

**VIRGINIA
IS FOR
LOVERS®**

**2023
MARKETING
PLAN**

MISSION





VTC is charged with promoting the Commonwealth as a premier travel destination by showcasing all there is to love in a Virginia vacation. The dollars spent by travelers fuel the economy, provide jobs for Virginians and improve communities across the state. Tourism helps make Virginia a great place to live, work, vacation, and raise a family.

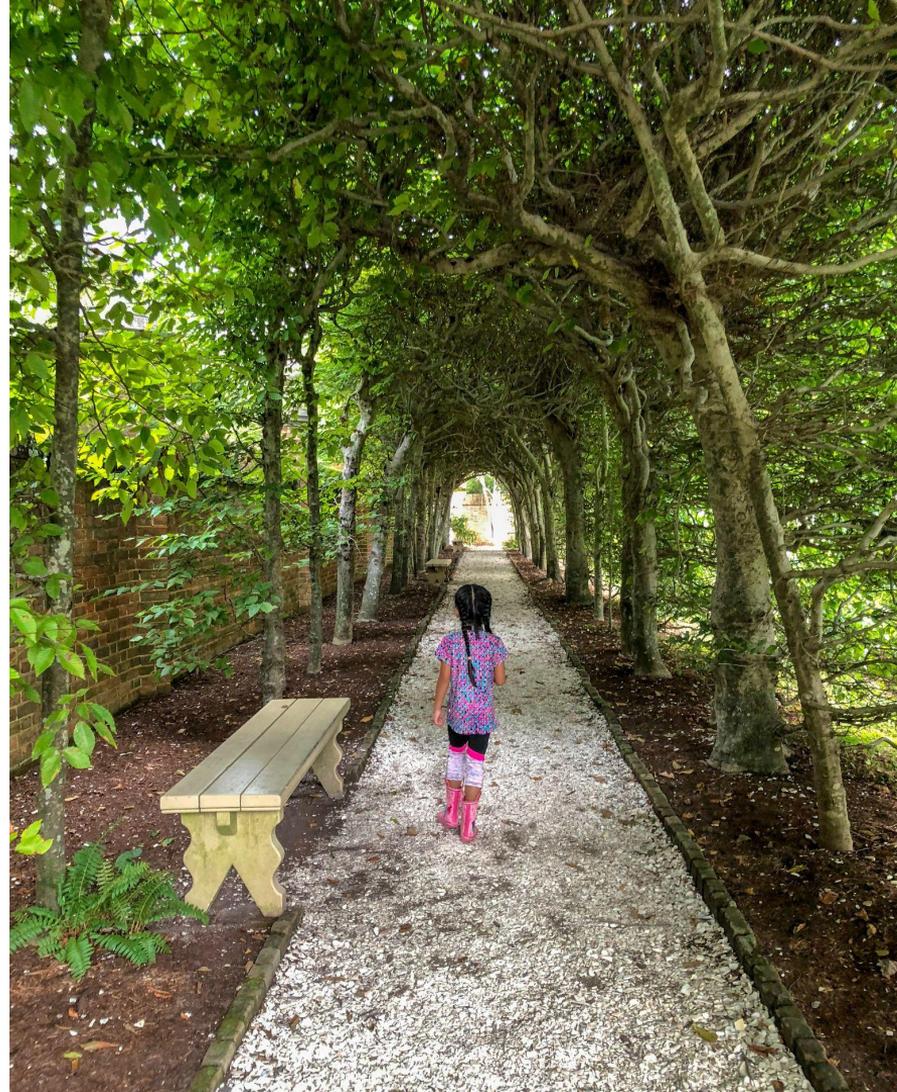
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VISION



To be an industry leader by
inspiring, promoting, and
increasing travel to Virginia.

VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS



TRAVEL TRENDS & RESEARCH



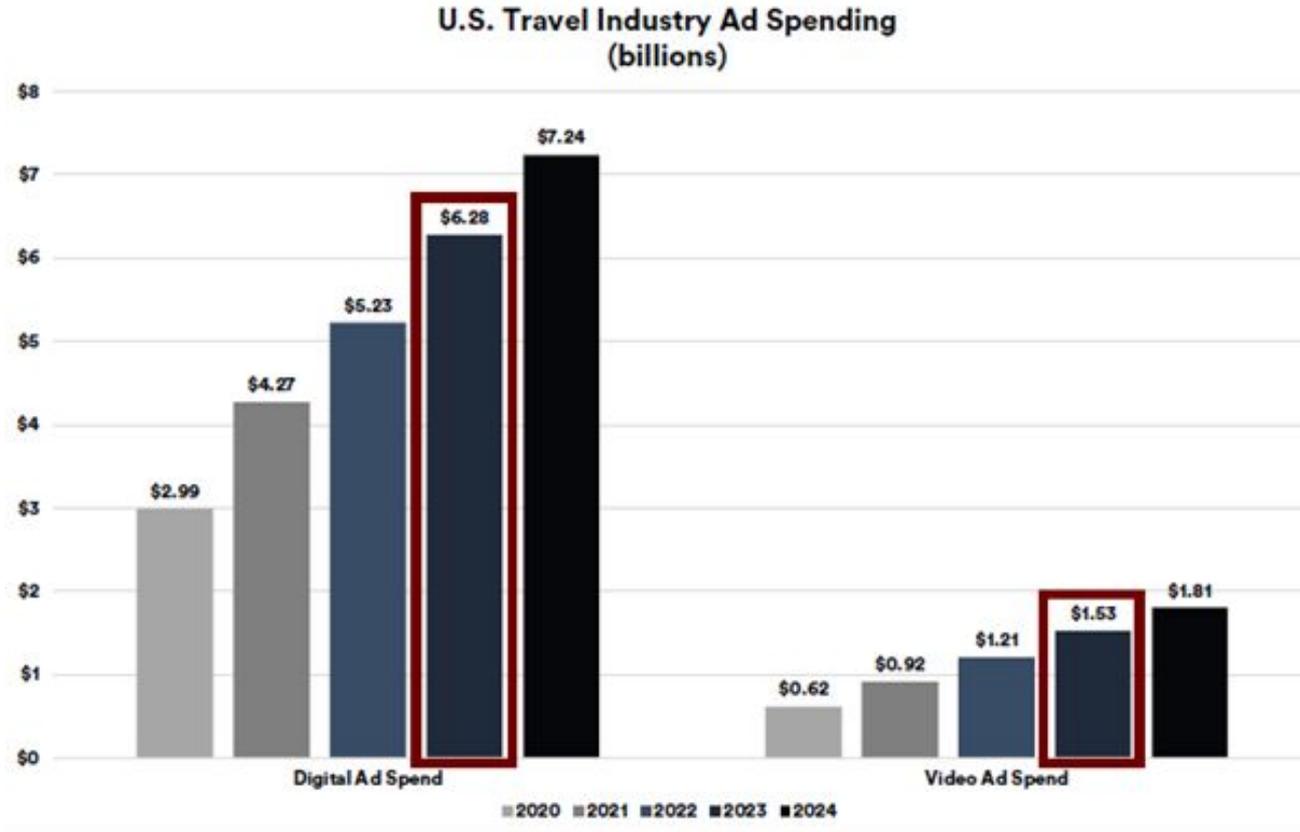
Despite rising costs and inflation, leisure travel is still a priority

Real Domestic Leisure Travel Spending

Forecasted recovery, relative to 2019 (index, 2019=100)



Brands are battling for traveler attention, with travel ad spending expected to exceed 2019 levels by 2023



2023 Traveler Trends (from a national perspective)

1. 71% of American travelers believe that travel planning has become more complex, and 43% are more likely to use a travel advisor
2. 46% want more **unique experiences**
3. 48% want to **return to their favorite places**
4. Demand for **outdoor experiences** continues to increase as people want to get away from crowds

