**96%**

**would recommend**  
the specific region  
they visited

## WHAT VISITORS DID

Food and culinary experiences topped the activity list by a wide margin — **73% of visitors engaged in food, beverage, or culinary activities** during their trip, reinforcing the strategic importance of Maine's culinary tourism program. Shopping (52%), touring/sightseeing (50%), and active outdoor activities (45%) rounded out the top four. Eating lobster and enjoying Maine's ocean views each drew 42% of visitors — a testament to the enduring power of Maine's most iconic experiences.

Visitors consistently cited Maine's uncrowded, authentic character as the defining quality that sets it apart. In their own words:

*"Truly impressive national and state parks. Incredibly scenery. Lots of wildlife. Clean environment."*

*"Maine's rugged coastline and fresh lobster shacks give it a unique, authentic New England charm that feels less commercialized than other coastal spots."*



## SECTION 3

# DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025 RESET:

## A 5-YEAR STRATEGY FOR MARKETING & MANAGEMENT

In spring 2023, the Maine Office of Tourism introduced its Destination Management Plan — a landmark strategic framework built to ensure the long-term sustainability of Maine’s tourism industry by balancing visitor growth with the wellbeing of Maine’s communities, natural resources, and cultural identity. In 2025, MOT undertook a formal reset of the plan: a structured review and renewal informed by a statewide stakeholder listening tour, new data and emerging trends, and a deep dive into related statewide plans across economic development, outdoor recreation, and arts and culture.

### THE VALUES-ALIGNED TRAVELER

At the heart of the 2025 Reset is a defining concept that sets Maine’s approach apart from traditional destination marketing: the Values-Aligned Traveler. Rather than targeting visitors by demographic profile, MOT’s marketing strategy is explicitly designed to attract travelers defined by what they care about — people who demonstrate genuine care for Maine’s communities, places, and industries. The goal is not simply to drive volume, but to match the right visitors with the right experiences in ways that benefit both the traveler and the host community. It’s a strategy that positions Maine not as a commodity but as a relationship.



Scan here to read more of the  
**Destination Management Plan 2025 Reset**



## THE FIVE PILLARS

The Destination Management Plan is organized around five strategic pillars that guide everything MOT does — from paid media investment to grant-making to how the organization shows up for statewide policy conversations:

- 1. Optimize Long-Term Economic Impact:** Focus marketing investment on generating high-value visitation, extending the travel season, and dispersing visitors across the state to maximize economic benefit in communities of all sizes — not just peak-season hotspots.
- 2. Promote Destination Stewardship:** Weave responsible travel messaging into every channel and campaign. The 2025 Reset deepened MOT’s commitment to stewardship with the launch of Look Out for ME 2.0 — a refreshed initiative built on Leave No Trace principles — alongside inclusive storytelling that authentically represents Maine’s local makers, independent businesses, and diverse communities. Seasonal and geographic balance in promotion, and authentic representation throughout, are explicit commitments of this pillar.
- 3. Advance Destination Development:** Build and promote a year-round portfolio of experiences, invest in content and assets that reflect the full breadth of Maine, and equip communities with the destination development tools they need to benefit from — and manage — tourism growth. The plan also commits to ensuring tourism has a voice in state infrastructure investment decisions and connecting MOT grantees to broader development programs.
- 4. Prioritize Collaboration and Partnership:** The 2025 Reset explicitly expands MOT’s role as a convener — not just a marketer. New commitments include an ongoing Roadshow series to bring MOT into direct conversation with communities across the state, the formation of a cross-agency working group to align tourism with broader state goals, and a systematic effort to grow and nurture the partner network of businesses, regions, and organizations that power Maine’s tourism ecosystem.
- 5. Enhance Organizational Effectiveness:** Delivering on all of the above requires an organization built to execute with precision and accountability. The plan calls for investments in team culture, cross-training, and leadership development — building internal capacity to match the ambition of the strategy.

## A STRATEGY BUILT FOR MAINE’S FUTURE

The Forged by Nature brand platform, launched in 2025, is the clearest public expression of the Destination Management Plan in action — a brand built not just to attract visitors, but to attract the right visitors, with the right mindset, in the right seasons. Every major program in 2025 connects back to one or more of the plan’s five pillars: the Inclusive Creator Program advances equitable storytelling and stewardship; Look Out for ME 2.0 operationalizes responsible visitor behavior; the Regional Co-Op expands collaboration; and the international expansion program opens new high-value markets. Sustainable tourism isn’t just a goal — it’s the framework through which every decision is made.

## SECTION 4

# FORGED BY NATURE BRAND LAUNCH

Maine is a place defined by contrast — rugged coastline meeting sweeping mountain terrain, wild forests bordering working waterfronts, ancient landscapes shaping a modern creative culture. In 2025, the Maine Office of Tourism launched a new brand platform built to capture that singular identity: **Maine. Forged by Nature.**

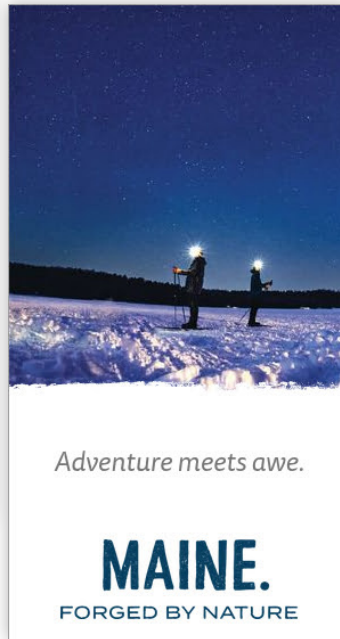
More than a tagline, Forged by Nature reflects the powerful connection between Maine's awe-inspiring natural environment and the authenticity, resilience, and creativity of its people. The platform was developed through extensive stakeholder input and creative exploration, ultimately landing on a direction that could speak to outdoor enthusiasts and arts lovers alike — and that could travel across national, international, and niche audience channels with equal conviction.

### TRADEMARK & LOGO

The brand launch included a completed trademark process and an updated logo lockup, modernizing Maine's visual identity and providing regional partners, industry stakeholders, and media with a unified, ownable mark.

### CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

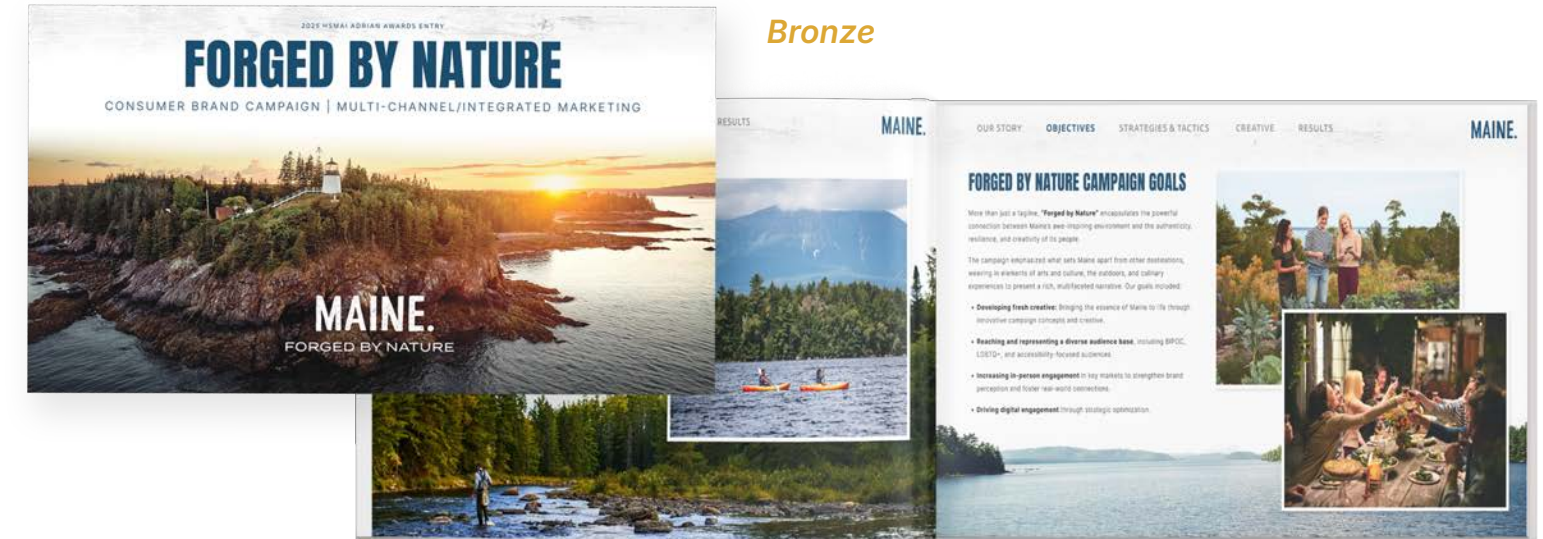
The new brand direction debuted with refreshed visual identity across print, digital, and video formats as well as premier content partnerships and activations with outlets like: National Geographic, Outside Inc., Atlas Obscura, and more. Campaign creative drew on Maine's extraordinary landscapes — coastal light, fall foliage, river valleys, mountain ridgelines — and wove in the state's food, culture, arts, craftsmanship, and community to present a rich, multidimensional story.



## ADRIAN AWARDS

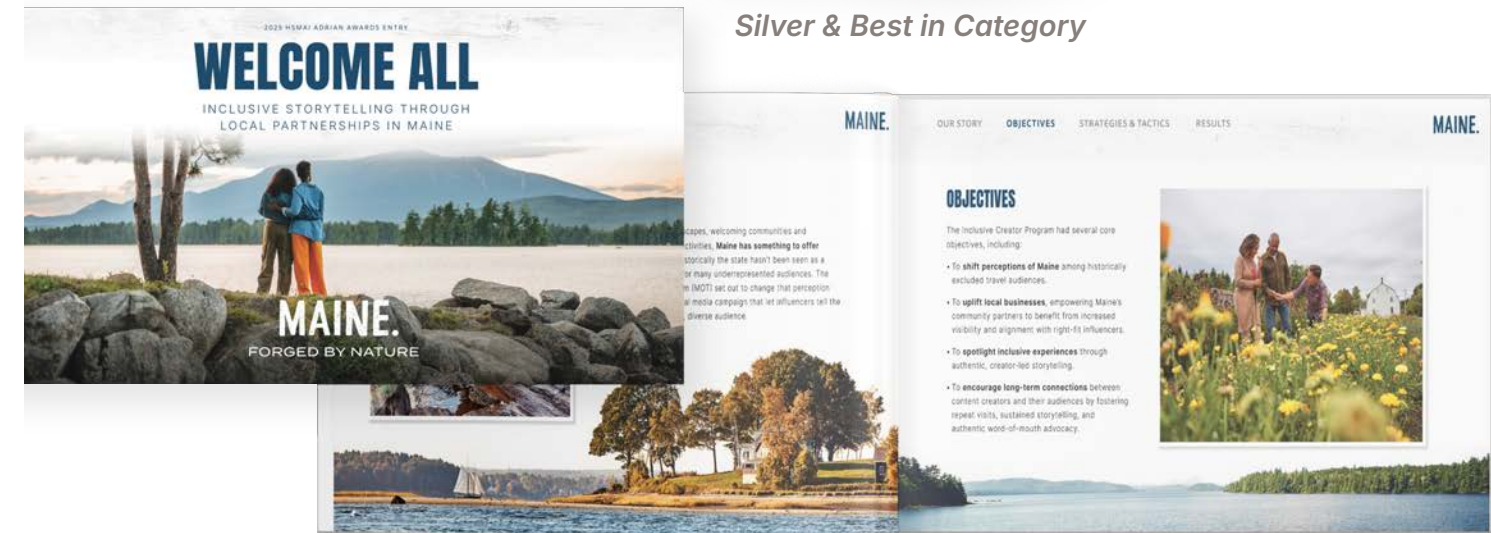
### FORGED BY NATURE CAMPAIGN

**Bronze**



### INCLUSIVE CREATOR PROGRAM

**Silver & Best in Category**



## SECTION 5

# CULINARY TOURISM: A YEAR OF STORYTELLING

Food is one of Maine's most powerful and distinctive assets — from the lobster shacks of the coast to the farm tables of the interior. In 2025, MOT continued building on its Culinary Tourism platform through Bountiful, its quarterly culinary email series, which delivered some of the strongest email engagement numbers in the program's history. The D&SG visitor tracking report reinforced the strategic importance of this investment: 73% of all Maine visitors engaged in food, beverage, or culinary activities during their trip — making culinary the single most popular activity category by a wide margin.

### BOUNTIFUL: QUARTERLY CULINARY EMAIL SERIES

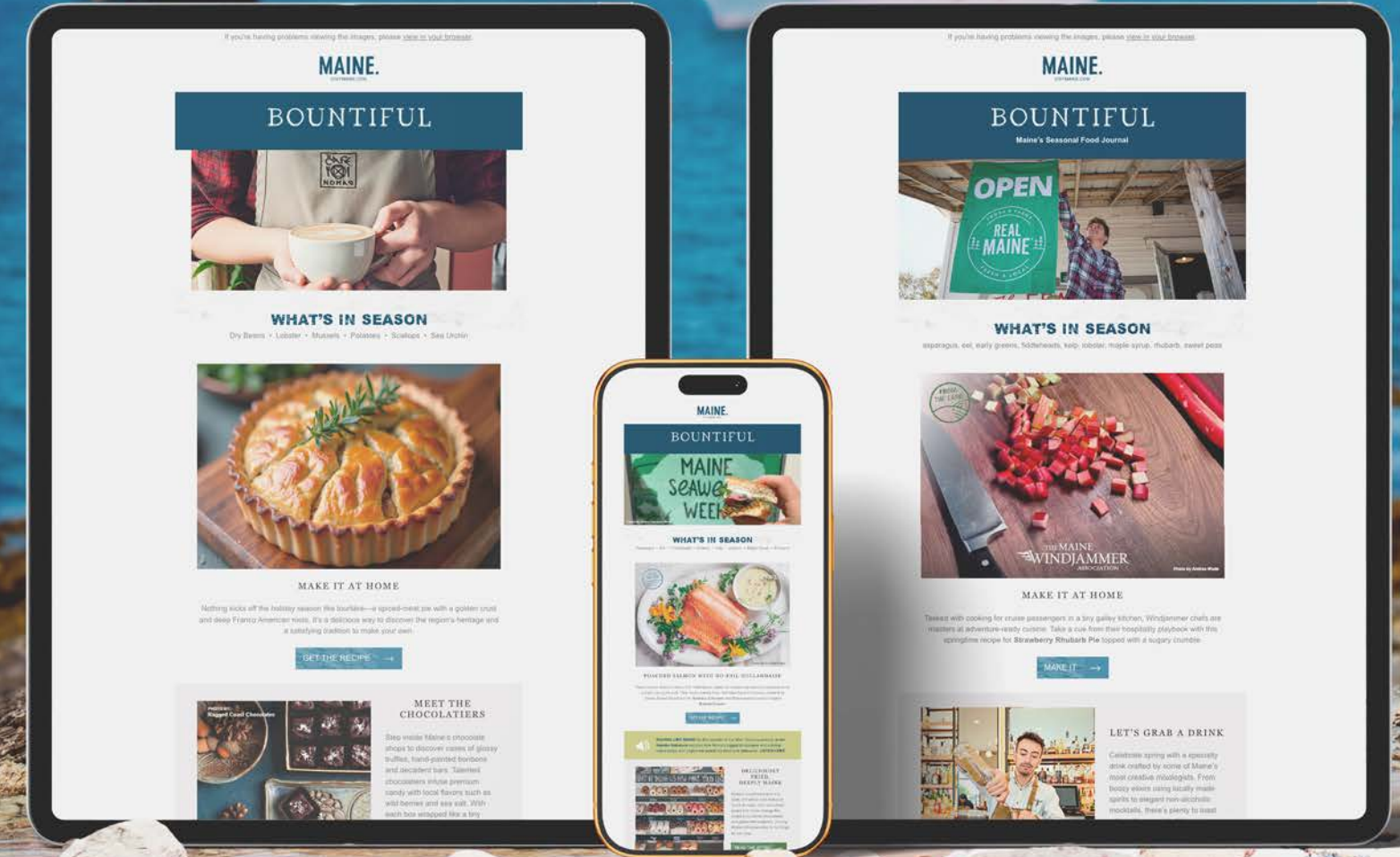
*Bountiful* delivered four seasonal issues in 2025 — spring, summer, fall, and winter — each celebrating what's in season in Maine through recipes, chef spotlights, food events, and links to partner businesses and culinary experiences across the state. The program reached a total engaged list of 78,896 subscribers and consistently performed well above industry benchmarks.

