



fort
MYERS
ISLANDS, BEACHES
& NEIGHBORHOODS

FY 2024-2025
Annual Plan



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Introduction

01



Letter From the Executive Director

The Journey Ahead

This year we have continued our journey to restore and rebuild both our coastal communities and visitation to our area. Yes, we have faced even more challenges along the way, but we're building back with more resilience than ever before. This word, resilience, is especially meaningful at this moment in time. I see it demonstrated every day by you. We are resilient as a community, bouncing back from hurricanes and working to position ourselves to face future challenges. Our resiliency shines through in more ways than personal spirit, however, and our visitors continue to respond to it.

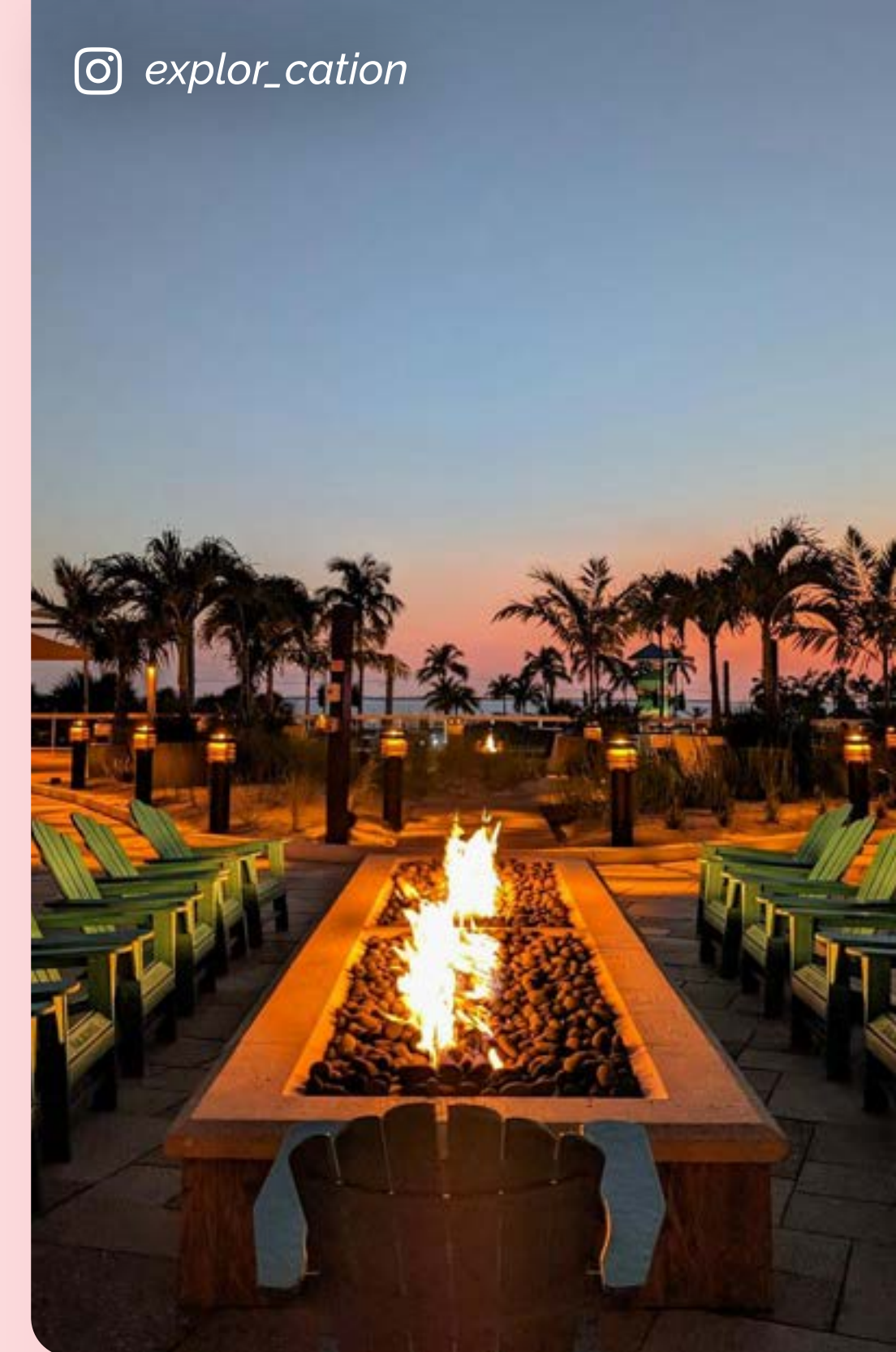


Despite recent setbacks, tourism indicators continue to move in a positive direction. The number of passengers traveling through Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) continues on an upward trend, and we have seen notable growth. In October, RSW became Breeze Airline's ninth base of operations nationally and the third in Florida. International nonstop service also increased this past year with Porter Airlines launching its daily, roundtrip service from Toronto.

Our coastal communities continue to rebound along with increasing inland hotel development. Properties continue to reopen, with two new hotels recently joining the mix — Comfort Suites/MainStay Suites and TownePlace Suites Fort Myers Gulf Coast. More are expected to open in 2025, such as TownePlace Suites Fort Myers Southeast at Colonial and I-75, StudioRes at Alico and I-75, and Shalimar Beach Resort on Sanibel. Plus, there are new experiential activities to look forward to in the coming year including Slipaway Food Truck Park & Marina along the water in Cape Coral, and Brightwater Lagoon in North Fort Myers. We also continue to see vacation rentals outperform previous years' volume. Despite the challenges we've faced, our total FY23/24 bed tax collections surpassed the FY18/19 benchmark, which we loosely see as our last "normal" year.



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Through the good and the bad we're in this together, in a community we're so privileged to be a part of. For generations of visitors, this place we call home just feels right no matter what. Our visitors are rooting for us and you can feel that support and positivity in every shining smile and happy return. And it's because of you and your ceaseless efforts. So thank you for helping us strive to meet our goals, sharing the place you call home with tourists, and for continuing to positively impact the local economy as we continue to evolve and improve our destination. I am proud of how far we have come. Time and again we weather the storm. No matter the challenges we have faced and will face in the future, we all know this place just feels right.



With much hope and warm regards,

Tamara Pigott

Tamara Pigott

Executive Director, Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau

Vision

To enhance our position as the premier tourism marketing organization by working with our partners to promote one of the world's best tourism destinations.

Mission

The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau serves the broader interests of the economy of Lee County by acting as an industry leader to market the entire area globally, facilitate travel to the area, and preserve and protect the area's unique attributes for the continual benefit of its residents and the travel and tourism industry.



Country Brand

02

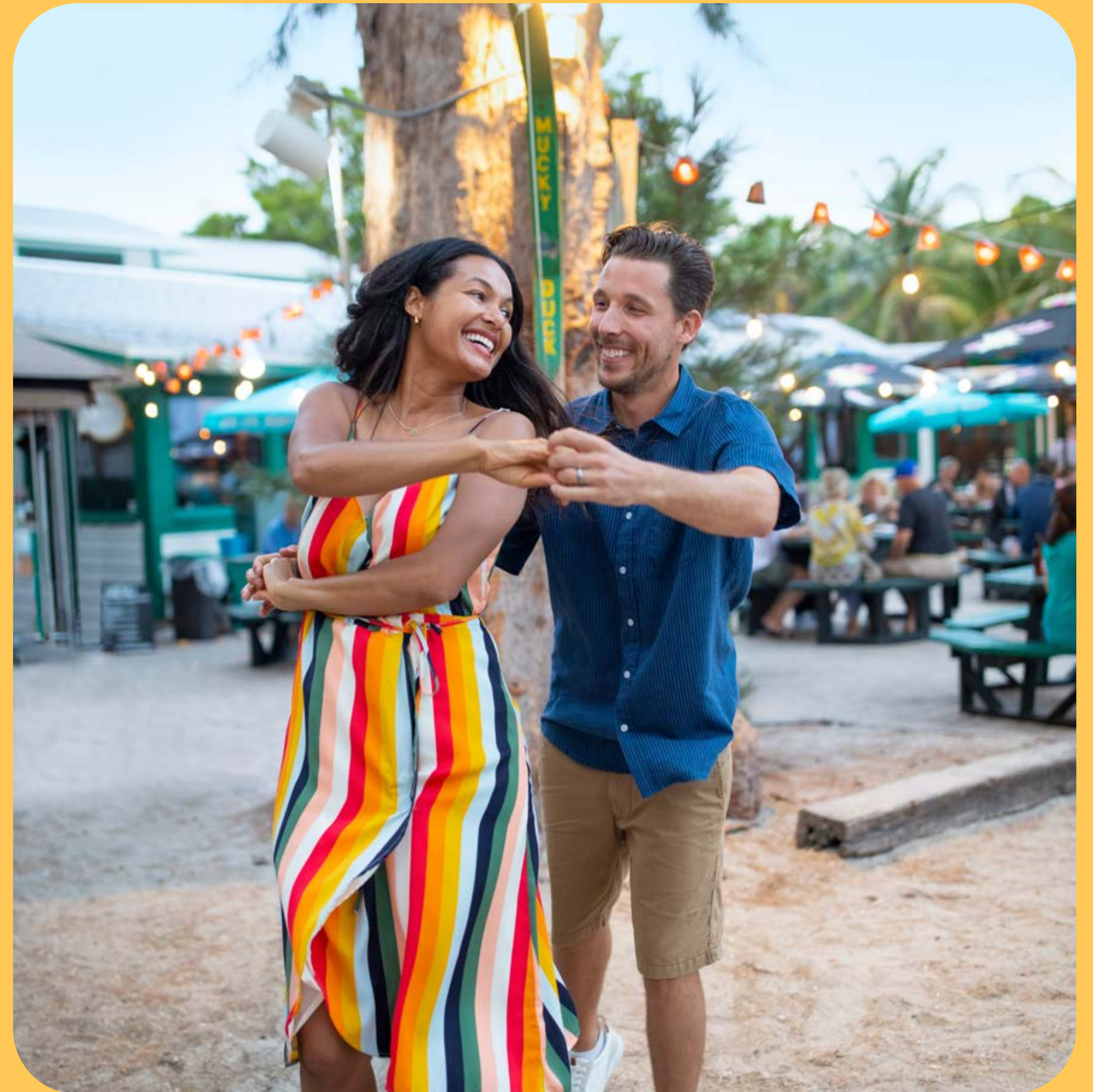


County Brand

The role of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) has evolved in recent years, creating an opportunity to refocus the Lee County brand. The objective of this process was to build a strong destination brand, boost local pride and increase our collective sense of community within one identity. To achieve this, we engaged residents, industry partners, business leaders, and elected officials to better understand the goals of our community. We also began determining themes related to Lee County's identity while collecting and analyzing facts and data related to the Lee County experience.

We connected the insights gained from our community engagement survey to traveler data from our proprietary research. Understanding how these motivations are so closely tied allowed us to create a brand that speaks to and emotionally connects with residents and travelers as well as the business and economic development communities.

Travelers are already familiar with our destination as “Fort Myers” — they’ve booked flights to our airport and seen signs along the interstate. We built on that familiarity in an inclusive way, showing that our area encompasses more than just the city of Fort Myers with a secondary line that acknowledges our many communities and their strong identities as islands, beaches and neighborhoods. This name also provides the flexibility to identify ourselves on a county and regional level.



The process culminated with the creation of Lee County's brand architecture. Fueled by the insights we gained along the way, the architecture is an articulation of what the brand stands for, how it is positioned against the competition, and how it emotionally connects with and motivates our audiences. It also guides us when reacting to changes in the marketing landscape.

For example, recent adjustments were made to the brand colors in order to improve contrast and readability for our audiences. This ensures our communications will comply with new accessibility standards laws that go into effect this year while maintaining brand integrity.

LIGHT GREEN

HEX: #A0EA95
 RGB: 160 | 234 | 149
 CMYK: 37 | 00 | 56 | 00

GREEN

HEX: #6BBF5C
 RGB: 107 | 191 | 92
 CMYK: 61 | 00 | 85 | 00

LIGHT YELLOW

HEX: #FFDC8F
 RGB: 255 | 220 | 143
 CMYK: 00 | 13 | 51 | 00

YELLOW

HEX: #FFC856
 RGB: 255 | 200 | 86
 CMYK: 00 | 22 | 77 | 00

LIGHT CORAL

HEX: #F58F95
 RGB: 245 | 143 | 149
 CMYK: 00 | 55 | 27 | 00

DEEP CORAL

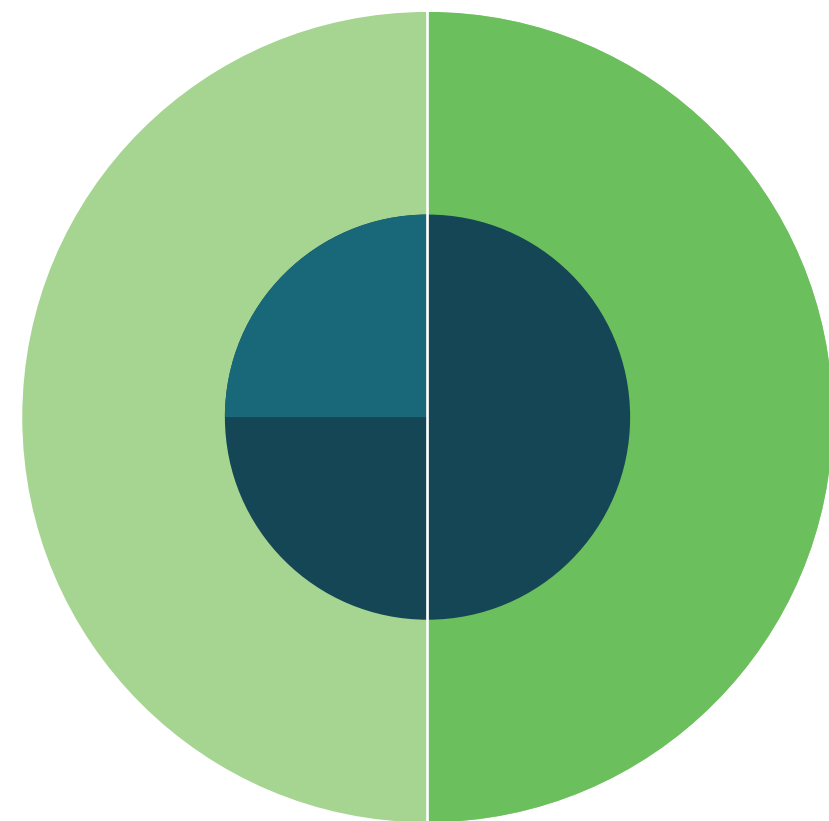
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 CMYK: 00 | 84 | 63 | 00

TEAL

HEX: #18677A
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 CMYK: 89 | 48 | 40 | 14

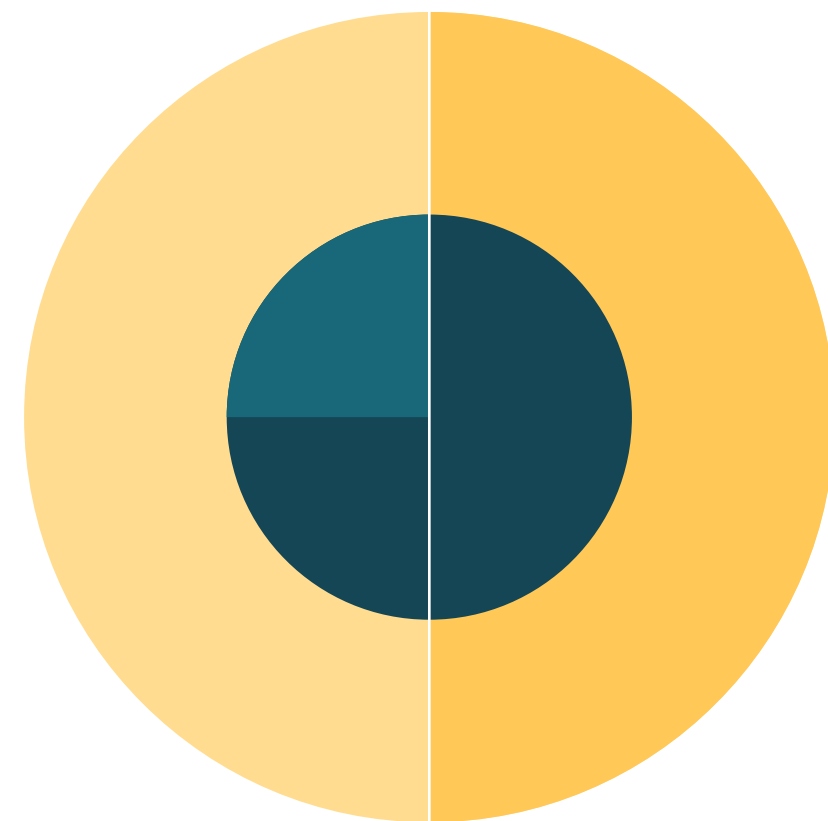
NAVY

HEX: #144655
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 CMYK: 92 | 62 | 49 | 35



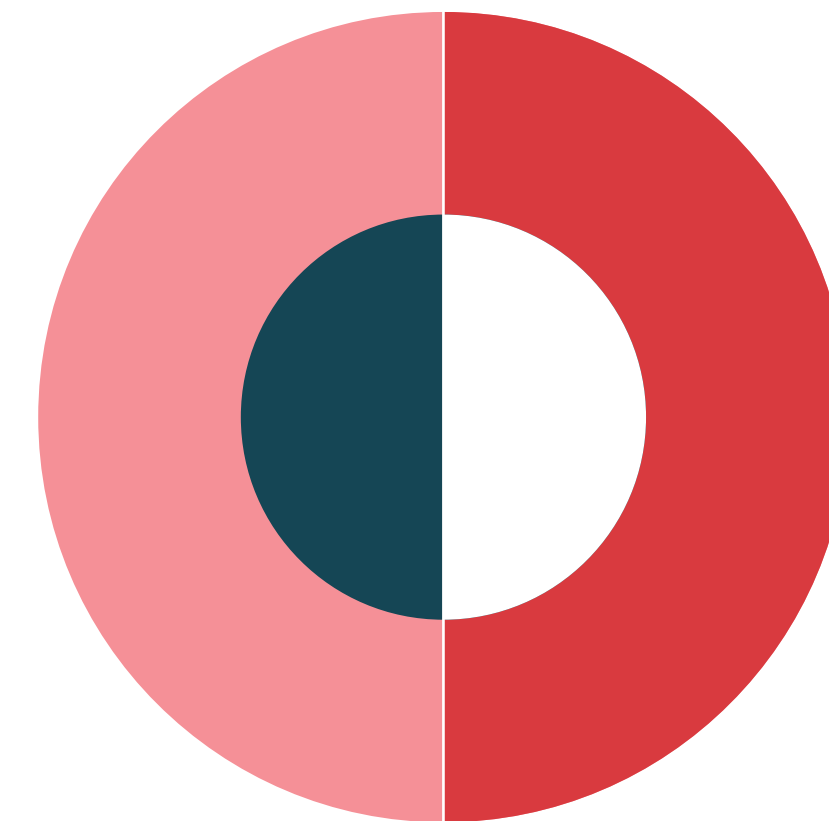
COMPLIANT COMBINATIONS

Light Green + Teal
Contrast: 4.51
 Green + Navy
Contrast: 4.53
 Light Green + Navy
Contrast: 7.22



COMPLIANT COMBINATIONS

Light Yellow + Teal
Contrast: 4.87
 Yellow + Navy
Contrast: 6.7
 Light Yellow + Navy
Contrast: 7.79



COMPLIANT COMBINATIONS

Light Coral + Navy
Contrast: 4.54
 Deep Coral + White
Contrast: 4.54



COMPLIANT COMBINATIONS

Teal + White
Contrast: 6.44
 Navy + White
Contrast: 10.31
 Light Green
 Light Yellow
 Light Green and Green
 Light Yellow and Yellow
 Light Coral



Following the recent hurricanes, our brand remains strong. Visitors continue to value our islands, beaches and neighborhoods because of how they feel while they're here. Those feelings will serve as the basis for how we promote the area moving forward.

At its core, the new brand combines the fundamental need all travelers share with what Lee County naturally provides: the gift of time. People need time to relax and to actively pursue their passions with the people they love most.

Above all else, this balance is what Lee County offers.

Brand Architecture

BRAND VALUES

Active • Connecting • Inspiring • Fresh • Fun

BRAND PURPOSE

We are a change of pace from the rest of the world.
We create an environment that inspires visitors to take time to pursue their passions and make the most of every moment.

BRAND EXPERIENCE

This is our time. • Always at our own speed.
Connected to the water. • More time, more living.

BRAND VOICE

Comfortable • Confident • Refreshing • Empowering • Passionate

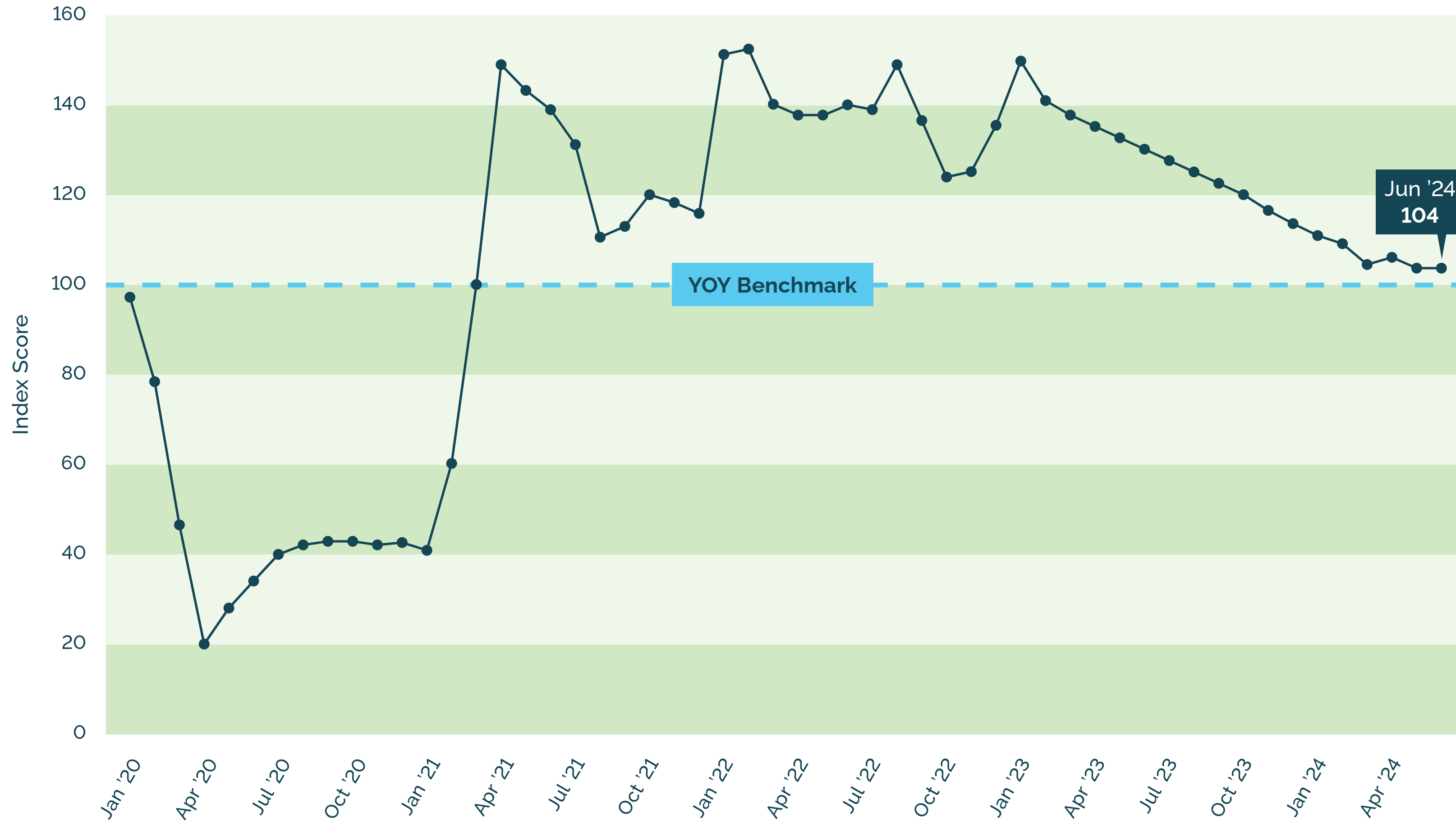
The Travel Landscape

03



Global Travel Health Index Score

Score relative to baseline reading of 100 for the same month in the previous year.