Traveler Habits:

- i. Smaller book-to-travel windows expected to continue in 2023
- ii. While the majority are traveling for the same length of time as years past, 32% are staying for longer.
- iii. As travelers plan for 2023, 'they're open to spending up to and over \$10,000 (vs. \$2K in 2022).
- iv. Social media plays a significant role in how people travel. The top 3 platforms across Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers are Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube

OBJECTIVES & KEY RESULTS



MARKETING OBJECTIVES





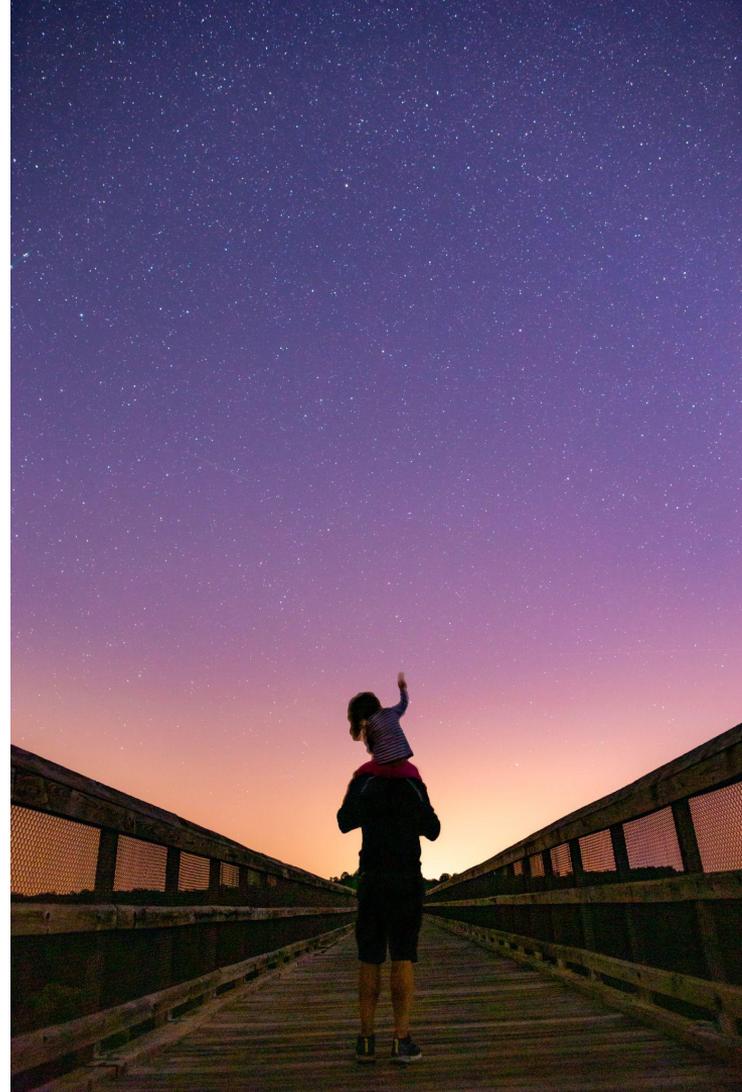
Awareness: Reach new audiences with an expanded marketing footprint while prioritizing underserved travelers who are strongly represented in feeder markets

Through an expanded footprint, achieve campaign awareness of 40%

Consideration: Improve Virginia's top-of-mind consideration among competitive states in Core & Expansion Markets

8% of consumers regard Virginia as an excellent place to go for a leisure travel

Virginia leads Pennsylvania (7%), Maryland(7%), and DC (2%) but falls significantly behind North Carolina (17%), South Carolina (16%), Georgia (14%), and Tennessee (15%)(From SMARI)





Engagement: Maintain high levels of engagement with current and potential travelers through all VTC channels

- Site traffic
- Retention
- Email
- Social Media followers and engagement levels

Impact/Visitation: Increase overnight visitation in Virginia as a result of VTC marketing efforts

- Hotel bookings and revenue
- Credit card spending
- ROI on integrated marketing

Partner Participation: Increase the number of partner touch points throughout the year:

- Ensure at least 80% of the \$1 million cooperative advertising program fund is utilized by industry partners
- Increase partner participation on Virginia.org by 10%
- Support the industry with marketing resources as needed through DRIVE 2.0, the marketing leverage program options, and legislative initiatives.

