



The Ashland Chamber of Commerce is pleased to present the City Grant report for our efforts with Travel Ashland (Ashland Visitors and Convention Bureau) for the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year. The Ashland Chamber has been producing a report annually to the City on behalf of our tourism promotional efforts since the first grant was received in 1982.

The Ashland Chamber is the umbrella organization that administers the grant to promote tourism for Ashland. A dedicated staff and budget, Travel Ashland Director and industry professionals who serve on the Travel Ashland Committee create and manage the programs, projects and events. The Chamber, in collaboration with Travel Ashland, enhances the efforts and greatly magnify what the tourism program creates.

As the following report details, Travel Ashland has navigated this challenging fiscal year, supporting our tourism industry and partners, given the multiple crisis and travel impacts with COVID and fires. While promoting safe and responsible travel through the COVID period, Travel Ashland continues to promote year-round visitation. We continue to pursue new markets and expand our reach to new demographics for new reasons as the officially designated DMO (Destination Marketing Organization). We launched a Visitor Research and Analysis to study the emerging new visitors we have seen in 2019 and 2020. Travel Ashland continues to strengthen partnerships regionally and statewide collaborating in promotional campaigns, market research and industry development. The work through the years has not only grown our economy but has increased our tax base and employment. **Please review the Executive Summary in the report for highlights of the pivotal efforts and promotional program along with detailed description of Travel Ashland's scope of work throughout the report.**

We are proud, not only of our efforts promoting tourism over the years but for crucial work of the Chamber to enhance and improve our economy beyond what is included in the City Grant report. Our strong partnerships include our state and federal legislators and staff, private and non-profit key leaders, business owners and the City which continue to grow as we collectively address issues and challenges. In 2020, these relationships and efforts were imperative to our ability to provide the support our businesses desperately need to survive this crisis and for Ashland's economy to emerge stronger than ever. We provided assistance and guidance, access to resources, new programs and campaigns in an ever changing, uncharted world. Together with our businesses, we have pivoted, adapted and focused on solutions through a very challenging time. Beyond the continued assistance and support provided to businesses directly, the Ashland Chamber is embarking on a robust Economic Development strategy for Ashland with local and regional partners, writing and receiving regional, state, federal and private sector grants to create programs specific for our businesses to help them be more resilient. We are enhancing our Emergency Preparedness efforts, temporarily merging this important Task Force with our Health & Wellbeing Task Force to provide detailed and comprehensive resources for Ashland's businesses and their employees. We will continue to create and manage Ashland's beloved community events as we are able to do so. The Ashland Chamber is a unique and nimble organization that works to serve the interests of our community, improve the economy, enhance our quality of life and support local business.

With over five hundred diverse members, representing thousands of employees, the Chamber promotes the entire community. We believe by working collectively we are successful. It is with appreciation that we present the enclosed report and stand ready to continue to be a partner in Ashland's success.



Sandra Slattery



Deena Branson

Ashland Chamber of Commerce and Travel Ashland (Visitor & Convention Bureau)

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ASHLAND



**City Grant Annual Report
FY 2019 - 2020
Ashland Chamber of Commerce
Travel Ashland (Visitor & Convention Bureau)**

Ashland's changing economy and livability depend on tourism

Travel Ashland Annual Report FY 2019-2020

Overview Points:

- Tourism continues to be a sustainable economic driver in Ashland. (Pg. 6)
- There has been a significant increase in outdoor visitation to Ashland due to access to the trails, promotion of responsible travel and refinement of Ashland's outdoor assets. (Pg. 7)
- Our partners; businesses, owners and employees of Ashland depend on Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber's role to effectively communicate, educate and inspire visitors through crisis, opportunity and periods of growth. (Pg. 8)
- Our new research shows a diversity of visitor personas that will bring new growth with anticipated pent-up demand for travel and a positive impact on employment, revitalization and expansion. (Pg. 10)
- Who is Travel Ashland and what do they do? Travel Ashland remains Ashland's official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) who is the trusted entity to promote Ashland. (Pg. 14)
- Travel Ashland's current visitor study will result in actionable information, leading us in a revised strategic direction and rebranding in 2021. By promoting tourism, we contribute to improving lives through a strong, sustainable local economy. (Pg. 21)



Courtesy of Weisinger's Family Winery

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Photo by Daren Campbell

Purpose:

Travel Ashland's job is *"to promote Ashland to visitors traveling from more than 50 miles to Ashland and to visitors who stay overnight in Ashland. Promotion includes advertising, publicizing, distribution of printed materials, marketing special events and festivals, conducting strategic planning, visitor center management and research necessary to stimulate tourism development."* Excerpt from Agreement for Services between from City of Ashland and Ashland Chamber of Commerce 2019-2020.

Mission:

To deliver an unmatched travel experience that engages the visitor, encourages repeat visitation, converts visitors into potential residents and services groups, tours and conferences. Attracting outdoor travelers, culinary and wine enthusiasts and those with cultural interests, Travel Ashland researches, analyzes and assesses the visitor and our assets to best promote, respond and pivot using the latest tools available through times of crisis, opportunity, recovery and expansion.

About Travel Ashland:

For thirty-eight years, the City of Ashland and the community have relied on Travel Ashland (Ashland's official Destination Marketing Organization) through an annual grant, to promote Ashland as a unique year-round, travel destination.

Travel Ashland's work is done through leveraging dollars received through the grant and fostering strategic partnerships with public and private sectors to promote and engage the tourism industry and visitors while conducting effective research and analysis each season that focuses on growing business in times of lower occupancy.

About this Report:

With the passing of Ashland City Council Resolution 2019-17, Ashland Chamber and Travel Ashland are required to submit an annual report regarding funds received during the prior fiscal year pursuant to ORS 320.300 through ORS 320.350



Executive Summary of FY 2019-2020

The following grant report represents the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year and the work completed in compliance with the grant guidelines and purpose stated in the contract for services between the City of Ashland and Ashland Chamber/Travel Ashland (VCB).

Using dollars received from the City of Ashland grant with the private sector and other organizations, Travel Ashland promoted with partners and thus saw strong visitation in Summer, Fall and Winter of 2019 as we expanded into new markets. We launched a new site, www.travelashland.com that provided a key online resource for visitors given the increase in online demand for information and wayfinding with the onset of the virus in Spring 2020.

We then navigated uncharted water, pivoting and responding to the impacts due to COVID and the travel restrictions and variances. We engaged and led local, regional and statewide crisis communication with the tourism industry and through our Chamber partnerships with the Governor's office, legislators and partners. We sought business and financial resources for our industry partners and businesses so they could continue forward. We pursued and received grant funding to support our businesses. We continue to serve in much needed response and recovery.

We saw resiliency in a younger visitor traveling to experience the wines of Ashland and the Rogue Valley and the outdoor adventures, many of whom were first time visitors. We promoted safe, responsible travel when it was appropriate to do so and paused when needed, following the lead of our state and regional partners. We educated the visitor on the new ways to experience Ashland. With Ashland seeing a bigger shift than other destinations in terms of its theatre goes not traveling to Ashland that make up a third of our visitor base, we were heartened to see the influx of this younger, more active demographic seek out and discover Ashland.

With these changing trends, we launched a Visitor Research and Analysis Study to learn, study and assess the new and potential visitors. Substantiating our role in tourism and data collection and analysis, this will result in actionable information we will use to guide our new strategic direction and rebranding in 2021.

Reflecting on the fiscal year that spans 2019 into 2020, we saw new visitors from markets such as Lake Tahoe and an influx of those from Seattle and Portland, exiting metropolitan areas, discovering Ashland for travel and relocation. Businesses who diversified to meet new audiences succeeded in welcoming new visitors. We were pacing very strong at the beginning of 2020 then March hit and travel halted. Life essentially paused due to the pandemic, impact of the virus and shut down. We saw many visitors on road trips, "discovering nature" for the first time. Our proximity on Interstate 5 was an advantage as a west coast drive market. We continue to see an influx of new visitors engaging in Ashland's amenities in a deeper way, further beyond how an OSF playgoer perhaps would as they ate, attended plays and slept. With more time, more varied interests and itineraries, the new, first time visitor could engage in a variety of experiences in Ashland.

Our strengths became our weaknesses in Ashland with a third of our visitor base not here due to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's inability to open due to COVID related safety restrictions. This closure, following the 2018 summer of 85+ days of wildfire smoke and OSF's choice to forego 6 weeks of outdoor plays in 2019, resulted in a decrease of OSF playgoer visitation and impacts upon businesses who relied solely on that visitor type. We continue to support OSF as a major amenity that we anticipate reopening when it is safe to do with a new strategic direction.

Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber always look for the opportunities even in times of crisis. Right before COVID hit, **we launched the new www.travelashland.com site** to provide a valuable resource for visitors. Timing wise, this was very impactful as the world went into lockdown, relying on online platforms and technology.

As a sounding board, we heard that **some partners reported their best year ever in 2020** from outfitters to wineries to retail. Of course, others have suffered deep losses. We commend our partners and businesses who adapted to the changing world. Restaurants, for example, embraced new technology and services, refined their margins and made crucial decisions with an everchanging tide of restrictions and changes to make it safe for their employees and patrons alike. These businesses continue to look for new ways to do business as we begin to move out of this time.

We worked together with the City of Ashland, building and business owners to create outside space for dining and shopping within the Summer Celebration effort to create vibrancy in the downtown welcoming locals and regional visitors safely and responsibly.

We convened leaders in the outdoor industry to further refine and enhance our outdoor messaging, assets, content, stories, resources, trail information and to overall promote the connectivity between outdoor activities and Ashland’s culinary and cultural amenities.

We must take into account the recent devastating Alameda and Obenchain fires affecting not only our local communities but throughout the West Coast. While still in response mode and pivoting towards a long recovery, we are seeing the effects of displaced residents and many who are the workforce of Ashland’s businesses. We are proud to see the hospitality industry responding by giving back by donating meals, food, rooms and providing for those in need. Rogue Food Unites is an example of how truly collaborative our community is. These fires further affected the partially damaged Oregon brand and perception. Building back in a mindful way includes our efforts of showcasing Ashland’s natural beauty and amenities, with the message we are still here and it is still a beautiful place.

Through the many challenges, prior to COVID, we continued to serve as a viable Destination Marketing Organization, targeting the outdoor and traveler in key markets such as San Francisco, Bay Area, Redding, Sacramento, LA, Seattle, Portland and Eugene. See Campaigns and Results on Page 24. As a support to the entire visitor industry, we continued to tell the story of Ashland to new audiences to backfill the summer along with each season while encouraging the industry to be open to change, nimble to adapt and evolve. **We continued to expand our digital platforms including our social media channels and audiences.** We hosted travel writers, influencers and the tourism industry through FAM trips and itineraries that resulted in features, stories, articles and blog posts that reached new audiences. **We saw continued increase in visitor inquiries,** leads and expansion of our database. We saw changing trends in group business prior to COVID and further impact on the industry once the impacts began to take place. It is yet to be seen how the **future of group business** will evolve. We are analyzing this in our Visitor Research and Analysis and staying apprised of group travel sentiment and emerging trends.

We continue our mission to educate, promote, to assess, listen, support and move forward with the goal of increasing visitation, when it is safe to do so towards a **steadier visitor volume** thus increasing revenues of the Transient Occupancy Tax, the Food & Beverage Tax and the tourism industry. We understand and acknowledge the temporary impacts of COVID in 2020 and into 2021. This is a collective effort through growing our valuable partnerships and diversifying our visitor. The overarching goal continues to be to deliver a unique travel experience that engages the visitor, encourages repeat visitation and converts visitors into Ashland residents. This is done through servicing individuals, industry partners, groups, tours and conference attendees. We accomplish this through our scope of work and strategic initiatives.