### ANNUAL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

- **4 emails deployed** across all four seasons
- **Total Engaged List: 78,896**
- **Average Open Rate: 74.17%** — dramatically above the industry benchmark of 20–22%
- Average Click-Through Rate: **11.08%**
- Top-performing issue by CTR: **Spring**

### BOUNTIFUL: PLATE VIDEO SERIES

Throughout 2025, MOT worked on a new project, Bountiful Plate — a culinary video series expanding the Bountiful content universe into long-form video storytelling celebrating Maine's food culture across seasons and regions.



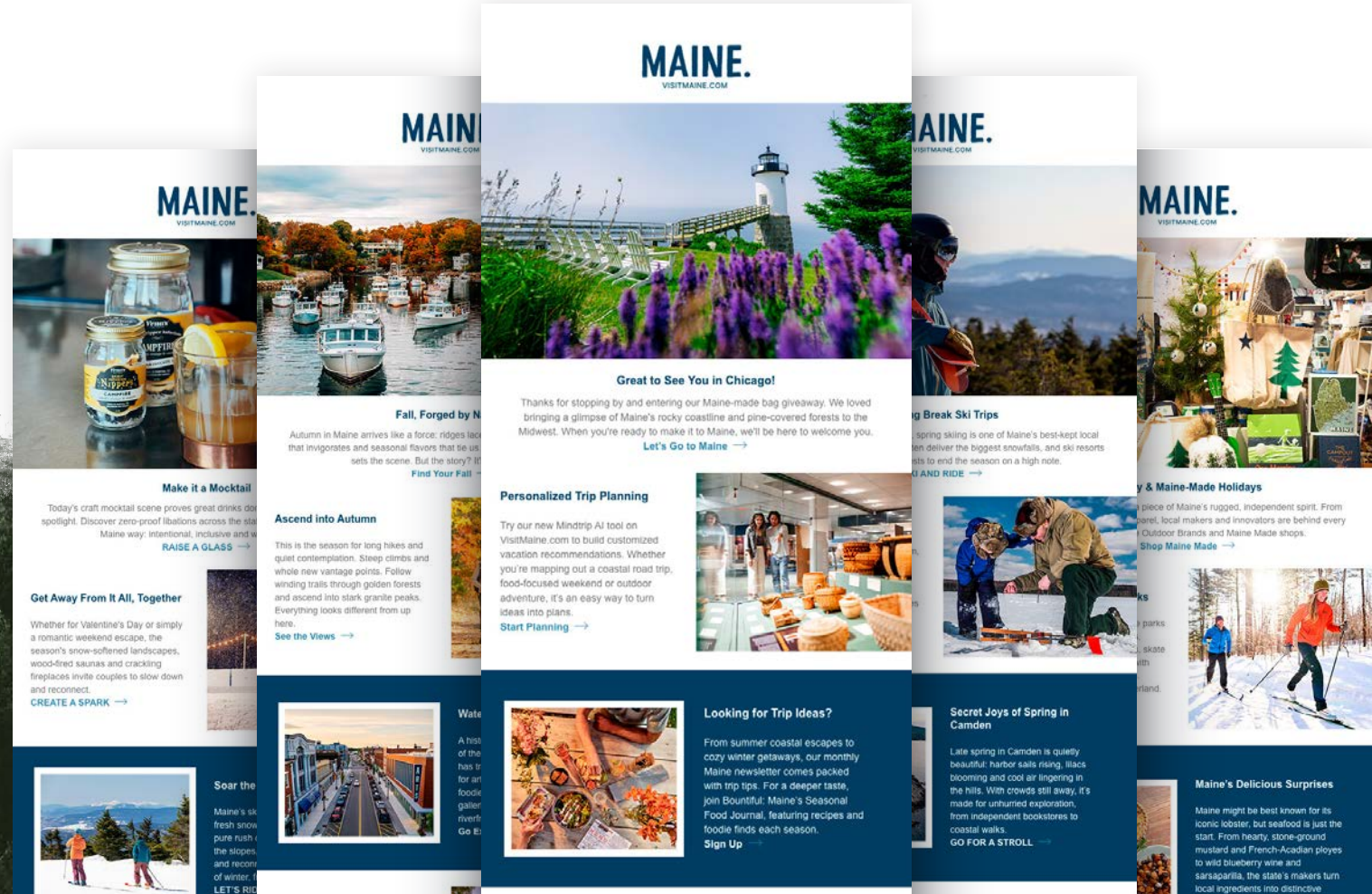
SECTION 6

# MONTHLY CONSUMER ENEWSLETTER

MOT's monthly consumer eNewsletter served as an always-on channel for inspiring travel throughout the year, reaching a growing audience of potential visitors with timely content, seasonal travel ideas, and curated Maine experiences.

- **12 emails deployed** across all four seasons
- **Total Engaged List: 200K**
- **Average Open Rate: 40.78%** — dramatically above the industry benchmark of 20–22%

The newsletter remained steady in 2025 with monthly sends, allowing MOT to stay consistently present in subscribers' inboxes across the full calendar year — including shoulder seasons where inspiring travel consideration has the greatest impact.



SECTION 7

# INDUSTRY OUTREACH & COLLABORATIONS

## VISITOR INFORMATION CENTERS

Utilizing \$1 million in EDA Travel, Tourism & Outdoor Recreation State Grant funds, the MOT partnered with the Maine Tourism Association to enhance interior design of the Visitor Information Centers in Kittery, Yarmouth and Hampden (North) locations. The project focused on a refreshed look and feel with new displays, improved visitor flow and visitor information technology upgrades such as new video walls and kiosks.

## MAINE'S 2025 CRUISE SEASON

Under the direction of the Maine Office of Tourism, CruiseMaine advances cruise-related development and promotional initiatives for the State of Maine and acts as a liaison among cruise industry stakeholders and local, state, and federal government partners.

The 2025 cruise season wrapped with a total of 374 ship calls and 313,159 passenger days to Maine's eight ports. This represents a 12.8% decrease in the number of ships and 17.2% decrease in passenger days from 2024.