AUDIENCE GEOGRAPHY



Tier 1/High-Value

New/First Time Visitors: awareness/frequency play

- Atlanta, GA
- Boston, MA
- Chicago, IL
- New York, NY
- Pittsburgh, PA

Tier 2/Good Value

Repeat Visitors: brand advocates

- Baltimore, MD
- Charlotte, NC
- Philadelphia, PA
- Raleigh, NC
- Washington, DC

Tier 3/Exploratory

Limited High-Impact Visitation: explore these markets for future potential

- Cleveland, OH
- Columbus, OH
- Harrisburg, PA
- Nashville, TN

CAMPAIGNS



Key Areas of Focus

To amplify the impact and reach of the priorities, VTC will promote the following areas of focus on owned channels. Based on research and seasonal trends, VTC will have a dedicated and integrated focus on the following topics to highlight experiences important to travelers. Most importantly, this will allow us to increase visitation, reach new audiences, and prioritize inclusivity.

- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
- Luxury
- Multi-generational families
- Outdoors
- Unique experiences

2023 Flagship Campaign - Virginia is for...

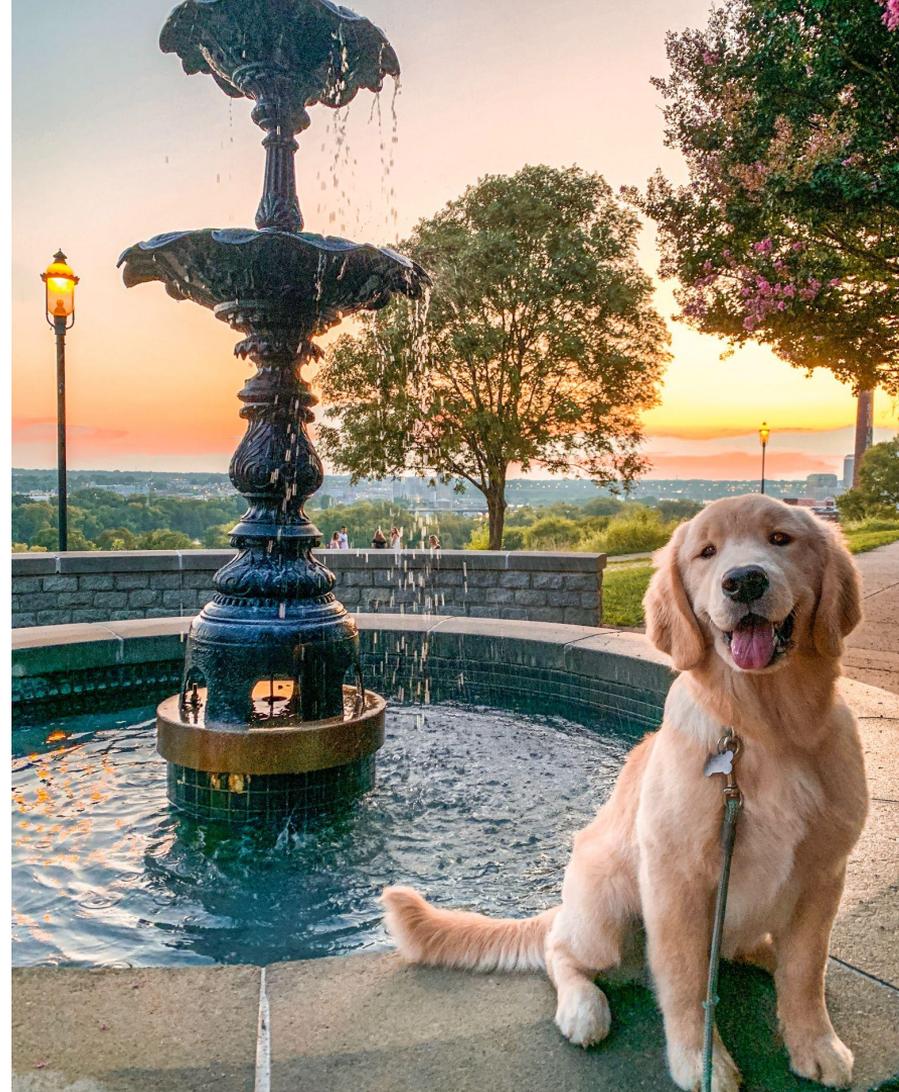
Timing: February - December

VTC's flagship campaign that defines the brand and challenges perceptions of Virginia as a vacation destination. Using learnings from 2022, VTC will target the high-value traveler and market Virginia as a place with an abundance of experiences.

Campaign Message

The voice/tone is fun, funny and upbeat. We occasionally break the fourth wall with funny, contemplative interjections.

Virginia is for mountain hikers, beach chair sitters, oyster shuckers and brewery hoppers, museum goers – and, well, you get the idea. Virginia is for all sorts of lovers. So come love it for yourself!





My Home, Virginia

Timing: June - September

The My Home, Virginia video series explores the stories of noteworthy Virginians across the Commonwealth as we seek to answer a simple question – "Why Virginia?".

The series looks closely into these 'individuals' stories and highlights Virginia's unique role in their lives, careers, and the pursuit of their passions.

Each episode captures an 'individual's' passion through bright, beautiful visuals that inspire, uplift, and evoke feelings of awe. The audio is voice-over driven, complemented with natural sound and provoking music.

Heart & Soul Campaign

Timing: April - August