For branding purposes and to maintain a current identity within the tourism industry, Ashland VCB will be referred to as **Travel Ashland** for the remainder of this report and is how it self-identifies within its public relations.

Ashland Chamber and Travel Ashland (VCB) have a unique vantage point, serving as a sounding board and liaison fostering effective partnerships and innovative programs that position our organization. In addition to the traditional responsibilities of a Chamber of Commerce and membership organization, we enjoy the added responsibility of a Destination Marketing Organization and a key element of the City of Ashland Economic Development Strategy.

Travel Ashland collects industry knowledge through research and depending upon the need, plans accordingly, in collaboration with our business partners, the most effective marketing promotions to meet the demands we hear. This strengthens and validates our direction as well as expands our market reach.

Travel Ashland (VCB) continues to serve as the gateway to Ashland, Southern Oregon, all of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest with approximately 60% of visitors continuing to arrive to Oregon through our corridor. We are open to the public year- round (outside of COVID restriction time periods), free of charge, providing an authentic message and superior travel experience. We submit this report for your review and thank you for your continued partnership and investment.



Katharine Cato
Travel Ashland Director



Sandra Slattery
Executive Director



Tourism continues to be a sustainable economic driver in Ashland.

Without it, we would not have a healthy economy in Ashland or the state of Oregon. Through the COVID crisis, we have seen resiliency in the visitor – a new, first time visitor discovering Ashland as an attractive, rural destination with cultural and culinary amenities. We see pent-up demand for when it is safe to responsibly travel again, that will drive the further influx of dollars to our economy. While it will look different as we rebrand and retool, tourism remains a driving force of economic impact as Ashland is a mature destination that has the ability to diversify its visitor because of the variety of outdoor, cultural and culinary amenities it offers.

Supporting 3000 jobs in Ashland, more importantly it supports a lifestyle that Ashland residents enjoy year-round.

Ashland's amenities, in a typical year, are supported by the **visitor base of over 350,000**. Though this indicator number may fluctuate, Ashland's beautification, streets, police, fire and public works department are all part of the infrastructure that is supported by tourism that **fuels Transient Occupancy Tax revenue to nearly \$3million annually**.

Ashland's parks system is supported through the **5% food and beverage tax**.

There has been a significant increase in outdoor visitation to Ashland due to access to trails, promotion of responsible travel and refinement of Ashland's outdoor assets.

Ashland has always attracted outdoor travelers to experience its trails, mountains, lakes and rivers. Given Ashland's unique location at the convergence of the Cascade and Siskiyou Mountain ranges and proximity to the Pacific Crest Trail, Ashland is an ideal basecamp for adventure.

With the backdrop of the Ashland Watershed, Mt. Ashland and accessibility to trails and regional terrain, Ashland has been growing as an outdoor destination in recent years. What sets Ashland apart from destinations such as Bend is that Ashland is a mountain town with unmatched cultural and culinary amenities such as Rogue Valley Wine Country, over 100 restaurants and the arts. By attracting the responsible outdoor adventure traveler, we sustain Ashland's quality of life and thus attract a future, active workforce.

In Summer, 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic, new visitors came to Ashland. They were younger and more active travelers. With the past visitor economy comprised of a third of the visitor base attending plays at OSF, their characteristics were traditional, older, loyal and predictable with long-term booking windows. With OSF closed in 2020, many businesses, partners and our organization saw more younger visitors, many here for the first time for new reasons such as recreation, exploring the outdoors, tasting wine and seeking culinary experiences. Their travel plans spanned from short term weekend trips to Ashland without much future planning to the road trip visitor traveling parts of the country.

For over a decade, Travel Ashland has been enacting that outdoor message and invitation to visitors to educate them on reasons to enjoy Ashland beyond the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, not just this year with their closure, that we will continue to do. As a community and as businesses, we have an opportunity to welcome, attract and build relationships with outdoor adventure travelers who are coming to Ashland.



Courtesy of Mt. Ashland



Photo by Sean Bagshaw Outdoor Exposure Photography

From our **trail stewardship** with partners like Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association and Ashland Woodland Trails Association, and **access to trails** as well as our **draw for cyclists** – road, gravel and mountain bikers along with being a **nationally recognized trail running town**, we attract year-round outdoor adventure travelers and have seen that growth.

Outfitters that run the rivers continue to see an increase year over year, despite the smoke-filled days of 2018 and clearer skies in 2019, by expanding their reach and continuing to deliver an authentic outdoor experience coupled with Ashland's culinary scene. Even in 2020 with COVID and fires, outfitters refined their services and practices to adapt.

Mt. Ashland has sustained itself through low snow years, making great strides with trail trimming and snow decks to cater to low snow. Meanwhile they have excelled in high snow years. Their capital campaign enabled the lodge to be fully renovated, with a new roof, new rental shop and continued maintenance to increase their infrastructure. For the 20-21 winter season they have successfully adapted their operations and protocols to provide a safe experience within COVID guidelines.

Ashland's walkability supports our climate action initiatives. As one of the top walkable towns in the country, Ashland's visitor base enjoys Ashland by exploring on foot and by bike. Ashland visitors are highly educated and therefore appreciate the stewardship of Ashland's natural resources.

Our partners: businesses, owners and employees of Ashland depend on Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber's role to effectively communicate, educate and inspire visitors through crisis, opportunity and periods of growth.

Tourism encompasses a full spectrum of jobs. Hotels, restaurants and attractions are supported by the work Travel Ashland does both in times of growth and in times of challenges. Retail businesses depend upon the visitor industry as the locals alone could not support them. However, we did see a major increase in local spending to support the retail industry in the 2020 Holiday shopping season.

Through valuable partnerships we foster alignment with our stakeholders, state agencies and industry.

We continue to improve people's lives through promoting and supporting a strong, sustainable economy.

Travel Ashland and Ashland Chamber serve a role only we possess. This is a very unique position in the community and business industry that allows us to create such valuable partnerships, lean on those in times of crisis and serve as a sounding board to a diversity of organizations, residents, visitors, members and private sector businesses.

Officially Designated Tourism Organizations and Alignment in Oregon:



Travel Ashland's **partnerships** are inherent to our success. We maximize and leverage exposure for Ashland as a major destination through strong cooperative efforts by sharing the message of the brand with partners and stakeholders while growing partnerships within the industry and fostering the growth of industry relations locally, regionally and statewide.

Industry Partnerships:

- **Private sector partners** include lodging, restaurants, wineries, attractions, retailers, outfitters, members of Ashland Chamber and beyond;
- **Oregon Tourism Commission dba. Travel Oregon** (statewide tourism)
- **Ride Oregon** – cycle tourism branch of Travel Oregon
- **RDMO's (Regional Destination Marketing Organizations)**
 - o **Central Oregon Visitors Association**
 - o **Travel Southern Oregon (formerly Southern Oregon Visitors Association)** Current Board Member and president : Katharine Cato, Travel Ashland Director. Membership provides opportunities for exposure at trade shows that market directly to tour operators and group coordinators. Membership results in creating itineraries and welcoming them to Ashland to experience the town while researching the amenities for their group. Many leads for travel writers come through this partnership channel.
 - o **ODA – Oregon Destination Association** – Board Member, Katharine Cato serves representing Southern Oregon in the statewide discussion on issues such as lodging taxes, funding, visitation trends
- **ORLA- Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association**

- **Regional DMO's (Destination Marketing Organizations):**
 - o Travel Medford,
 - o Discover Klamath
 - o Travel Grants Pass
- **OACVB- Oregon Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus**
- **Oregon Film and Television Office and Film Southern Oregon**
- **OTIC- Oregon Tourism Information Council**
- **OTTA- Oregon Tour and Travel Alliance**
- **NTA- National Tour Association**
- **IFWTW- International Food & Wine Travel Writers**
- **BATW- Bay Area Travel Writers**
- **Oregon State Parks and Recreation Scenic Bikeway Committee**
- **Federal Agencies:**
 - o **The Nature Conservancy**
 - o **Bureau of Land Management**
 - o **United States Forest Service**
 - o **ODOT-** with the construction of the Oregon Welcome Center completed in summer 2019, Travel Ashland played a key role in the opening and training of visitor information to staff. In partnership with Travel Southern Oregon. Now open it serves all north bound visitors with much needed travel information and welcoming.
- **We value our Local Partners and work with them to support them, collaborate and expand our success:** Jackson County – bicycle and pedestrian, roads and parks divisions; Ashland Parks and Recreation; Ashland Forest Resiliency Project (now AFAR); Ashland Independent Film Festival; Stay Ashland; Ashland Gallery Association; Britt Festival; Oregon Shakespeare Festival; Southern Oregon University; International Mountain Bike Association; Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association; Siskiyou Velo Club; Rogue Valley Growers and Crafters Market; Klamath Bird Observatory; Scienceworks Hands On Museum; Mt. Ashland Ski Area; Southern Oregon Winery Association and Rogue Valley Vintners.

Crisis Communication:

Ashland Chamber and Travel Ashland have longstanding partnerships with legislators, representatives, regional and statewide organizations that are key to be able to rely on during not only the impacts of wildfire the past few years but as we collectively navigated the impacts of COVID in 2020. These crises showed the strength of our partnerships as we worked forward towards solutions. In terms of fires, www.smokewiseashland.com launched as a result of collaboration of our Fire Prevention Task Force that supported businesses, employees and residents. Through the COVID crisis, Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber engage in regional and statewide strategy building weekly calls hearing and reporting on the impacts and how we move through the COVID crisis.



Photo by Sean Bagshaw Outdoor Exposure Photography

Our new research is showing an emerging diversity of visitor personas that will bring new growth with anticipated pent-up demand for travel and a positive impact on employment, revitalization and expansion.

The Ashland Chamber and Travel Ashland have always valued accurate data on the visitor economy to inform our marketing strategy. Knowing our market is changing with current COVID restrictions, there are also opportunities for Ashland embedded in this change.

Anecdotally, we saw many new visitors in 2019 and even more so in 2020, with a noticeable influx coming for the first time for the outdoors, recreation, wine tasting and our culinary scene. We have always been diversifying our visitor base to promote the many authentic experiences of Ashland, inviting the growing number of outdoor and culinary adventure travelers who are seeking Ashland out more each year. For more data on the emerging Outdoor traveler, see Outdoor Brand Pillars on Page 19.

Given the recent changes with COVID, resulting in closures and an inability to open the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, we, more so than other destinations, are delving deeper into exploring the core reasons and effects of these changes in the shifting demographics. We know OSF's vision the past few years has been to diversify their visitor to overcome challenges such as poor air quality and an aging audience.

We know that visitors have been and still are the gateway to business development and residential relocation.

Upon receiving funding in July of 2020 earmarked for research, Travel Ashland created a Request for Proposal to conduct a Visitor Research and Analysis Study. We interviewed four research firms. With the guidance of a steering committee of tourism industry leaders and Travel Ashland's committee, we chose to work with Destination Analysts out of San Francisco. We launched the Visitor Research and Analysis in November 2020. The study includes three surveys: Leisure Travelers in Key Markets (1500 results), In-depth Interviews of Key Personas that emerge from the Leisure Traveler quantitative data and a Survey of Owned Databases with local partners deploying the survey. The findings from this survey will guide the strategic marketing as well as the rebranding of Ashland's visitor messaging and tone.

