2017-18
YEAR IN REVIEW
Dear Floridians,

I am proud to share that last year marked the seventh consecutive record year for Florida tourism as we welcomed 118.5 million visitors to the state. This incredible momentum is a testament to the strength of VISIT FLORIDA and the Florida tourism industry’s innovative efforts to market the Sunshine State. Thanks in large part to our tourism industry, our private sector has created nearly 1.6 million jobs since 2010, and our unemployment rate is the lowest it has been since 2007. On behalf of the State of Florida, I would like to thank the more than 1.4 million Floridians working in the tourism industry who dedicate themselves to increasing visitation to our state and for the unparalleled hospitality they provide to our visitors.

Tourism continues to be the state’s leading industry and serves an essential role in the growth of our economy. VISIT FLORIDA is the driving force that brings the public and private sectors together to create programs that promote the Sunshine State to travelers around the globe. Visitors to our state generate $189.1 billion in economic impact and $11.6 billion in state and local tax revenue. The positive impact of tourism cannot be overstated.

This year, I signed the “Securing Florida’s Future” budget which provides $76 million for VISIT FLORIDA to continue attracting record numbers of tourists to Florida. Every 78 visitors to our state creates one job, and a growing tourism industry means more opportunities for Florida families. I look forward to continuing our investments in VISIT FLORIDA so that we can create more jobs and promote Florida as the number one global destination.

Sincerely,

Rick Scott
Governor

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MEASURES OF SUCCESS
FISCAL YEAR 2017-2018

While VISIT FLORIDA’s successes cannot always be measured in numbers, the following highlights illustrate the impact of VISIT FLORIDA efforts during the past year to position Florida as the No. 1 travel destination in the world.

TOURISM INDUSTRY

118.5 million*        Out-of-state and international visitors to Florida
1.4 million          Floridians employed by tourism
78                  Florida visitors it takes to support each tourism job
$111.7 billion       Spending infused into Florida’s economy by visitors
$11.6 billion        State and local tax revenue generated by visitors
2.1 million         Average number of visitors who come to Florida every day
$306 million        Average spend by Florida visitors every day

*preliminary; subject to revision

VISIT FLORIDA

$2.15                    Tax revenue returned to the state for every $1 invested in VISIT FLORIDA
57.6                      Percent of visitors who were significantly influenced by VISIT FLORIDA marketing efforts (up 20.7 pp since 2010)

INDUSTRY RELATIONS

12,816                  Florida tourism industry businesses involved with VISIT FLORIDA
207                     New investing Partners enrolled with VISIT FLORIDA

GRANTS PROGRAM

$322,647.14              Amount paid to 77 grant recipients through the Advertising Matching Grant, Minority Convention Grant, Small Business Partner Grant, and Cultural, Heritage, Rural and Nature Tourism Grant programs

ADVERTISING & CO-OP

$8.3 million                Industry investment in VISIT FLORIDA co-op programs
5.2 billion                Consumer impressions generated through dedicated VISIT FLORIDA advertising in domestic and international markets

PROMOTIONS

$100.4 million           Media value generated from the execution of 252 promotional programs
1 billion                Consumer impressions generated from promotional programs
Dear Partners and Friends,

The Florida tourism industry has much to celebrate. We have achieved seven consecutive years of record visitation and visitor spending, more than 1.4 million Floridians are employed in our industry and we are the top vacation destination for domestic visitors, families, beach-goers, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, Millennials and African American leisure travelers.

We have been successful because we are constantly innovating how we market our destination. To this end, VISIT FLORIDA launched a Canada Takeover winter marketing campaign that included a historic advertising spend and helped increase Canadian visitation to Florida after three consecutive years of decline. We created the Targeted Marketing Assistance Program to enhance the tourism marketing efforts of small, minority, rural, and agritourism businesses. We launched our first ever campaign specifically targeting Adventure travelers who seek natural and outdoor experiences. We also designed an advertising campaign for families that mirrored the cultural diversity of the American population – a first in VISIT FLORIDA history.

The entire Florida tourism industry is grateful to Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature for continuing to provide VISIT FLORIDA with the resources it needs to successfully market the state. In its most recent report, the Office of Economic & Demographic Research found that for every $1 the state invests in VISIT FLORIDA, $2.15 in tax revenue is returned. We look forward to creating more innovative and cutting-edge programs that will generate an even greater return on the state’s investment and continue to grow employment in this sector.

Thank you for your continued support and for all you do to help make Florida the No. 1 travel destination in the world.