Global Travel Trends

Skift Research's Global Travel Health Index is a real-time measure of the performance of the travel industry and the core verticals within it. It tracks 84 travel indicators across 22 countries with data from 22 partners. After the dip through the pandemic and pent-up demand driving massive growth levels, 2024 is seeing modest global travel growth over 2023. As of June 2024, the index is at 104, indicating 4% growth compared to June 2023.

Source: Skift's State of Travel 2024

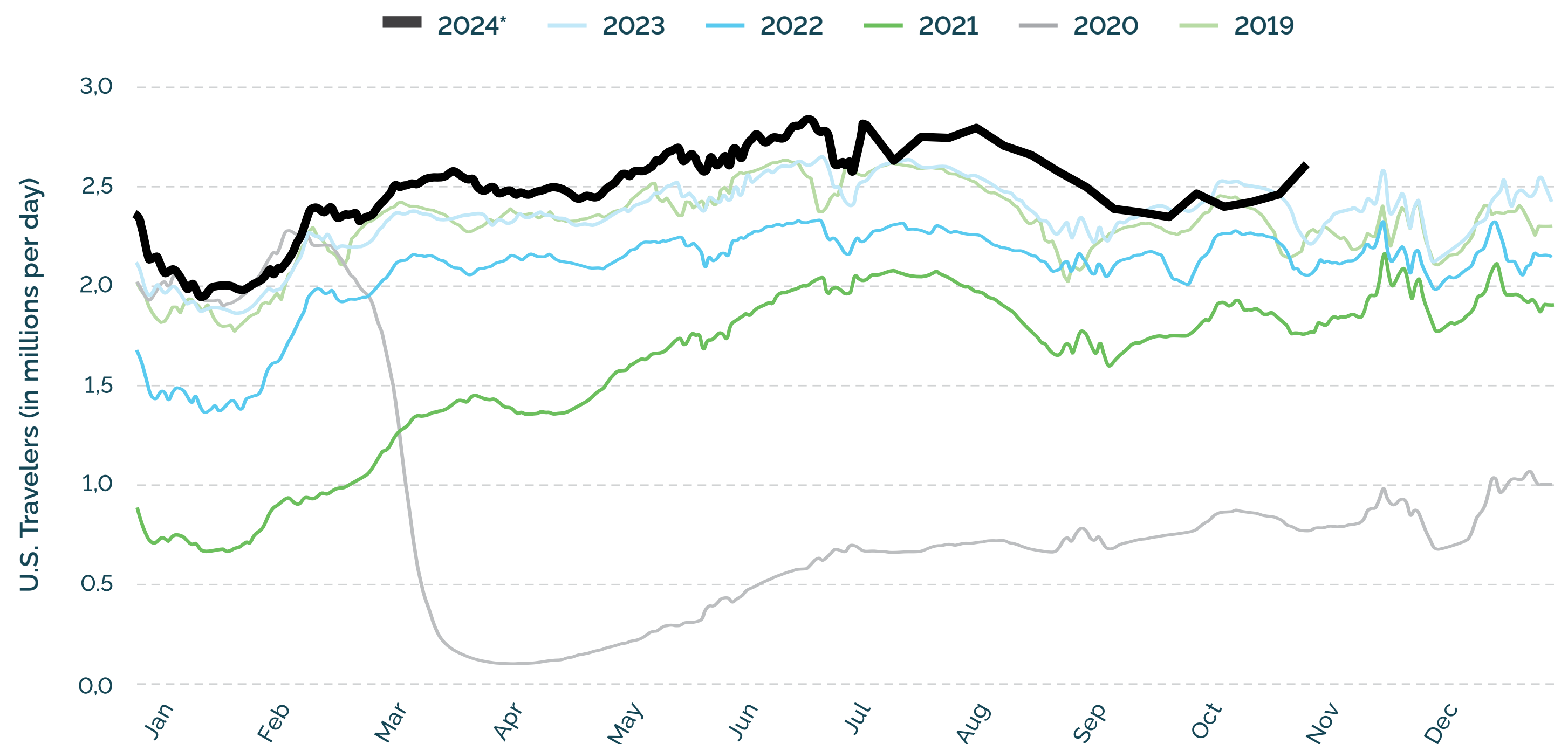


U.S. Travel Volumes Surpass Pre-Pandemic Levels

TSA throughput numbers continue to increase, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Notably, the record for individuals screened by the TSA in a single day was broken twice this summer — 2.9 million individuals on June 23, 2024, and over 3 million individuals on July 7, 2024.

Sources: [Skift's State of Travel 2024](#),
[TSA National Press Release](#),
[TravelAge West by Northstar](#)

Seven-Day Rolling Average of TSA Throughput

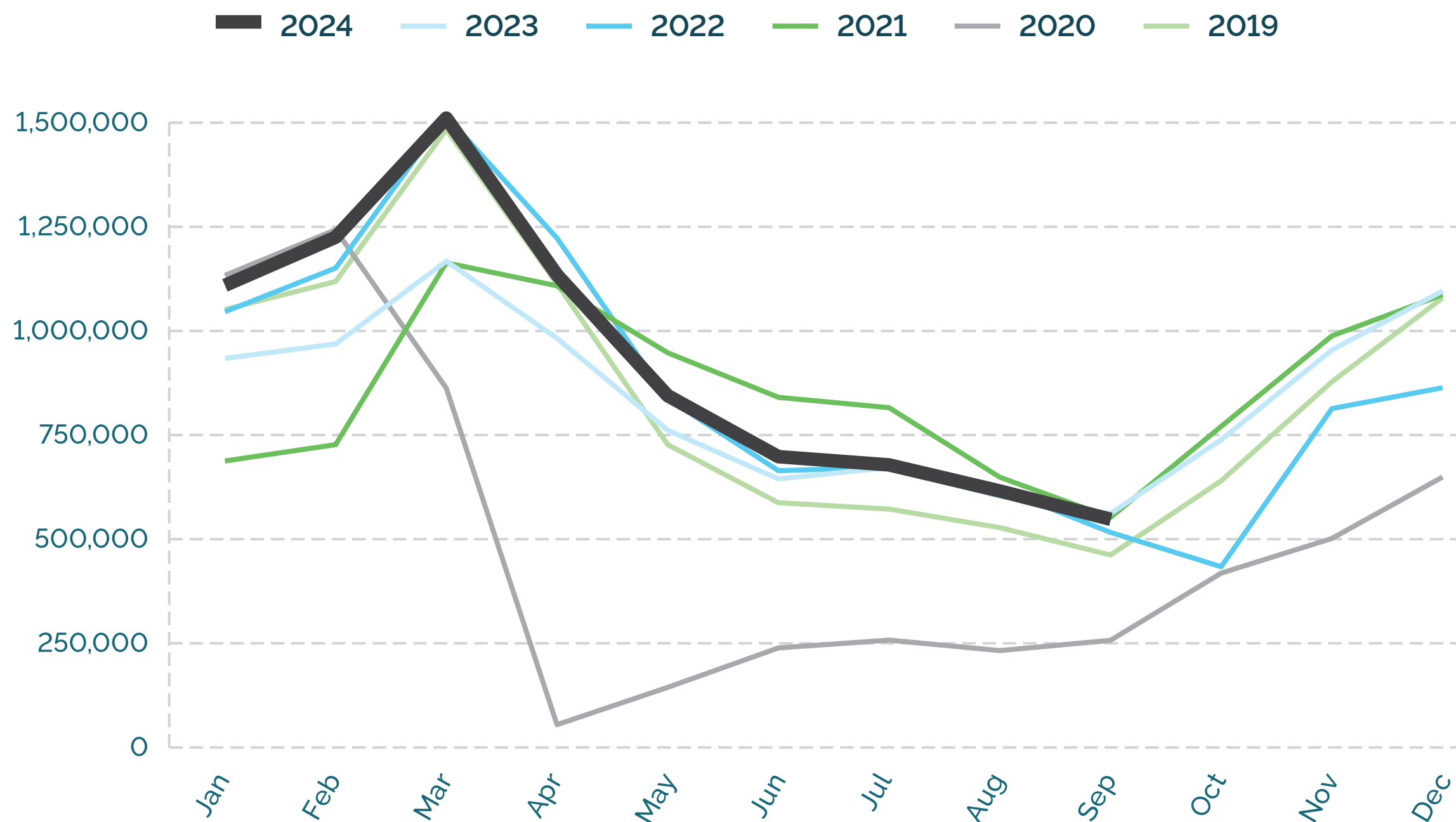


*2024 data through October 23, 2024.

Air Service Updates

Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) passenger traffic is up 14% year-to-date, slightly above 2022 levels.

Total Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) Passengers



Source: [LCPA/Charts/Stats/Total Passengers 10/17/2024](#)



Air Service Updates

As of the October 2024 Air Service Update, Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) provides nonstop service to 74 destinations by 15 carriers.

New flights include:

- American Airlines:
 - New York-LaGuardia (LGA) - Daily, starting Nov. 5
- Avelo Airlines:
 - Wilmington, NC (ILM) - Weekly, starting Nov. 7
- Breeze Airways:
 - Bangor, ME (BGR) - Weekly, starting Oct. 5
 - Burlington, VT (BTV) - Weekly, starting Oct. 4
 - Islip-Long Island (ISP) - Weekly, starting Oct. 2
 - Lansing, MI (LAN) - Weekly, starting Oct. 3
 - Manchester, NH (MHT) - Weekly, starting Oct. 2
 - New Haven, CT (HVN) - Weekly, starting Dec. 10
 - Portsmouth, NH (PSM) - Weekly, starting Oct. 10
 - South Bend, IN (SBN) - Weekly, starting Feb. 5, 2025
 - Stewart/Newburgh, NY (SWF) - Weekly, starting Oct. 2
 - Wilkes-Barre/Scranton, PA (AVP) - Weekly, starting Oct. 3
 - Wilmington, NC (ILM) - Weekly, starting Feb. 14, 2025
- Frontier Airlines:
 - Chicago-O'Hare (ORD) - Weekly, starting Dec. 17
- JetBlue Airways:
 - Manchester, NH (MHT) - Weekly, starting Jan. 23, 2025
 - Providence, RI (PVD) - Daily, starting Oct. 27
- Porter Airlines:
 - Montreal (YUL) - Weekly, starting Nov. 29
 - Ottawa (YOW) - Weekly, starting Nov. 28
- Spirit Airlines:
 - Charlotte (CLT) - Daily, limited service from March 5–April 8, 2025

Source: [FlyRSW.com](https://www.flyRSW.com)

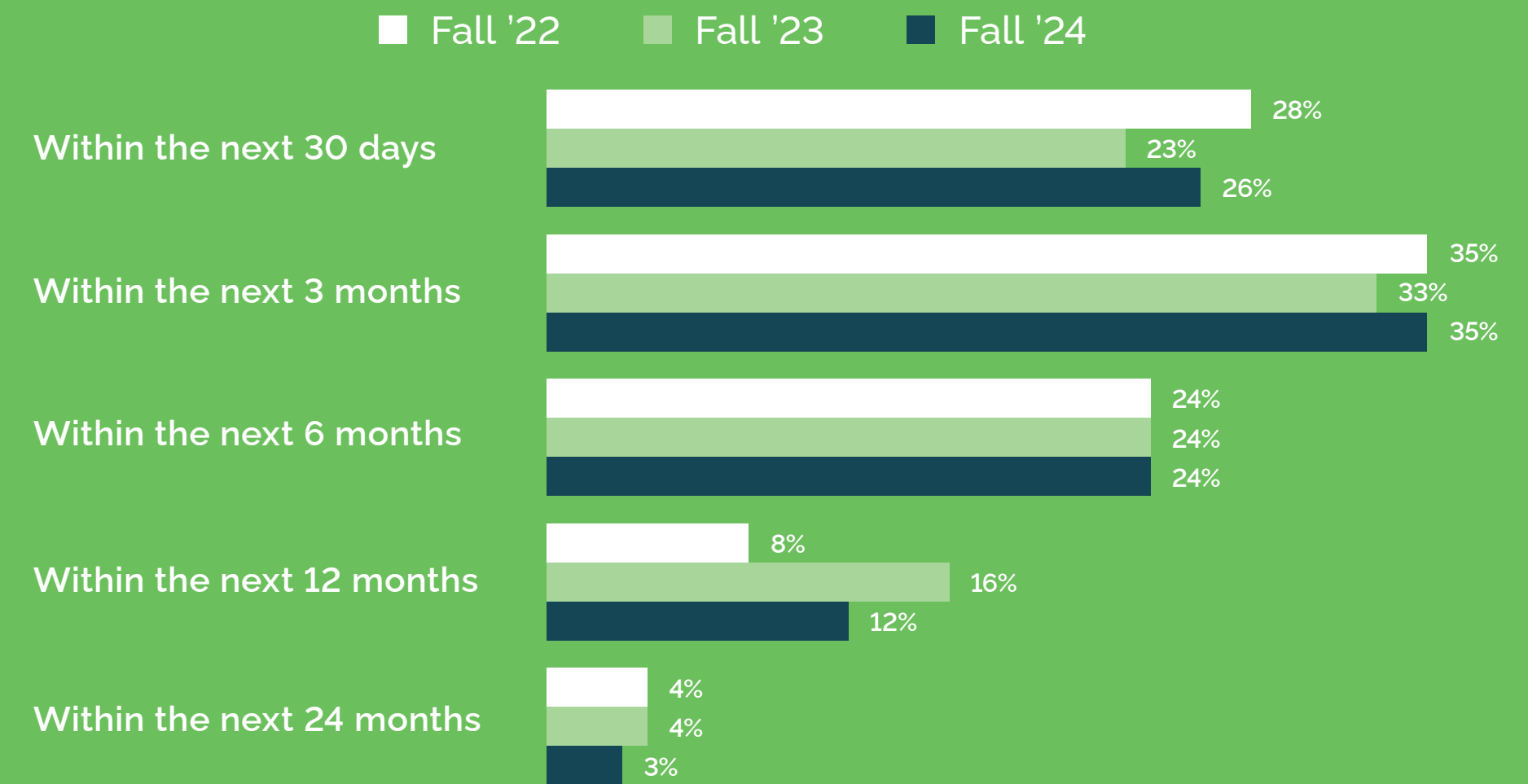
Fort Myers Prospect Leisure Travel Indicators:

- Fort Myers prospects are showing lower intentions to travel in the next 12 months but are more likely to be considering a leisure trip in the next 30 to 90 days than in 2023. More than **6 in 10 (61%)** Lee County prospects plan to travel in the next three months.
- Overall travel intentions are unchanged, hovering around four trips expected in the next 12 months. However, spending intentions are still steadily increasing, with an almost **\$600 increase** since 2023.

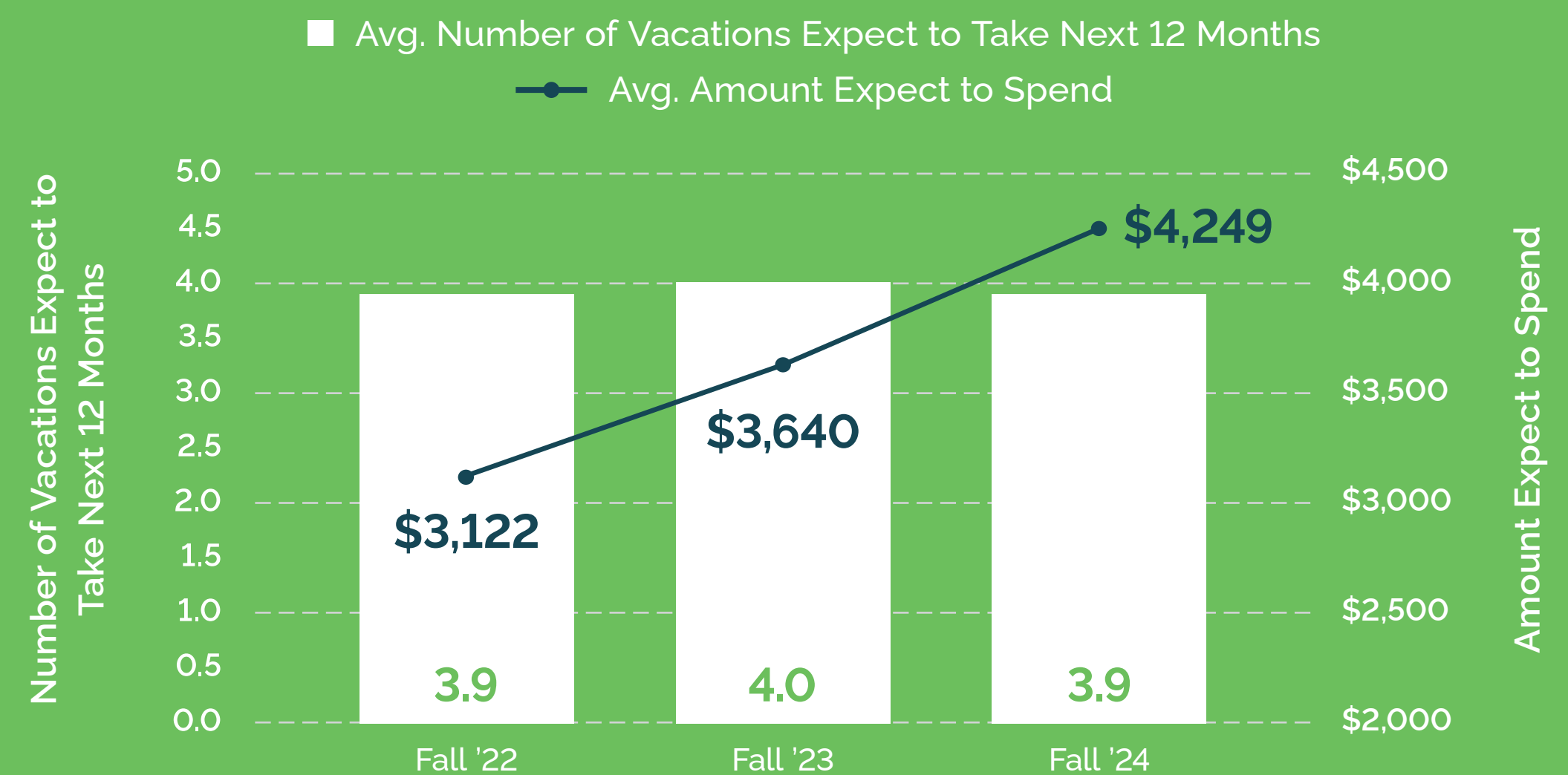
The Fort Myers prospect is defined as one who intends to take at least one overnight leisure trip during the next 24 months and is interested in visiting our area on a vacation in the next 24 months.

Source: MMGY's 2024 Portrait of American Travelers® "Fall Edition - Lee County"