Timeline for this study spans through the first quarter of 2021 with a Final Report due in early April to Travel Ashland.

The focus of this study is on the visitor and will influence the larger research project the Ashland Chamber and Travel Ashland are concurrently doing. These findings will be embedded in the overarching Economic Development analysis we are conducting that will analyze all sectors including the evolving regional visitor industries that are responding to these changes.

Below is an Update as of January 15th, 2021 from Destination Analysts provided solely for the purposes of this report.

Travel Ashland Visitor Research & Analysis Research Study Update as of January 15, 2021

As part of the comprehensive Travel Ashland Visitor Research & Analysis study, Destination Analysts is conducting the following research components:

- Survey of Leisure Travelers in Key Markets
- Survey of Owned Audiences
- In-Depth Interviews with Domestic Leisure Travelers
- Analysis of Secondary Data

The primary objectives of the Travel Ashland Visitor Research & Analysis—to identify and profile current and potential visitors to Ashland, as well as ultimately guide the organization’s strategic marketing and future branding efforts—are supported by several other goals:

- An exploration of traveler behaviors and motivations
- An analysis of key target personas: families, wine travelers, culinary travelers, outdoor adventurers, arts and culture travelers and younger travelers
- An exploration of the new seasonality that is driving travel consideration to Ashland
- An analysis of competitive markets and evaluation of new market potential
- Identification of new ways Travel Ashland can leverage the destination’s assets
- Analyze current, relevant secondary visitor data
- Assess the data collected to provide Travel Ashland with important insights to drive marketing decisions, strategic direction and ultimately a refresh of the Travel Ashland brand

For the remaining research components, data collection for the Survey of Owned Audiences is slated to begin the week of January 25.

The qualitative In-Depth Interviews with Domestic Leisure Travelers will begin on or around mid-February.

The Analysis of Secondary Data (from Destination Analysts’ *Coronavirus Travel Sentiment Index Study™* and *The State of the American Traveler™*) will occur as part of the analysis and development for the final report that will cover findings from the Survey of Leisure Travelers in Key Markets and In-Depth Interviews with Domestic Leisure Travelers. This final report will be sent at the end of March.

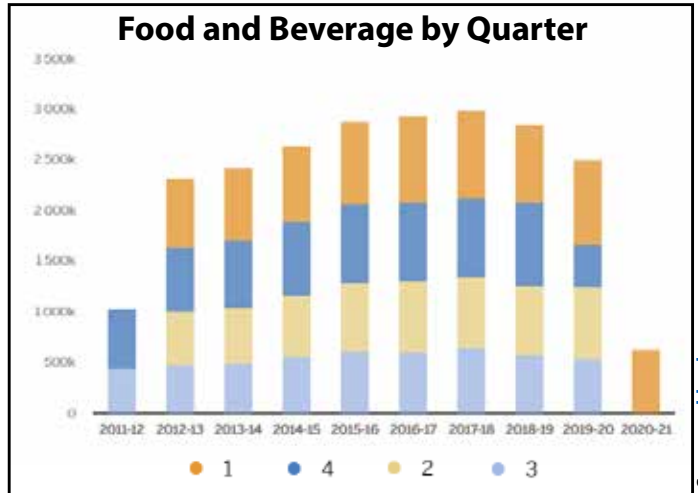
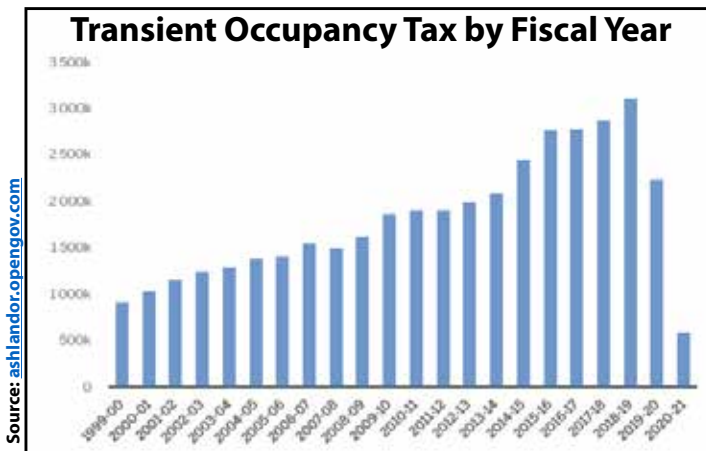
Existing Impacts of Tourism

Travel Ashland, since its inception thirty-eight years ago has collected industry knowledge through research and depending upon the need, plans accordingly, in collaboration with our business partners, the most effective marketing promotions to meet the demands we hear. This strengthens and validates our direction as well as expands our market reach. It is important to note in these times we have particular strength that we are nimble and flexible to react to market changes and constantly adapting our marketing efforts to reflect those trends. Travel Ashland annually analyzes the Food and Beverage tax collections and the Transient Occupancy Tax collections. We chart the data and look for strengths and weaknesses in seasonal fluctuations. This tells us when we need to promote and target areas that need focus.

Tourism remains a key driver to Ashland’s economy. Statewide, Oregon tourism is an \$12.8 billion industry that directly generates more than 117,500 jobs. Tourism generates \$592 million in state and local tax revenues. In Southern Oregon there are over 12,000 tourism related jobs.

In Ashland, over 3000 jobs are fueled by the visitor spanning Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Lodging and Restaurants. Employment, quality of life and the success of Ashland’s economy is directly dependent upon tourism. This can be shown not only from historical data with growth in the lodging and food & beverage tax revenues year over year but also through the growth of the number of tourism related business and jobs. Tourism has contributed to the increase of jobs, payroll and wages. Retail expansion and growth of local businesses along with the revitalization of the Historic Railroad district catering not only to a local but visitor clientele is fueled by a strong visitor base.

The hospitality industry provides full time and part time jobs for people, including students who can hold part time jobs enabling them to afford and obtain higher education.



The above data was sourced from ashland.or.opengov.com, updated as of January 11th, 2021. The above graphs reflect the most current data available including tax receipts collected through September 30th, 2020. Therefore these graphs do not reflect data or impacts between October 2020 and January 2021.

Noted in the charts above and below, the impacts on travel due to COVID restrictions and staying safe at home are clearly evident with the first and second quarters of 2020 showing significant impact to both the lodging and restaurant industries. Based on our dialogue with key local tourism industry leaders, fall of 2020 and the year as a whole resulted in higher revenues than expected for many businesses who projected losses of 80%+ finished the year stronger than originally forecasted in June of 2020.

Transient Occupancy Tax by Quarter	
Amount (\$)	Quarter Ending Date
1,215,870	9/30/19 (July/Aug/Sept)
597,296	12/31/19 (Oct/Nov/Dec)
244,266	3/31/20 (Jan/Feb/Mar)
192,571	6/30/20 (Apr/May/June)
19-20 Total: \$ 2,250,003	

Food and Beverage Tax by Quarter	
Amount (\$)	Quarter Ending Date
833,132	9/30/19 (June/Aug/Sept)
713,596	12/31/19 (Oct/Nov/Dec)
540,144	3/30/20 (Jan/Feb/Mar)
420,544	6/30/20 (Apr/May/June)
19-20 Total: 2,507,426	

Travel Ashland's Past Research Findings

- **There has been an inherent value for visitors in Ashland's downtown. This past research also concluded that the inherent value of the downtown was closely tied to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. With the recent closures, we have seen growth in properties outside of the downtown.** Visitors value the downtown lodging and proximity to our amenities. This underscores the importance of the commitment and investment to keep our downtown's physical structure and ambiance vibrant, well maintained and welcoming. Over the past two decades, we have conducted extensive research to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the geographic layout of our accommodations through BR&E (Business Retention and Expansion) surveys, ongoing visitor profile and lodging analysis studies that were conducted by Rebecca Reid, Independent Research consultant.
- **January – March has consistently had the greatest opportunity to grow with the lowest occupancy.** While we prioritize this quarter with targeted campaigns and promotions, we are very nimble to adjust as we have seen much needed promotion throughout the year, not just in the off season.
- **Spring and Summer travel can vary and are seeing market shifts.** Through our past research, results show variance in occupancy based on how each year unfolds whether summer travel is affected by wildfires, poor air quality, intentional avoidance of the busy season and now COVID. With the current shift towards a new, first time visitor, we are researching emerging trends taking into account new demographics, spending and travel preferences.
- Over the past decade, we have seen increasing trends such as the **last-minute traveler**, with a shorter decision-making window that affects how we market to them, offering incentives to choose Ashland. Last minute decisions are often made using online tools hence why we must constantly be in front of the visitor, digitally, directly and in print.
- **Wildfires and poor air quality have affected travel.** We saw this even more so with the devastating Almeda and Obenchain fires affecting perception of visiting Ashland. Travelers want transparency, timely and accurate information when planning their trips. **2019 Travel Southern Oregon's Wildfire and Visitor Perception Study** As a follow up to the summer smoke filled days of 2018, Travel Southern Oregon, along with regional partners such as SORCE, Travel Ashland and the Coraggio Group embarked on a survey for visitors to see the impact of the wildfire smoke on their travel plans, behavior and outlook. Travel Southern Oregon's Wildfire & Visitor Perception Study was released in April 2019. The visitor study, which begun back in October of 2018, presents tourism partners with valuable data from recent summer visitors about the way wildfire smoke has impacted the visitor perception of Southern Oregon as a travel destination. The findings were heartening with 85% of respondents planning to visit Southern Oregon in the future. The results showed that there is visitor interest in shoulder seasons, the ways smoke impacts vacation plans and much more. There were also a major difference in the type of visitor comparing Klamath Basin and Crater Lake to the Rogue Valley and Ashland visitor. View full report here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FaRvC80CNe9trWIq_AfEH0JGqMymenUR/view .



Photo by Sean Bagshaw Outdoor Exposure Photography

Who is Travel Ashland and what do they do?

For thirty-eight years, the City of Ashland and the community have relied on Travel Ashland (Ashland's official Destination Marketing Organization) through an annual grant, to promote Ashland as a unique year-round, travel destination, to visitors traveling from more than 50 miles away and those staying overnight.

Travel Ashland's work continues through using dollars received through the grant and fostering strategic partnerships with public and private sectors to promote and engage the tourism industry and visitors. In 2020, we began a much needed, robust Visitor Research and Analysis Study to look at the evolving Ashland visitor, changing trends and how we can best leverage our assets. The goal remains to grow business in times of lower occupancy.

The goal is to deliver an unmatched travel experience that engages the visitor, encourages repeat visitation, converts visitors into potential residents and services groups, tours and conferences. Attracting outdoor travelers, culinary and food enthusiasts and those with cultural interests, Ashland has become a desirable destination whose amenities are fueled by the visitor population.

Travel Ashland has significantly increased the **TOT and F&B** revenues to nearly 3 million EACH year with a ½ million dollar increase alone in just three years. Tourism revenues **support businesses** in retail, lodging, food and beverage, attractions and subindustries who serve those businesses. Though we saw an impact of COVID due to travel and safety restrictions to flatten the curve and stay safe, we saw a resiliency and responded accordingly to the visitor who continued to come



explore Ashland, as a rural destination with world-class amenities such as our wine industry and outdoor experiences. With proven pent-up demand seen across the world by travel research firms, such as Destination Analysts, once the population is vaccinated and it is deemed safe to travel again, we believe our visitor base will again grow and stimulate the economy, but they will be a younger, more diverse visitor base.

Travel Ashland produces, **manages and distributes the tools that visitors use to make their travel plans such as Travel Ashland's social media channels on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.** Travel Ashland's website, www.travelashland.com guides visitors effectively within the site to serve them the most relevant information in the fewest clicks in mobile, tablet and desktop versions.