For Florida,

Ken Lawson
President and CEO, VISIT FLORIDA
On behalf of the Sunshine State’s tourism industry, VISIT FLORIDA was focused on maximizing the impact of our marketing resources to attract visitors to the state during the 2017-2018 fiscal year. The following “Annual Highlights” showcase just a few of the ways VISIT FLORIDA’s innovative leadership helped grow the Florida brand during the past year.
Announced that Florida set another record in tourism by welcoming the highest amount of visitors of any six-month period in the state’s history, with 57.4 million visitors between January and June 2017.

Hosted the annual Florida Governor’s Conference on Tourism in Hollywood, FL, where more than 25 industry experts discussed the latest tourism trends and opportunities with over 800 conference attendees.

Announced that Florida surpassed Texas to become second in the nation for airline passenger volume.

Recognized by a prominent industry publication, Skift, for our outstanding tourism board website, which showcases services and attractions for underserved populations and helps travelers find their perfect beach with the innovative Florida Beach Finder.

Awarded more than $320,000 in grants to Florida tourism industry organizations as part of the 2017-2018 grant program.
Launched an aggressive, multi-phased marketing campaign across 18 cities to combat $500M in negative press following Hurricane Irma. Among other components, the campaign included real-time billboards that resulted in **290 million impressions**.

Launched in-stream Facebook video ads as part of the Canada Winter Sun Seekers campaign that enticed Canadian travelers to plan winter trips to Florida. The ads were recognized by Facebook Business as a success story, reaching 1.77 million people and resulting in a 6-point lift in action intent (2X higher than the North America benchmark) and a 22-point lift in ad recall.

Partnered with Delta Airlines to offer discounted fares to select Florida destinations following Hurricane Irma.

Announced phase two of VISIT FLORIDA’s post-Irma marketing efforts to show visitors that the state’s destinations were open for business following Hurricane Irma. The phase included TV broadcast, print, transit and digital billboard ads in Florida’s top domestic feeder markets of Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

Coordinated 20 Facebook Live broadcasts throughout the state during September and October to share Florida’s sunshine with potential visitors following Hurricane Irma. These resulted in **more than 5 million views and nearly 12.7 million impressions**.
Targeted Winter Sun Seekers in Ontario and Quebec through a Canada Takeover winter marketing campaign that included an historic advertising spend and helped increase Canadian visitation to Florida after three consecutive years of decline.

Announced that Florida set another tourism record by welcoming the highest number of visitors of any nine month period in the state’s history with 88.2 million travelers between January to September 2017.

Created a co-branded stand with nine industry Partners at IMEX America 2017, the largest exhibition in the U.S. for meetings professionals, where VISIT FLORIDA held appointments with domestic and international meeting and event planners.

Encouraged last-minute, impulse getaways for consumers through a holiday push that included digital advertising, radio promotions, Facebook Live broadcasts, and 21 shopping mall takeovers in our six largest feeder markets. The campaign generated more than 225 million total impressions.

Coordinated the Florida stand at the 2017 WTM in London with 22 industry organizations who conducted 800 appointments with leading travel brands.

Arranged a three destination familiarization tour for Chinese media group CanVideo, resulting in five online TV episodes and 6 million earned media impressions.

Created the Targeted Marketing Assistance Program to enhance the tourism marketing efforts of small, minority, rural, and agritourism businesses. VISIT FLORIDA received 110 total applicants, 85 of which qualified for the program and were small businesses grossing annual revenues of $500,000 or less.
Hosted more than 600 suppliers and buyers from 14 countries at Florida Huddle, the premier appointment-based tradeshow, showcasing all the Sunshine State has to offer for domestic and international tour operators and wholesalers.

Released new Economic Impact of Out-of-State Visitors in Florida study that showed **visitors spent a record $111.7 billion in 2016, generating $11.6 billion in state and local taxes and supporting more than 1.4 million jobs.**

Hosted the annual Florida Tourism Day at the Capitol, in conjunction with the Partnership for Florida’s Tourism, where more **nearly 500 industry representatives** showcased the state’s number one industry to the legislature.

Sponsored the 15th annual New York Times Travel Show, the largest trade and consumer show in the United States. In addition to distributing vacation guides, custom image postcards and maps, VISIT FLORIDA shared local food samples created by Florida chef, Brian Knepper, and met with **40 top-tier domestic and Canadian media outlets.**

Evolved the UK Winter Campaign into a national effort with eight participating Partners that generated **more than 120 million impressions** and resulted in a **20 percent increase in year over year bookings.**

Helped announce the establishment of a new, two-aircraft base at Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport that created **65 new jobs** and is anticipated to bring **$418 million in tourism revenue** to the area by 2023.

Hosted a #FLTravelChat discussing family travel with 702 participants that resulted in **2,488 mentions of the hashtag, 36.4 million impressions, and #FLTravelChat trending No. 3 on Twitter** in the United States.