Expected Timing of Next Leisure Vacation Among Fort Myers Prospects

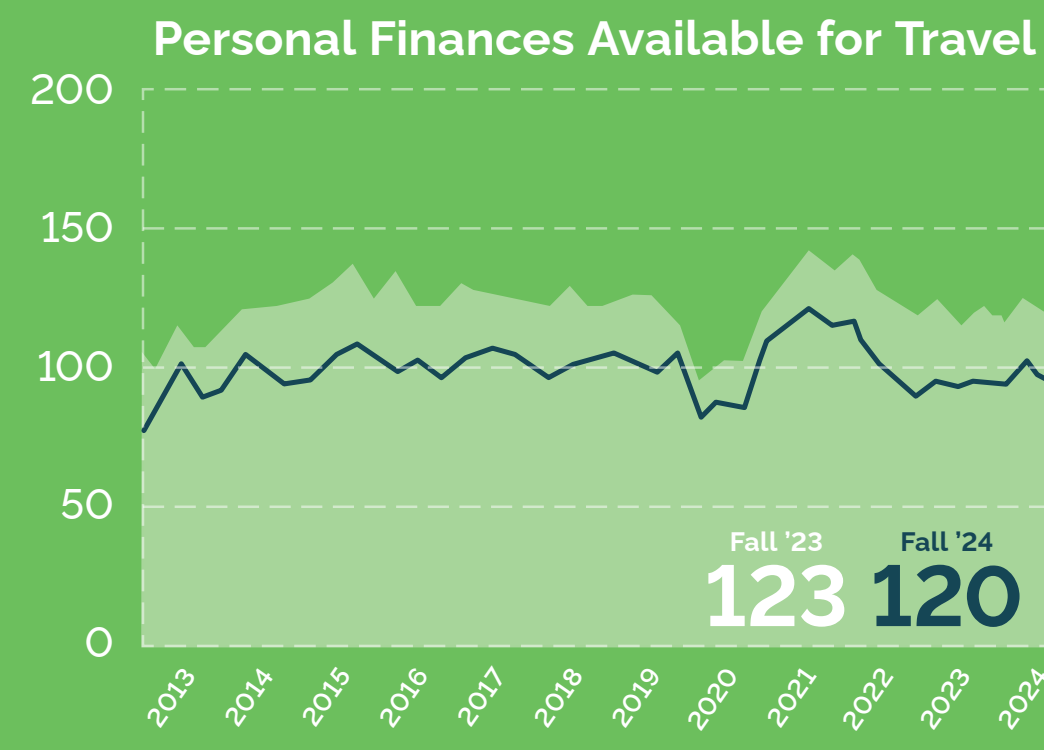
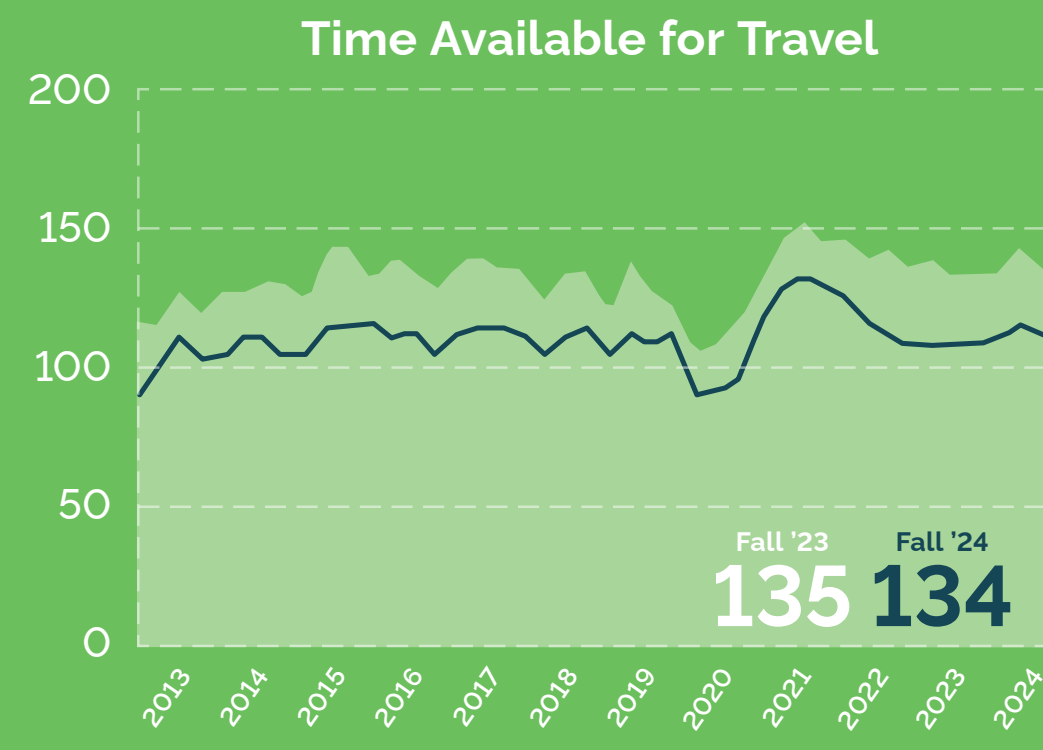
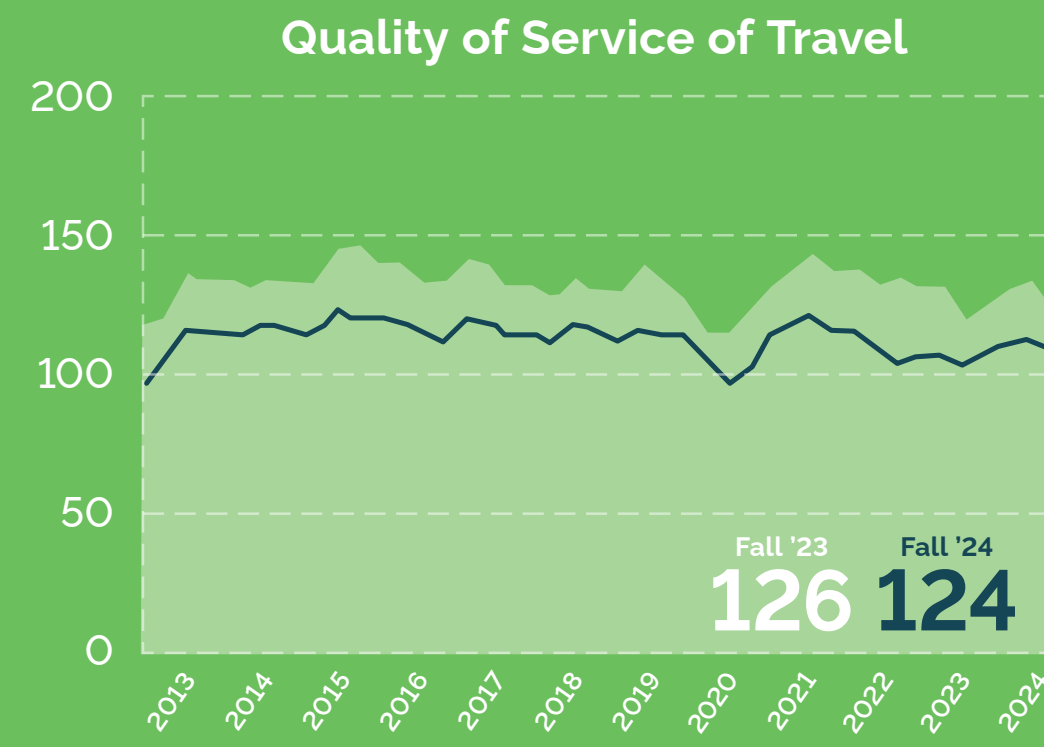
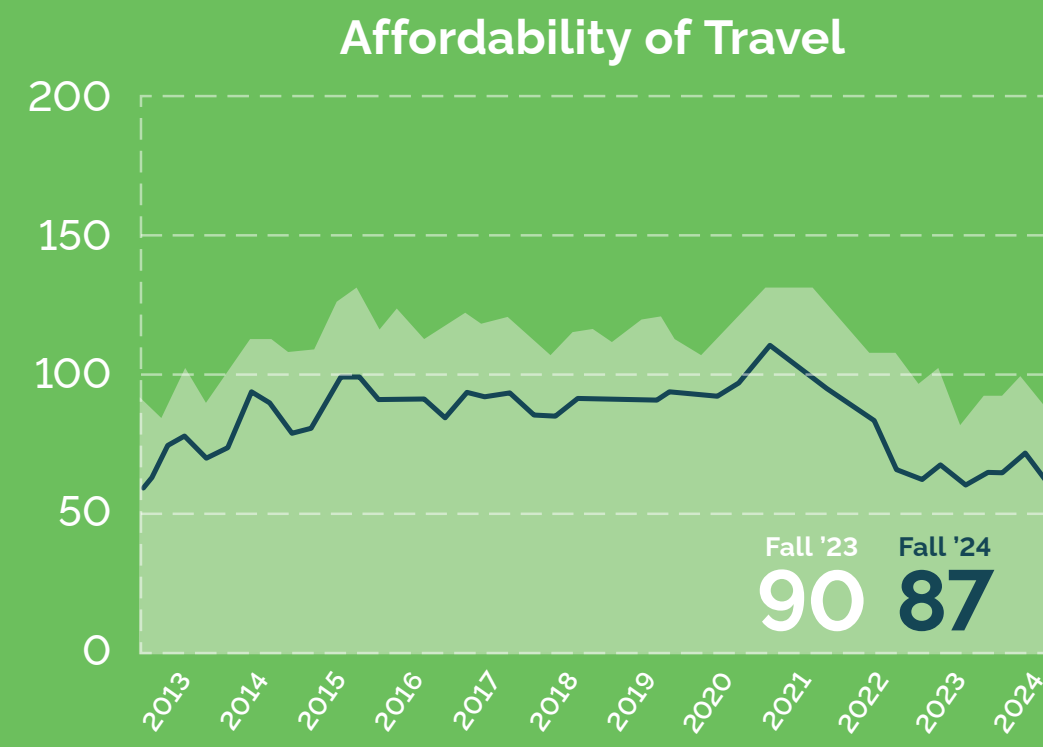
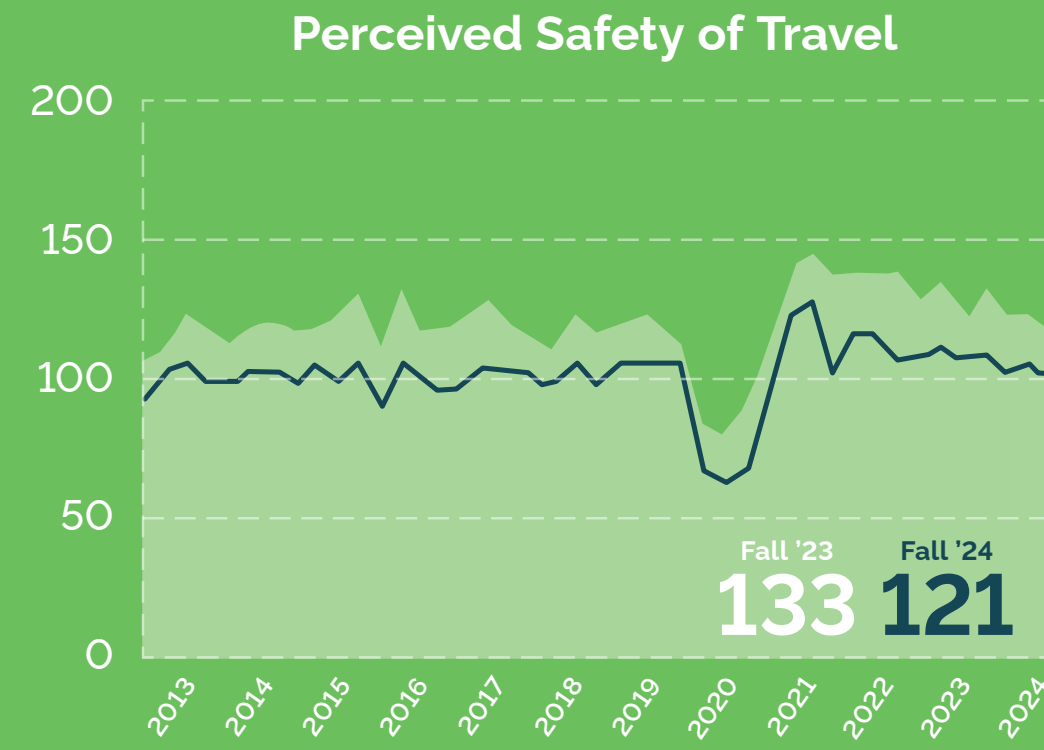
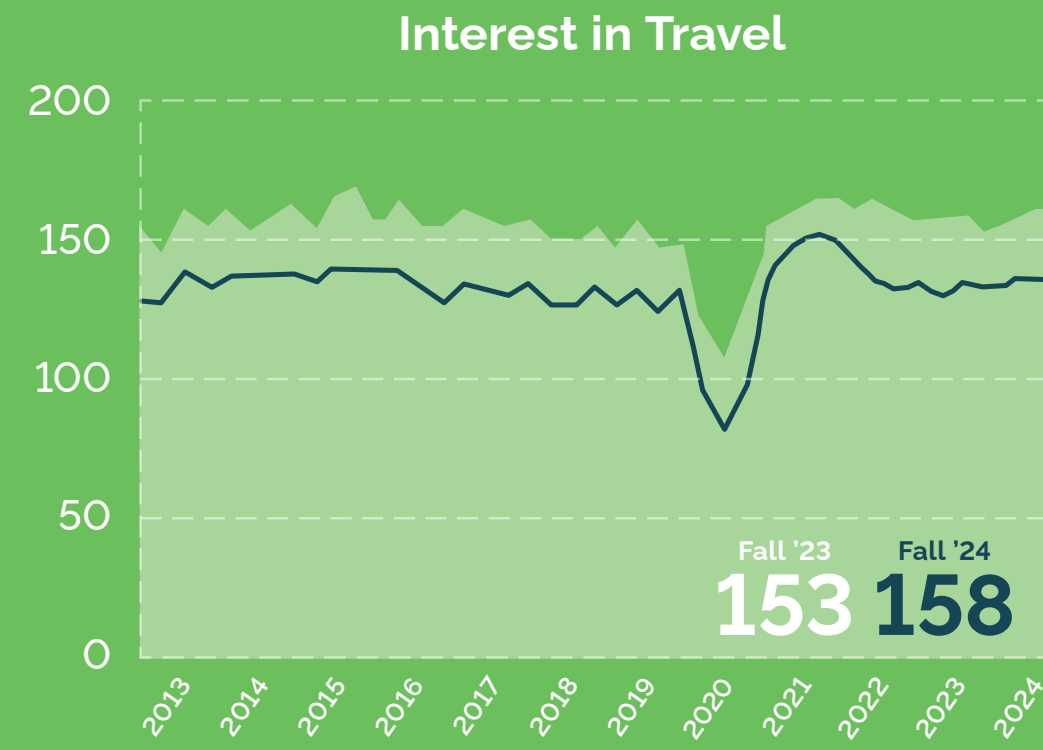


Leisure Travel and Spending in the Next 12 Months Among Fort Myers Prospects



2024 Traveler Sentiment Score

■ Sentiment for Fort Myers Prospects — Baseline for U.S. Adults Surveyed



Travel Sentiment Score

The Traveler Sentiment Index™ consists of six variables including: interest in travel, time available for travel, personal finances available for travel, affordability of travel, quality of service, and safety of travel. It provides a glimpse into how U.S. adults are feeling about travel this year compared to the same time a year ago. The most recent Traveler Sentiment Score for Fort Myers reflects a slight decrease from this same time last year but holds steady compared to summer. Overall, Lee County prospects' travel sentiment continues to trend higher than the overall U.S. average score of 103.

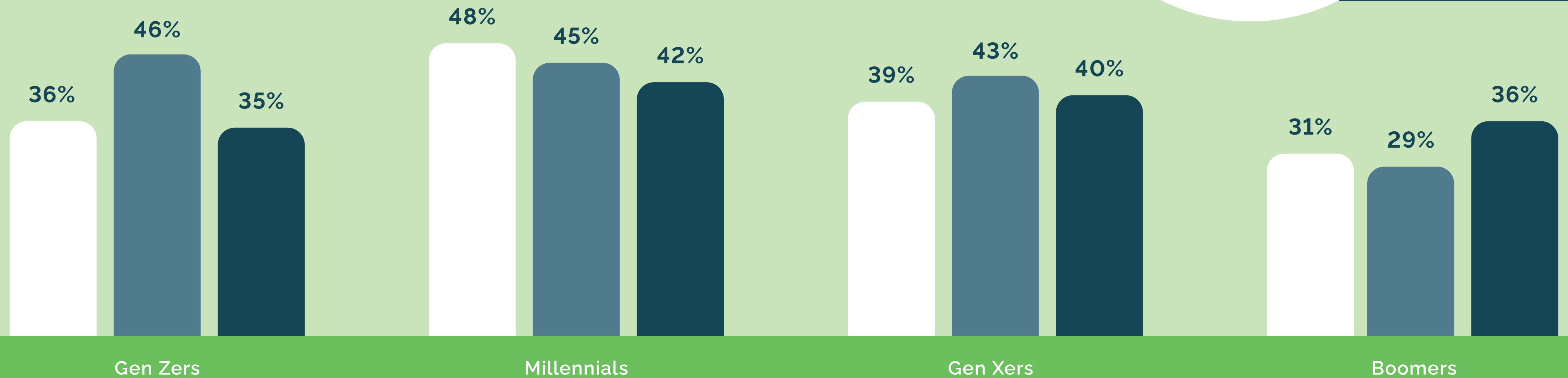
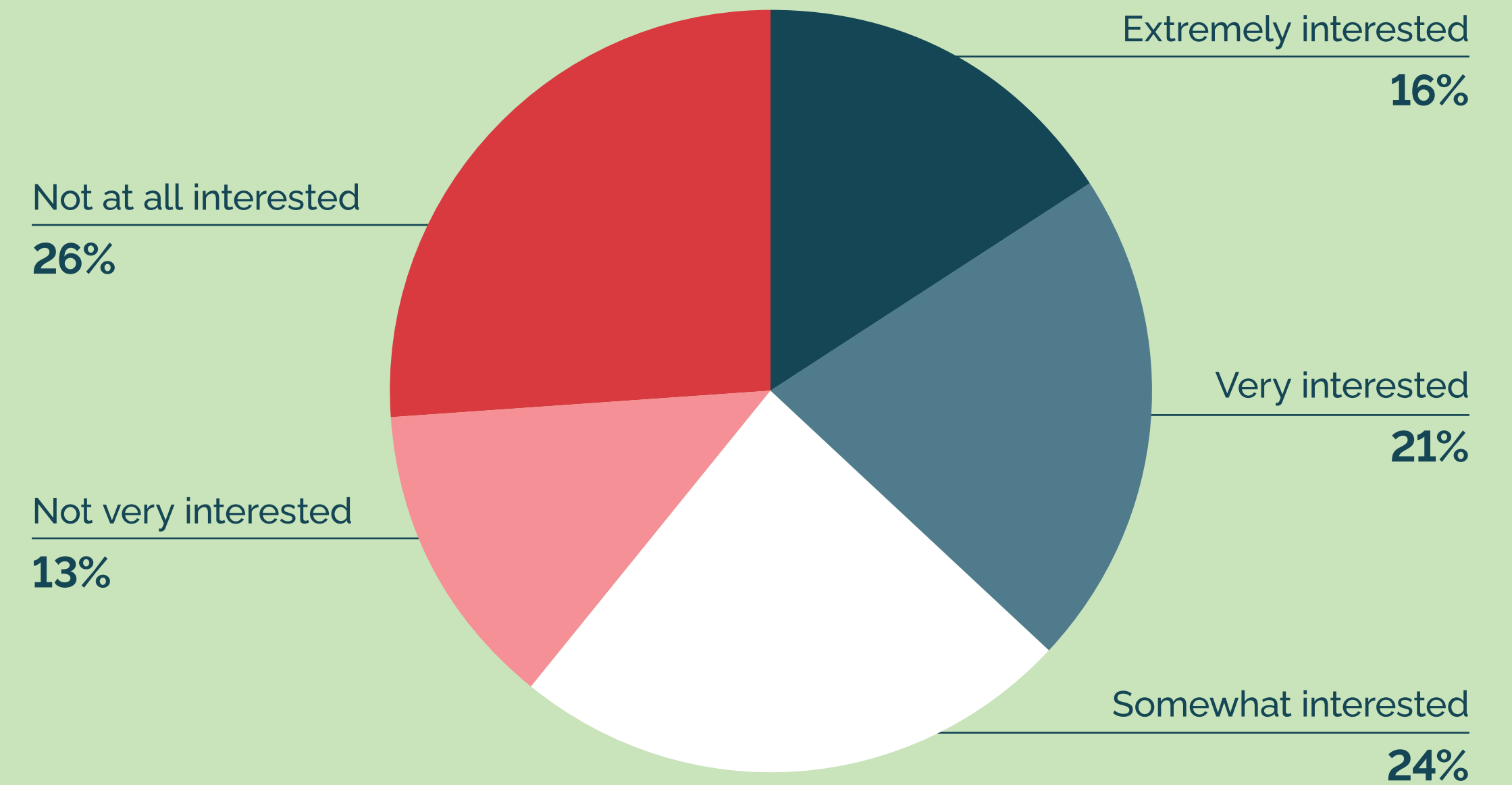
Travel Sentiment Score Components

While perceptions of safety, available time and travel budget have declined year over year, interest in travel among Fort Myers prospects is on the rise. Notably, both travel affordability and perceived safety have improved since this summer, despite the broader annual decline.

Source: MMGY's 2024 *Portrait of American Travelers*® "Fall Edition - Lee County"

Travel Intent

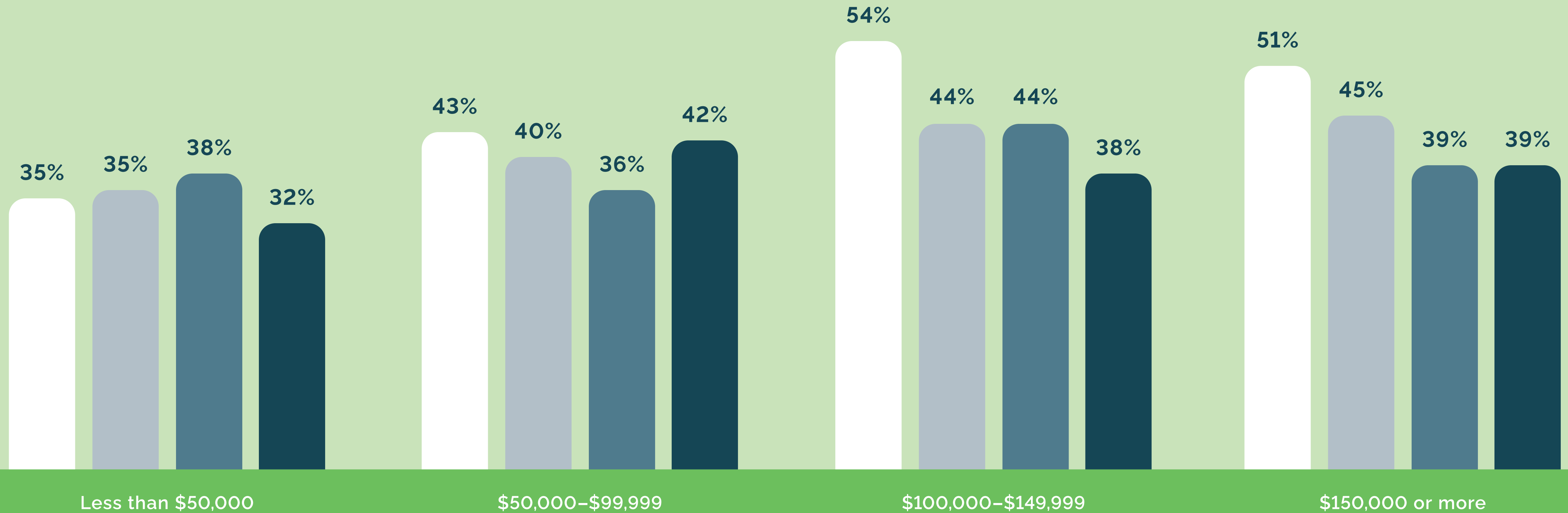
Overall interest in visiting Fort Myers is down slightly from fall 2023, with about 4 in 10 (37%) U.S. leisure travelers showing interest in visiting. Among Boomers, however, interest is on the rise with a 7% increase YOY.



Interest in Visiting Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods by Generation

■ Fall '22 ■ Fall '23 ■ Fall '24

Travel Intent (continued)

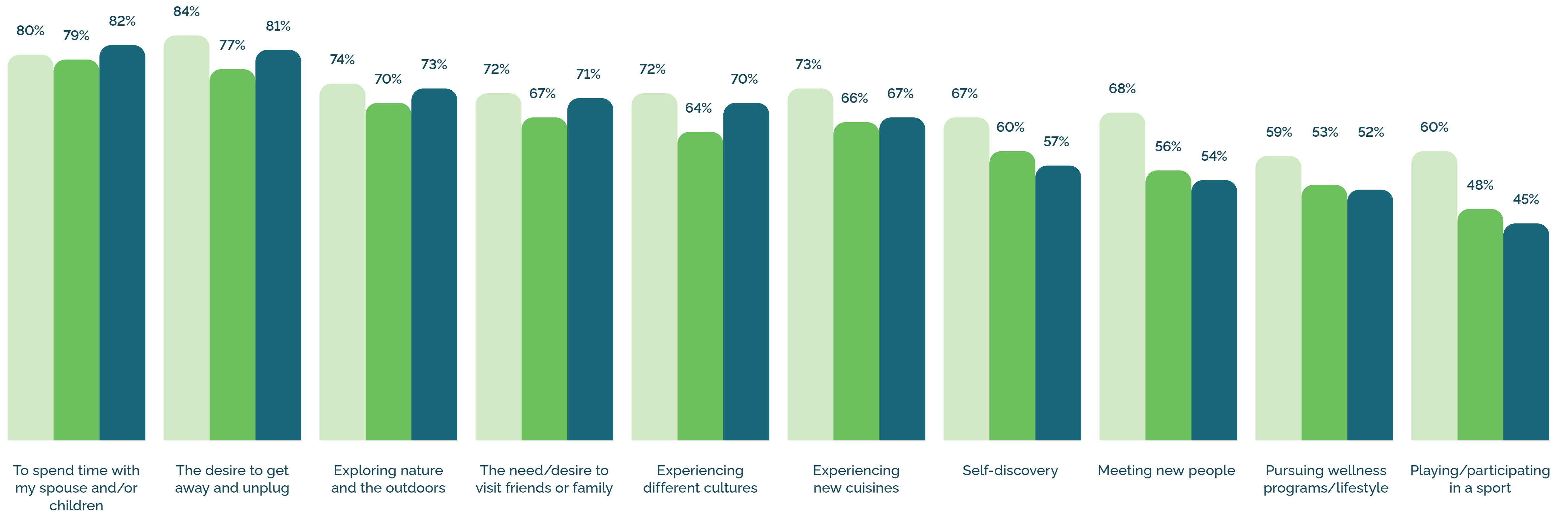


Interest in Visiting Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods by Household Income

■ Fall '21 ■ Fall '22 ■ Fall '23 ■ Fall '24

Travel Motivators

Traveling to get away and unplug or to spend time with family continue to be top motivators for travel, though the desire to experience different cultures saw the greatest increase YOY (+6%).

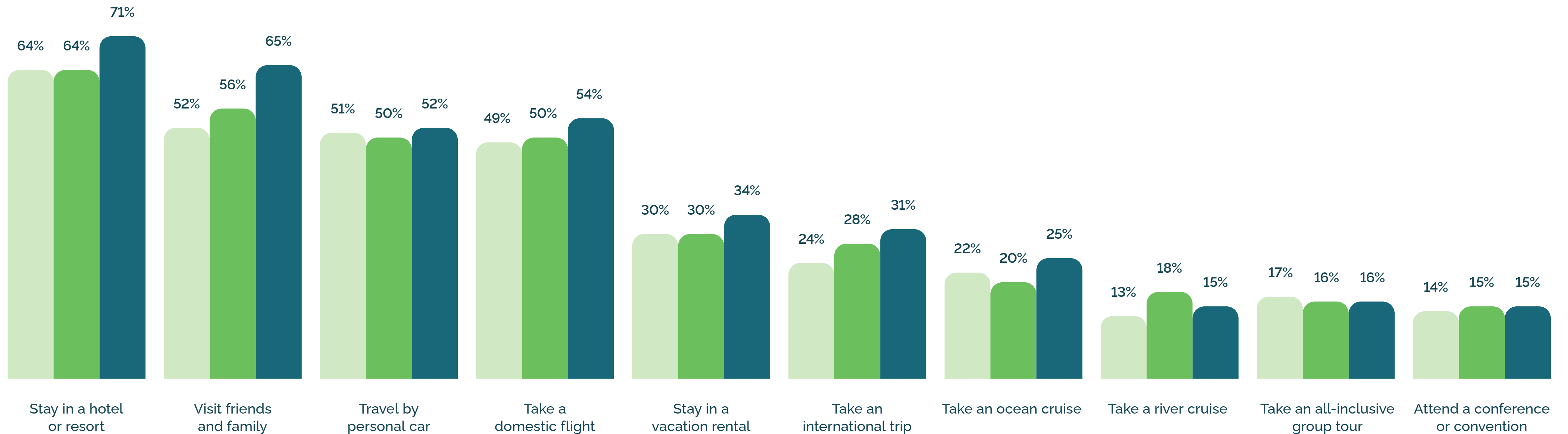


Vacation Motivators for Fort Myers Prospects

■ Fall '22 ■ Fall '23 ■ Fall '24

Travel Expectations

More travelers report intentions to stay in a hotel or at a resort in the next six months. However, the greatest increase came from travelers who intend to visit friends or family (+9%).