Highlight Virginia as a desirable vacation destination for Black travelers by positioning Virginia localities as hubs to experience the authentic Black culture. This campaign aims to encourage tourism by celebrating Black creatives and elevating Black culture in Virginia.

Campaign Message:

You know our heart, now meet our soul.

Explore the heart and soul of Virginia with Black creators, artists, and trendsetters who shape the culture of Virginia.





Luxury Travel Campaign

Timing: April - May

Saks Fifth Avenue is recognized globally as the leader in luxury retail. VTC will partner with Saks to tap into its affluent audience and generate awareness for 'Virginia's premier luxury properties. The collaboration with Saks will leverage best-in-class marketing initiatives to bring Virginia's awe-inspiring beauty and culture to life, encouraging exploration and travel intent to an elite, engaged audience.

CONTENT & EDITORIAL



CONTENT MARKETING

The relationship between paid marketing and organic marketing is synergistic. Owned marketing channels provide the foundation for paid media ROI as they increase conversions, build brand trust and authority, and keep our brand top-of-mind with consumers.

As new audiences are exposed to Virginia's advertising, they must be continually engaged through content marketing on owned channels such as the website, social media channels, blog content, digital video, and email marketing. Additionally, these channels serve an important purpose of engaging in-state "advocates" for Virginia.

The bottom line: content marketing is essential for converting a newly acquired lead into a repeat visitor as it increases brand awareness, generates and nurtures consumer interest, and retains customers.

Through integrated and collaborative efforts, the Content team executes a data-driven content marketing strategy that outlines how to create, distribute, and promote highly relevant content necessary to attract, engage, and retain our target audiences.

EDITORIAL STRATEGY

The editorial goal of Virginia is for Lovers is to be the **most trusted source for Virginia trip inspiration and information.**

The editorial lineup is built to **inspire, educate, and convert travelers.**

We use **storytelling and compelling visuals** to inspire visitors and locals to experience the abundance of Virginia experiences, and to discover for themselves why Virginia is for Lovers.