Ports	2025		2024	
	# of Ships Calls	Passenger Days	# of Ships Calls	Passenger Days
Portland	133	200,801	139	202,300
Rockland	47	19,654	53	20,645
Bar Harbor	56	49,576	97	132,735
Eastport	22	30,787	8	7,029
Bath	40	3,806	46	5,608
Boothbay Harbor	39	3,719	46	5,608
Bucksport	13	1,186	20	2,801
Bangor	24	3,629	20	2,160
	<b>374</b>	<b>313,159</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>378,166</b>

## EDA TRAVEL, TOURISM & OUTDOOR RECREATION STATE GRANT PROGRAM

The U.S. Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation program invested \$750 million in American Rescue Plan funding to support communities across the country whose economies were hard hit by damage to these sectors from the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds supported projects focused on rebuilding the travel and tourism sector and creating a more equitable, competitive, and resilient industry. The Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation program made \$510 million in awards directly allocated to every U.S. state and territory. Maine Office of Tourism received \$10.8 million, which was equally divided between MOT and the Office of Outdoor Recreation. The project work through sub-awards began in 2023 and all work was completed as of October 2025. The following is a list of the projects that were supported by the EDA funding:

### Canadian Marketing Campaign

Conducted research to identify a target audience and develop a Canadian marketing campaign to include bilingual messaging encouraging Canadian visitors to visit Maine following the border closure.

### Responsible Recreation Campaign

Relaunched Look Out for ME, in partnership with Leave No Trace, to encourage responsible use of outdoor recreation sites, educate visitors about respecting the natural resources and reduce damage and misuse of recreational sites.

### Workforce Marketing Campaign

The Office of Tourism, in partnership with Maine Tourism Association and Maine Outdoor Brands, developed a fully integrated campaign, based on in-depth market analysis, focused on attracting new and more diverse workers to the hospitality industry by “re-branding” the industry as one that provides flexibility, incredible experiences, unparalleled inter-personal skills and unique opportunities in Maine.

## MAINE TOURISM MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT RECOVERY PROGRAM

The Maine Office of Tourism established and implemented a competitive sub-award program designed to provide technical assistance, training, and marketing support to communities and non-profit organizations. Projects focused on:

- Building organizational and community resiliency, leveraging MOT investment to achieve sustainable funding streams.
- Expansion and growth of tourism marketing efforts and destination development by building on Maine's unique tourism assets, creating long-term capacity for tourism product management and growth.
- Increased visitation and visitor spending and stabilization of staffing following pandemic generated layoffs.

The program awarded over \$2.7 million in funding to support to 13 non-profit tourism related organizations to advance work in these areas.

## MAINE TOURISM MARKETING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The Maine Tourism Marketing Partnership Program (MTMPP) is a grant initiative administered by the Maine Office of Tourism. It was established to help tourism-related organizations promote Maine as a travel destination through innovative marketing projects and collaborative campaigns. For 2025:

- 20 organizations were awarded \$441,218 through the Enterprise Marketing Grant
- 14 Maine Communities Grants totaling \$70,000
- 4 Special Events Grants totaling \$217,500

The eight Tourism Regional Destination Marketing Organizations received a total of \$2.4 million for regional marketing and promotion (\$300,000 per region).

### TRAVEL TRADE 2025

The Maine Office of Tourism continued to promote abroad through targeted sales missions, familiarization tours, and trade show attendance. Partnership with Brand USA strengthened cooperative marketing, trade engagement, and visibility on the America the Beautiful website, alongside collaboration with Discover New England and regional representatives in key markets including the UK, Ireland, Germany, France, Japan, and Mexico. Major shows attended included the U.S. Travel Association's IPW, Brand USA Travel Week, and the Discover New England Summit.

## 2025 CONSUMER TRAVEL SHOWS

In 2025, the Maine Office of Tourism connected with tens of thousands of potential visitors across key North American markets through a robust slate of consumer adventure travel shows. MOT staff and regional partners distributed Maine's Official Travel Planner and regional guides while engaging directly with attendees in Toronto (19,100), Montreal (16,600), Ottawa (17,000), Washington, D.C. (16,817), Chicago (14,726), New York City (15,738), and Atlanta (4,011), strengthening awareness of Maine's year-round experiences and inspiring future travel.

## WABANAKI CULTURAL TOURISM INITIATIVE

“The Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Initiative (WCTI) is a collaborative effort involving the Wabanaki Nations in Maine—the Mi'kmaq Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk (Indian Township), the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik (Pleasant Point), and the Penobscot Nation—along with community stakeholders, tourism educators, and professionals. Collectively, we are proud to present the Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Plan, a strategic plan written to build a robust cultural tourism economy in the state of Maine.” — From the Four Directions Development Corporation website.

MOT continues to assist this important initiative and the implementation of the Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Plan. For 2025 this included support for the project lead, advancing the work of the cultural tourism fellows, and the Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Summit.

## SECTION 8

# EARNED MEDIA & ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Over the past year, in close collaboration with Miles Partnership, Marshall Communications helped advance Maine's evolved brand through strategic earned media that amplified key messages and extended Maine's reach beyond paid channels. Guided by the Destination Management Plan and Maine's brand pillars, these efforts generated a steady drumbeat of compelling storytelling and media engagement across traditional, digital and social platforms, elevating Maine's position as a destination rich in authentic experiences. Throughout 2025, the public relations work deepened awareness, inspired visitation aligned with Maine's values, and reinforced the state's distinct sense of place in the minds of travelers and media alike.

- Provided monthly media updates and story ideas to a list of **522 media contacts** and **fulfilled 100 requests** for information or images/videos from members of **national/international travel media**.
- Worked with **144 businesses** in Maine to host **42 travel media and international tour operators** on press and familiarization tours.
  - U.S. media included representation from publications including AAA Explorer, Boston Globe, Sportfishing, Outside Online, Yankee, Travel + Leisure, National Geographic, Gear Junkie, and Backpacker
  - International media and trade included representation from the UK, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Australia, and Canada
- The combined earned media efforts resulted in the following editorial coverage:
  - **191 trackable articles with a combined readership of 2.8B**
  - **10.8MM coverage views**
  - Outlets included **National Geographic, Travel + Leisure, Good Morning America, Maxim, Food & Wine, HGTV.com, MSN,**

### USA Today, and Boston Globe

- Attended **Trav Media's IMM in New York City** and conducted 23 individual, 15-minute meetings with writers, editors, and content creators.
- Drafted a Maine Scenic Byway communications plan in partnership with MOT and MDOT.
- Collaborated with the Maine Department of Agriculture Conservation & Forestry on weekly foliage reports during the fall foliage season.
- Worked with Maine-based photographers on shoots that added **346 new images** to the MOT library.
- Added **20 new PR Partners** to the program. The PR Partners program helps bring interested print, digital and broadcast journalists, photographers, content creators, and international tour operators to our state to experience, firsthand, the best of Maine. There are more than 700 PR Partners statewide.

- Assisted **10 Maine business** with technical support as requested.
- Provided a session on **working with travel influencers** during the Maine Tourism Conference.
- Drafted the Maine National Scenic Byways communications plan.
- Maintained and **grew the social media** channels for **@VisitMaine**
  - Instagram: more than 9,550 followers
  - Facebook: more than 1,900 followers, with a total reach of more than 33,450,000
  - Pinterest: total audience reached 96,400

We use **user-generated content** to authentically showcase the depth and breadth of Maine's regions, landscapes, experiences, and seasons through the eyes of residents and visitors alike. It allows us to highlight diverse perspectives, from professional photographers to casual explorers, while inspiring others to discover Maine for themselves. As part of its organic social media efforts, Visit Maine pursues **strategic**

- **collaborations** that align with the Maine brand and marketing pillars, amplifying partner voices and content through partnerships such as Portland Hearts of Pine and campaigns like Feedfeed and the Miles paid inclusive creator initiative.
- Created **industry-facing LinkedIn** account and added 160 followers.
- **Shared more than 282 social media posts** supporting the regions, grant recipients and Maine businesses, events, activities, and programs.
- Assisted the **Maine Film Office** with press releases and newsletters and drafted the communications plan.
- Assisted the **Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation** with press releases, newsletters, social media, and PR efforts for the Maine Outdoor Recreation Economy Roadmap and annual Maine Outdoor Economy Summit and drafted the communications plan.