Travel Expectations in the Next 6 Months for Fort Myers Prospects

■ Fall '22 ■ Fall '23 ■ Fall '24

Arrivals

Azira measures arrivals to Lee County, giving us insights on a range of information including the visitor's origin market, their length of stay and the places they visited. We use this information to build strategies for target markets, booking windows and different activities to promote in our advertising.

In FY23/24, Azira observed 1.8 million visitors — with 81% of visitors spending at least one night in Lee County. Visitors tend to stay an average of 3.1 nights.

Arrival volume is trending in-state, with Tampa as the top origin market with 14% share of all trips. Miami and Orlando are the

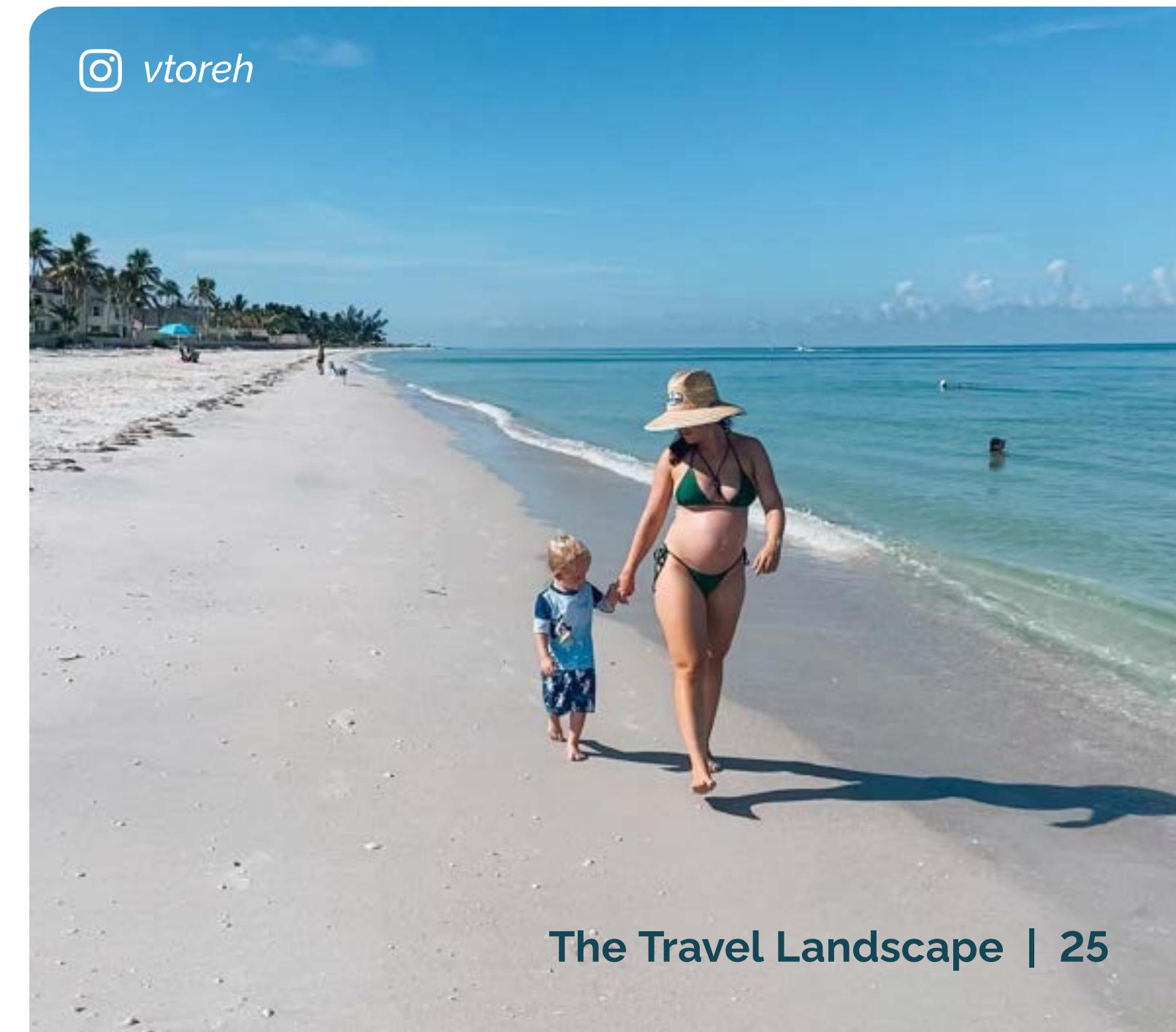
second- and third-highest origin markets for visitation. Overall, 38% of visitors are arriving from distances of 50–249 miles, indicating that in-state travel continues to drive heavy visitation. Out-of-state markets continue to favor the Upper Midwest/Great Lakes region including Chicago, New York City, Detroit, Minneapolis, and Indianapolis. Visitation share is still highest for the fly markets, with 57% of all arrivals coming from distances of 500+ miles. We did see increased share in visitation from our market blitz cities including Detroit, Minneapolis and Cincinnati compared to FY22/23.

(Source: Azira/Tourism Economics)

macarthur.k



vtoreh





Booking Windows

According to recent Sojern ecosystem data, consumers are searching for flights with longer booking windows and lodging with much shorter booking windows. Forty-five percent of flight bookings are occurring 30+ days out, while 52% of lodging bookings are occurring 0–7 days out. More than 85% of lodging bookings were made for 1–3 days, with an average stay of 2.1 nights, suggesting short-term visitation to Lee County. (Source: Sojern)

Expedia data continues to show nearly 23% of all bookings are completed within 0–6 days of travel, and the second-highest volume (22%) occurs 31–60 days out. Visitors trend toward longer booking windows ahead of winter and spring high seasons and shorter booking windows as we transition to summer and fall. (Source: Expedia)

Expedia data indicates longer stays with vacation rentals, as 48% of vacation rental stays last 6–9 days. Historically, the summer season brings a higher volume of vacation rental stays lasting six days or more, aligning with the overall average. (Source: Expedia)



Media Consumption

Next year will mark a turning point for the decline of traditional TV.

Social media will beat TV in audience for the first time, per a forecast by market research firm EMARKETER. Social media is on pace for 236 million users in 2025, versus 229 million viewers of broadcast TV. The figures represent Americans who use social media or view TV at least once per month. Alphabet's YouTube, the online video platform, already surpassed TV in 2023, with 237 million viewers. Consider that at TV's peak in 2011, it had a little more than 300 million viewers.

Among Gen Zers, YouTube trounces traditional TV. It's been used monthly by nearly 90% of 12- to 27-year-olds this year, per EMARKETER. Meanwhile, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat also boast more users than TV viewers in this age range.

The trend points to growing advertising dollars flowing to social networks and short-form videos. A bright spot for TV? Posting TV content on social apps.

(Source: The Kiplinger Letter, September 12, 2024 edition)

Meeting Planner Insights

Although meeting planners are less optimistic about their events than last year, they continue to report that in-person meetings are highly important to them (4.2 out of 5 overall sentiment).

Meeting planners are increasingly frustrated by rising costs, especially A/V costs charged by hotels and event spaces, which make planning in-person meetings difficult.

The top challenges when planning meetings over the next year:

- 87.8% increasing costs (hotels, suppliers, food and beverage, etc.)
- 22.7% facility staffing levels
- 21.5% room block issues

Types of off-site options used most often:

- 73% restaurants
- 41.4% historic buildings/landmarks
- 38.5% museums
- 32% breweries/wineries

Types of activities included in meetings:

- 81% networking events
- 37.9% team-building activities
- 35% wellness components
- 27.6% golf
- 21% spa activities

(Sources: *Meetings Today Market Trends, January 2024*,
Northstar Meetings Industry PULSE Survey, July/August 2024)



FY24/25 Plan

04

Marketing

Overarching Plan Objective:

Drive increased visitation and visitor spend.



Core Pillars of Success

Defined Measurement Strategy

Provide a clear purpose for each objective and associated measures of success to match the consumer journey. Continue to refine the VCB's research program so that data and KPIs can be used more easily to share market insights over time, including quality of place.

Purposeful Planning

Maintain a full-funnel approach, aligning media, messaging and audiences with travel motivators, organizational objectives and the evolving destination attributes.

Friends and Relatives

Continue establishing visiting friends and relatives (VFR) as a target market.

Data-Led Strategies

Leverage vendor data and insights to reframe targeting strategy, aligning segments with changing guest patterns.

Be Ready

Keep an agile approach, knowing that changing destination conditions may require ongoing pivots in strategy, targeting and execution.

Uplift Partners

Support consumer brand messaging with co-op programming based on partner needs and feedback.

Thought Leadership

Identify opportunities to support placemaking efforts that positively impact the visitor economy and enhance quality of life for residents.

Champion Tourism Impacts

Seek out opportunities to educate partners and residents, and demonstrate the impacts of optimizing the visitor economy.



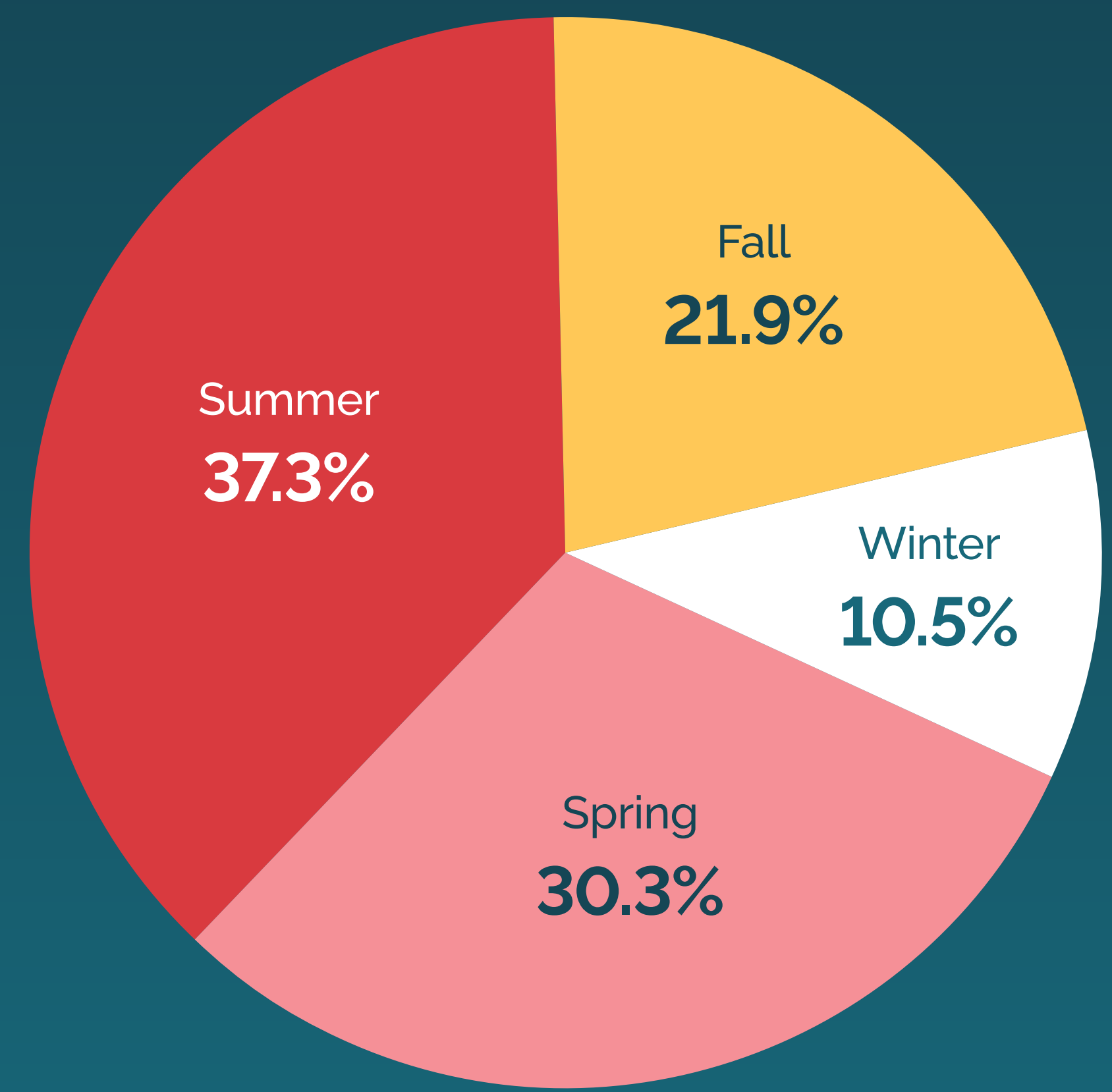
Approach to Seasonality

Overview

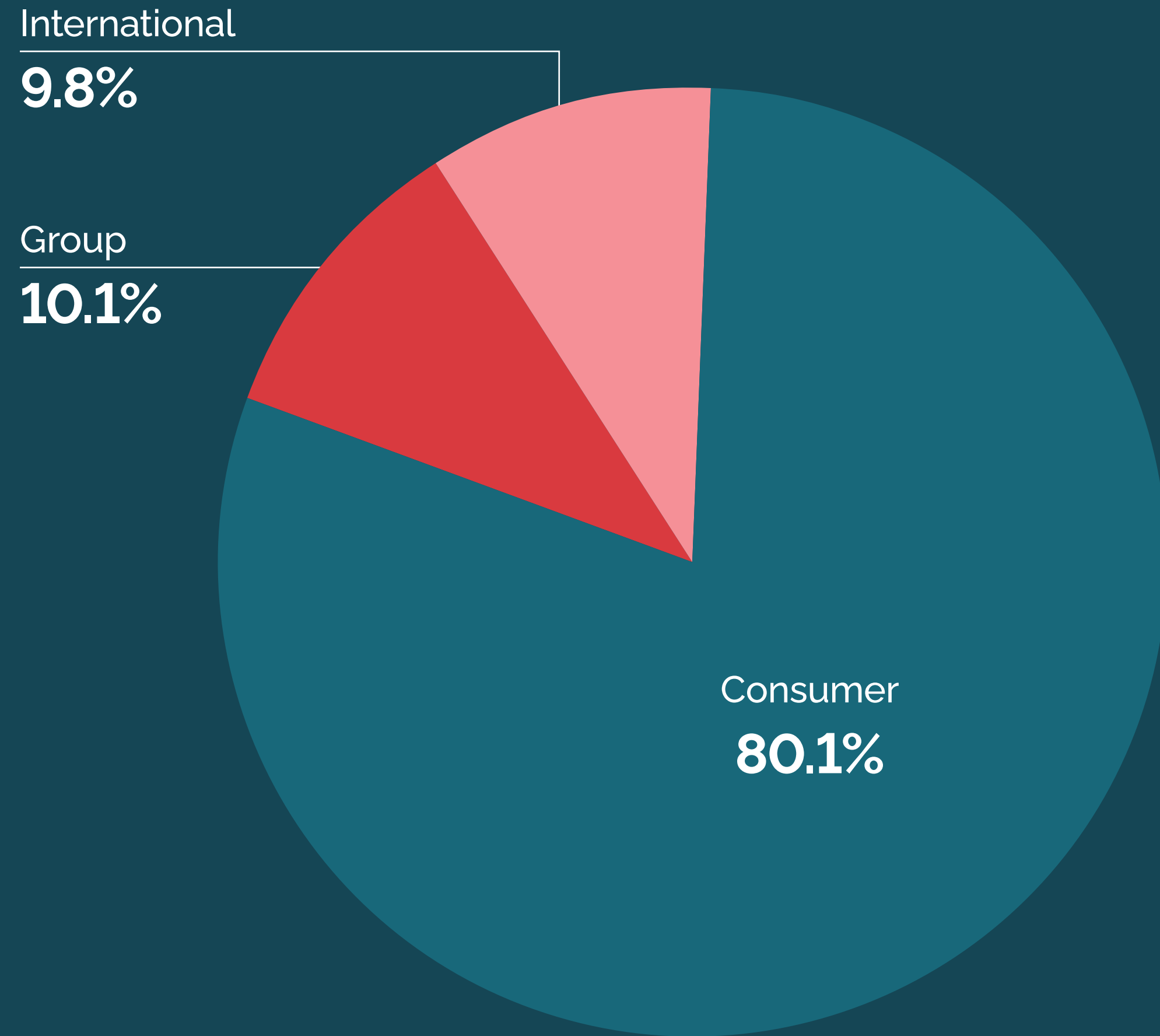
Launch media in market 60 days before each season to align with search and booking windows as travelers begin planning their trips.

SEASONALITY		
SEASON	TRAVEL PERIODS	MEDIA FLIGHTING
Winter	Dec 1-Mar 14	Oct 1-Dec 31
Spring	Mar 15-May 31	Jan 1-Mar 31
Summer	Jun 1-Aug 31	Apr 1-Jul 4
Fall	Sep 1-Nov 30	Jul 5-Sep 30

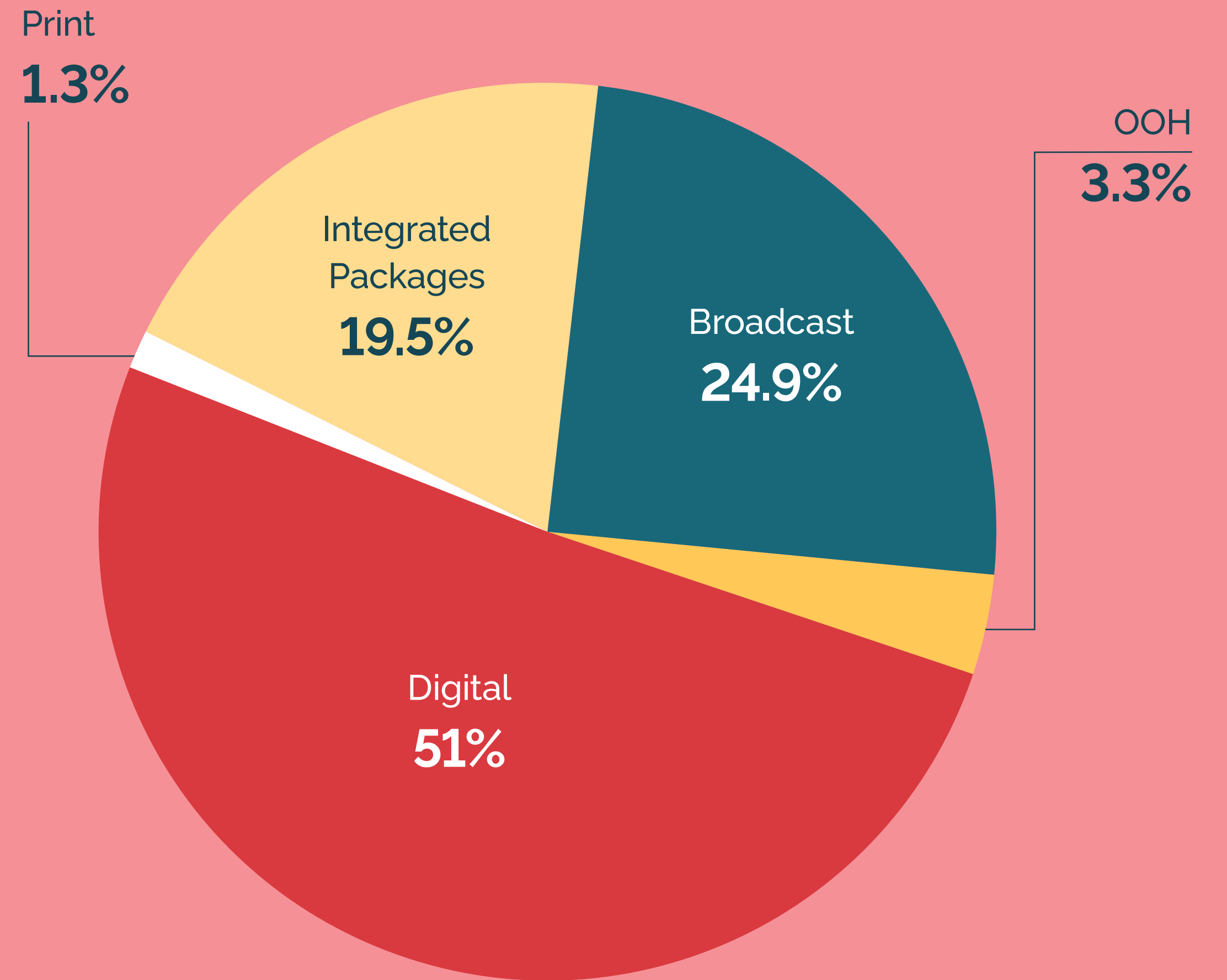
FY24/25 Seasonal Consumer Investment



FY24/25 Audience Allocation



FY24/25 Consumer Media Mix

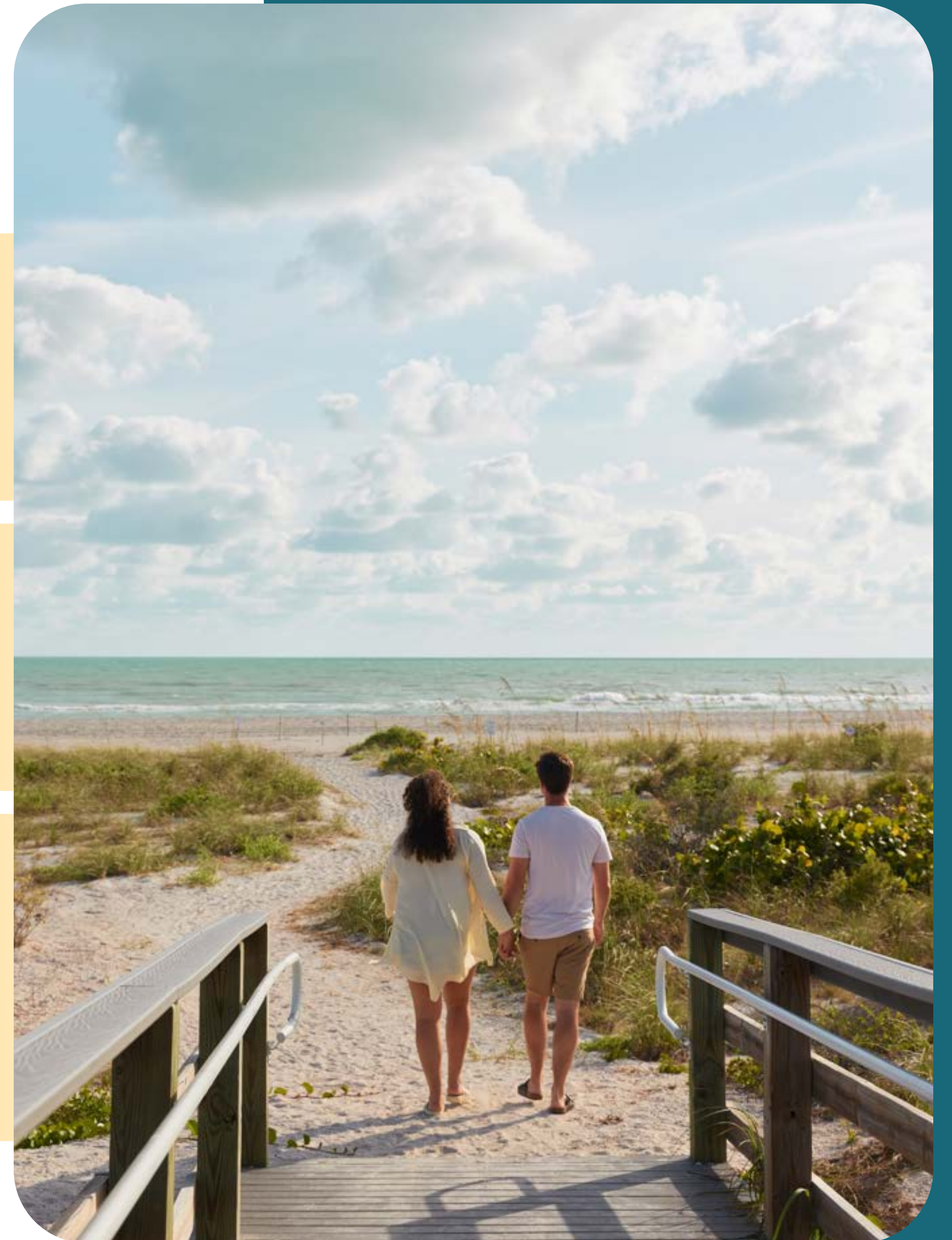


Approach to Markets

Maintain a **market strategy** focused on both **traveler intent** and **geolocation**.