Travel Ashland's Visitor Guide showcases tools such as a calendar, maps, Itinerary ideas, reasons to make Ashland their next travel destination. The digital version of the Guide can be downloaded for free. The **Ashland Map Guide** provides wayfinding and access to Ashland's recreation and outdoors including Lithia Park, the Ashland Watershed, the City of Ashland and Parks, Crater Lake National Park, Table Rocks, the Mountain Lakes, and the Cascade Siskiyou Scenic Bikeway. Free digital version available.

Travel Ashland **manages the visitor center and Plaza information kiosk** serving tens of thousands of visitors year-round, with the exception of 2020 due to COVID. We operate the **Travel Ashland Advisory Committee** made up of tourism industry representatives from lodging, restaurant, outdoor outfitters, wine industry, retail, theatre and attractions.

This advisory committee assesses each season's visitation and provides input to planning campaigns and programs that Travel Ashland carries out. Travel Ashland attracts, promotes, services and supports **groups, tours and conferences** through collaborative partnerships, with the exception of years with impacts due to COVID. We serve as a **sounding board** to the tourism industry, members and businesses, providing support, guidance and facilitating opportunities to grow together depending upon the issue, the partner or timing.

Travel Ashland and the Chamber **produce major events** including the Ashland Culinary Festival, the Festival of Light Celebration, the Fourth of July and the Children’s Halloween Celebration, with the exception of years we could not due to COVID. Travel Ashland also supports many **community events**. Travel Ashland and the Chamber provide **educational workshops** and seminars as well.

Tourism promotion is a **key element of the City of Ashland Economic Development Strategy** and is the front door for economic development inquiries.

Travel Ashland Leadership:

The Travel Ashland Advisory Committee (see pg. 35) is made up of members from different areas of the tourism industry from lodging, restaurant, outdoors, culinary, wineries, retail, theatre and attractions. Under the advisory direction of the committee and Chair, now in his 3rd year, Hiram Towle, General Manager of Mt. Ashland Ski Area, Katharine Cato, Director, executes the strategic direction, promotions, campaigns, project and programs. This work continues to occur despite layoffs and staff reduction due to COVID impacts and budget.

Hiram Towle
*General Manager for
Mt. Ashland Ski Area
Travel Ashland Chair*



Katharine Cato
*Director
Travel Ashland*



The Ashland Brand

The Ashland Brand style and messaging are the foundation for the story we tell. We refine it each year with fresh messaging, images and content. We continue to evolve each year with a sophisticated, yet approachable, current look and feel to appeal to a visitor to choose Ashland as their travel destination. The Ashland Brand showcases the discovery of each season and the niche interests that attract targeted audiences.

Update 2021: Following our Visitor Research and Analysis Study, we will be using these actionable findings to launch into a new strategic direction and rebranding for Ashland's visitor. The brand below has been a successful pathway forward to expand Ashland's destination and draw. With changing times, visitor trends, demographics, challenges and opportunities, we feel it is time to rebrand and refresh the Ashland brand, though it has served Ashland's tourism industry and partners well.

Logo description:



A trip to Ashland is not just a single experience. It's the coming together of many extraordinary people, places and events to create a city that is unique to every single person who comes to visit. "As you like it", while alluding to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for which Ashland is best known, truly speaks to multitude of choices and lets our audience know that, here, they will experience the exact version of Ashland that they love most.

Brand Statement:

At the convergence of the Cascade and Siskiyou Mountains, where forested alpine peaks give way to some of the most fertile and bio-diverse lands to have ever been shaped by geologic wonder and the hands of time, lies a town that's just as unique and authentic as the terrain that surrounds it. Nowhere else do so many experiences- from performing, visual and culinary arts, to education, wellness and outdoor recreation – combine to create something so inspiring. While others may try, there's only one authentic Ashland, Oregon. (there are 31 in the United States!)

The pillars remain the foundation to the Ashland brand – culinary, outdoors and culture.

Culture

With COVID, destinations worldwide had to respond, adapt and pivot towards new travel trends and restrictions that affected who they welcomed and how they traveled there. Ashland, compared to many other destinations, saw the greatest change in its visitor base of 350,000 with the temporary omission of a third of its visitors, who traditionally come to see plays at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Even in recent years, Ashland had started to see a preview of those changes due to wildfires, smoke and poor air quality. **Culture and theatre have been the historical reason approximately 120,000 visitors seek Ashland as their travel destination.** Over the past decade the Ashland visitor has been evolving, with a declining OSF audience that is aging and a growing number of outdoor adventure and culinary travelers that skew younger.

Biggest shift:

Historically, a third of this visitor base has been playgoers to OSF which is why their profile has been an integral part of the demographic and behavior driving the Ashland visitor as well as shaping how visitor related businesses cater to them. Their traits include staying 5 days, seeing 3+ plays, traveling over 100 miles, with incomes over \$100K, highly educated from CA, OR and WA and a median age of 55 – 74.

With 85 days of wildfire smoke in 2018, OSF moved or canceled 26 performances and in their response to anticipated poor air quality in 2019, chose to retrofit their outdoor performances to the Ashland High School therefore limiting capacity to 400 down from 1200 seats, though they had been running at approximately 80% capacity in recent years. In 2020, due to COVID, OSF did not hold performances for the season, forcing a massive acknowledgement to businesses dependent upon the OSF playgoer that they must diversify.

There are many other cultural reasons visitors are drawn to Ashland. Through our current Visitor Research and Analysis Study, we are looking at how the cultural traveler is navigating Ashland beyond OSF and engaging deeper into Ashland’s amenities with perhaps more time and a looser itinerary without a play schedule.

Performing arts beyond OSF – Conversely, the Oregon Cabaret Theatre benefited from being an indoor venue in 2018 and 2019 providing steady sell out performances. OSF has been the platform for many other theatres to grow, some of which attract both visitors and locals.

Heritage – With a growing interest in visitors seeking out historic locations and trips guided by heritage, there is a warranted avenue for Ashland to explore in attracting more heritage travelers with alignment from regional partners.

Music – With our proximity between Portland and San Francisco, we have the ability to attract more musicians and performances that create a visitor draw, once COVID restrictions are lifted. As we continue to grow in notoriety for music, we are looking at opportunities to partner more with entities such as Britt, Oregon Center for the Arts and Rogue Valley Symphony.

Visual arts - Ashland galleries, artists, markets and the creative community draw visitors from all over the world to Ashland. Through our Visitor Research and Analysis, we are assessing how closely related they are to the OSF playgoer or if they have their own demographics and reasons for visiting.

Shopping – Visitors are drawn to Ashland for an authentic, shopping experience, forming relationships with independently owned shops and store owners who create retail experiences for them that are memorable. Given the changing visitor demographics, we have been and continue to assess how it is affecting retail trends in product demand and spending.

Culinary

The number of culinary travelers, wine enthusiasts and agritourists have increased year over year, even in 2020, being drawn to our emerging wine country, award-winning chefs and food artisans coupled with the unique destination of Ashland.

This segment of our visitor base ranges in age, demographics and markets on the West coast, primarily the Bay Area, Northern California and lately including Portland, Seattle, Eugene and Bend.

We have observed younger travelers and their travel patterns to be year-round spanning the four seasons. We have observed their level of comfort traveling and seeking outdoor dining experiences this past summer as restaurants have responded creatively abiding by lower dine-in capacity from COVID restrictions, providing expanded outdoor seating options.

Culinary events, as they have occurred in the past, have driven visitation in the off-season and throughout the year. Regionally, with the formation of Rogue Valley Vintners and Rogue Valley Wine Country identity, signifying southern Oregon as a wine destination synonymous with a southern Oregon vacation, there is an anticipated trajectory of growth in attracting more wine enthusiasts to our region of all ages.

Another regional example is the new Rogue Valley Food Trail, launched in 2020, a collaborative effort with Travel Oregon, Travel Southern Oregon, Travel Ashland and local partners that showcases itineraries highlighting agritourism – farms, food artisans and onsite experiences throughout the Valley.

Travel Ashland has worked with founders of Ashland On A Plate since its inception, serving on the Advisory committee to collaborate and collectively promote Ashland’s culinary scene. As a DMO, our role is to inspire travelers and connect them to experiences. We support Ashland On a Plate’s efforts to create curated events for niche culinary audiences and are excited to see what we can continue to build upon together.

With our Visitor Research and Analysis Study in 2020-2021, we are delving deeper into exploring who the culinary traveler is, as an evolving foundation of Ashland’s future visitor base, given the changing trends due to COVID-19 and decline of the playgoer.





Culinary Branding statement:

Explore Ashland's thriving culinary scene with over 100 restaurants, talented chefs and innovative restaurateurs who incorporate produce and products from local farmers and food artisans. Discover coffee shops, farms and taste delicious specialty foods made by local artisans who take pride in their sustainable practices. Sip and taste local at Ashland's micro- breweries and distinguished wineries that are gaining national recognition. (Pre COVID and perhaps post. Culinary events abound and are a reason to visit year- round with events such as the Ashland Culinary Festival, Taste of Ashland, Oregon Chocolate Festival (Virtual in 2021), Oregon Honey Festival, Brews and Boogie all of which Travel Ashland partners with to promote.

Travel Ashland's work has spanned from producing the **Ashland Culinary Festival** each November, which has produced four *Iron Chef Oregon* winners and engaged the entire culinary scene of Southern Oregon to showcasing **Ashland Culinary Month (February)** and **Restaurant Week** bringing attention to Ashland culinary scene in a typically slower occupancy month. **By hosting culinary travel writers and influencers, the Ashland culinary scene is being noticed** and written about through multiple media channels and gaining more followers on social media channels.

Outdoors

Ashland has always attracted outdoor travelers to experience its trails, mountains, lakes and rivers. Given Ashland's unique location at the convergence of the Cascade and Siskiyou Mountain ranges and proximity to the Pacific Crest Trail, Ashland is an ideal basecamp for adventure.

With the backdrop of the Ashland Watershed, Mt. Ashland and accessibility to trails and regional terrain, Ashland has been growing as an outdoor destination in recent years. What sets Ashland apart from destinations such as Bend is that Ashland is a mountain town with unmatched cultural and culinary amenities such as Rogue Valley Wine Country, over 100 restaurants and the arts. By attracting the responsible outdoor adventure traveler, we sustain Ashland's quality of life and thus attract a future, active workforce.

In Summer, 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic, new visitors came to Ashland. They were younger and more active travelers. With the past visitor economy comprised of a third of the visitor base attending plays at OSF, their characteristics were traditional, older, loyal and predictable with long-term booking windows. With OSF closed in 2020, many businesses, partners and our organization saw more younger visitors, many here for the first time for new reasons such as recreation, exploring the outdoors, tasting wine and seeking culinary experiences. Their travel plans spanned from short term weekend trips to Ashland without much future planning to the road trip visitor traveling parts of the country.

For over a decade, Travel Ashland has been enacting that outdoor message and invitation to visitors to educate them on reasons to enjoy Ashland beyond the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, not just this year with their closure, that we will continue to do. As a community and as businesses, we have an opportunity to welcome, attract and build relationships with outdoor adventure travelers who are coming to Ashland.

Outdoor Branding statement:

From Ashland's walkable downtown and 93-acre, Lithia Park to more adventurous pursuits on the Rogue and other nearby rivers and lakes, including the Ashland Watershed, Mt. Ashland, and along the Pacific Crest Trail, Ashland's outdoor adventures offer something for everyone. Whether you are a pro-mountain biker, marathon runner, adventure cyclist or taking your first hike or ride with your family, Ashland offers four seasons of **natural beauty** and **adventures**.