Views: 96,042  
Reach: 8,860  
Interactions: 978

Likes & Reactions: 911  
Comments: 5  
Shares: 31



Views: 1,676,774  
Reach: 11,135  
Interactions: 1,132

Likes & Reactions: 1,019  
Comments: 16  
Shares: 67



Views: 171,890  
Reach: 122,680  
Interactions: 766

Likes & Reactions: 576  
Comments: 33  
Shares: 128

## SECTION 9

# PAID MEDIA RECAP

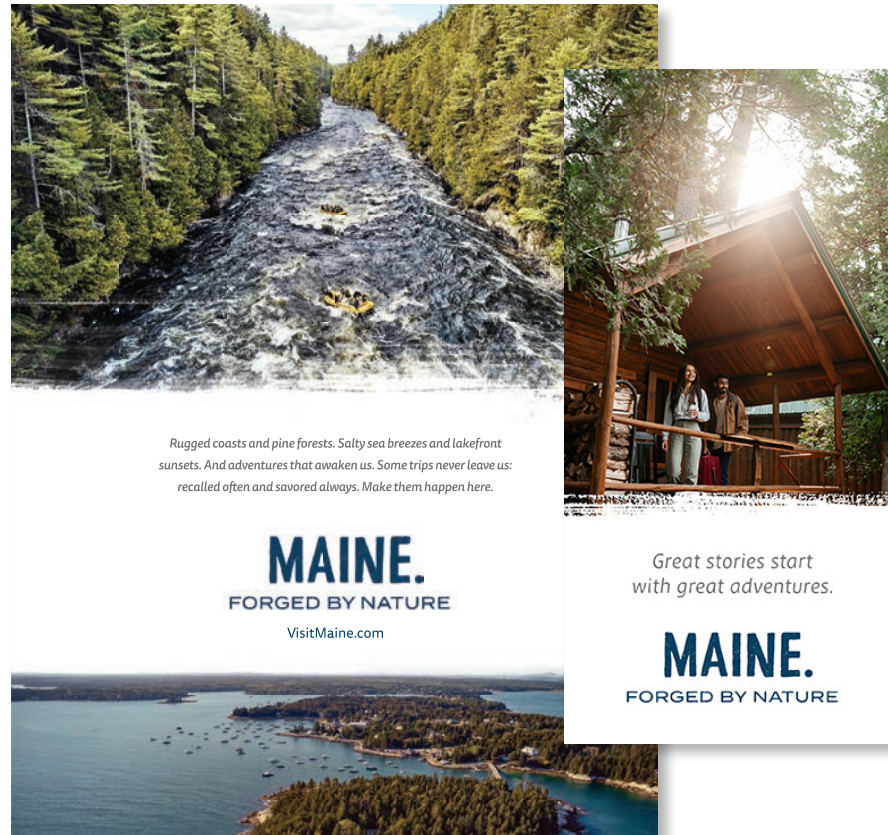
MOT's 2025 paid media program operated across the full traveler journey — from broad awareness through to conversion — with a strategic mix of programmatic digital, paid social, search, content partnerships, broadcast, print, activations, and innovative new formats. The campaign ran as a true always-on program throughout the year, with seasonal flights calibrated around winter, spring/summer, fall, and holiday windows.

### TARGETING STRATEGY

The 2025 media plan prioritized travel intenders first, layered with geographic targeting across primary markets (Mid-Atlantic, New England, Eastern Canada), expansion markets (Tampa, Orlando, Miami, Atlanta, Chicago, Charlotte, and Denver in summer), and national reach. Behavioral and interest overlays were applied by season — from hiking, fishing, outdoor enthusiasts, and foodies in summer/fall to skiing, snowmobiling, and winter sports audiences in the colder months — with dedicated diversification targeting running year-round across BIPOC and LGBTQ+ audiences.

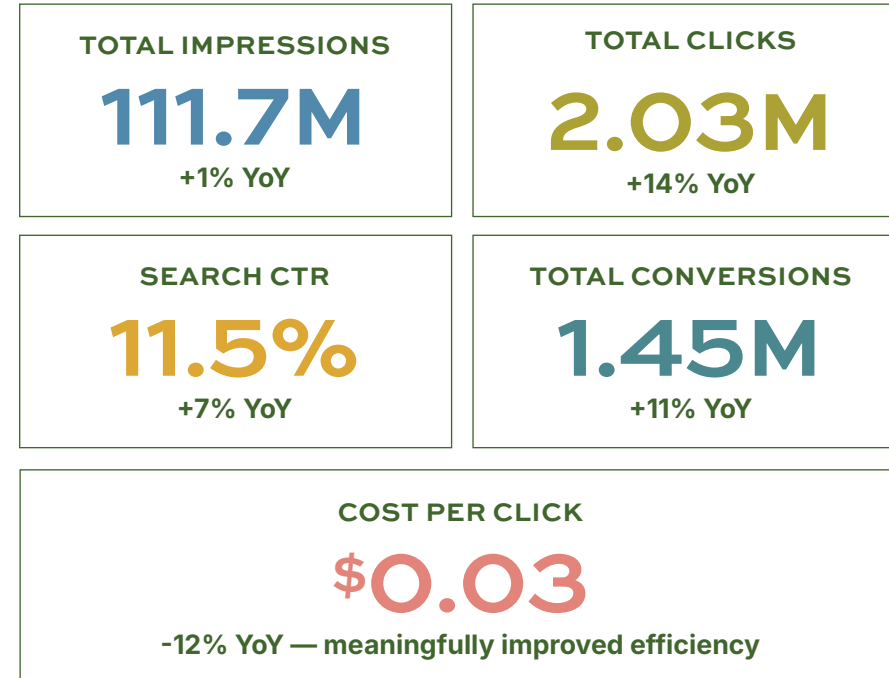
### PROGRAMMATIC DIGITAL

The backbone of the paid media plan was a comprehensive programmatic suite. Formats ran year-round across Connected TV, Online Video, Native, Display, DOOH (digital out-of-home billboards, airports, and urban panels in Boston and expansion markets), and Audio. YouTube TrueView ran from May through December, targeting travel intenders with behavioral overlay across key markets.



### SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (SEM)

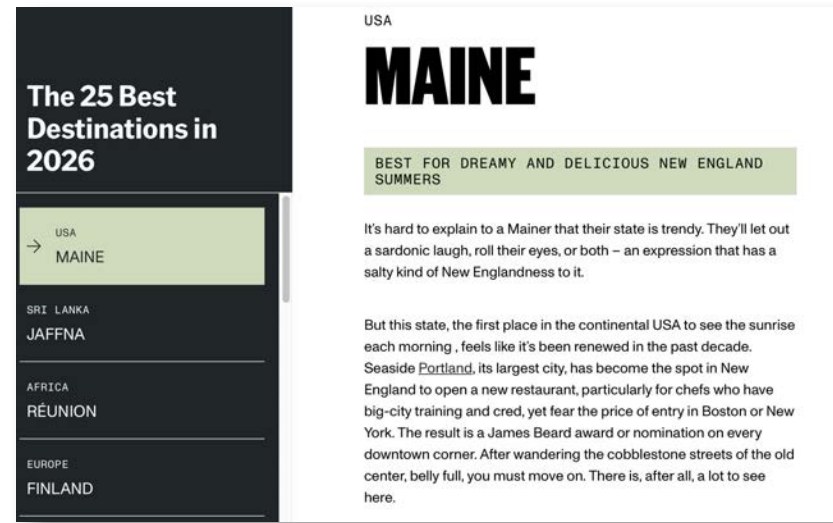
Nearly three in 10 Maine visitors used search engines to plan their trip in 2025 — making organic search one of the most direct lines between MOT's content investment and a traveler's decision to visit. Strong SEO translates that content into visibility, and visibility into arrivals. Within 2025, SEM delivered strong year-over-year performance across every key metric:



## CONTENT PARTNERSHIPS

The 2025 campaign brought Maine's story to audiences through a rich roster of premium editorial, digital, and experiential partnerships:

- **National Geographic** — Custom video and photo shoot, vertical video package, three custom articles on NatGeo.com with social distribution, a Maine Destination Guide sponsorship, and a print spread. Estimated audience: 34.8M impressions.
  - **Hulu/Disney+** — A :30 cut-down of the NatGeo custom video ran across Hulu and Disney+ using Disney audience segments targeted to key markets. Estimated audience: 6.8M impressions.
- **Condé Nast / Bon Appétit** — Custom interactive video and brand article, high-impact Crown Unit, two Bon Appétit print spreads, and one Condé Nast print spread. Estimated audience: 13M impressions.



- **Outside** — The Road Less Eaten branded content program plus three print spreads and a winter editorial component, reaching Outside's national outdoor and food audience. Estimated audience: 14.3M impressions.
  - **Outside Festival & Summit Activation** A signature in-person moment for the Forged by Nature launch was MOT's presence at the 2025 Outside Festival and Summit in Denver — a new expansion market. In partnership with Outside Inc., MOT built a custom multisensory experience in the heart of the festival grounds, including a custom A-frame cabin featuring Maine Outdoor Brands giveaways, a cinematic video display, an interactive moose ring toss, the Sounds of Maine audio experience, and a sweepstakes offering an all-expenses-paid trip to Acadia National Park. Results:
    - **35,000+ attendees** — a 95% increase year over year
    - **2.5 billion media impressions** — up from 1.8 million in 2024
    - 32% of attendees identified as BIPOC, with 26% from out of state
    - Nearly 1,000 sweepstakes entries and 2,000 Maine-made products distributed
- **AllGear Digital / AllTrails + GearJunkie** — A custom AllTrails Trail Collection for Maine paired with a supporting GearJunkie editorial article, reaching a national outdoor and hiking audience. Estimated audience: 16.6M impressions.
- **Atlas Obscura** — Custom content partnership reaching a national audience of curious, adventurous travelers.
- **Lonely Planet** — Best in Travel 2026 promotional placement, running November through December.

- **Food & Wine / Travel & Leisure** — Best New Chef promotion tied to the fall announcement, reaching a high-intent national culinary travel audience.
- **AFAR** — Where To Go in 2026 digital launch takeover plus a MOT brand page and content page in November.
- **SMX Media (Podcasts)** — Host-read integrations across high-profile shows including The Mel Robbins Podcast, Where Everybody Knows Your Name, and 99% Invisible, generating 94,500 website conversions. Estimated audience: 9.4M impressions.
- **VO2 Media** — Custom POV footage of Maine distributed across 100,000 fitness machines in hotels, gyms, and residential buildings nationwide, generating 14.5M+ minutes viewed.
- **TripAdvisor** — Display, native, Explorer video, and an Outdoor Adventure Thematic Takeover reaching Maine travel intenders and interest-based audiences.
- **Expedia** — Display across Expedia, Hotels.com, and VRBO targeting primary and expansion markets.
- **Origin** — Aperture flight overlay units serving personalized flight information to expansion market audiences, paired with fall foliage data overlays and localized road trip messaging for New England markets. Delivered strong brand lift results: Ad Recall +302.6% among ages 45–64 and +179.9% among ages 18–24.

- **Equalpride** — Display and video targeting LGBTQ+ travelers, delivering a 0.51% conversion rate at \$1.31 cost per conversion.
- **Nativo** — Canvas and Native Stories formats running Q1 through Q3, reaching travel contenders with behavioral and contextual targeting. Estimated audience: 33M impressions.

## BOSTON FOCUS

Boston remained MOT's single most important out-of-state market, accounting for 25% of all out-of-state visitors (Zartico). In addition to broad programmatic reach, MOT maintained a dedicated presence in the Boston market through Boston Magazine (display run-of-channel travel) and WCVB (on-air Boston Ski Report and Fall Foliage Report).

## PRINT PARTNERS

Print remained a meaningful channel for reaching both in-state and regional audiences. 2025 print partners included Down East Magazine, Activity Maine, the Maine Tourism Association, Maine Campground Owners Association (MECOA), and Yankee Magazine.



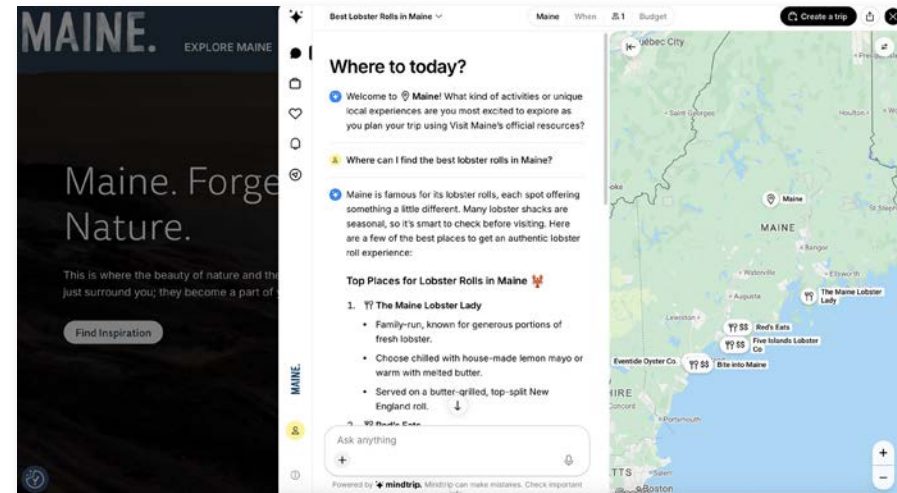
## SECTION 10

# INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

2025 marked a meaningful step forward in MOT's international reach — not just through media investment, but through digital infrastructure that makes VisitMaine.com accessible and usable for international audiences for the first time.

## VISITMAINE.COM ENHANCEMENTS

Weglot language translation was integrated into VisitMaine.com in 2025, enabling visitors from non-English-speaking markets to explore the site in their native language — a foundational step in making Maine's digital front door genuinely welcoming to international travelers. Mindtrip, an AI-powered trip planning tool, was also added to the site, allowing visitors to build personalized Maine itineraries through a conversational planning experience that meets travelers where modern trip research actually happens.



## SECTION 11

# INCLUSIVE CREATOR PROGRAM

Maine has always had something to offer everyone. In 2025, MOT set out to make sure that message reached audiences who had historically been underrepresented in Maine's tourism marketing — through an innovative influencer program built on authentic community partnerships rather than transactional content.

**The Inclusive Creator Program** partnered with a carefully selected roster of five digital creators whose audiences span Black and African American, Hispanic, Asian, Multiracial, European, and LGBTQ+ travelers. Each creator spent time in Maine, partnering with local businesses, cultural organizations, and nonprofits to produce content rooted in real experiences — including short-form video, photo storytelling, and Instagram Highlights.