Deploy a **data-driven** approach to **evaluate both historical and emerging markets**.

Customize **markets** and **seasonal weighting**, adjusting per the **unique needs** of each season.





Target Audiences

Audience Strategy

- Focus strategies to reach a more qualified audience based on who is currently visiting.
- Continue leaning into addressable audiences and leverage for year-round, 1:1 prospecting.
- Utilize contextual, behavioral, purchase, search, and social targeting to capitalize on demonstrated intent.
- Target past visitors from 2021–2022 and encourage them to return.



Addressable Audiences

Social Sophisticates

Social Sophisticates are active and wealthy travelers. They are conscientious consumers who value quality over price, are extremely brand loyal, and have high expectations of the services they receive. They read reviews before they purchase and want their brands to be environmentally friendly and socially responsible.



Travel Interests:

Parks, Wildlife, Nightlife, Active Vacations

Ages:

45-64

Household
Income:

\$155K

95%

Married

28%

Have Children





Addressable Audiences

Family Fun-Seekers

Family Fun-Seekers are family-focused, sociable trailblazers. They lead busy lives, so spending time together and making new memories are important to them. They prefer vacations where they can do a lot of activities together as a family, and lifestyle presentation is also a high priority.



Travel Interests:

Parks, Amusement Parks, Boating, Camping, Golfing

Ages:

35-64

Household
Income:

\$135K

98%

Married

100%

Have Children





Addressable Audiences

Savvy Explorers

Savvy Explorers are community-centric, bring diverse perspectives and immerse themselves in local culture. When traveling, having new experiences is a big deciding factor in their choices, and they place an emphasis on unique culinary opportunities. They also like to research online recommendations ahead of time.



Travel Interests:

Eco-Travel, Arts and Culture, Photography, Zoos

Ages:

25-54

Household
Income:

\$87K

71%

Married

52%

Have Children





Addressable Audiences

Timeless Travelers

Timeless Travelers are health-conscious, easygoing and put comfort first. Most are retired or empty nesters. Spending time and celebrating special occasions with friends and family is important to them. They enjoy their leisure time and a slower pace of life.



Travel Interests:

Parks, Wildlife, Boating, Camping, Golfing, Personal Health

Ages:

55+

Household
Income:

\$150K-
\$750K

81%

Married

15%

Have Children





Addressable Audiences

Affluent Adventurers

Affluent Adventurers are pragmatic, open-minded and curious explorers. They seek culinary experiences but are known to prioritize their health, also pursuing outdoor activities and natural environments. They are loyal to brands they like and prefer brands that make them feel valued.



Travel Interests:

Local Food, Hiking, Fine Dining, Galleries

Ages:

45-64

Household
Income:

\$250K+

90%

Married

45%

Have Children



Channel Mix

Consumer Approach

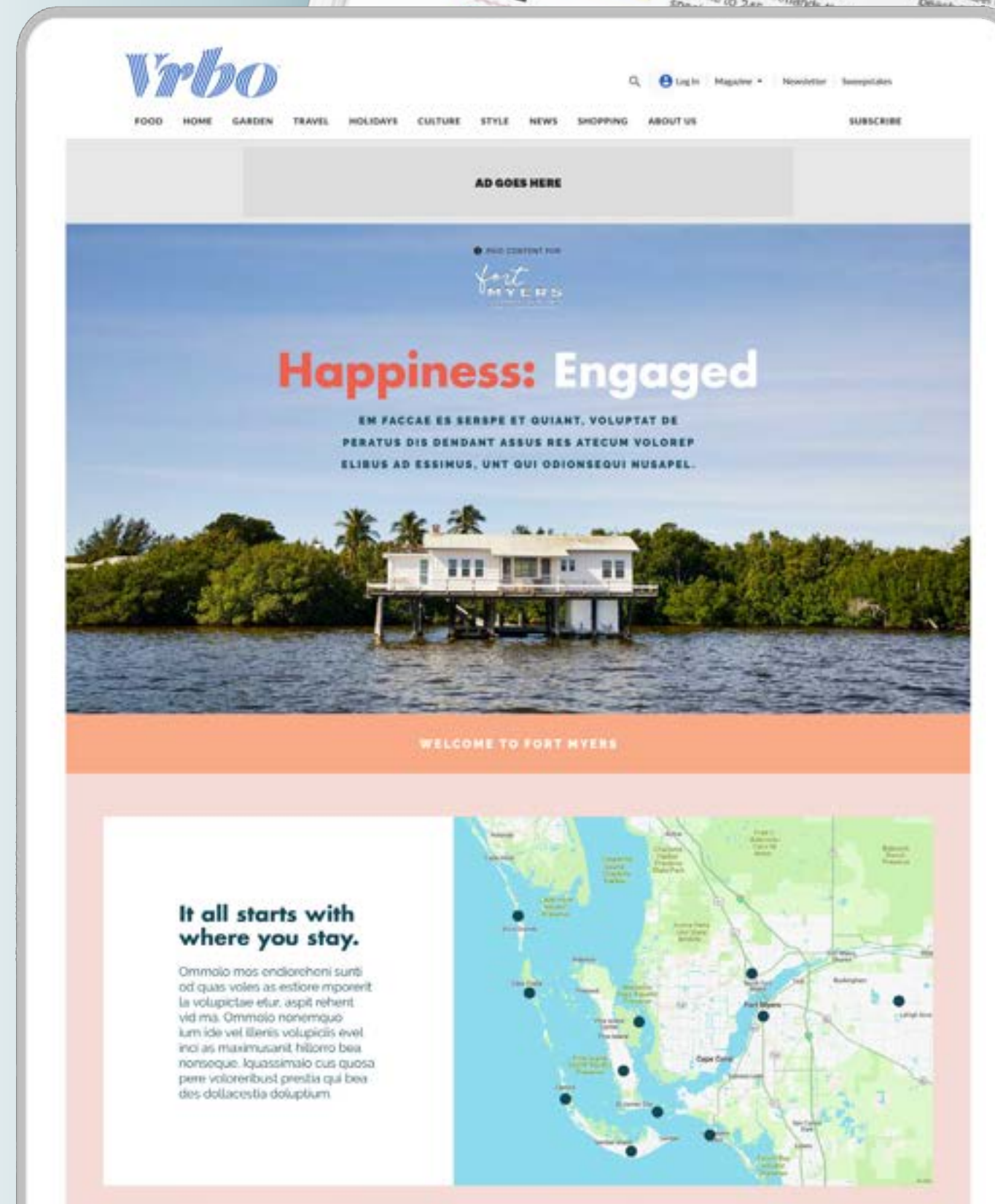
- Use data and insights from vendors to align target segments with changing visitor patterns.
- Maintain a full-funnel approach where media, message and audience align with travel motivators and our area's evolving attributes.
- Test new targeting, placements and vendor options and apply learnings to future seasons.
- Launch innovative campaigns that inspire visitors by leveraging our buying power and value adds.
- Support our consumer and group messaging with a co-op program that supports partner needs and feedback.
- Match each step of the consumer journey with a clear marketing objective and measure of success.

Key Vendors:

- Condé Nast
- Dotdash Meredith
- Expedia
- Garden & Gun
- Matador Network
- Meta
- The New York Times
- Pandora
- Pinterest
- Priceline
- Spotify
- Sojern
- Tastemade
- Tripadvisor
- Vrbo

Integrated Media Approach Mega Campaign

This integrated campaign brings together the brand power of Dotdash Meredith and Vrbo for a large-scale promotion of vacation rentals throughout our area. Key placements feature print spreads in Midwest Living, Southern Living and Travel + Leisure. Digital custom content and paid social influencer content work with print to promote iconic and new things to do throughout our area. This includes a custom Vrbo landing page promoting vacation rental inventory with the ultimate goal of inspiring visitors to plan and book their trip.





Integrated Media Approach

Garden & Gun

Let's bring Fort Myers flavor to the ATL! This legendary Southern-focused publication is hosting a menu takeover and Sunday Supper in one of our key markets at their esteemed Garden & Gun Club located at The Battery Atlanta™. The event features a Fort Myers-inspired cocktail menu, a signature dish and a dinner experience for Garden & Gun readers. As part of the program, we receive a recap video on Garden & Gun social handles, as well as features in print, email and the digital space.

Integrated Media Approach

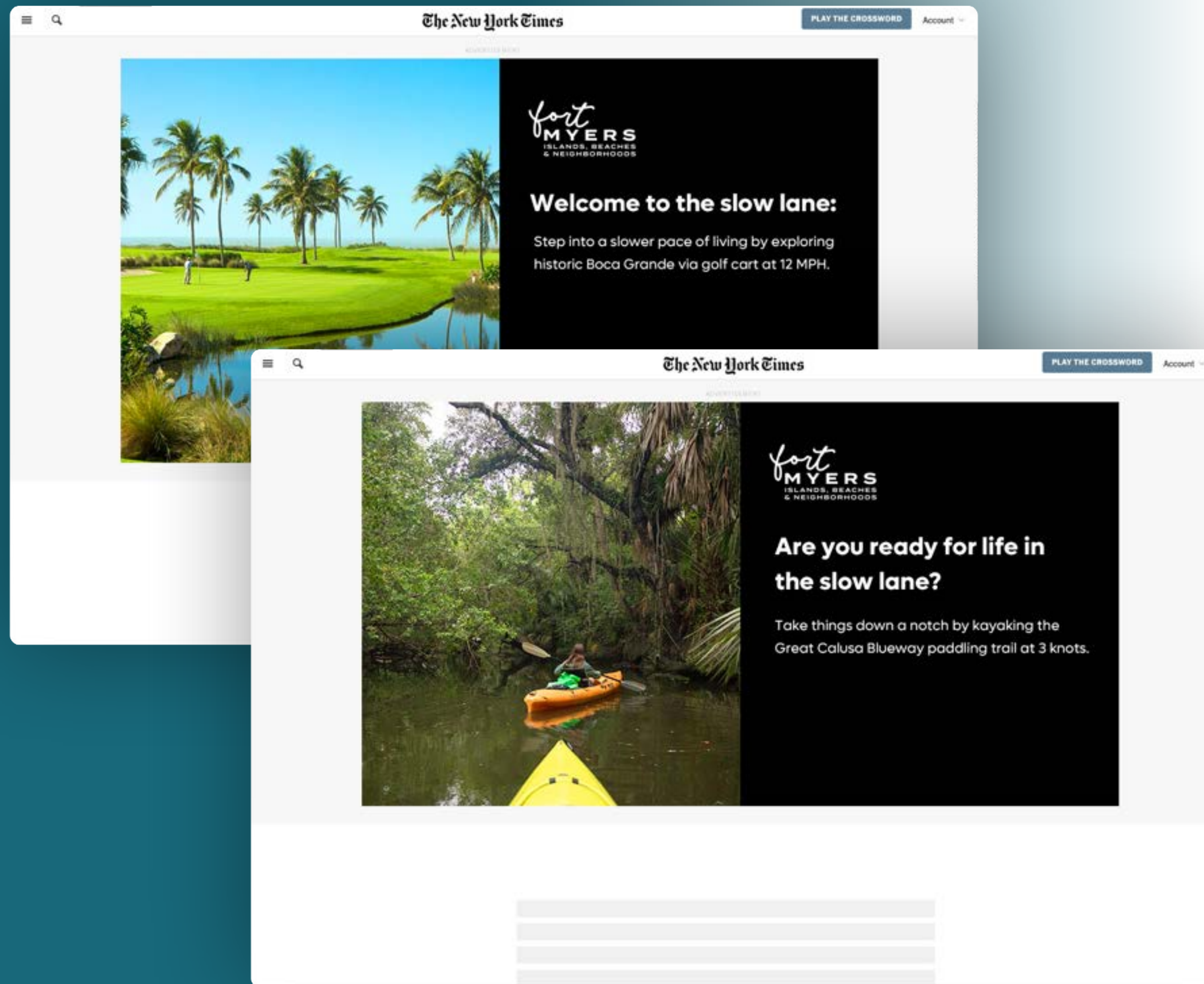
Amazon CTV

This year, connected TV placements will appear throughout Amazon Prime's premium inventory. Each spot targets one of our addressable audiences throughout key target markets.

Travelzoo

This broadcast media event features live segment videos airing across 15+ local and national news outlets that align with key target markets. The program includes a destination showcase highlighting stories, images and videos of Fort Myers and the surrounding areas. Email, native ads and social media will also promote the showcase in our key international markets of Germany, Canada and the UK.





Integrated Media Approach

The New York Times

Time for another great partnership! This package includes a paid post with social content on The New York Times travel handle as well as a custom audio podcast spot. The concept showcases ways visitors can connect with the most relaxed versions of themselves thanks to the slower pace of our islands, beaches and neighborhoods. Featured photos and illustrations highlight the different “speeds” at which visitors can experience our area.

Channel Mix

Group Approach

(Meeting Planners, Travel Advisors, Weddings)

- Continue to focus on our key group categories: meeting planners, travel advisors and weddings.
- Align high-performing placements across email and display to promote key seasons.
- Target Florida and Southeast markets with a history and likelihood of planning group events.
- Track, examine and learn from engagement and efficiency metrics.

Meeting Planners:

- EproDirect
- Florida Trend
- FSAE
- The Meeting Magazines
- Meetings Today
- Northstar
- Prevue Meetings & Incentives
- Skift/EventMB
- Sojern

Travel Advisors:

- Expedia TAAP
- Insider Travel Report
- Northstar
- Questex
- Recommend
- VAX VacationAccess
- Wellness Travel University

Weddings:

- Bridal Guide
- Honeyfund
- The Knot
- Love Stories TV
- Maharani Weddings
- Pinterest
- WeddingSutra

International Approach

- Maintain our presence in the well-established markets of Canada, Germany and the UK.
- Drive inbound visitation and visitor spend by capitalizing on rising international travel.
- Run media campaigns during key travel-planning periods.
- Learn from new search and booking patterns as they return to pre-pandemic levels.
- Support consumer messaging with co-op placements that feature even more conversion tactics.

Key Vendors:

- Air Miles
- Expedia
- LastMinute.com
- Skyscanner
- Sojern
- Travelzoo
- Tripadvisor
- Vrbo

International Market Mix and Seasonality

		2024			2025												
		OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	
CANADA	Brand	Green					Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Green		Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal
	Co-Op	Dark Teal	Light Green				Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Light Green		Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal
	Travel	Light Yellow						Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Light Yellow			
GERMANY	Brand	Green															
	Co-Op	Dark Teal	Light Green								Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal
	Travel	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Light Yellow					Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Light Yellow		Dark Teal	Dark Teal
UNITED KINGDOM	Brand	Green															
	Co-Op	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Light Green				Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Light Green		Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal
	Travel	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Light Yellow					Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Dark Teal	Light Yellow				Dark Teal

Owned Channels: Overviews, Strategies and Tactics

ControlTower Website Personalization Platform

- **Overview**

- ControlTower allows us to make several personalizations across VisitFortMyers.com based on known user data. We are able to observe the type of content someone engages with and then personalize the homepage and other pages across the website supporting those interests with images, videos, headlines, supporting content, unique calls-to-action, and recommended content.

- **Develop Zero-Party Data Website Experiences**

- Rather than always inferring a website visitor's intent, we're developing a homepage module called Website Concierge that will ask a question and provide data on what interests visitors. By clicking a selection,



Creating a unified digital ecosystem.

their website experience can be personalized starting with a quick content refresh that provides instant gratification.

- For example, we could ask, “*What kind of trip are you planning? Let us know below and we’ll personalize your website experience.*” Users could respond:
 - *Family Trip*
 - *Couples Trip*
 - *Friends Trip*
 - *Solo Trip*
- This is a great example of zero-party data. This means no personal information was provided, but they have still communicated the type of trip that interests them most. Their preference will be saved for future website sessions.

- This approach also creates valuable business intelligence data, such as understanding the percentage of website visitors interested in planning a family vacation versus a romantic getaway.

- **Integrate ControlTower Website Personalization Platform With Bandwango Experience Pass Platform**

- Bandwango is the digital platform used to create our mobile-exclusive [Sun Saver Passport](#) and [Calusa Blueway Challenge](#).
- New for this year, we’ll be able to track Bandwango pass sign-ups in ControlTower. This allows for more timely email communication, improves insights into conversion, and provides the basis for better paid social advertising.





- **Implement Industry-Leading Text Messaging Marketing Program**
 - Large publishers such as The Washington Post are creating mobile marketing programs to keep their audiences connected and engaged. So far, we have not seen other destinations making SMS/MMS text message marketing part of their marketing mix, so we are seizing this opportunity to do it first and do it well.
 - Here, we would also gain business intelligence data. If users subscribe to receive travel updates during their trip, we'll know when they're traveling, for how long, and when they signed up for text messages relative to their trip dates.

Web

- **Continue to Emphasize Marquee Pages**

- Our evolution from temporary pages to content-rich, long-term marquee pages is well underway. For example, rather than creating new Spring Training pages for 2024, 2025, 2026, etc., we now have a general Spring Training marquee page that acts as a hub and is refreshed annually. We will expand this tactic for areas of interest such as Manatees and trip styles like Affordable Travel and Solo Travel.
- By establishing marquee pages, we help build website search authority around topics aligned with our area while saving time on web content creation.

- **Continue to Expand Navigation**

- We can help website visitors dive even deeper into what the Fort Myers area offers while also increasing website engagement. Simply, we will expand the navigation subcategories under the Things to Do website tab, such as “Things to Do by Category” and “Things to Do by Trip Type.”
- Additionally, we will develop featured content zones within the expanded navigation for better promotion of timely and prioritized content.

- **Merchandise for No Dead Ends**

- Continuing the theme of content discoverability, we will design, develop and implement a smart content module that recommends content similar to the page the user is currently viewing.
- We will accomplish this functionality with tags that already exist, such as “Parks & Preserves” and “Food & Drink.”



insta.pollo.gram



Social

- Adapt to ever-changing social media and travel landscapes.
 - Conduct quarterly brainstorms to align content themes and messaging initiatives with content pillars, seasonality and ongoing social media trends.
 - Continue to create diverse and customized content for each platform (e.g., short, dynamic videos for Reels and interactive content such as polls and Q&A's on Instagram stories).
- Generate ownable, shareable social media content that drives awareness and engagement.
 - Continue to prioritize video content, sharing a minimum of two high-quality videos per week that highlight key aspects of our area such as local attractions, events and scenic views.
 - Ensure all content aligns with our core content pillars while connecting with different target audiences based on their interests.

- Collaborate with influencers to share unique experiences through authentic storytelling.
 - Continue to foster relationships with local creators for quick-turn and timely campaign initiatives.
 - Work with creators to tell unique and authentic stories, highlighting our unique attributes beyond travel (e.g., conservationists, historians, foodies, golfers, etc.).
 - Extend the impact of influencer partnerships by repurposing their content across various marketing channels, including paid media campaigns, dedicated editorials and website landing pages, email marketing campaigns, and customized trip-planning itineraries.
- Drive traffic to website for further inspiration and trip planning.
 - Showcase editorial content that is both timely and relevant to the season or current travel trends, such as “Winter Getaways” or “Top Summer Activities,” by sharing it across social channels.



Messaging Strategy

Brand Story Pillars

Purpose

- Align our core assets and values with those of our audiences in order to connect emotionally.
- Drive conversion by motivating our audience to engage with messages that interest and inspire them.
- Optimize messaging to resonate with our audiences and build a foundation of learning.



Brand Story Pillars

On the Water

Being on, in and around the water is key to local life. From the Gulf to the islands and every waterway in between, Lee County protects its nature and wildlife for all to enjoy.

Bright Spots

Every Lee County neighborhood has its own unique identity. They're what make the area so special and set the backdrop for stories that inspire visitors to have a different experience every time they visit.

Off the Water

On land, Lee County's unique geography and abundant natural offerings provide sights, sounds and adventure unavailable elsewhere. This includes visual arts and culture, musical performances, breweries and distilleries, and walkable downtown areas.

Shoulder-Drop

There's a relaxed vibe in Lee County that puts visitors at ease as soon as they arrive, from our slower-paced lifestyle to locals' friendly, laid-back nature, and from regional flavors to a variety of museums, historic sites, shopping districts, and more.

Just Feels Right Brand Campaign

Our audiences are living with multiple stressors on a daily basis. They're looking for ways to escape feeling overwhelmed. Whether they're traveling as a family or without kids, we'll appeal to their desire to feel they're in the right place and empower them to put their well-being at the top of their to-do list.