Our outdoor partnerships and work to showcase Ashland's outdoors include:

- With partners like **Mt. Ashland and the Ashland Forest Resiliency project along with Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association, Ashland Devo and Ashland Woodland Trails Association**, Ashland's trails and assets are maintained through effective stewardship practices and encouraging responsible recreation. These assets and easy access along with little "ego" enable Ashland to grow as an unmatched outdoor destination for runners, hikers and riders.
- **Travel Ashland serves as the Lead Proponent, and drove the effort to get the official designation for the Cascade Siskiyou Scenic Bikeway (CSSB), one of 14 Scenic Bikeways in Oregon and was designated by the Oregon State Parks and Recreation commission on June 25th, 2015.** Of the thousands of proposed miles, the Scenic Bikeway committee reviews, less than half is recommended. The route begins at Garfield Park on East Main, travels up the Green Springs Hwy 66, over Hyatt and Howard Prairie and back down Dead Indian Memorial Road to Garfield Park, totaling 52 miles. The Scenic bikeway has seen an increase in ridership. When weather is conducive, The Up and Down Bike Event each July commemorates the route welcoming over 100 riders. Official signage has been installed along the route to create awareness for riders.
- As the Destination Marketing Organization, Travel Ashland continues the effort on creating more **Bike Friendly Businesses** and awareness for the positive economic impact of cycle tourism which brings \$400 million to Oregon and nearly \$40 million to Southern Oregon annually (Travel Oregon). Partnerships include Oregon State Parks and Recreation, Ashland Parks and Recreation, Jackson County and Ride Oregon in this effort.
- **Ashland's visitor is diversifying and there is new data on the outdoor traveler – the mountain biker.** Mountain biking is one of the fastest growing sports in the country and is the current number one user of public lands in the country. The average mountain biker spends \$491 for a weekend visit to a destination. (source: IMBA) Ashland is currently shuttling over 3,000 riders per year up into the Ashland Watershed.
- **In a 2021 study conducted with Travel Oregon in collaboration with Oregon State Parks and Recreation, Office of Outdoor Recreation, Oregon Fish and Wildlife and Earth Economics**, it was found that in 2019 the outdoor industry accounted for 224,000 full time and part time jobs; \$9.3 billion in wages and compensation and \$15.6 billion in spending included trip related spending on recreation type trips and equipment. The collective goal remains accessibility and sustainability of our natural resources and lands that provide recreation.



Regional and Statewide Tourism Programs

The Travel Ashland director, Katharine Cato serves on the Travel Southern Oregon Board of Directors and is the current President. Travel Ashland has had a continued presence at the regional tourism table since its inception.

After decades of deliberation Siskiyou Welcome Center opened for Labor Day Weekend 2019 with a regional gala opening including partners from around the region with collaborative efforts from Travel Oregon, Travel Southern Oregon and local DMO's and attraction. It is open daily until 7pm in the summer and 5pm in the winter. It is staffed by employees of Travel Southern Oregon and managed by TSO under contract with Travel Oregon. The newly

constructed welcome center is located at the ODOT Siskiyou Safety Rest Area along the northbound I-5 corridor, near mile post 12 south of Ashland. The welcome center serves as a respite for travelers coming from the Siskiyou Summit, the highest pass on I-5 between Canada and Mexico. Additionally, it will provide an opportunity for visitors to learn about and be inspired by Oregon. The center will be staffed by experts offering concierge-style guest service. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Siskiyou Welcome Center operated daily through March 2020 then shutdown temporarily. Based on Travel Oregon's goal of educating the visitor to travel responsibly and when appropriate Travel Oregon opened 3 of the state welcome centers including the Siskiyou Welcome Center to serve the incoming visitation to Oregon.

Oregon State Welcome Centers Travel Oregon operates now eight staffed **welcome centers** at key entry points around the state.. These welcome centers are an essential part of a visitor's experience and provide in-person engagement with Travel Oregon's brand. They are able to offer this efficient and extensive program thanks to critical partnerships with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, ODOT, Oregon Travel Experience, Seaside Visitors Bureau, Port of Portland, and the Port of Morrow.

OREGON GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON TOURISM Each year, outside of COVID, Travel Oregon hosts the Oregon Governor's Conference on Tourism in a different part of the state. The 2018 conference, held in Bend, offered three days of networking and workshops for more than 450 attendees, exhibitors, sponsors and industry experts. Travel Oregon is looking at how to return to producing this conference when it is safe again to gather.

Image and Video

Travel Ashland is the one entity in Ashland that responds to all media inquiries and provides images of Ashland upon request that are published in stories, coverage and articles. Ashland Chamber and Travel Ashland contract with local photographers and influencers to continually refresh the portrayal of Ashland's experiences, seasons and amenities that are then published through our digital channels, publications, material and social channels. In Spring 2018, we contracted with a local photographer to create "moments of Ashland" that included a family in the park, shopping at the Farmer's market, eating at local eateries, the friendly vibe Ashland with young folks eating together and wine tasting. By creating these scenes, young visitors can see themselves here and are more likely to visit.

In 2019, we captured "Ashland Fall moments" with some of the members from the cast of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's production of Hairspray. The goal was to develop content for social channels, publications, the new Travel Ashland website in addition to promotions. The photos showcase diversity, the Railroad District, shopping, dining and happy people. We worked with Illustrated Sandwich production company to gain both footage and imagery following along their journey through Ashland as they enjoyed Noble, Peerless Restaurant, Alchemy and Hearsay.

Also, in 2019 and 2020, we strengthened our connection with our outdoor partners such as Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association, Mt. Ashland and others to build up the content and assets we have that showcase our trails, active lifestyles and outdoor adventures experiences. **The culmination of this can be seen on our social channels as well as our websites. We will continue to expand our content to include the various outdoor experiences and also portray the new post-pandemic world we are entering into and how to best exemplify that.**

The library of b-roll, footage and finished videos Travel Ashland and Ashland Chamber produce continues to grow to meet the demand of how we sell Ashland to the visitor but also how we build the brand of Ashland's seasons and promote major events. Whether it is 5 second, 15 second, or 2 minutes videos, we have the capacity by contracting with talented partners to help us deliver the Ashland brand. Housing the most current videos on our site to further inspire visitors to plan their trip is our ever-arching goal.



Travel Ashland's current visitor study will result in actionable information, leading us in a revised strategic direction and rebranding in 2021. By promoting tourism, we contribute to improving lives through a strong, sustainable local economy.

Events

Festival of Light – annual holiday season event to attract visitors

- **Update 2020:** Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we could not hold the 28th annual Festival of Light parade or festivities. Given the challenges of 2020, we pursued the lighting of the town through both private and public donations and sponsorships that enabled the town to be beautiful for the holidays and help bring magic and healing to many in our community. We welcomed visitors and locals to safely and responsibly shop and support restaurants offering to-go, curbside and delivery.
- **In 2019:** “Find your Holiday Spirit in Ashland”- 27th annual event drew over 15,000 attendees for the Grand Illumination. Kicking off the day after Thanksgiving through New Year's, this promotion's success results in increased business year over year each December in retail, lodging and restaurants and provides a unique holiday destination.
- **Festival of Light** invites families and the regional traveler to Ashland during the months of November through January. With lodging packages, events and celebrations, Ashland attracts visitors not only from Southern Oregon, but from Northern California as well as Central Oregon. Welcoming over 15,000 people for the event and thousands through the month of December, the Ashland Chamber & Travel Ashland organize the festivities the day after Thanksgiving including entertainment on the Plaza, Santa's Parade, the Grand Illumination and Santa's workshop.
- In addition to the kickoff event, this program includes caroling on the weekends, the installation and hanging of **refurbished, historic lanterns, wreaths, snowflakes, decoration and lighting** of the Plaza and around town, including Hwy 66 to create a welcoming, holiday ambiance.
- **The Holiday Gift Guide (formerly the Coupon Book)** promotes our retail sector, shopping and dining locally in Ashland while creating awareness for Ashland's retailers, in 2014 we created, sold and published a sophisticated branding piece that had 48 coupons good at local businesses, told the story of Ashland's holidays and Festival of Light and showcased the winter season and upcoming events. 8,500 copies were printed, and all copies were distributed and utilized by visitors, locals and businesses. In 2015, we successfully grew the publication with more coupons and wider distribution. In 2017, it was direct mailed to 7,500 targeted residents and 1,000 were distributed to retailers, hotels and motels. This generated an increase in local business. In 2018, 25,000 were direct mailed to residents in Grants Pass, Ashland and Medford. In 2019, 25,000 were direct mailed to Ashland residents while over 5000 were distributed to local retailers, high visitor and local traffic areas, hotels and partners.
- **Walking in a Window Wonderland** – to support our local retailers and encourage local shopping, the Ashland Chamber created the Walking in a Window Wonderland promotion. Over 30 retailers compete with their window decorations to win various categories that locals and visitors can nominate them for through the ballots that are available at each participating business. Maps of the participating businesses are printed and available online. This provides wayfinding for shopper and encourages them to shop local and engage with their local retail sector. Over 30 retailers compete with their window decorations to win various categories that locals and visitors can nominate them for through the ballots that are available at each participating business. Maps of the participating businesses are printed and available online. This provides wayfinding for shopper and encourages them to shop local and engage with their local retail sector as well as magical windows creating a charming visitor experience.

Strategic Initiative: Elevate Ashland’s notoriety in the culinary world through: Amplifying Ashland as a year-round culinary destination and wine vacation destination in the Rogue Valley. Promoting Ashland as home to four Iron Chef Oregon winners.

13th annual Ashland Culinary Festival 2019 Celebrating Southern Oregon’s food, drink, talent and creativity

Travel Ashland, with the Ashland Chamber, promotes Ashland as a year- round paradise with an award-winning culinary scene, rich culture and epic outdoors. The Ashland Culinary Festival began in 2007 to showcase the bounty of Southern Oregon during the fall, to increase visitation after OSF closes, inviting culinary locals and visitors to taste, enjoy and learn about all things culinary.

- **Update 2020:** We were not able to hold the 2020 (what would have been the 14th annual event) in November 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Instead, we collaborated with partners to create virtual options such as an online cooking class, Facebook live events including past Top Chefs, local restaurants owners and mixologists sharing their recipes. Looking forward, we will assess as to if we are able to return to producing this scale of an event or diversifying resources to broaden the culinary reach more so throughout each season.
- Over the past 12 years, it has grown to encompass four days of a dynamic destination festival. The **Top Chef Dinner** honors the legacy of talented chefs that have won the **Top chef competition** (where 12 chefs compete each year for Top chef honor) in past years. Four of these top chefs have gone on to take the Iron Chef Oregon title at the Bite of Oregon’s Iron Chef Competition in Portland. This elevates Ashland not only state-wide but nationally in terms of what types of Chefs we produce here and underscores Ashland as a culinary destination.
- The **Mixology competition** provides a platform for bartenders to show their skills and build camaraderie while showcasing local and ingredients used to make the specialty cocktail. As a member organization, the Ashland Chamber alongside Travel Ashland supports the growth of the food and beverage industry not only through this festival but through workshops, conferences and providing a venue such as this event to network and partner. Over 12 bartenders competed. The largest attendance ever occurred in 2019 welcoming over 400 people. **Top Mixologist 2019: Jordan Shepard-McGuire, Larks Kitchen and Cocktails.**
- At the heart of the event, the **Top Chef competition** puts the spotlight on local chefs that work hard year- round welcoming thousands of visitors and locals alike. It gives the restaurants an opportunity to share small bites from their menu as well as gain exposure through the many channels of promotion. We also see restaurateurs discovering new wines to add to their menu or new artisans to collaborate with. The local farms and their contributions make the ingredient table that the chefs use truly abundant and interesting for the audience to see how they incorporate the produce to compliment the secret ingredient. **Top Chef 2019: Billy Buscher (Top Chef 2012) of Larks Kitchen & Cocktails**
- The **workshops** provide culinary education with something new each year. This year’s workshops included Biodynamic – Organic Wine Education, Texas Beef Brisket, Winter and Dried Fruit Desserts and CBD infused Bitters.
- Southern Oregon is best exemplified through the **vendors** that surround the room. Restaurants share their samples, food artisans provide holiday gift ideas, award-winning wineries, breweries and distilleries educate guests on their practices. Over 40 vendors attended and sold at this festival.