## RESULTS

- **2M impressions** across Instagram and TikTok
- **100,000+ engagements**
- **7.8% average engagement rate** — well above industry benchmarks
- Posts were **saved and/or shared at a 2.7x higher rate** than MOT's average content benchmarks
- Featured businesses reported increased foot traffic and visibility
- Portland, Maine's rating on the Green Book Global app rose from 4.34 in 2024 to 4.7 by January 2026 (based on Black travelers' reviews)

The impact extended well beyond impressions. Audience comments captured in real time told the story best — viewers adding Maine to their travel lists, expressing surprise and delight at the state's diversity and welcome, and actively planning trips. The work was awarded a Silver Adrian Award and "Best of Category," meaning that the entry scored the highest within its budget range.

*"The multiple posts from Green Book Global have driven serious business to Luke's Lobster from a diverse audience that may not otherwise have visited us... We are so glad that the MOT sees the potential of reaching out to new audiences and the importance of featuring inclusive and welcoming destinations."*

**Ben Conniff**  
Co-founder, Luke's Lobster



## SECTION 12

# CANADA MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Canada has long been one of Maine's most important and proximate visitor markets. In 2025, MOT developed a dedicated Canadian media campaign; a lower-funnel program designed to stay in front of Canadian travelers most likely to convert and to remain genuinely welcoming at a moment when U.S.-Canada travel sentiment required thoughtful consideration. Maine welcomed 513,700 Canadian visitors in 2025, who contributed \$340 million in direct spending to the state's economy.

### STRATEGIC APPROACH

The 2025 Canada campaign was calibrated around two deliberate adjustments from prior years. First, targeting was elevated to a higher household income threshold — \$100,000+ — to reach audiences less likely to be affected by currency exchange rate fluctuations, protecting both visitation volume and per-visit spend. Second, tactics were concentrated toward the lower funnel, prioritizing audiences already in consideration mode and most likely to book. Creative messaging was designed to remain inspirational while staying attuned to the current bilateral climate — warm, welcoming, and focused on the experience waiting for them.

### FLIGHT & MARKETS

The campaign ran April through December — a nine-month window spanning spring/summer, fall, and winter seasons — targeting both English and French Canadian travelers simultaneously. Target markets were: Toronto, Ottawa, Fredericton, Montreal, and Quebec City, optimized throughout the campaign toward the top-converting markets within that set.



### MEDIA MIX

The campaign ran across three tactic categories:

- **Native Advertising (English + French Canadian)** — Separate English and French native streams ran across the full flight window, each with an estimated audience of **3.5M impressions per stream (7M combined)**. The English stream targeted travel intenders in Toronto, Ottawa, and Fredericton; the French Canadian stream used French content and French browser settings to reach travelers in Montreal and Quebec City in their native language. Both streams targeted travel intenders with behavioral overlays that shifted by season — outdoor enthusiasts, foodies, beach-goers, nature travelers, and family adventure travelers in spring and summer; winter sports enthusiasts, skiers, snowmobilers, and foodies in the colder months.
- **Brand USA — Canada East Optimized Audience Campaign** — Running in both spring and fall, this program leveraged Brand USA's first-party proprietary audience of pre-qualified Eastern Canadian travel intenders. Multi-channel touchpoints drove native impressions to a Visit the USA Maine landing page and custom landing pages, with supporting media running across Kayak, Booking.com, and Expedia. Estimated audience: 12.4M impressions.
- **Display** — Additional display placements supported the native and Brand USA activity, extending reach and reinforcing messaging across the campaign window.

### Total Estimated Campaign Impressions

# 23.4M

Impressions across all three markets

The Canada program reflects MOT's understanding that proximity is an asset but not a guarantee — maintaining a consistent, welcoming presence in Canadian markets throughout the full travel planning season is what converts awareness into arrivals.



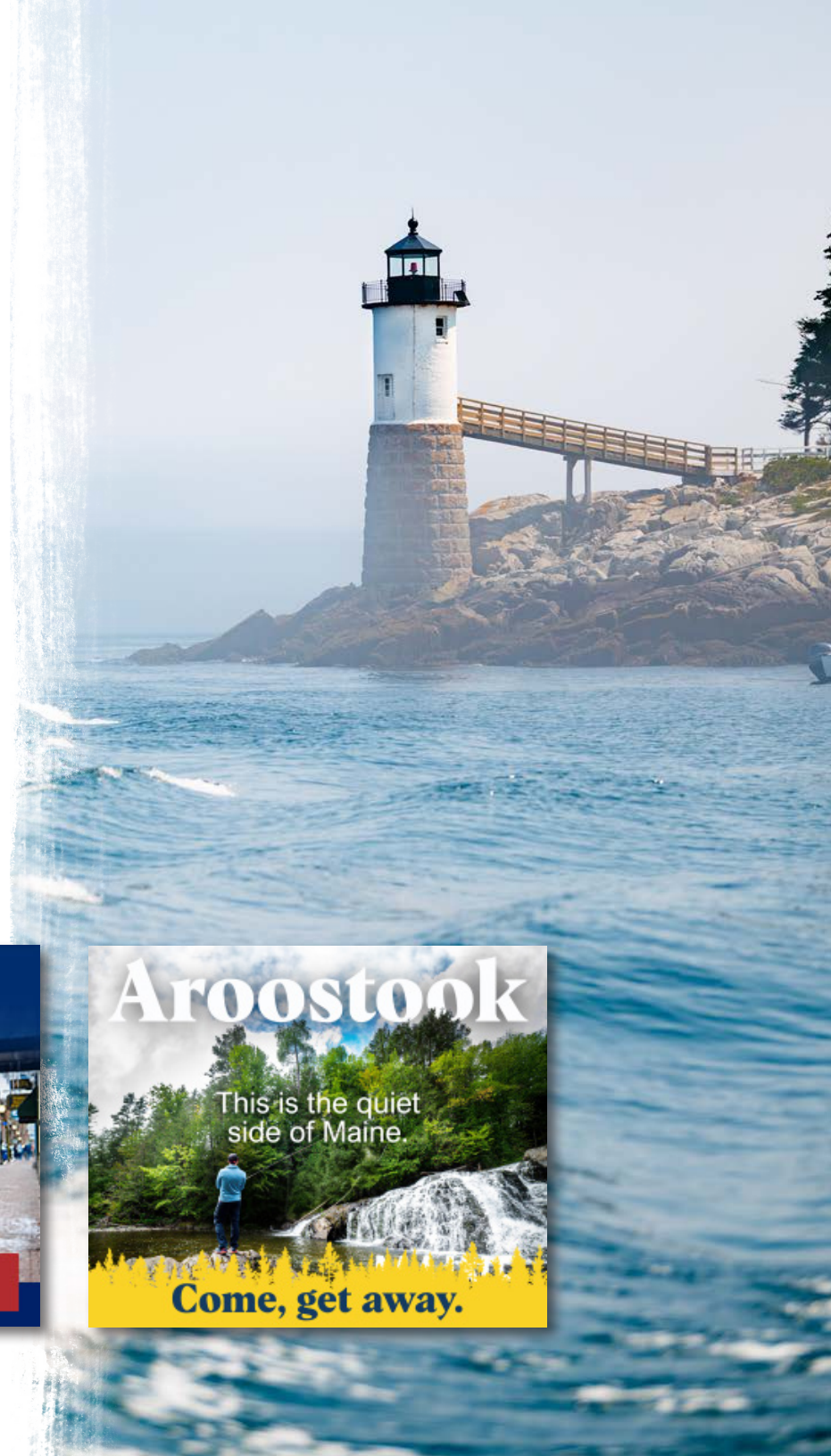
## SECTION 13

# REGIONAL CO-OP PROGRAM

2025 marked the launch of the Maine Regional Co-Op Program — a new initiative developed by the MOT to amplify marketing efforts across Maine's eight Regional Destination Marketing Organizations.