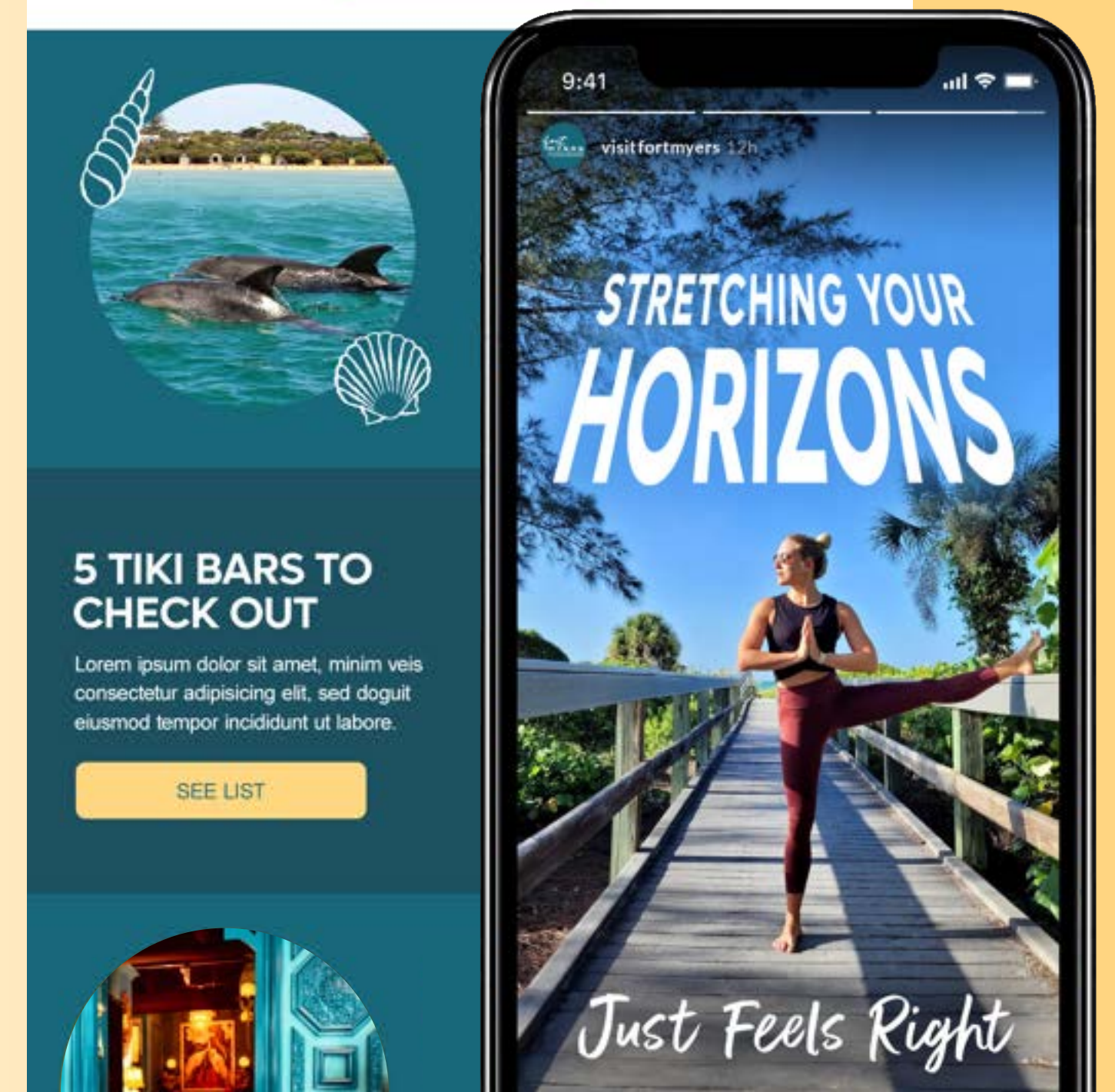
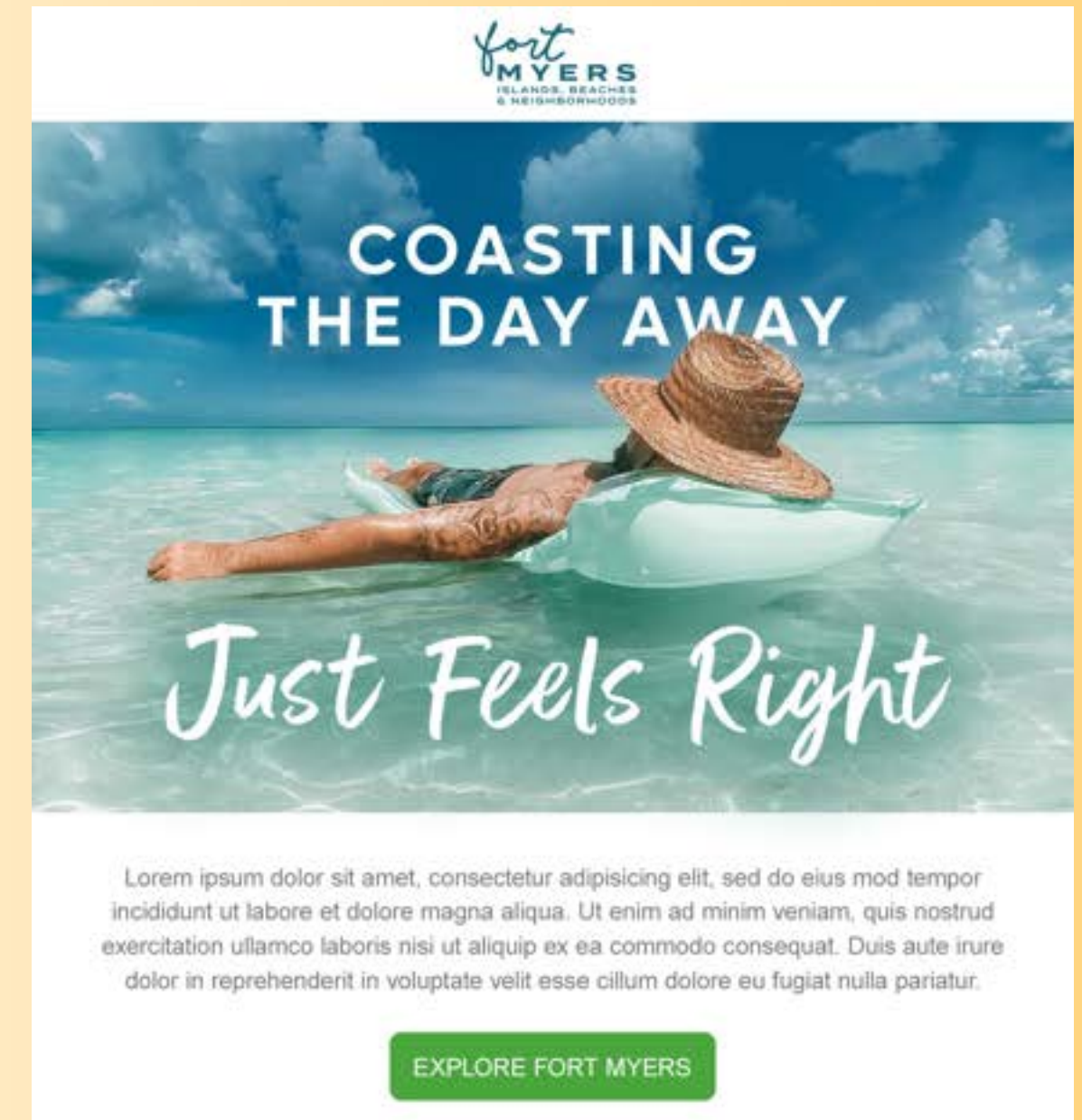
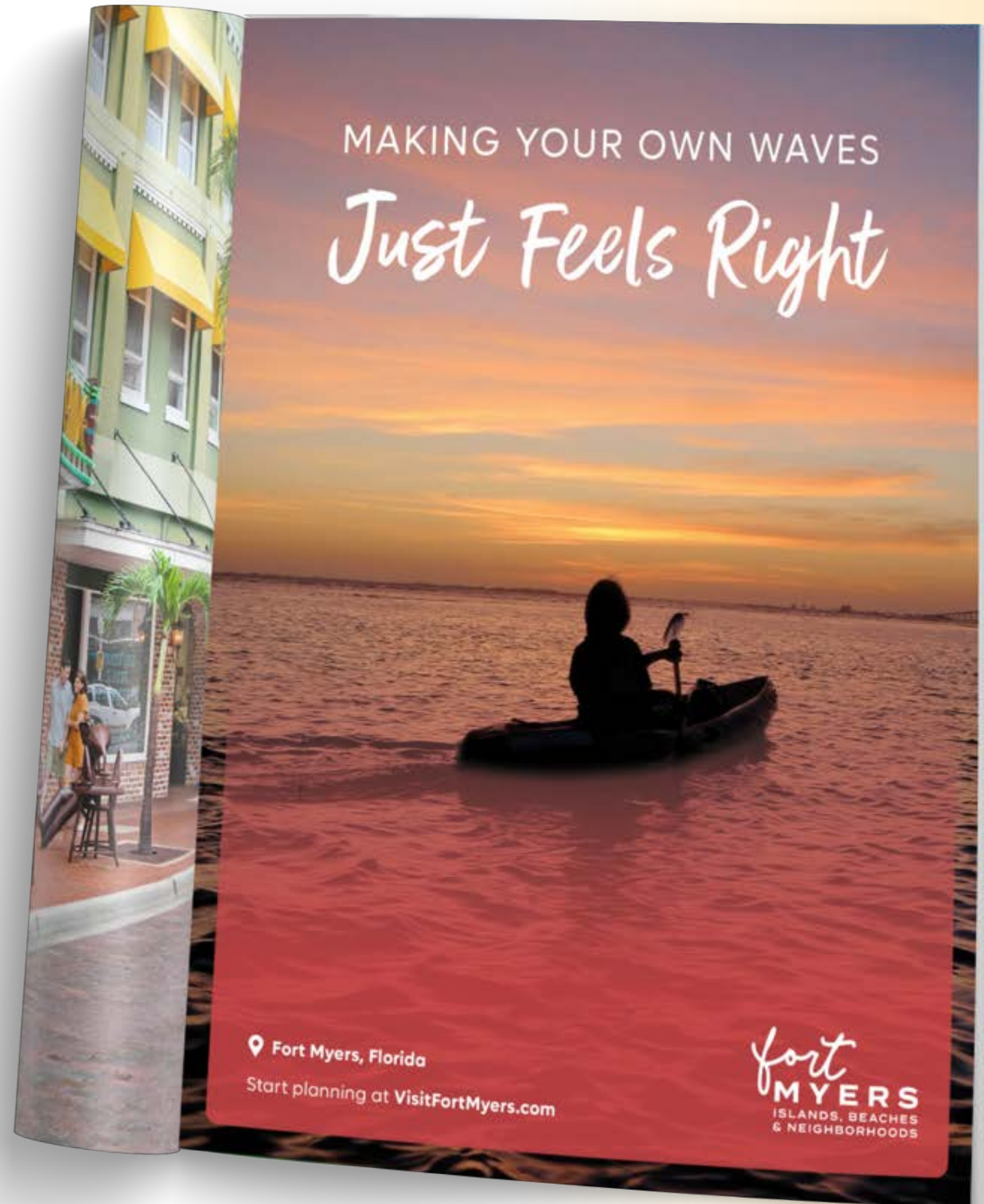
The Just Feels Right campaign shows how much easier it is to feel relaxed, adventurous, connected, playful, and curious throughout our islands, beaches and neighborhoods. On every trip, you're free to enjoy whatever you do, big or small, because you can let go of what's weighing you down. Everyday worries melt away. Simple joys become more vivid. There's finally time to feel whole again.



Just Feels Right Brand Campaign

We'll show that Fort Myers is the place to follow what feels right and reclaim your sense of being present. Because when you find your place, you keep coming back.

Watch the Just Feels Right introduction video.





Weddings Campaign

In cooperation with Bridal Guide Magazine, this campaign's stunning photos continue to showcase our beautiful backdrops and the special feeling of a destination wedding throughout the islands, beaches and neighborhoods of Fort Myers.

Meetings Campaign

Our new meetings print and digital campaign launched earlier in 2024. This split-screen approach shows that our natural settings support the kind of relaxation and inspiration that allow for creative thinking and productive outcomes. When work meets play, meeting planners meet their clients' goals and expectations, proving once again that Fort Myers helps meeting planners create more successful meetings.

We're also launching a new interactive video and stand-alone informational videos. Meeting planners are extremely busy and want specific details about prospective destinations. The interactive video's seamless functionality tailors the viewing experience to the exact Fort Myers meetings content each planner is looking for.





Digital Visitor Guide

The 2025 Visitor Guide carries on the successful, digital-only approach of last year's award-winning edition, which allowed for updates as we recovered from Hurricane Ian. As storms continue to impact our destination, the refreshed Visitor Guide remains an invaluable resource with the flexibility to refresh content as needed. Moreover, the digital format entices with engaging videos and sounds that a printed guide can't and provides links back to our website where visitors can find specific information they're looking for, making planning trips a breeze!

Sales

Essential to the VCB's mission is the sales effort. The sales team promotes the area and sources business to Fort Myers' islands, beaches and neighborhoods. Business targets include meeting professionals, the travel trade, and wedding and leisure groups, all of which positively influence the visitor economy in Lee County.



Core Pillars of Success

Defined Measurement Strategy

Provide clear purpose for each objective and the associated measures of success to match the travel professional journey. Utilize the VCB's research program so that data and KPIs can be more easily used to share market insights over time, including quality of place.

Purposeful Planning

Align sales activities with media messaging and target market segments.

Friends and Relatives

Recognize visiting friends and relatives (VFR) as a growing transient market.

Data-Led Strategies

Utilize attained data and seek the most efficient, appropriate and highest-producing sales activities for targeting markets identified by data insights.

Be Ready

Keep an agile approach, knowing that changing destination conditions may require ongoing updates to strategy, targeting and execution.

Uplift Partners

Take advantage of memberships, value-adds and sponsorships. Support consumer, travel trade and group sales activities with cost-effective co-op programming featuring trade show and sales mission partnerships.

Thought Leadership

Identify opportunities and support placemaking efforts that positively impact the visitor economy and enhance quality of life for residents.

Champion Brand and Tourism Impact

Seek out opportunities to educate partners and residents on the destination brand and demonstrate the impact of optimizing the visitor economy.

Domestic Sales

Overview

In our dynamic environment, we have adapted in extraordinary ways to sustain and grow the visitor economy. While some challenges may be daunting, it is crucial to remember the vast opportunities that lie ahead. Uncovering these opportunities is our top priority.

During FY23/24, group sales RFP sourcing gained momentum as the area recovered from the hurricane. Throughout the year, our steadfast commitment to boosting tourism, cultivating group business and devising innovative sales strategies led to the successful achievement of our sales goals.



We continue to closely monitor trends and opportunities to generate business for our industry partners.

Here are some trends we believe align well with what the Fort Myers area offers visitors:

- **Sustainability Takes Center Stage:** With increasing environmental awareness among travelers, sustainability has become a necessity rather than a choice. This includes the regeneration of economic, social and environmental impacts through initiatives like voluntourism and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, benefiting both Lee County residents and visitors.

- **Growth in AI Experimentation:** AI is a hot topic in the industry for good reason. Its rise has provided travel professionals and event planners with new ways to automate time-consuming tasks, allowing them to focus on more creative and strategic endeavors.
- **Experiences Are Key:** Experiential, memory-based activities have a significant impact. Travelers increasingly use advisors to ensure their expectations are met and to gain access to customized experiences they can't achieve independently (*Source: MMGY's 2024 Portrait of American Travelers® "Summer Edition - Lee County"*).

- **Wellness and Well-Being:** Health and wellness are a priority for 36% of meeting planners (*Source: Cvent*). Business and leisure travelers alike seek restorative experiences, including breaks from technology and opportunities to connect with nature, local heritage, culture, and each other. Travel is recognized as a vital form of self-care, contributing to mental and emotional well-being.

We embrace agility to swiftly adapt our plans. As traveler behavior, preferences, politics, and market dynamics evolve, our approach to growing the visitor economy will continue to adjust accordingly. We are continuing to press forward in opportunity markets through the sales activities outlined in the following strategies.



Domestic Sales

Strategy #1: Drive Demand and Optimize Yield

Tactics:

- **Build and Strengthen Relationships:** Foster new and existing relationships with travel professionals by participating in well-executed industry trade shows, sales missions, client events, destination education training classes, webinars, FAM trips, and site tours.
- **Targeted Show Digital Promotions:** Use geofencing to place digital ads at selected trade shows and conferences throughout the year, reaching meeting planners and travel trade professionals to amplify show presence.
- **Expand Sales in Key Cities:** Focus sales activities on cities with expanded nonstop flight services to RSW and PGD.
- **Grow Affinity Groups:** Further develop markets such as visiting friends and relatives (VFR), trending travel, multicultural weddings, faith-based events, and military groups.
- **Leverage Lead Generation Platforms:** Explore new lead generation platforms to support ongoing sales team initiatives.
- **Maximize Strategic Partnerships:** Fully utilize partnerships and memberships with organizations like PCMA, MPI, FSAE, HelmsBriscoe, CVBReps, Association Forum, NTA, RCMA, CMCA, and ABA.
- **Targeted Digital Marketing:** Use the Sojern marketing platform to combine travel intent data with MICE custom audiences based on planner search activity, delivering targeted digital messages and videos.





- **Focus on Key Vertical Markets:** Collaborate with the Lee County Economic Development Office to target key vertical markets, including logistics, manufacturing, technology, life sciences/biotechnology, and health care.
- **Produce Informative Guides:** Partner with Northstar Meetings Group to create the Newcomer's Handbook, Introduction to Fort Myers Area Meetings and Destination Guide for Meetings.



- **Promote Meeting Incentive:** Market the meeting incentive offer to attract and secure new group business.
- **Engage Travel Advisors:** Enhance messaging to travel advisors through in-market travel ambassador experiences followed by live webinars.
- **Target High-Volume Producers:** Focus on travel trade and high-volume producers of small to midsize events with sales engagement, enhanced destination



- landing pages (e.g., VAX VacationAccess) and webinar sponsorships for increased visibility.
- **Optimize Trade Show E-Marketing:** Maximize trade show e-marketing to engage attendees before, during and after the event.

Strategy #2: Brand Engagement

Tactics:

- **Social Media Engagement:** Boost engagement through social media posts promoting the sales team's attendance at upcoming trade shows, industry events and conferences via our brand's social media channels.
- **Strategic Sponsorships and Speaking Opportunities:** Invest in strategic event sponsorships and speaking opportunities to maintain strong industry support and expand brand presence.
- **Enhance Destination Tools:** Optimize destination tools for travel trade and group planners by updating and utilizing Threshold 360 virtual tours and custom map functionalities.
- **Sales Enhancements to VisitFortMyers.com:**
 - Refine the Meeting Planner Toolkit to include the updated Event Planner's Guide.
 - Promote custom conference landing pages with links to VisitFortMyers.com as a service for planners to boost attendance and educate attendees about the destination, encouraging them to extend their stay (blended travel).
- Automate post-meeting surveys to continuously update planner endorsements and testimonials on MeetInFortMyers.com.
- Update and magnify destination education courses with Travel Agent Academy and Wellness Travel University through digital and trade show promotions.
- Promote "hub & spoke" and pre/post-stay opportunities with sample itineraries.
- **Develop New Sales Collateral:** Create new sales collateral, including a Travel Advisors Guide.
- **Leverage Enewsletters:** Use quarterly meeting planner enewsletters to share inspirational and informational content, including trade show and event coverage, group activities, destination updates, and new experiences.
- **Promote Meetings Interactive Videos:** Showcase interactive videos to meeting planners highlighting meeting hotels, team-building activities, area attractions, restaurants, and off-site venues.

Strategy #3: Industry and Community Alignment

Tactics:

- **Partner Engagement:** Facilitate partner participation in a variety of co-op trade shows, sales missions and client events. Launch the co-op program in early August to align with partners' annual budgeting cycles.
- **Education and Outreach:** Through the accommodations and attractions outreach program, continue educating partners about the destination brand and demonstrate the positive impact of optimizing the visitor economy.

- **Community Education:** Likewise, educate local businesses and residents about the destination brand and the benefits of optimizing the visitor economy by participating in local chamber of commerce meetings and other local organizations' meetings and events.
- **Stakeholder Communication:** Provide updates through a monthly industry stakeholder newsletter, highlighting sales activities' results and future plans.
- **Meetings Incentive:** Continue supporting the hotel community by offering a meetings incentive to attract conferences during the destination's softer season, thereby boosting booking conversion.

- **Collaborative Programs:** Enhance the collaborative lunch and learn program to leverage resources effectively. Work closely with Lee County Economic Development and utilize existing relationships with local businesses and community organizations to attract new conferences to Lee County (e.g., *Bring Your Meetings Home*) and promote the VFR market.
- **Conference Services Support:** Provide amenities, promotional materials and volunteer ambassadors to support meetings, conferences and events in the area through our conference services program.





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International Sales

Overview

The VCB remains steadfast in its commitment to restoring international visitation to pre-pandemic levels. The slower recovery in this market segment is largely attributed to the limited availability of coastal accommodations.

Despite these challenges, the global economic landscape is improving. Inflation is easing across much of Europe, with the United Kingdom leading the way. As inflation decreases, the Bank of England is anticipated to lower interest rates, boosting the economy and enhancing travel potential. Canada is also experiencing renewed momentum, with modest interest rate reductions stimulating economic growth and, consequently, travel to our region.

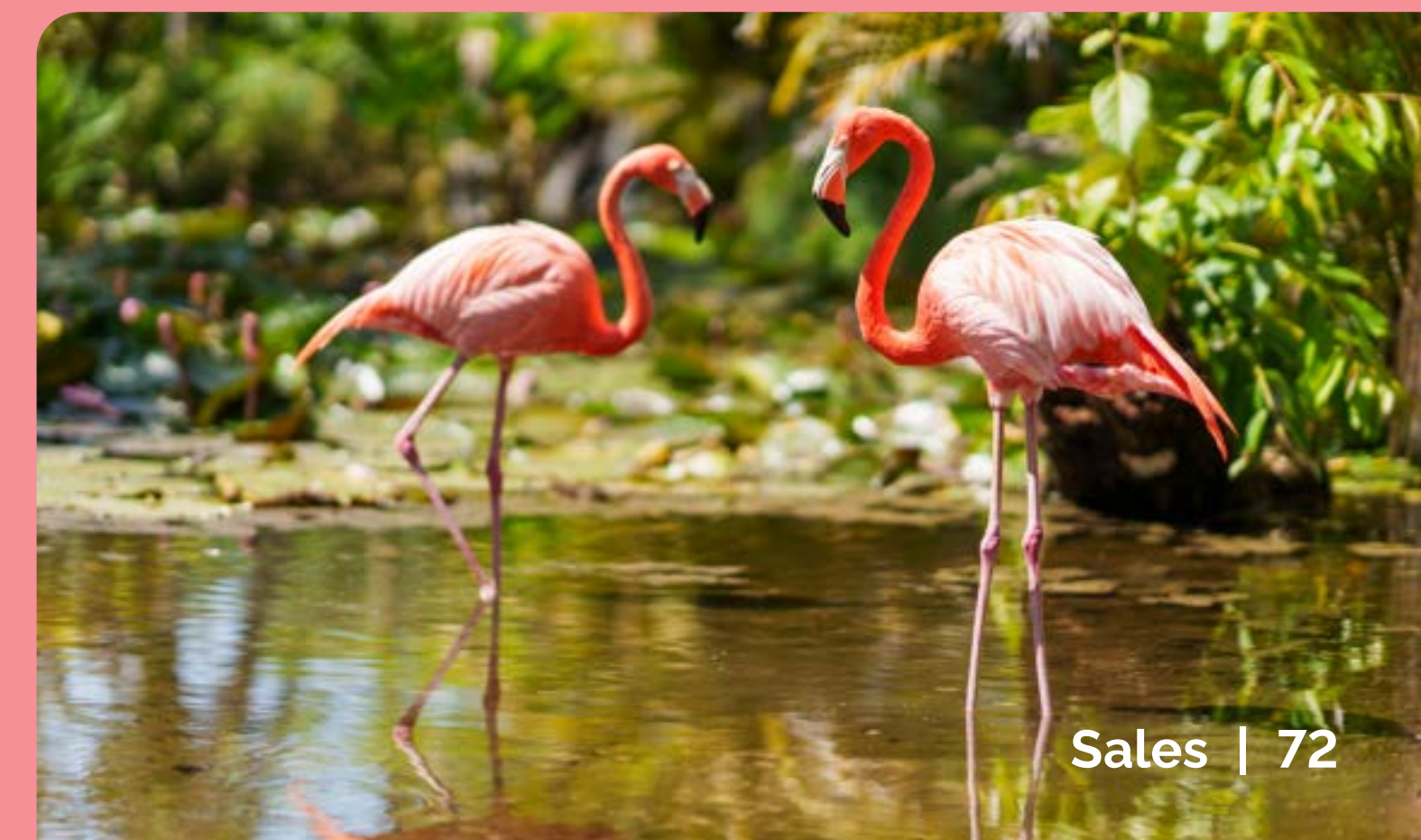
International Sales

Strategy #1: Build Brand Awareness and Drive Demand

Tactics:

- Implement an integrated marketing plan to target international travelers, trade media and tour operators, aiming to incrementally increase travel to Fort Myers from key international target markets.
- Leverage international market growth through increased sales activities in top markets and expand into Latin America by partnering with Visit Florida, Brand USA and U.S. Travel.
- Increase awareness and interest in destination assets through innovative marketing with an emphasis on sustainability, eco-friendly accommodations and community engagement.

- Continued collaboration with the Lee County Port Authority, Discover Airlines, and the Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB to increase international brand visibility and drive inbound travel demand from Germany to RSW through targeted marketing campaigns and strategic initiatives.
- Promote destination via custom content and digital display placements with trusted vendors.
- Challenge international contractors to elevate their standards and set a higher benchmark to create memorable events, experiential activations and experiences.
- Stimulate demand in key and emerging markets through public-facing content and consumer promotions.
- Monitor booking windows and travel periods for returns to pre-pandemic norms.



International Sales

Strategy #2: Brand Engagement

Tactics:

- Strengthen consumer-direct channels and campaigns in Canada, Germany and the UK.
- Leverage Brand USA, Visit Florida and Visit USA global trade programs by joining their sales activities and virtual events in core global markets.
- Enhance social media efforts on owned channels that are specifically created for and geared toward each country.
- Strengthen international tour operator partnerships through FAM tours/sales support and encourage tour operators to increase their hotel product within Lee County's inventory.
- Engage with key tour operators on sales education for buyers, travel professional training, and live and virtual events to drive economic impact in-destination.
- Support international airline recovery through FAM trips and collaborative efforts with Visit Florida and other Florida destination marketing organizations.





International Sales

Strategy #3: Industry and Community Alignment

Tactics:

- Use storytelling to actively engage with business leaders, local and regional influencers, and residents to further discuss the community's top economic driver — highlighting how tourism makes the destination a better place to live, work, play, and visit.
- Engage and educate industry partners to identify emerging international markets and seek feedback on current efforts.
- Work with local businesses and organizations through participation in community meetings and events to forge new partnerships for the greater good of our community and residents' quality of life.
- Provide international sales activity results and future intention updates in monthly industry stakeholder e-newsletters.
- Strengthen advocacy and stewardship of the destination's natural assets through engagement with local preservation and sustainability organizations.
- Protect and preserve the area's natural assets by educating visitors about Lee County's conservation efforts.