- This event, that attracts over 3000+ each year is not only measured by how many visitors come from around the west coast but rather how many people it engages. The power of partnership and collaboration that delivers a collective impact to our local economy is felt not only in those four days but throughout the year. That is why we take great pride in producing this event each year.

Digital Channels



Travel Ashland’s social channels have become even more important throughout the impacts of the pandemic. Reaching new audiences and continuing to broaden our reach and number of followers by engaging photography, showcasing partners and sharing a collective message to inspire visitors to love and visit Ashland responsibly has enabled growth despite the variance in travel sentiment. Followers are fans that dream and plan to visit Ashland either in the near or far future.

Our effective social media and digital plan is crucial in delivering relevant information and inspiration towards the seasonality of Ashland and new reasons to visit – primarily through 2020, the outdoors and expansive culinary and wine scene.

Our strategy has included “takeovers’ by widely known influencers infusing our channels with their imagery and voice, along with enter to win contests, audience created content such as images and videos showcasing their experiences and compelling content, we continue to grow exposure for Ashland. We leveraged the audiences of travel writers and influencers to grow our followers. These social channels drive increased traffic to our website promoting the destination of Ashland.

Update: In 2020 to conservatively retain our social media presence, we contracted with social media manager Lanessa Pierce, (What to Do in Southern Oregon, Travel Southern Oregon) to post for both Ashland Chamber and Travel Ashland every other day following a social media plan established by staff that she carries out.

Ashland Chamber (@AshlandChamberOregon)

Facebook: 3480 followers (12% growth)

Instagram: 1273 followers (49% growth)

Travel Ashland (@TravelAshland)

Facebook: 2119 followers (13% growth)

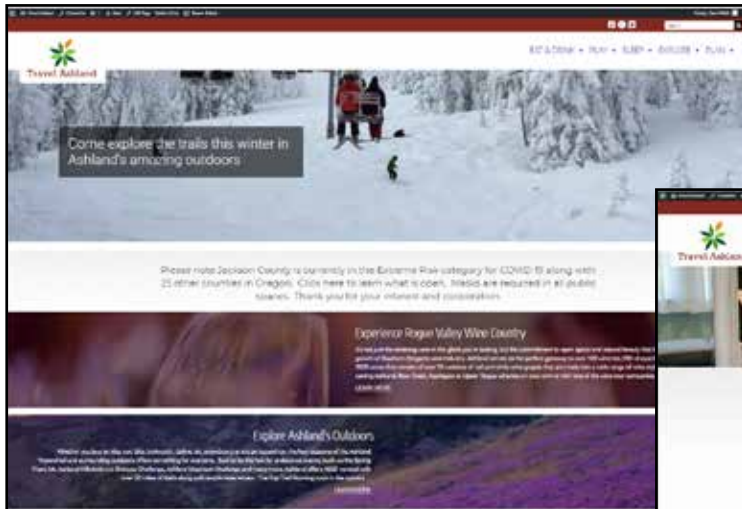
Instagram: 2,872 followers (32% growth)

Ashland Culinary Festival (@AshlandCulinaryFest)

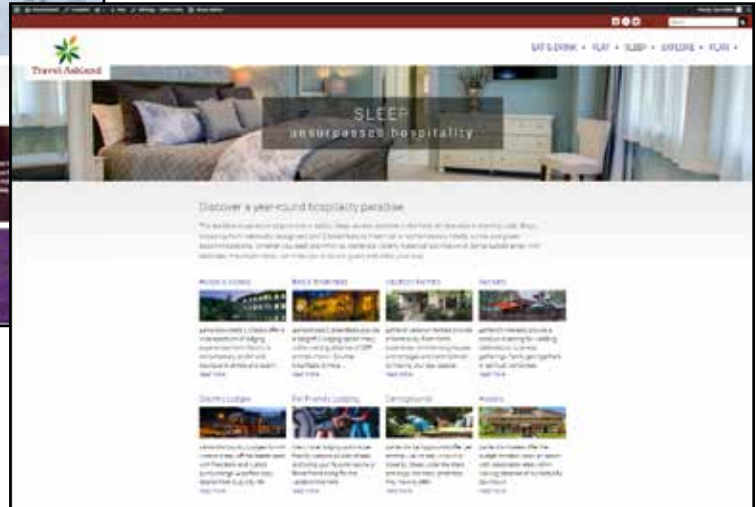
Facebook Page: 1,703 followers (2020 event cancelled, kept strong following)

Instagram: 1,207 followers

Launched February 2020: www.travelashland.com



The new www.travelashland.com site launched in February of 2020, just ahead of the significant increase in online demand for information during the pandemic lockdown.



The new site provides a quality user experience for the visitor seeking information on Ashland. With a variety of videos on the homepage showcasing each season. Featured partners, stories, travel planning, tool, news stories, fresh content and imagery provide an inspiring, informative virtual visitor resource.

Sections include:

EAT & DRINK (farms, wineries, restaurants, breweries, artisans and agri-tourism)

PLAY (winter recreation, trails, water sports, wellness, exploring)

SLEEP (hotels, vacation rentals, campgrounds, B&B's, etc.)

EXPLORE (culture – music, performing and visual arts, entertainment)

PLAN (travel planning tools, news stories, industry resources, etc.)

Aside from our digital channels, the need for a new, robust, visitor focused website was evident to be able to create an entire visitor experience that delivered on the messaging in our promotions. Travelashland.com is where all traffic is driven to. Hence the development of the new site. Demand for print is still very strong and continues to grow based on the demographic of our visitor base. While visitors find information online, they still desire to be inspired by our print publications, by requesting and using both.

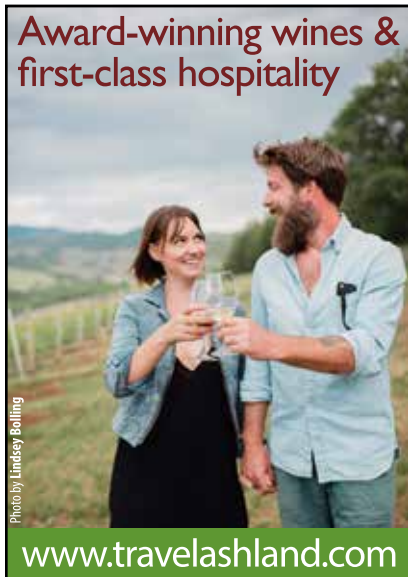
Campaigns and Results

Strategic Initiative: Continue to broaden our reach into new markets to attract new audiences for new reasons therefore diversifying the reasons visitors come to Ashland. In March 2020, promotion paused to responsibly abide by travel restrictions and lockdown due to the pandemic. Key West Coast Drive markets continue to be Northern California, Bay Area, Eugene to Redding, Portland, Bend and Seattle. Travel Ashland looks forward to returning to the marketplace with a refreshed branding and messaging that will result from our current visitor study exploring new and potential visitors and markets.

What is an Impression? Sometimes called a view or an ad view, is a term that refers to the point in which an ad is viewed once by a visitor, or displayed once on a **web page**. The number of impressions of an advertisement is determined by the number of times the particular page is located and loaded.

Below are examples of campaigns throughout the year that amplify each season.

Fall and Winter Campaigns



Travel Ashland fall and winter campaigns showcase the colors and adventure of fall leading up to the Ashland Culinary Festival and Festival of Light typically in November. Targeting the outdoor traveler and the wine/culinary traveler, the message is to enjoy Ashland’s sunshine, access to amazing terrain and award-winning wines in a casual setting. These promotions have supported increased occupancy in the Fall and Winter months, year over year. For 2020, marketing was paused to reflect the travel advisories due to the pandemic. Below is the example of Fall 2019 during the reporting fiscal year.

AAA/VIA ad campaigns reached a combined 8 million readers and activated over 1800 leads. Seasonal campaigns with ad placements in AAA/VIA publications target Northern California, Northern Utah, Nevada, Oregon, Phoenix and Idaho. Each lead is responded to in a timely manner with a current Visitor Guide.

NW Travel Fall Campaign reached the greater Pacific Northwest, Seattle and Olympic Peninsula.

Results:

Northwest Travel & Life Digital Content Network (DCN) Results October 2019

Newsletter	Date	Open Rate	Click Thru
October 2019	10/29/19	20.3%	1.7%

Banner Ads	Impressions
October 2019	922,286

Social Media	Date Boosted	Reach	Engagement	Link Clicks
October 2019	10/30/19	8,356	157	142

- Newsletter ran on Tuesday, October 8, 2019.
- Very high number of banner ad impressions.
- Excellent reach and engagement on the social media ad

Ashland Culinary Month Campaign

Ashland Culinary Month encompasses all things culinary throughout February with participation from over 50 partners such as wineries, restaurants, lodging and theatres offering specials and an enter to win a night out. The goal of Culinary Month is to amplify Ashland and Rogue Valley Wine country, winery events, culinary classes, dinner series and the thriving culinary scene for regional visitors while continuing momentum from the Ashland Culinary

Festival from November by highlighting the Top Chefs and Mixologists. Each restaurant provides gift certificates to participate and those are what folks can enter to win by dining at one of the participating restaurants. Restaurants have reported the promotion generated business they would not otherwise have enjoyed this time of year. **We saw an increase in F&B tax in February 2019 that underscores the value of this promotion.**

Update: While we conducted Ashland Culinary Month in February 2020, below is an example of the 2019 promotion. For 2021, due to the restrictions on outside dining, Travel Ashland decided to postpone the promotion until restaurants were able to offer more dining options. We commend our restaurants for participating in the Rogue Food Unites project that is providing much needed nourishment to those who encountered loss due to the Almeda and Obenchain fires.

SacBee Culinary Month Campaign:

Results:

- Demographic: Adults over 21, Sacramento and surrounding 25 miles
- E-Blast deployed January 31st, 2019
- 50,000 emails sent; #26,861 opens; 53.73% open rate (unheard of! Great results!); 1381 clicks; 2.76% CTR

KOIN NEWS Culinary Month promotion results reaching the greater Portland Market:

KOIN TV Commercials Schedule:

- 71 television commercials
- Commercial schedule delivered 1,458,948 Impressions
- Eye On the Northwest Segment
- Segment delivered 41,806 Impressions

KOIN.com Digital Schedule for Culinary Festival:

- 300x250 Video Ad = 115,006 Impressions
- Homepage Takeover on 1/25/19 = 139,711 Impressions

Total Deliverables:

- 71 Commercial Views
- 1x Eye On The Northwest Segment
- 254,717 Digital Impressions
- 2,232 Click Thru's to Travel Ashland website
- 0.88% Click Thru Rate (national average is 0.04%)



Edible Shasta Butte reaching Northern California –

Promotion of Ashland’s culinary scene in the quarterly publication, Edible Shasta Butte Magazine on the Back Cover. Alignment with their effort to promote local foods, artisans, chefs and restaurants to six counties in the Central California Valley encouraging the move to support our local, sustainable food system and the businesses related to it.