The Co-Op program was designed around a straightforward premise: when MOT and the regions advertise together, their shared investment reaches further and works harder. By tapping into Maine's first-party audience data and aligning regional buys with state brand campaign flights, the program allowed regional partners to extend their reach to in-market travel intenders with precision and scale that would be difficult to achieve independently.

The Co-Op program represents a new model of collaboration between MOT and regional partners — one that pools data, aligns messaging, and multiplies impact.



## SECTION 14

# SPORTS MARKETING & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In 2025, MOT deepened its investment in sports-based marketing, recognizing professional and semi-professional athletics as a powerful vehicle for reaching new, diverse audiences — particularly younger and more urban demographics who may not have previously considered Maine as a travel destination.

### HEARTS OF PINE

Maine's new professional soccer club, the Portland Hearts of Pine, became a key partner in 2025.

The club's community-focused identity and commitment to inclusivity made it an ideal partner for MOT's Welcome All and Forged by Nature messaging.

### MAINE MARINERS

Through a partnership with the Maine Mariners, Maine's professional hockey team, MOT was able to reach the hockey enthusiasts through activations and video placements throughout home and away games, getting in front of new potential travelers.

### MAINE SEADOGS

The MOT also partnered with the Maine Seadogs, the Boston Red Sox's Double-A Affiliate team in Portland, to activate signage and an activation space at the stadium.



## SECTION 15

# LOOK OUT FOR ME + LEAVE NO TRACE

Maine's natural landscape is both its greatest asset and its most important responsibility. In 2025, MOT refreshed and expanded its Look Out for ME destination stewardship initiative — aligning it with the Forged by Nature brand and deepening its partnership with Leave No Trace to give visitors the knowledge and inspiration to experience Maine with care.

### THE CAMPAIGN

Built around seven core stewardship principles of Leave No Trace — Know Before You Go; Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces; Dispose of Waste Properly; Respect Maine Culture and Leave What You Find; Minimize Campfire Impacts; Respect Wildlife; and Be Considerate of Others — the program offers guidance that is specific to Maine's landscape rather than generic outdoor ethics. That specificity includes dedicated guidance around Wabanaki Nations heritage and cultural sites, working forests and waterways, and Maine's long-standing tradition of private land recreation. The campaign ran across paid social, display, native, and content partnership channels, with messaging designed to reach visitors during the planning and in-destination phases of their trip.



### CONTENT PARTNERSHIPS

Two notable partnerships brought the Look Out for ME message to highly qualified audiences:

- **Outside Magazine** — A five-part custom social series hosted by a Registered Maine Guide and Leave No Trace educator, targeted to users who had previously engaged with Maine travel content. The series brought authentic, credentialed voices to responsible recreation storytelling.

- **Nativo** — A custom native article distributed across contextual, data, and geo-targeted layers, reaching leisure travelers, outdoor enthusiasts, and travel intenders with stewardship messaging integrated into their natural content environment.

The Look Out for ME program reflects MOT's ongoing commitment to the Destination Management Plan principle that growing tourism and protecting what makes Maine worth visiting are not competing goals — they are the same goal.

## SECTION 16

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGN

A thriving tourism industry depends on a thriving tourism workforce. In 2025, MOT launched a dedicated, ARPA-funded workforce development media campaign designed to attract workers to Maine's tourism, hospitality, and outdoor recreation industries — addressing one of the industry's most persistent structural challenges with the same creative energy powering the Forged by Nature brand.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

Before launching in the media, research was conducted by Downs & St. Germain across key audiences. This research surfaced consistent themes that shaped the overall workforce strategy: housing affordability, income instability due to seasonality, lack of benefits, and difficulty assimilating into Maine communities were cited repeatedly as barriers to recruitment and retention. These findings point toward an evolved role for MOT in future campaigns — shifting from promoter to active conduit, connecting potential workers to jobs, housing resources, and community integration support alongside employment messaging.

### THE CAMPAIGN

Running July through October 2025, the campaign carried the tagline Forge Your New Career Path in Maine, extending the Forged by Nature brand into the workforce space with creatives that positioned Maine not just as a place to visit, but as a place to build a life. Media ran across Meta, LinkedIn, Reddit, and display and native channels, targeting prospective workers in key feeder markets including Boston, New York, and Portland/Auburn.

### PERFORMANCE

- Video completion rate: **91.31%** — well above the 75% benchmark
- Arts, Culture & Entertainment content: **93.28%** completion rate (top-performing vertical)
- Display and native: **34.5M+ impressions** and **19,253 conversions** at **\$9.18 cost per conversion**
- LinkedIn showed particular traction with Food & Beverage Services and Higher Education audiences



## CONTENT, SEO & WEBSITE PROGRESS

VisitMaine.com continued its evolution in 2025 as the primary hub for travel inspiration, planning, and conversion, with measurable gains in organic authority, technical performance, and content reach.

### TRAFFIC & ENGAGEMENT

In Q4 2025 alone, the site logged **1.2M users (+24% YoY)** and **1.5M sessions (+19.2% YoY)**. A bounce rate of **24.58%** — well below the 40–50% industry average — reflects a site that’s attracting the right visitors and giving them reasons to stay. Timely seasonal content proved its value, with winter landing pages delivering significant traffic spikes that reinforced the direct relationship between content investment and organic performance.

### SEO PERFORMANCE

December 2025 marked an all-time high for VisitMaine.com’s search footprint: **19,760 page 1 keywords in Google U.S.** — ranking the site 32nd among all 50 state DMOs, **up three spots from Q3**, and **above the 50-state average for page 1 keywords** as a percentage of total ranked keywords. While organic traffic was down 16.3% year over year, that figure tracks with a broader industry-wide decline, meaning VisitMaine.com significantly outperformed its peers.

### NEW CONTENT & ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS

Ongoing content enhancements focused on improving both user experience and search performance. Site structure and navigation were refined with clearer H2/H3 hierarchies, stronger crosslinking, updated taxonomy, and strategic keyword integration to better guide users

and search engines. Existing content was expanded, consolidated, or rewritten to eliminate overlap, improve accuracy and timeliness, and align with reader intent and the Forged by Nature tone. Competitive analysis and keyword research informed new content development, resulting in 34 new articles published to close topic gaps and capture high-value search demand.

### AI SEARCH VISIBILITY

VisitMaine.com ranked for **5,094 AI Overview keywords** — a strong early signal for future visibility as AI-generated search results become an increasingly dominant part of how travelers discover destinations. This positions the site well for the continued growth of AI-assisted trip planning described in the 2025 trend landscape.

### NEW PLATFORM INTEGRATIONS

Two significant additions expanded VisitMaine.com’s capability for international and AI-assisted travelers in 2025. **Weglot** language translation was integrated, making the site accessible in French, German, and other languages, directly supporting MOT’s first sustained international media campaign. **Mindtrip**, an AI-powered trip planning tool, was also integrated into the site, enabling travelers to build personalized Maine itineraries through a conversational planning experience.



A photograph of a dense forest with a wooden boardwalk path leading through tall trees and ferns. The scene is captured in a monochromatic green color scheme. The path is made of wooden planks and leads from the foreground into the distance, flanked by lush vegetation and tall, slender tree trunks. The lighting is soft, creating a serene and natural atmosphere.

**MAINE.**

FORGED BY NATURE™

[VISITMAINE.COM](http://VISITMAINE.COM)