Sports Development

Sports Development's mission is to attract, promote and retain amateur athletic events and sports-related conferences for Lee County. As the premier destination for leisure tourism and sporting events, the team's goal is to foster growth and economic development for the local community through new and repeat events.



Sports Development

Strategy #1: Drive demand and diversify Lee County's tourism economy through sports.

Tactics:

- Produce 180,000 booked nights in hotel rooms in Lee County through sports tourism events and business activities.
- Enhance the sports tourism initiative by identifying and diversifying markets of opportunity.
- Identify and host a new sports association meeting annually.
- Attract a minimum of 12 international teams to participate in Lee County sports tourism events.
- Retain 90% of our sports business as repeat business.
- Identify opportunities with VCB brand integration to promote Lee County as a premier global sports destination.
- Evaluate ROI of current and future local events.
- Attend industry trade shows including, but not limited to, the Florida Sports Foundation Summit, TEAMS Conference + Expo, ConnectSports Marketplace, etc.



Sports Development

Strategy #2: Expand collaboration across government organizations and the community.

Tactics:

- Leverage local signature sports events, such as Spring Training baseball, the City of Palms Basketball Classic and the Fort Myers Tip-Off, to build relationships and support the VCB and Economic Development departments in attracting media, clients and site selectors.
- Identify new “shared use” sports facilities within the community.
- Collaborate with the VCB's Sales team to attract sports-related conferences and events.
- Maintain up-to-date sports metrics on the Lee County Performance Dashboard.





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Sports Development

Strategy #3: Improve communication about the value of sports with residents and local businesses.

Tactics:

- Increase communication of sports activity to the hospitality industry in Lee County.
- Partner with Lee County Community Engagement and Communications to share sports tourism successes and “quality of life” stories with residents.
- Report regularly to the hospitality industry, educating them on past and future sports activity, business development and economic impact derived from sports events.
- Work collaboratively with Parks & Recreation to ensure that sports tourism has a positive impact on residents when facility access is desired.

Public Relations

The Public Relations team at the VCB focuses on securing earned media coverage in both domestic and international markets to elevate the visibility of our destination. Over the past two years, we have established a positive reputation among visiting journalists as a resilient, can-do community.

As British journalist Dominic Kocur remarked during his recent FAM tour, "It's really quite obvious that your resurgence reflects a strong-willed and industrious community." His July 2024 feature in *The Week* highlighted the stories of many tourism partners, amplifying their reach to a global audience.





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Public Relations

Overview

Our mission is to actively seek and cultivate opportunities to share the unique appeal of our destination with a global audience, whether for a short visit or an extended stay. Each of our objectives aligns with the overarching goals of the VCB.

Public Relations

Strategy #1: Increase Brand Awareness

Enhance brand recognition among visitors, residents, media, and business partners in Lee County through strategic media relations efforts. This includes continuing a robust schedule of media familiarization visits (FAMs), engaging with media in target markets and increasing in-state drive market visitation.

Tactics:

- Organize individual and group press trips to showcase the diverse offerings of our destination.
- Work closely with the marketing department to align media relations with advertising campaigns, maximizing exposure across multiple platforms.
- Identify tourism partners with strong international connections and leverage their expertise when hosting journalists from their home countries to create more authentic and engaging experiences.



Public Relations

Strategy #2: Maximize Media Exposure

Leverage media opportunities to expand our destination's domestic and international reach.

Tactics:

- Engage South Florida's drive market media through deskside visits and interview opportunities.
- Collaborate with county PR leaders to identify and promote subject matter experts on tourism-related topics, enhancing media pitch efforts.
- Provide multimedia support (video, audio, technical) for journalists to ensure high-quality coverage.

Strategy #3: Expand Media Visits From Emerging Markets

Focus on increasing media coverage from emerging markets, particularly in Latin America.

Tactics:

- Partner with Visit Florida to organize media visits from key Latin American markets.
- Collaborate with in-state DMO partners to create multideestination itineraries for visiting journalists from emerging markets.
- Work to secure two separate group media visits from Brazil and Colombia via Visit Florida.
- Provide a first-rate experience for visiting media groups to share with some of the largest markets in the Western Hemisphere.

 *andrewdelcostello*



 *wcdameron*



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Public Relations

Strategy #4: Leverage Communication Products for Local Engagement

Utilize communication tools and local media partnerships to highlight the VCB's achievements and share compelling stories about our partners and destination.

Tactics:

- Connect media with local tourism partners to help craft authentic, compelling stories that showcase the unique aspects of our destination.
- Produce 12 monthly "Partner Spotlight" videos and six bimonthly "Shellcast" podcasts, featuring local tourism businesses and industry leaders.
- Maintain an updated library of b-roll footage and photography for use by local journalists, helping to tell the story of our destination.

Visitor Services

Visitor Services, located at the Southwest Florida International Airport, focuses on volunteer and community relations efforts that provide a positive tourism experience to visitors and residents in Lee County and Southwest Florida. Tourism Ambassadors and staff provide comprehensive information and assistance to visitors and passengers at the airport, promote Lee County at special events, support tourism partners, and serve as emergency liaisons for the traveling public during a crisis. Visitor Services also honors and recognizes tourism industry workers and local residents for providing exceptional customer service.



Visitor Services Programs

Volunteer Tourism Ambassadors

Knowledgeable and friendly volunteers with a welcoming smile have been greeting travelers at the airport since 1990. Ambassadors at five Visitor Information Booths annually answer more than 600,000 questions about the area, as well as roam the airport to provide hands-on help to passengers. Multilingual ambassadors greet international guests and work with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to provide translation assistance. We collaborate with Lee County Sports Development to provide two mini Visitor Information Booths at county stadiums, which are staffed by volunteers during Spring Training and special events.

Elaine McLaughlin Outstanding Hospitality Service Awards (E Awards)

This program recognizes extraordinary customer service professionals in Lee County as nominated by visitors.

Project Cookie

Airline and airline partner emergency assistance and comfort are provided to stranded passengers whose travel is interrupted due to severe weather or lengthy delays.

Special Projects

Ambassador teams assist at conferences, conventions, sporting events, and community events by providing a quality Lee County experience for visitors and residents.

Visitor Assistance Program

Specialized assistance is provided to travelers during emergencies or crises. We work closely with accommodations, law enforcement, transportation, government, foreign consulates, and medical services to provide emergency support to visitors and their families.

Visitor Services

Strategy #1: With the expansion of Southwest Florida International Airport, we will grow and nurture our team of well-trained volunteer Tourism Ambassadors from 130 individuals to 150 within the next two years.

Tactics:

- Onboard new volunteer Tourism Ambassadors with an in-depth orientation focusing on the various volunteer roles, an overview of the VCB, its impact on the county, and the value of tourism.
- Provide refresher training for our current volunteer Tourism Ambassadors to emphasize the role that the VCB plays in our local economy, focusing on engaging with the traveling public, assisting with hotel reservations, and making suggestions to enhance the visitor's stay.
- Increase the number of volunteer Tourism Ambassadors roaming the airport to meet the growing demand for visitor and resident assistance.

- Collaborate with the Lee County Port Authority in celebrating special events, national days and holidays. Volunteer Tourism Ambassadors will wear themed headgear and hand out customized stickers and coloring pages to travelers.

Strategy #2: Expand community outreach and strengthen connections with industry partners.

Tactics:

- Enhance National Travel & Tourism Week initiatives to include more industry partners and resident involvement. Display "*Did you know ... ?*" slides on digital screens above visitor information booths, highlighting tourism's impact.
- Organize regular outreach to industry partners to demonstrate how they can leverage VCB resources.
- Increase social media posts to showcase industry partners hosting our volunteer Tourism Ambassadors, as well as showing the volunteers in action assisting the traveling public at RSW and special events.

Guests First Program

A positive visitor experience begins with a warm smile and a friendly welcome — key elements that generate goodwill and often lead to extended stays or return visits. The Guests First (GF) program, in partnership with the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute, is a nationally recognized certification training program designed specifically for Lee County hospitality employees. This program equips frontline staff and management professionals with the skills to anticipate guest needs, deliver memorable experiences and effectively handle challenging situations.





Guests First Program

Overview

GF focuses on three core elements: **communication, emotional intelligence and problem-solving**. As the hospitality industry faces ongoing workforce challenges, the GF program aims to familiarize employees with our destination's unique assets while also providing essential tools, resources and customer service training.

These free learning sessions are interactive and tailored to provide a deep understanding of customer expectations, empowering participants to exceed service standards. By fostering consumer loyalty through quality customer experiences, the program helps secure repeat business and drive positive revenue growth.



Core Objectives

Enhance Visitation and Length of Stay

Provide consistent and superior customer care to increase visitation and encourage longer stays in paid accommodations.

Cultivate Repeat Visitation

Train local businesses to adopt a strong service culture that fosters guest loyalty.

Develop Service-Oriented Employees

Equip employees with the skills to engage visitors and create memorable experiences, leading to repeat visits.



Guests First Program

Strategy #1: Promote the Value of Guests First

Tactics:

- **Highlight Benefits:** Communicate the advantages of improved employee competence and a more satisfying workplace culture, leading to greater customer satisfaction, increased revenue and repeat visitation for Lee County businesses.
- **Ensure Accessibility:** Make GF customer service training easily accessible to all Lee County hospitality businesses.
- **Certification Preparation:** Use GF education modules to prepare participants for the Certified Guest Service Professional (CGSP®) exam, the highest global recognition of guest service excellence in hospitality and tourism.

Strategy #2: Keep Guests First Content Engaging and Relevant

Tactics:

- **Leverage Technology:** Utilize digital tools and technology to enhance engagement and broaden the reach of the GF program.
- **Update Content Regularly:** Develop and refresh GF training content to ensure it remains current, relatable and aligned with industry trends.
- **Customize Training:** Tailor and adapt training sessions to meet the specific needs of participants, ensuring positive learning outcomes.

Strategy #3: Monitor and Analyze Program Results

Tactics:

- **Achieve Certification Success:** Set a goal of a 100% pass rate for the CGSP program, reinforcing its status as the pinnacle of guest service excellence.
- **Evaluate Success:** Continuously monitor, evaluate and report on the program's effectiveness based on VCB targets, adjusting as needed to ensure ongoing success.

FY24/25 Targets Summary

	SOURCE	FY24/25 TARGETS
OVERARCHING		
Bed Tax	Audited Returns	Project \$47.9M
PAID MEDIA (Including Paid Search and Paid Social)		
Impressions	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	733.7M
Total Engagements	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	74.5M
Total Inquiries	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	411K
CPM	Contracts	\$12.00
Added-Value Placements	Contracts	\$3.2M
SOCIAL		
Website Referrals	Sprout Social	845K
Video Views	Sprout Social	17M
Total Social Media Engagements	Sprout Social	2.2M
Total Social Impressions	Sprout Social	145M
EMAIL		
Website Leads: Unique Open Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	34%
Website Leads: Click Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	3.40%
Unsubscribe Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	0.20%
All Leads: Partner Referrals	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	28.5K

FY24/25 Targets Summary

	SOURCE	FY24/25 TARGETS
WEBSITE		
eNews Sign-Ups (Leisure, Meetings and Weddings)	Google Analytics 4	19K
Average Pages/Visit	Google Analytics 4	1.85
Average Session Duration	Google Analytics 4	1:40
Accommodations Referrals (Jan–Sep)	Google Analytics 4	6.95%
Dining Referrals (Jan–Sep)	Google Analytics 4	0.55%
Activities Referrals (Jan–Sep)	Google Analytics 4	1.60%
Engagement Rate of Organic Search Sessions	Google Analytics 4	80%
MEDIA RELATIONS/PUBLIC RELATIONS		
Media Impressions	Ad Service	4B impressions
Group and Individual Media FAMs	VCB Count	Host 15 journalists in-destination through a combination of individual and group press trips
Partner Mentions	VCB Count	Maintain number of members (partners) mentioned in articles at 100
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT		
Event Development	Events/Venues	12 events funded/2 new venues
Attractions Marketing	Applications	35 attractions funded/2 new
Attractions Marketing	Placemaking Initiatives (Bandwango/Murals)	3 passports/4 murals

FY24/25 Targets Summary

	SOURCE	FY24/25 TARGETS
INDUSTRY RELATIONS		
Guests First Participants	VCB Count	525 Guests First participants
Guests First Trainings	VCB Count	Host a minimum of 50 training sessions
Team Tourism Events	VCB Count	Host a minimum of 2 events
Awards Recognition	VCB Count	Encourage 800 nominations
Tourism Ambassadors	VCB Count	Add 20 new Tourism Ambassadors
SALES – DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL		
Meeting/Conference Conversion	Simpleview	Achieve 47,000 room nights contracted by partners from VCB leads
Meeting Leads	Simpleview	Achieve 463,000 group lead room nights sourced by VCB
Wedding Leads	Simpleview	160 leads sourced by VCB
FAM Trips/Site Inspections	VCB Count	50 domestic & international travel professionals
Destination Education/Client Events (Webinars, Podcasts, Training Classes, Events)	VCB Count	50 destination education events
Community Engagement	VCB Count	60 local organization meetings or events



FY23/24 Performance

05

FY23/24 Targets Reporting

	SOURCE	FY23/24 TARGETS	FY23/24 RESULTS
OVERARCHING			
Bed Tax	Audited Returns	Projected \$42M (Up 25% over FY22/23)	\$44.3M
PAID MEDIA (including Paid Search and Paid Social)			
Impressions	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	612.9M	834M
Total Engagements	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	45.4M	74M
Total Inquiries	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	398K	536K
CPM	Contracts	\$15.33	\$8.92
Added-Value Placements	Contracts	\$3M	\$3.8M
SOCIAL			
Website Referrals	Sprout Social	780K	842K
Video Views	Sprout Social	25M	14.7M
Total Social Media Engagements	Sprout Social	3.6M	2.2M
Total Social Impressions	Sprout Social	115M	141.3M
EMAIL			
Website Leads: Unique Open Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	Increase open rate to 33%	32%
Website Leads: Click Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	Increase click rate to 3%	3.28%
Unsubscribe Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	0.90%	0.23%
All Leads: Partner Referrals	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	25K	25.7K

FY23/24 Targets Reporting

	SOURCE	FY23/24 TARGETS	FY23/24 RESULTS
WEBSITE			
eNews Sign-Ups (Leisure, Meetings and Weddings)	Google Analytics 4	20K	17K
Average Pages/Visit	Google Analytics 4	1.85	1.77
Average Session Duration	Google Analytics 4	1:45	1:28
Accommodations Referrals (Jan–Sep)	Google Analytics 4	5.5%	6.29%
Dining Referrals (Jan–Sep)	Google Analytics 4	0.55%	0.35%
Activities Referrals (Jan–Sep)	Google Analytics 4	1.10%	1.21%
Engagement Rate of Organic Search Sessions	Google Analytics 4	70%	79%
MEDIA RELATIONS/PUBLIC RELATIONS			
Media Impressions	Ad Service	3.7B	8.1B
Group and Individual Media FAMs	VCB Count	Host 15 journalists in-destination through a combination of individual and group press trips	Hosted 11 total journalists (4 individuals and 7 across two group trips)
Partner Mentions	VCB Count	Increase number of members (partners) mentioned in articles to 75	145
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT			
Event Development	Events/Venues	12 events funded/2 new events	11 events funded/2 new events
Attractions Marketing	Applications	35 attractions funded/3 new attractions	36 attractions funded/2 new attractions
Attractions Marketing	Placemaking Initiatives (Bandwango/Murals)	3 passport challenges/6 murals	3 passport challenges/6 murals

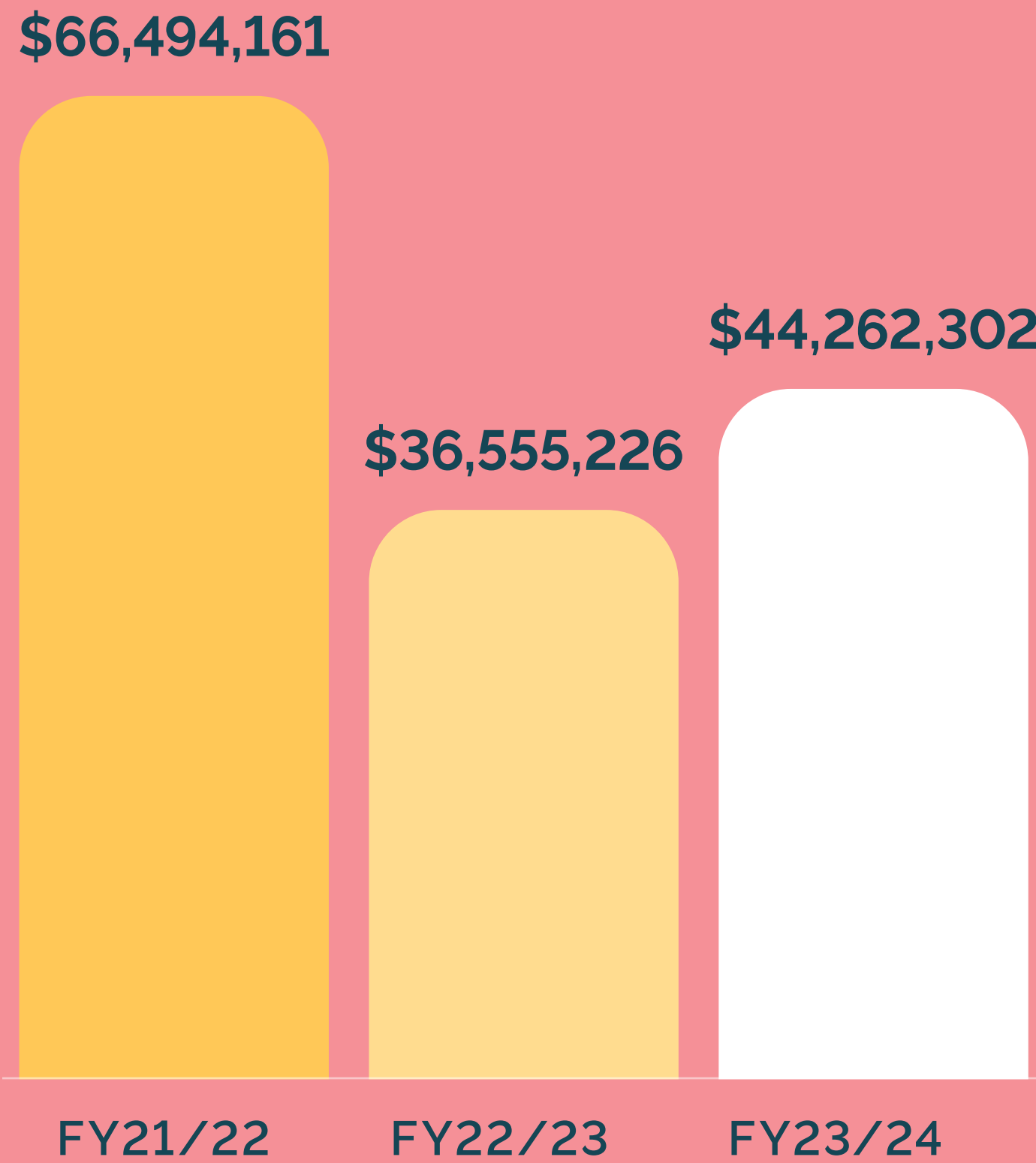
FY23/24 Targets Reporting

	SOURCE	FY23/24 TARGETS	FY23/24 RESULTS
INDUSTRY RELATIONS			
Guests First Participants	VCB Count	500 Guests First participants	522 participants
Guests First Trainings	VCB Count	Host a minimum of 50 training sessions	60 training sessions
Team Tourism Events	VCB Count	Host a minimum of 3 events	1 event
Awards Recognition	VCB Count	Encourage 800 nominations	784 nominations
Tourism Ambassadors	VCB Count	Add 15 new Tourism Ambassadors	18 new Tourism Ambassadors
SALES – DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL			
Meeting/Conference Conversion	Simpleview	Achieve 36,000 room nights contracted by partners from VCB leads	45,780 room nights 127% of target attained
Meeting Leads	Simpleview	Achieve 325,000 group lead room nights sourced by VCB	450,108 room nights 139% of target attained
Wedding Leads	Simpleview	150 leads sourced by VCB	164 leads 109% of target attained
FAM Trips/Site Inspections	VCB Count	40 domestic & international travel professionals	90 travel professionals 225% of target attained
Destination Education/Client Events (Webinars, Podcasts, Training Classes, Events)	VCB Count	50 destination education events	55 events 111% of target attained
Community Engagement	VCB Count	50 local organization meetings or events	60 events 120% of target attained