Summer Campaign

Summer 2019: Travel Ashland promoted summer into the San Jose, Bay Area and Bend markets in addition to continued promotion throughout Oregon, Idaho and Northern California. Travel Ashland invested additional dollars into summer promotion for July and August in 2019 to recover from the wildfire smoke filled days in 2018 that decreased visitation. Below is the San Jose campaign with SacBee.

Discover the outdoors in Ashland, Oregon

Discover Ashland’s amazing wines this summer

Both strategic targeted campaigns reached the San Jose and surrounding markets telling the story of Ashland’s outdoors to the outdoor adventure traveler and the burgeoning wine industry and amazing wines to the culinary traveler with the goal of building brand awareness for Ashland during the summer beyond culture. Campaigns launched in May (outdoor message) and in July (wine message) positioning Ashland as a unique destination.

Campaigns included a targeted email campaign, Facebook video campaigns, videos that Travel Ashland produced and targeted display ads on a network of sites administered through SacBee.

Results:

- Target Demographic: 21+ men and women, HHI \$150K, interested in outdoors, wine tasting, travel
- Facebook Campaign: 237,591 Impressions; 354 clicks; .15% CTR with 8133 video engagements
- Targeted Display Ads: 139,881 impressions, 99 clicks, .07% CTR
- E-Blast Campaigns:
 - Outdoor Adventure Traveler deployed 5/21/19
 - 50,000 emails sent; #7926 opens; 15.85% open rate; 808 clicks; 1.62% CTR
 - Wine Adventure Traveler deployed 6/25/19
 - 50,000 emails sent; #8662 opens; 17.32% open rate; 1068 clicks; 2.14% CTR

Digital Targeted Ads and E-Blast email examples:

ASHLAND
as you like it

**EXPLORE
ASHLAND, OREGON
THIS SUMMER!**

Top 10 Best Wine Travel
Destinations In The World!

Explore Now!

**come ride
Ashland**

© Chris Constantine

ASHLAND
as you like it

Discover
**Ashland's
amazing wines
this summer!**

Getaway to the newest wine country in Oregon just over the border. Ashland and the Rogue Valley's wines are distinct and compelling. Rich microclimates are capable of producing an incredible range of world-class varieties with the Rogue Valley being the southernmost and warmest AVA in Oregon.

Ashland is an ideal jumping off point with five award-winning wineries right outside your door to make a day of it by exploring the Upper Rogue, Applegate or Bear Creek wine trails.

Place your trip to take in Ashland's culinary scene with over 180 restaurants. Distillative flavors and tastes abound in Ashland. Locally sourced ingredients coupled with innovative menus and hand-crafted wines, beers and cocktails offer a culinary scene that is gaining international attention.



Summer is the perfect time to experience Ashland. Friendly coffee shops, food artisans and abundant farmer's markets round out the Ashland foodie experience.

**Explore Ashland
this summer,
as you like it.**

Travelashland.com



did you know Ashland has over 50 miles of epic trails to ride?

Come explore, as you like it.



[learn more @ travelashland.com](http://learnmore@travelashland.com)

ASHLAND
as you like it

**DISCOVER
THE OUTDOORS
IN ASHLAND, OREGON
THIS SUMMER!**

Endless Adventures,
Endless Fun!

Explore Now!

Lead Generation

In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, lead requests increased by 15% due to effective promotion and new lead sources. Despite the pandemic, leads continued with strong demand for the Visitor Guide, Relocation Guide and Map Guides as travelers carried interest in Ashland and future planning to travel here. A lead is a request for information from an individual that is generated by our strategic ad placements in reader services online and in print, primarily in Sunset and VIA/AAA channels. See Results section for each campaign's leads generated. By generating the leads through effective advertising, we have grown and diversified our databases to include visitors who want to receive ongoing updates, become event attendees, members, workshop participants, **followers on our social media channels** and enter to win entries who we have become a part of our fan base. With each lead we generate, we send a *Visitor Guide* to that individual, hand addressed via first class mail that same day. We include the *Ashland Map Guide* and the *Living & Doing Business Guide* when applicable. Our timely response often exceeds other Chambers and Bureaus while exceeding visitor's expectations.

Media Coverage and Hosting Writers

Strategic Initiative: Travel Ashland continues to welcome and host influencers, travel writers and tourism industry partners that provide connections and coverage for Ashland from a 3rd party perspective that engages their readership and diverse audience. This requires staff time that includes building itineraries, customizing experiences and showcasing Ashland based on their story focus. It also includes hosting them while they are here, guiding them through their itinerary and spending time with them to share the in-depth knowledge only our staff has. In addition, this initiative encompasses developing content including images and stories to build upon brand and differentiate Ashland as a unique destination.

Industry relationships: Travel Ashland and Ashland Chamber have had valuable partnerships with organizations such as Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) and the International Food and Wine Travel Writer Associations (IFWTWA) for over three decades. These partnerships have resulted in hosting notable writers, both returning and new that reach a highly desired audience.

Hosted Media Trips included:

- Summer 2019 - Editor in Chief, *1859 – the Oregon Magazine* - Kevin Max . Here to produce a pilot video featuring Ashland for the 1859 digital road tripping feature.
- August 2019 - Allen Cox, editor of *Northwest Travel & Lifestyle* magazine staying at ASH. Story: "72 Hours in Ashland"
- September 2019 - Tamara Gane – "Glamping Southern Oregon" river trip, plays, dinners, time in Ashland. collaboration with Travel Ashland, Momentum River Expeditions, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Neuman Hotel Group. Writer for *Washington Post*, *Huffington Post*, *Fodor's Travel*
- Fall 2019 - Kim Cooper Findling – Ashland Culinary Festival coverage and Ashland beyond OSF.

LA Wine Travel Writer Group – Fall Harvest Tour, October 2019

Katharine Cato of Travel Ashland and Dionne Irvine of Irvine & Roberts Vineyards put together a dynamic itinerary to showcase the best of Ashland and the Rogue Valley during harvest. Working with Group Leader, Cori Solomon, an IFTWA writer and well known in the industry, a 5-day, 4-night robust itinerary brought the group to experience DANCIN, Irvine & Roberts, Weisingers and Cowhorn. Winemaker dinners included Quady North at Alchemy and Troon at Peerless Restaurant. From Applegate Valley to Jacksonville and Ashland the group experienced farmer's markets, lunches, OSF play and backstage tour, history tour given by Walk Ashland, Peter Finkle as well as time to explore on their own, shop and take in the feel of Ashland. By hosting this group, there will be numerous points of exposure from articles, blogs and coverage on their unique experiences we will be providing for them. Travel Ashland, Ashland's official destination marketing organization for the tourism industry invests time and energy into partnership by building itineraries that welcome writers to tell the story of what makes Ashland and the Rogue Valley an unsurpassed travel destination. This group, listed below, consisted of vetted, notable group of seasoned wine travel writers. Update: As a result of hosting these writers, we have received coverage in articles posted after their trip in Winter and Spring of 2020 and will continue to foster these relationships to expand our audience and reach.

Ashland Fall Wine Travel Writer Group

- Andy Harris - SoCal Restaurant Show
- Patricia Decker - Wine Along the 101 -
- Cori Solomon - The Written Palette, FWT Magazine and Vine.ly
- Robin Dohrn Simpson - Beverage Master Magazine and Grapevine Magazine
- Barbara Barrielle - Oregon Wine Press and Napa Valley Register
- Danielle Bauter - Outlets Include: Saveur, Wine Enthusiast, Budget Travel, Atlas Obscura, Laguna Beach Magazine, OC Register and Coast Magazine.
- Don Sonderling - Wine Country This Week....both the weekly (N. CA) on occasion, Central Coast monthly (Wine Country this Month), Very Napa Valley Magazine, Paso Robles Daily News, SLO Visitors Guide, also has a for fun blog: <http://winersdelight.blogspot.com/>
- Tamara Belgard - WinePress Northwest, Oregon Wine Press, SIP Northwest, The Oregonian, NW Travel and Life, Eater PDX, satiatepdx.com



LA Wine Travel Writer group on a guided historic tour by Walk Ashland's, Peter Finkle

Groups, Tours and Conferences

We observed major shifts in group travel prior to the pandemic that are noted below. Due to travel restrictions and travel sentiment halted due to the pandemic as of March 2020 and the inability for OSF to operate, this put further impacts upon groups booking. We work closely with our partners frequently to stay abreast of the booking trends for 2021 and future years. We believe group travel will return as Ashland is a viable group travel destination however when that is, is yet to be determined. Assessing this is part of our current visitor study of which we will have findings in April 2020 to guide us forward. Below is a summary of Travel Ashland's role within the group, tour and conference industry.

Travel Ashland plays a key role in developing and sustaining group business to Ashland through outreach, collaborative planning with partners such as Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Neuman Hotel Group, promotional efforts and fulfillment with groups, tours and conferences. Ashland serves as an ideal destination for groups and conferences of all sizes from thousands to small seminars because of its amenities and proximity to major markets. Through Travel Ashland's strong partnership with Travel Oregon and Travel Southern Oregon, Ashland welcomes many types of tours and tour operators expanding their Oregon product and itineraries with its location on Interstate 5 coupled with its unmatched visitor amenities.

Travel Ashland is engaged in the process of bidding with groups and conference planners, writing letters of support, consulting and actively recruiting as well as welcoming and servicing group, tours and conferences.

Ashland annually welcomes different sizes and types of groups such as associations, school, youth groups and travel industry representatives. Many religious groups, alumni and medical associations annually convene in Ashland. On a weekly basis, we field inquiries of groups and tours that seek planning advice, logistical recommendations such as transportation, accommodations, dining options, itinerary building and venues. Travel Ashland and group partners promote staying longer, returning and inviting significant others and family.

Lodging partners and those who cater to group business have continued to see an increase in bookings in fall, winter and spring. Though there has been a decrease in groups staying in the downtown specifically noted in August 2018 due to wildfires and smoke and August 2019 with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival cancelling plays in the Allen Elizabethan Theatre. Due to the pandemic in 2020, and OSF unable to operate, this continued to have an impact on any group affiliated with OSF. Because groups book out a year or more ahead of time, the hesitancy to travel in groups, inability to attend theatre without vaccination and theatres unable to operate, including OSF, bookings for 2021 are on pause due to OSF not being able to announce their season as of when this report was created in January 2020. This causes groups to either schedule another time of year or try a new destination. **That said, partners including Travel Ashland are working to invite new groups for new reasons from new markets.**

Here are highlights of past groups, tours, industry and conferences Travel Ashland worked with:

- **TUI - Germany's largest tour operator** in the German speaking market (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) in support of the non-stop service between Reykjavik and PDX. 16 top travel agents and TUI product management staff were hosted by Travel Ashland, Travel Southern Oregon and Travel Oregon. After spending the day at Crater Lake, they attended a Welcome Reception then dinner at Standing Stone.
- **VIVENW group** toured Ashland creating footage to promote EDI awareness in rural destinations and make them welcome. This was a result of the new Tourism Inclusion Council of Southern Oregon spearheaded by Travel Southern Oregon that Travel Ashland serves on. May, 2019

- **Packard Auto Classic** group, May 2019
- **AAAS – American Association of Advanced Science Conference** at SOU. Assisted with planning, brochure and collateral support and Welcome Address at opening, June 2019
- **Tahoe Trampers** – Group of 80 Northern California outdoor adventurers. Built itinerary and provided Map and Visitor Guides and information packets. August, 2019.
- **Little America Dutch Tour Operators** – Marloes Meinders Product Developer and Laurens Garendregt Owner, expanding their itinerary with Oregon products. 6000 clients in Australia and New Zealand. Focus on B&B's, nature and culture for unique specialty destinations. Tour included hosting lodging at Country Willows B&B, tours of Iris Inn, Peerless Hotel and Winchester Inn as well as dinner at Peerless and Alchemy. Entire Ashland portion of itinerary was coordinated by Travel Ashland. September 2019
- **CANUSA – Top German Specialty Tour Operators of North America** visited Ashland to expand their itinerary and Oregon product to offer to clients. September 2019

Publications

It requires **staff time** to write, design, build, produce and distribute these quality publications.