Partnered with Ctrip, China’s largest online travel agency, to grow interest and bookings for Florida. The campaign included email marketing and Florida Experience Store, as well as key placement across Ctrip media, and generated **13.9 million impressions and a 30.3 percent increase in group and FIT bookings.**
Celebrated the state's seventh consecutive record-breaking year for tourism, welcoming an historic 118.5 million visitors in 2017.

Attended ITB Berlin, the world’s leading travel tradeshow, with 68 Florida participants from 22 Industry Partners, and promoted the Sunshine State to more than 170,000 convention attendees.

Funded at $76 million for FY 2018-2019 after advocating for the importance of tourism funding during the 2018 Legislative Session.

Engaged top travel agents, tour operators and media during a 10-day sales mission with 10 industry Partners in Beijing, Guangzhou, Chengdu and Shanghai.

Held 46 meetings and appointments, as well as a media reception, with six industry Partners at World Travel Market Latin America to ensure the Sunshine State remained top of mind with Brazilian travelers.

Boosted visits from winter-weary northerners through increased warm weather messaging, targeted social media ads, and I’m Sick of the Snow(man) Instagram contest, resulting in 5.6 million social impressions.

Commissioned an indoor sand sculpture for the I-10 Welcome Center to inspire the more than 650,000 visitors who stop in annually to extend their stay and explore more of Florida’s destinations.

Hosted a Travel Trade “Roadshow” in Toronto and Montreal with 11 industry Partners. The Roadshow included two days of call center visits and evening receptions where Partners promoted their destination to 500 travel agents.

Partnered with New York Times Brand Studios to reach Winter Sun Seekers and position Florida as the destination to escape the cold during the winter. The editorial piece explored the benefits of escaping to Florida through original photography of Fort Myers and Sanibel, Fort Lauderdale, and Tampa Bay and resulted in 150K page views and 3.2 million social impressions.

Encouraged German outbound travel to Florida through the first co-branded TV spot with Weg.de, a German travel booking site, which generated 30 million impressions.
Hosted five influential German travel writers on an in-depth three destination familiarization tour packed full of unique outdoors and nature experiences that are favorites of visitors from their country.

Volunteered alongside 160 tourism professionals to clear 20,960 pounds of trash and debris in the Florida Keys during Tourism Cares for South Florida.

Hosted the first-ever Regional Conversations with Ken. The events introduced 2018-19 VISIT FLORIDA marketing plan and helped gather industry feedback for new programs and servicing.

Targeted adventure travelers for the first time to build awareness of Florida as an accessible adventure destination. The campaign delivered 204 million impressions and increased Florida’s market share of the adventure audience from 9.1 percent in 2017 to 10.8 percent in 2018.

Partnered with Expedia to develop a co-branded marketing campaign to persuade travelers seeking a quick getaway to choose Florida. The partnership included “always-on” and “heavy-up” media plans driving to a Mini Vacay Hub on Expedia, and creative asset development by the Expedia Creative Partnership’s team. This campaign will continue through next fiscal year.

Announced that Florida welcomed an all-time record 33.2 million visitors to the Sunshine State in the first quarter of 2018.

33.2M Visitors

85 SMALL BUSINESSES

Delivered approximately 285 hours of Targeted Marketing Assistance Program benefits from January through June to 85 small businesses grossing $500,000 or less in annual revenues.

MILE MARKER COUNTDOWN THROUGH THE FLORIDA KEYS

Launched a Keys to Summer campaign that highlighted the bright, beautiful and brilliant experiences of the Florida Keys and resulted in an estimated 40.3 million impressions.

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May

June

2018
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW
FISCAL YEAR 2017-2018

Over our 22-year history, VISIT FLORIDA has been a $2.5 billion destination marketing cooperative, matching $836 million in public funding with $1.7 billion of private investment by more than 12,000 Florida tourism businesses and strategic alliance partners.

As a public-private corporation, VISIT FLORIDA adheres to stringent guidelines for the proper stewardship of both the public and private funding we receive. Each year, a third-party audit is conducted on VISIT FLORIDA’s financial statements and compliance with our state contract. VISIT FLORIDA has received an unqualified opinion every year since our founding in 1996.

ACTUAL EXPENSES 2017-2018
(IN PERCENTS)

ACTUAL REVENUES 2010-2017
(IN MILLIONS)

Note: For fiscal year 2014-2015, public funds include $4.2 million for Medical Tourism and $300,000 for Florida Is For Veterans. Beginning in fiscal year 2015-2016, $1 million of the public funding is for Florida Is For Veterans.

To learn more about VISIT FLORIDA, please go to VISITFLORIDA.org

or follow us on our industry social media channels:

SunshineMatters.org,
Facebook.com/FloridaTourism
and
Twitter @FloridaTourism

To see an expanded version of this brochure, go to VISITFLORIDA.org/AnnualReport