Performance

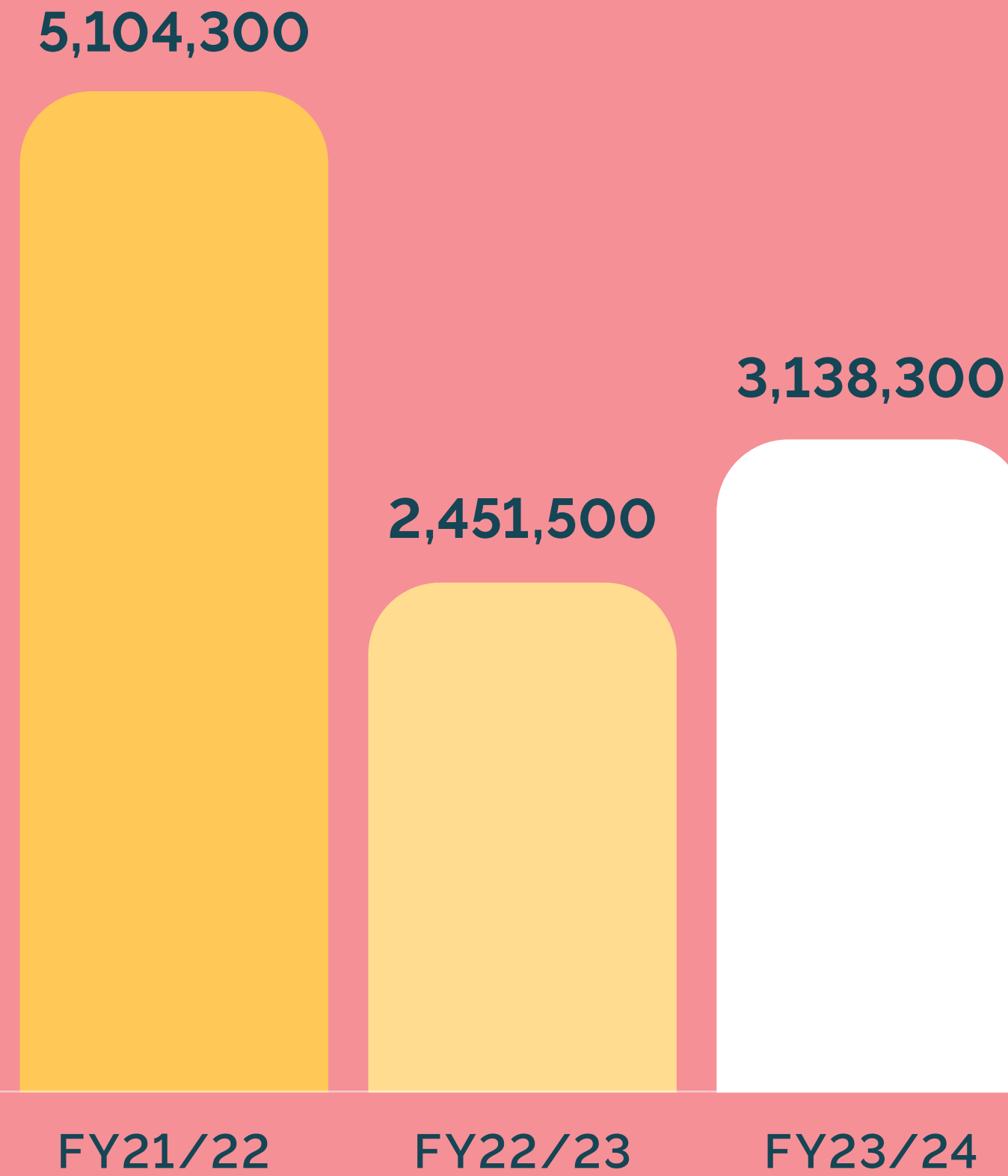
BED TAX

Source: Lee County Clerk of Court



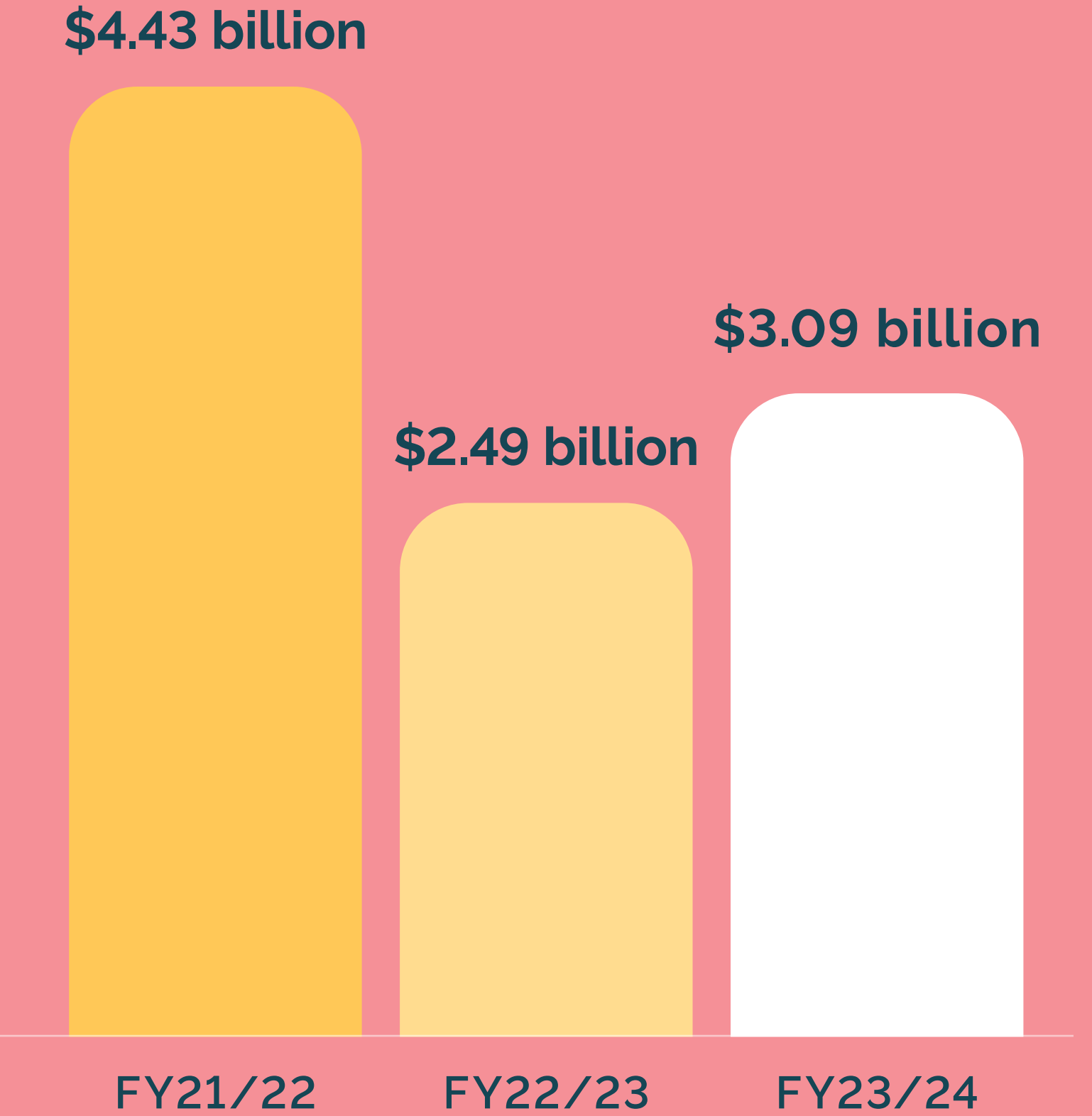
NUMBER OF VISITORS

Source: Downs & St. Germain Research



VISITOR EXPENDITURES*

Source: Downs & St. Germain Research

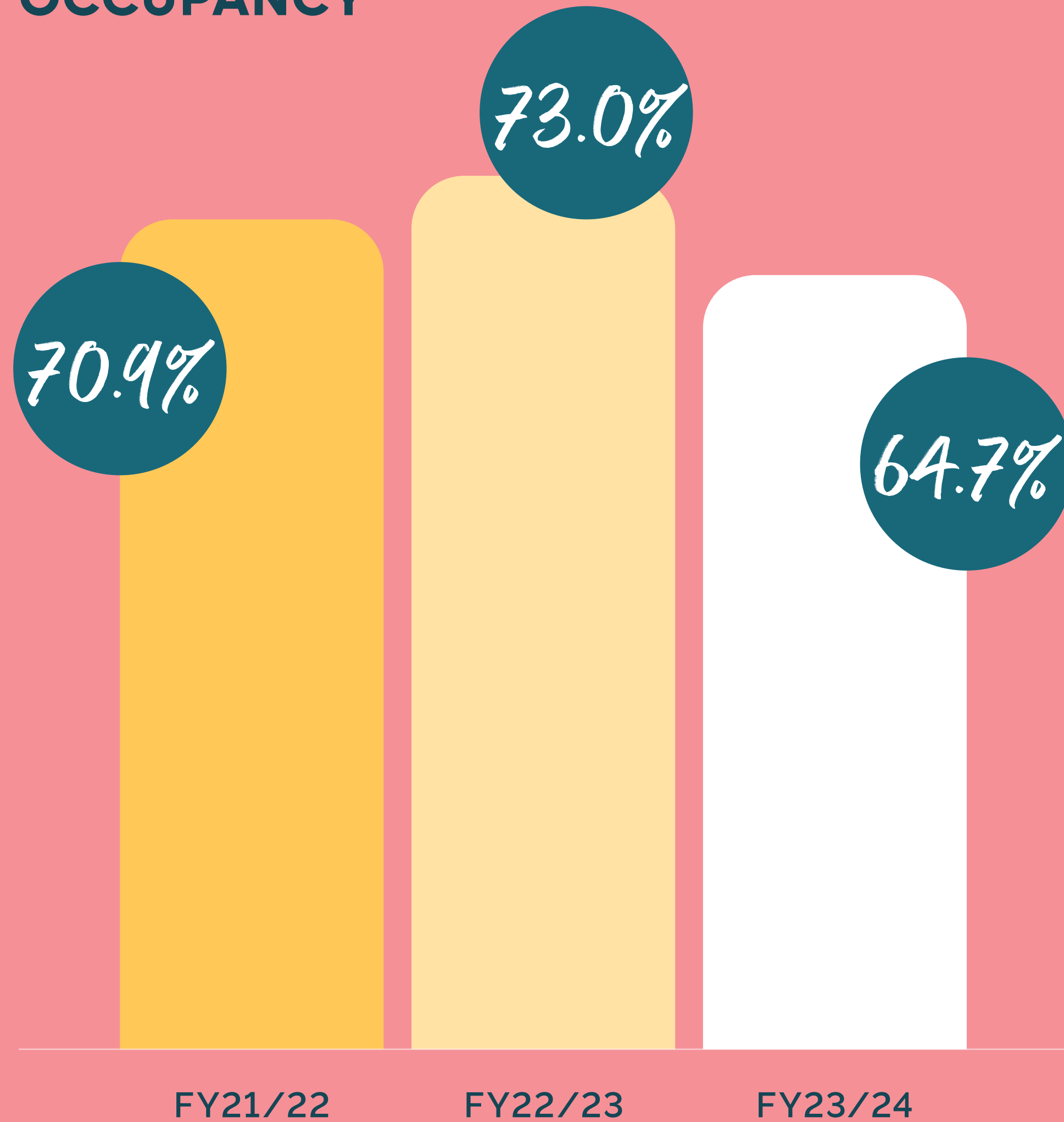


For more detailed information, please visit our [Performance Dashboard](#) on LeeVCB.com

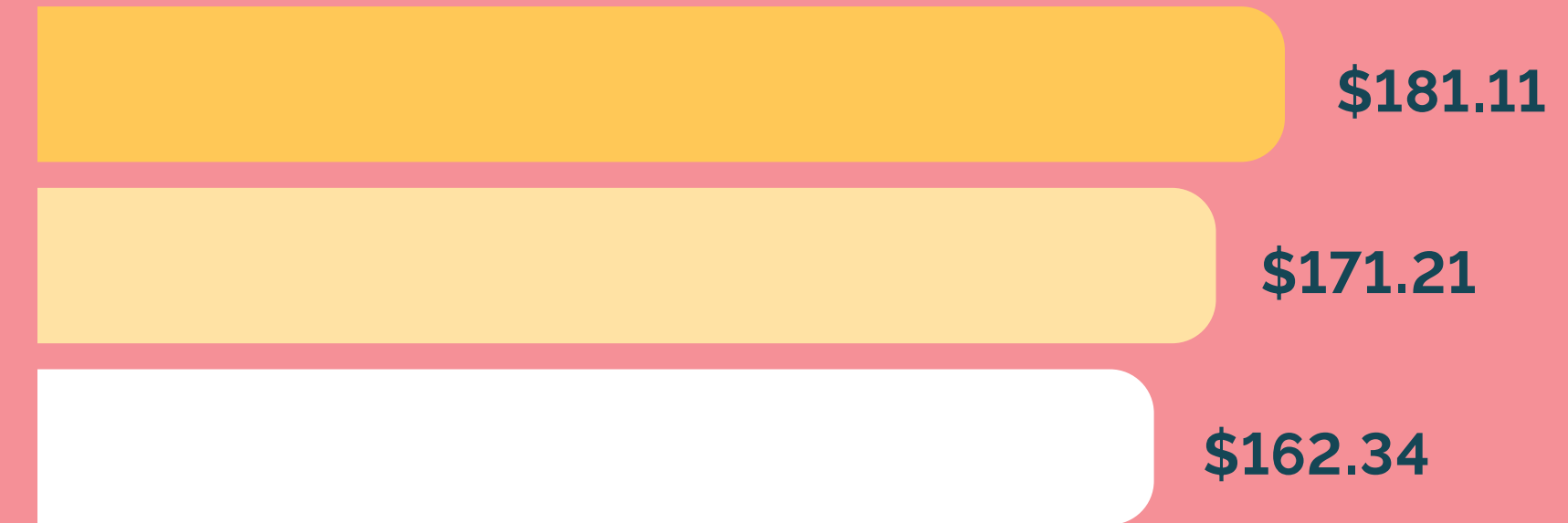
*Visitor Expenditures includes accommodations, restaurants, entertainment, shopping, transportation, groceries, and other expenses.

Lodging Performance

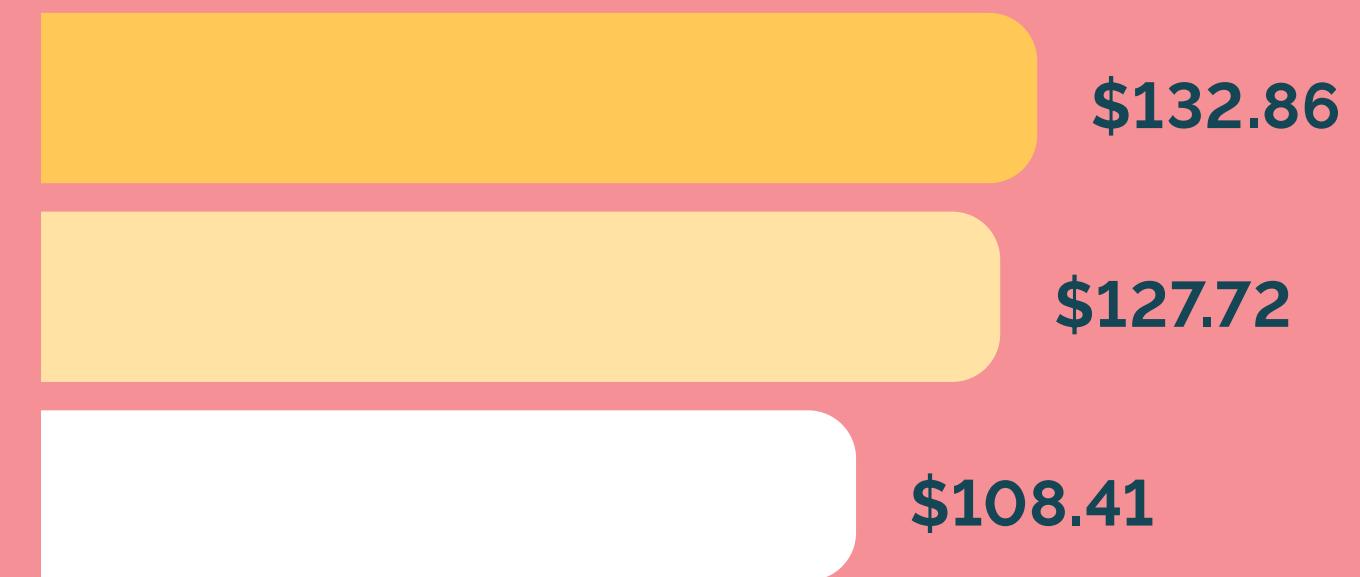
OCCUPANCY



ADR



RevPAR



SUPPLY

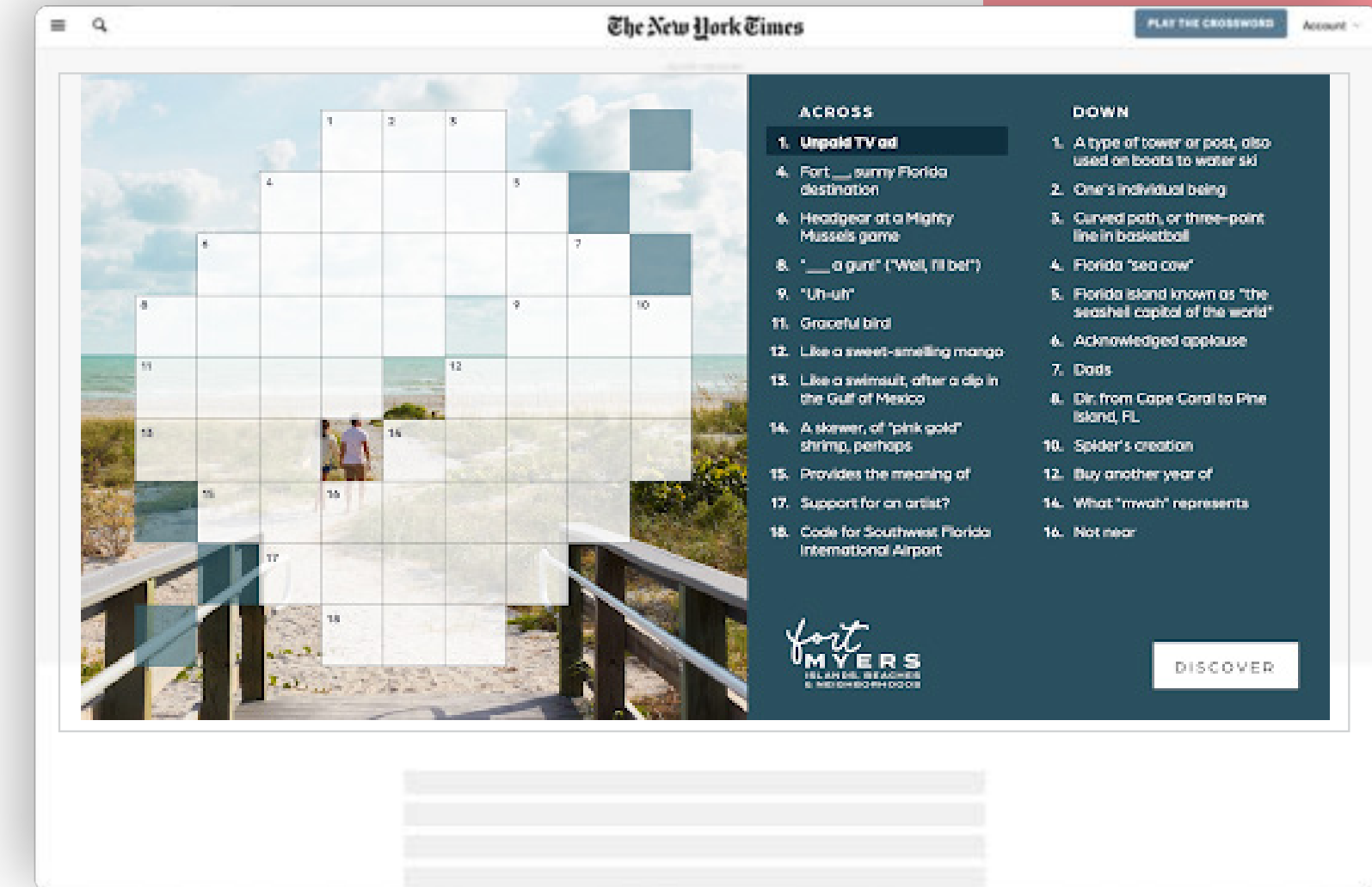


■ FY21/22 ■ FY22/23 ■ FY23/24

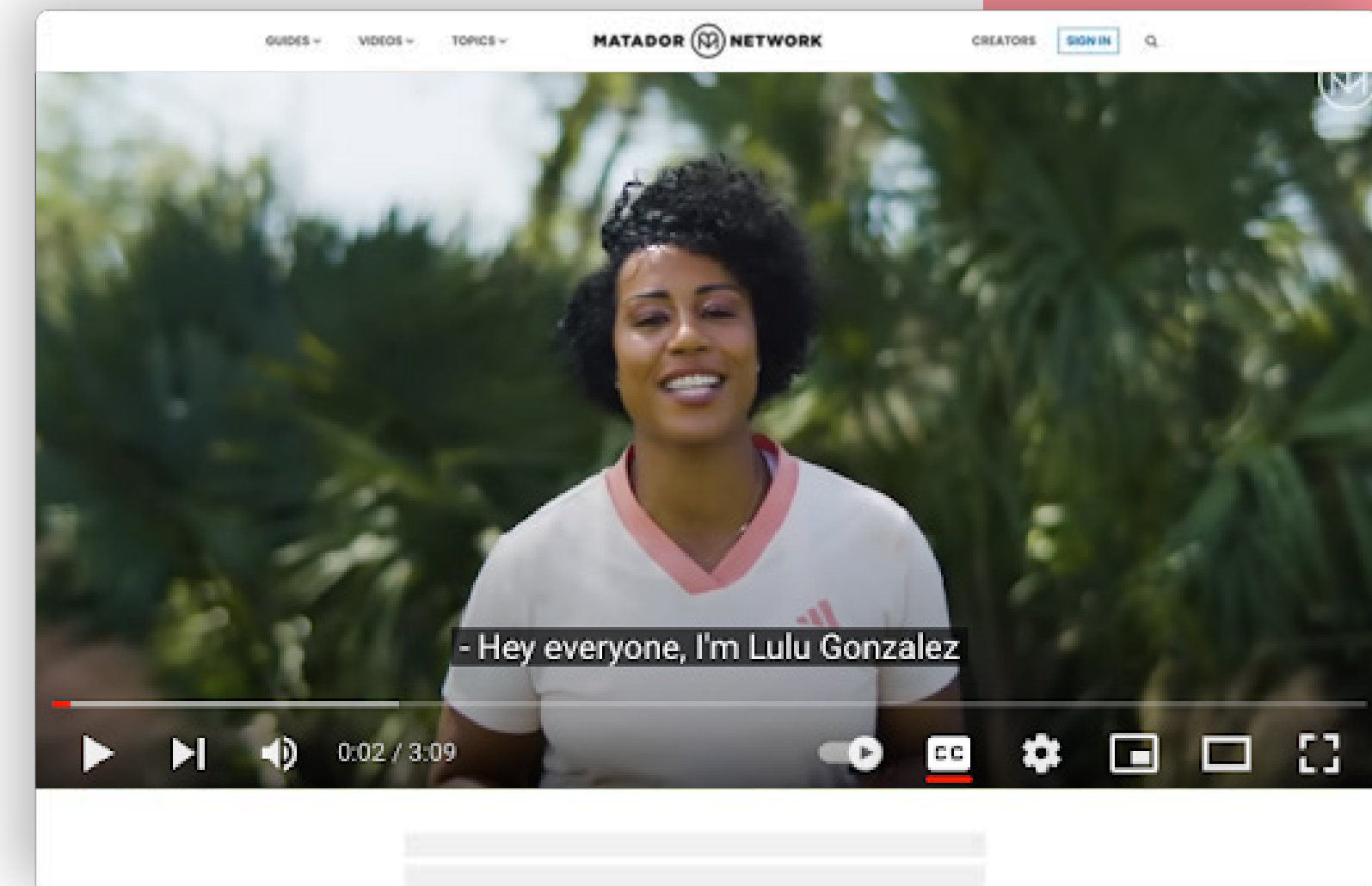
FY23/24

Paid Media Highlights

- [The New York Times](#) – Crossword
- [Matador Network](#) – Golf Influencer Program
- [Augmented Reality Direct Mail](#)
- [Midwest Living](#) – Fall 2023 Digital Native Article
- [Southern Living](#) – Spring Digital Native Article
- [SELF](#) – Digital Native Article with Interactive Map
- [Travelzoo](#) – Custom Content
- [Garden & Gun](#) – Field Guide



The New York Times Crossword



Matador Network Golf Influencer Program

Awards:

- **Flagler Awards 2024**
 - Consumer Resource/Promotional Material Henry Award for Digital Visitor Guide
 - Tourism Advocacy Silver Award for 2023 Savor the Shore Campaign
- **Adrian Awards 2023**
 - Broadcast Integration Gold Award for CBS Sunday Morning "A Moment In Nature"
 - Broadcast Integration Gold Award for Fox Weather Hurricane Recovery Series
 - Group Sales/Travel Trade Bronze Award for The Knot Summer Avalanche Display Unit
- **Sunsational Awards 2024**
 - First Place for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest T-Shirt
 - Third Place for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest Promotional Video
 - Third Place for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest Promotional Poster



Accolades

- ["The Best U.S. Islands: 2023 Readers' Choice Awards"](#) - *Condé Nast Traveler*
- ["9 Best Places To Visit On Your Next Florida Vacation"](#) - *Forbes*
- ["The Most Charming Small Town in Every State"](#) - *Reader's Digest*
- ["15 Best Beaches in Florida Locals Want to Keep Secret"](#) - *Reader's Digest*
- ["The Must-Visit Small Town in Every State"](#) - *Thrillist*
- ["The Coolest Small Cities in the U.S."](#) - *Thrillist*
- ["The 51 Best Vacations for Kids in the U.S. for 2024"](#) - *PureWow*
- ["The 12 Best Fall Getaways in Florida, Says a Floridian"](#) - *PureWow*
- ["The 20 Best Beach Towns in Florida, Vetted by Locals"](#) - *PureWow*
- ["The 30 Most Magical Island Getaways in the United States"](#) - *Women's Health*
- ["These 6 U.S. Beach Towns Are at the Top of Traveler's Wishlists for Good Reason"](#) - *Matador Network*
- ["15 Best Places To Travel In The South This March"](#) - *Southern Living*
- ["The 18 Best Beach Bars In The South"](#) - *Southern Living*
- ["The 15 Best Beaches In The South, According To Our Readers"](#) - *Southern Living*
- ["10 Best Beach Towns For Girls' Weekend Getaways"](#) - *Southern Living*
- ["16 Best Romantic Getaways in Florida"](#) - *Travel + Leisure*
- ["15 Best Islands in the Continental U.S."](#) - *Travel + Leisure*
- ["The 20 Best Beaches in Florida — From Romantic Islands to Family-friendly Spots"](#) - *Travel + Leisure*
- ["15 Best Spring Break Getaways in the U.S."](#) - *The Points Guy*
- ["Where to Stay in Florida: 10 Dreamy Beach Resorts Perfect for Families"](#) - *USA Today*

Staff Directory and Contractors



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An aerial photograph of the Fort Myers coastline, showing a mix of residential areas, greenery, and water. The text is overlaid on the image.

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MYERS
ISLANDS, BEACHES
& NEIGHBORHOODS

VisitFortMyers.com