Partners depend upon these publications and rely on the information we compile within each of them to attract potential employees, customers and businesses such as the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Asante Ashland Community Hospital and Southern Oregon University.

While we grow the experience on our digital platforms and outreach, the Ashland visitor demographic continues to **demand and expect printed material** in the tangible form to hold and be inspired by. Each publication has an annual shelf life because of its useful tools and serves as a resource many plan their travels with, take with them on their trip or move here with. The printed piece is something that cannot be replaced by a webpage.

Update: In 2020, we continued to fulfill requests with our 2019-2020 publications, all noted below. We pulled back on active distribution through some of the channels noted below such as our Certified Folder Display for the summer but have since returned to distributing in December 2020 due to demand for the publication. There was still demand and in fact increased demand for relocation we are still seeing through the pandemic. Visitors continue to request our visitor guide and map guide as a useful tool for wayfinding and destination information. We anticipate producing a new 2021 Spring & Summer Visitor Guide ahead of the season with updated travel information.



Ashland Visitor Guide

***The most requested publication in Certified Folder Display's Southern Oregon circuit.** The Ashland Visitor Guide publishes annually to target the spring traveler and coincide with the launch of each visitor season. It is an effective tool for marketing tourism with a distribution of 60,000 that is designed in house. It is mailed as a response piece to all online and phone inquiries and provided to all walk-in inquiries. It is annually distributed at Portland International Airport, all Oregon State Welcome Centers and Chambers/Visitor Bureaus and trade shows. It is distributed to all groups visiting Ashland, within all travel writer welcome bags, recreation event goodie bags, all lodging properties, restaurants, members and advertisers in addition to realtors and anyone locally that can use it to help showcase Ashland. Showcasing the annual events, food, lodging, shopping, fine arts, museums, maps, entertainment and outdoor recreation that Ashland offers, it is a complete picture of what the Ashland experience is. The PDF version can be downloaded online from www.travelashland.com.

Tools within the guide that provide trip-planning resources include Sample Itineraries with themes such as culinary, cultural and outdoor ideas. Maps include Lithia park, the region, wayfinding downtown and promoting the Historic Railroad District. An annual calendar, travel and transportation information along with referring to the websites, enable this Guide to remain relevant and useful to our visitor market and tourism industry partners.

Prior to the pandemic, Travel Ashland participated in the Travel Oregon's Welcome Center Brochure Program that gives Oregon attractions, lodging properties, tour operators, events, festivals and destinations the opportunity to reach visitors directly by displaying their brochures in all of the state welcome centers. Through this program, each welcome center carries a broad selection of local, regional and statewide visitor information materials, including publications produced by Travel Oregon, Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Parks & Recreation, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and other state and federal agencies.

In addition to robust staff distribution throughout Ashland and the Rogue Valley, Travel Ashland contracts with Certified Folder Display to reach over 250 locations spanning from Roseburg to Crater Lake, Klamath and Josephine counties.

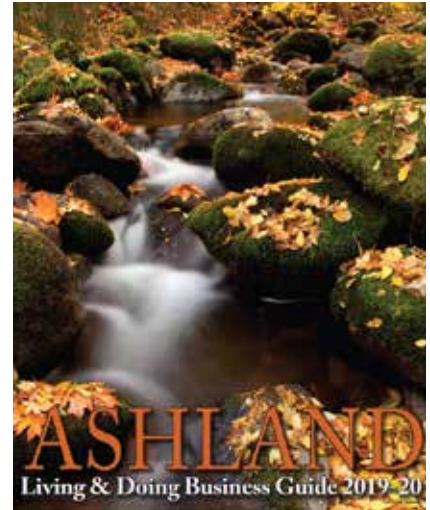
The **Living & Doing Business Guide** is the primary economic development marketing piece for Ashland. The purpose of this annual publication is to provide accurate and substantive information on the Ashland community to help guide decisions for local business development and relocation for prospective businesses and residents. Significant work is done annually by staff to showcase the depth of our community including quality of life, community values, visitor amenities, demographic and economic data all done in an engaging graphic format. Many visitors use this publication to consider converting to residents of Ashland. Ashland's amenities are highlighted along with the strength of Ashland's ever-growing tourism industry.

Grand Award for Communications Excellence, July 2009 given by ACCE (American Chamber of Commerce Executives) – the premier national organization for Chamber Executives. This is the highest national award that can be given in the nation for Chamber publications competing with some of the largest cities in the country.

Content: Each year, this publication is revised to reflect the current 500+ Chamber membership, efforts and themes surrounding Ashland lifestyle, economy and its businesses. The Guide is annually critiqued by the ESC (Economic Sustainability Committee) with staff.

Growth in Demand and Distribution: We have seen an increase in the demand for this publication from individual requests to increased needs from local realtors, both in print and online. It is used in recruitment and distributed at Asante Ashland Community Hospital, Providence Medford Medical Center (Medford and Portland), Asante, Southern Oregon University and the City of Ashland along with medical offices, lodging properties, members and advertisers.

***We saw major increase in demand and relocation inquiries both through direct requests and the need for realtors to use this publication as a tool. Many were seeking a rural location, exiting metro areas through the pandemic. We acknowledge the inventory shortage in our region but feel our role in promotion and education continues for both residential and commercial relocation.**



Ashland Map Guide



The Ashland Chamber & Travel Ashland partnered with AFR (Ashland Forest Resiliency) to create this collaborative, educational, free Map Guide to foster stewardship and create awareness for the history of fire, our source for drinking water, resources and the balance of recreational uses in the Ashland Watershed. We contracted with Lea Richards, GIS analyst for City of Ashland to build the maps. Editorial, image collection, layout and graphic design was done by Katharine Cato and Dana Welsh, in house at the Chamber & Travel Ashland. 25,000 copies were printed and distributed from 2014 – 2016. In 2018, we produced 50,000 to meet the growing demand. The 5th edition, published in July of 2019 included updated Watershed, City Street and Lithia Park maps. NEW in 2019, Travel Ashland partnered with Rogue-River Siskiyou National Forest Service to enable the Ashland Watershed map to be geo-referenced, digitized and available on www.avenzamaps.com so when a user is out on the trail, they can see their location. Other maps included in past editions have included the Cascade Siskiyou Scenic Bikeway, Crater Lake National Park, Table Rocks Hiking Trails and the Mountain Lakes. The map is distributed and used by real estate offices, outdoor stores, groups, tours and conferences in Ashland, retailers, public libraries, REI, the Rogue Valley International Airport, hotels, outfitters, retailers, SOU, Medford Visitor Center, cycling shops and more. The Map Guide can be found on www.travelashland.com as a downloadable PDF, www.avenzamaps.com or in print at the Chamber/Travel Ashland office.

Administration and Operations

Staff

Travel Ashland staff is comprised of a professional Director with shared costs of a graphic designer, webmaster, event coordinator, volunteer coordinator and contracted event staff. Travel Ashland is the destination marketing organization (DMO) for Ashland with direct linkage to Travel Southern Oregon and Travel Oregon. The staff creates the marketing messages, and working closely with the Travel Ashland Committee develops all promotions, outreach, travel industry tours and creates and markets events. The staff responds to all local, visitor and relocation needs daily by phone, website, and in office when possible. In addition to serving as Ashland's welcome center, we operate the Plaza Information booth (May – October). In summer 2020, we were not able to operate our Plaza Information booth nor have volunteers in the office other than for a few months. Given the Governor's restrictions, we limited access to our office, meeting outside, assisting visitors outside as well as fielding many first-time visitor inquiries.

The staff annually trains and oversees over 200 volunteers that help operate the Plaza Information Booth serving over 15,000 visitors and the front desk at the office. Volunteers are a key part of all the events we manage with assistance in planning, preparation, set up, execution and cleanup of events. They answer questions, support the staff's work, provide wayfinding and information for visitors, residents, businesses and those considering relocation. We have immense gratitude for these volunteers (primarily Ashland residents) who generously give their time, expertise and love of Ashland showing deep community pride.

In-House Printing

Besides our large printing runs of publications, Travel Ashland prints smaller jobs in-house which saves time, money and maintains an authentic brand. Producing these materials, in addition to the graphic design and coordination, is a significant part of promoting tourism that takes staff time. For every event and promotion Travel Ashland produces, there is a repertoire of printed materials that there is a continued demand for. This includes brochures, signage, monthly calendars, advertising, rack cards, enter to win entries and correspondence to name a few. In conserving energy wherever possible, we use electronic versions of these printed materials to communicate the message and engage participation.

Postage is a necessary cost to meet the demand of our ever-increasing lead generation and visitor requests. Postage enables our office to respond to all inquiries received from emails, walk-ins, phone calls and referrals. We maintain a high level of customer service by corresponding via first-class mail to each inquiry, mailing them brochures specific to the visitor needs. The personal touch of a hand addressed envelope and timely receipt of information introduces a potential visitor or future resident to Ashland and engages them. This includes solicitation and outreach to meeting planners, tour operators, travel writers and bulk distribution to other visitor centers across the west.



Travel Ashland (VCB) Advisory Committee Members

Committee Member:

Don Anway
Michael Biggs
Vicki Capp
Graham Sheldon
Julie Gurwell
Ariel Sherman
Pete Wallstrom
Michael Stringer
Hiram Towle
Paula Muncaster Walker
Katharine Cato
Anne Robison

Business:

Neuman Hotel Group, Oregon Tourism Commission
 Peerless Hotel & Restaurant
 Stay Ashland/ Iris Inn
 Stay Ashland/ Ashland Creek Inn
 Hearsay Restaurant, Lounge & Garden
 Weisinger Family Winery
 Momentum River Expeditions
 Mt. Ashland Ski Area
 (Current Chair 2nd year) Mt. Ashland Ski Area
 Oregon Shakespeare Festival
 Director/ Chamber Marketing
 The Crown Jewel/Board Liaison

2019 – 2020 Ashland Chamber Board of Directors

Board Member:

Gary Blake
Deena Branson
Mary Gardiner
Sheila Clough
Julie Gurwell
Debra Ingram
Elijah Katkin
Marie Lange
Jac Nickels
Meiwen Richards
Anne Robison
Larry Steiner
Eric Weisinger

Business:

Recology Ashland
 Branson's Chocolates (*President*)
 Southern Oregon University (*Past President*)
 Asante Ashland Community Hospital
 Hearsay Restaurant, Lounge and Garden
 First Interstate Bank
 Brickroom
 Ashland Homes Real Estate
 Architectural Design Works Inc. (*Secretary/Treasurer*)
 Honorary Life member
 The Crown Jewel
 Edward Jones
 Weisinger Family Winery



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