Our content focuses on the consumer journey, including **details on things to see and do, places to stay, insider tips, travel deals, and transportation information.**



Editorial Framework

- **Brand Building & Editorial**
 - Organic content to entertain, educate, and inspire
- **Product**
 - Industry support, priority products & projects, grant support
- **Conversion**
 - Branded tactical content to drive specific KPIs like landing page clicks, CTA actions & email signups
- **Thought Leadership**
 - B2B & VTC news and updates

Content Objectives

1. Increase awareness and consideration in core and expanded markets
2. Engage new users with owned content
3. Build consumer retention and loyalty
4. Engage brand advocates



Editorial Themes

January: Winter sports, health & wellness, affordable luxury

February: Black history month, romance

March: Spring break, sustainability, women's history

April: Outdoor activities, you-pick farms, wineries

May: Beaches, family vacations, festivals

June: Foodie experiences, American history, outdoors

July: 4th of July, waterfront getaways, festivals

August: Craft beer, mountains, small towns

September: Luxury, spirits, seasonal activities

October: Fall foliage, off-season getaways, wine & cider

November: Oysters, Thanksgiving, seasonal retreats

December: Holidays in Virginia



Social Media Marketing Platforms



	Audience	What We Share	Content Formats	Objectives	Key Metrics	Action Items From Social
	Women ages 25-34 in RVA, VA Beach, Alexandria and Washington DC	Things to do, roundups, brand building, downloads (conversion), quiz content	Stories, Reels, In-feed Post, Guides, Highlights	Brand & Editorial, Product, Conversion	Engagement, Followers, Views	Post in feed 6-7x week, reels 4x per week, stories 5x per week, engage with followers, engage with pages/industry, respond to DMs and comments, source UGC with crowdrriff
	Senior level employees, with job functions in Business Development, Operations & Marketing	VTC Programs and Impact, brand building, roundups, things to do, storytelling, events & festivals	In-feed posts with images or video	Thought Leadership, Brand & Editorial, Product	Engagements, Page Followers, Clicks	Post 3-5x week, engage with followers, engage with other pages/industry, change cover image quarterly
	78% male, 25-44 years old	Storytelling, episodic content, brand building	Videos, shorts, playlists	Product, Brand & Editorial	Views, Followers/ Subscribers	Post new videos as available, engage with subscribers and reply to comments daily, update playlists regularly
	25-34 years old, 50/50 men and women, LA, NY, DC top metros	Things to do, roundups, brand building, downloads (conversion)	Pins, idea pins (stories), carousel pins (multi-image)	Product, Conversion, Brand & Editorial	Engagements, Clicks	Create new pins monthly, update boards as needed, change cover photo quarterly
	Women ages 35-44 in Virginia Beach, RVA and NY	Events and festivals, roundups, brand building, quiz content,	Facebook feed posts, videos, carousels (multi-image posts), stories	Product, Conversion, Brand & Editorial	Engagements, Clicks	Post 5-7x per week, engage with followers and other pages/industry, respond to DMs and comments daily, change cover photo quarterly
	70% of users are male ages 25-34, 500 million tweets sent per day in Marc 2021	Things to do, news, downloads (conversion), quiz content, roundups, brand building, events & festivals	Tweets with images or video	Brand & Editorial, Product, Conversion, Thought Leadership	Engagements, Clicks	Post 5x per week, engage with followers and other pages/industry, repond to DMs and comments daily, change cover photo quarterly

COMMUNICATIONS



Priorities

- Maintain a steady drumbeat of Virginia outreach to keep the brand top-of-mind
- Continue What's New pitching but present in innovative ways via video
- Identify the Top 10 outlet targets for feature press placements. Proactively pitch specific trips and itineraries months in advance and recommend pitching road trip visits for spring/summer now
- Support Hero/VTC campaigns with specific outreach and press visits; continue highlighting key focuses in monthly outreach (Wine, Oysters, Outdoors, Families, Local Culture, Luxury, etc.)
- Utilize the research, planning, and content from the team to inform pitches





Proactive Pitching

- Respond to daily media leads from HARO, Czars, SATW, Rachel McAllister, direct inquiries
- Use 2023 editorial calendars from top-tier publications to develop pitch priorities
- Leverage pressroom as a communications tool with updates to pages, (what's new, statewide accolades, story ideas, etc) to complement VTCs marketing priorities

Digital Media Kit/Image Collections

- [What's New in 2023](#)
- [Heart & Soul](#)
- [LOVEworks](#)
- [Sustainable Tourism / Leave No Trace](#)
- [Luxury](#)
- [LGBTQ+](#) (to be included in ongoing content and highlighted in family content)
- Drive 2.0 Support - Outdoor, Vibrant Communities, Storytelling

DOMESTIC MARKETING



- Participate in desk-side appointments with planners and rights holders at a minimum of six trade shows/ conferences and share the resulting lead reports with industry partners to actualize new business
- Sponsor a minimum of three trade shows to increase Virginia and partner 'destination's brand awareness
- Provide partnerships in VTC trade show booths and VTC-hosted client events to our industry partners at an affordable cost
- Support industry partners in their efforts to host AAA/ tour planners/ rights holders for familiarization tours and planner trade shows/conferences hosted in Virginia
- Partner with the Virginia Association of Destination Marketing Organizations to support sales missions to AAA and tour operator offices
- Maintain updated promotional materials and sales resources to educate tour planners and sports rights holders on tour products, venues, and the benefits of coming to Virginia.
- Work with trade media to offer discounted advertising opportunities to our industry partners in unique Virginia State Guides and digital coops. Provide editorial for digital and print media
- Work with the VTC Digital team to maintain and update three microsites for group tours, meetings, and sports planners that are engaging and rich in content. Optimized to increase visitation
- Support our partners in pandemic event recovery through administering grants via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Sports Marketing, and Meeting & Convention Incentive Programs

INTERNATIONAL MARKETING



- Partner with BRAND USA to expand market reach in Canada and overseas markets
- Participate in all relevant in-person travel consumer, trade, and media shows in Canada and overseas markets
- Host up to 20 in-person Familiarization Tours in Virginia with tour operators, travel agents, media, and influencers
- Conduct desk-side visits with tour operators, travel agents, media, and influencers in Canada and our key overseas markets
- Participate in Travel 'South's Global Week- Summit & Media Marketplace in Charlestown, SC
- Participate in IPW, the leading inbound travel trade and media show in Los Angeles, CA
- Increase Virginia is for Lovers AU NZ Facebook and Instagram followers by 10% through organic and paid content
- Continue to increase Tourisme Virginie's Facebook page followers by 10% through organic and paid content; use Facebook as a tool to increase visitation to the Canadian section of virginia.org
- Lead a sales and media mission with Virginia suppliers in the Canadian market to include Quebec and Ontario
- Implement a comprehensive multi-media advertising campaign in Canada to continue to drive awareness of Virginia as a vacation destination, increase website visitation and impact visitation to Virginia from Ontario and Quebec
- Inform international travel trade and media of the Virginia brand message and tourism product through newsletters, pitches, media visits, and in-country initiatives
- Forge new and enhance current relationships with Canadian and overseas travel trade and media
- Engage with and promote Dulles International Airport via our partnership with MWAA
- Increase awareness of the Virginia luxury product and United Airlines service to Virginia while focusing on key growth opportunity markets through our partnership with Ink-Global, media fams, and trade outreach

Capital Region USA

- Plan and implement group media familiarization (fam) tours for each of the key markets with additional individual farms as requested
- Generate at least 72 press releases from key market offices to generate \$12 million total AVE
- Host a second annual Global Travel Exchange (GTE) marketplace and fam tours with tour operators from the UK, Germany, and France, as well as US-based receptive tour operators and up to 48 CRUSA-region suppliers
- Conduct sales and media missions in key markets for tourism partners and members
- Execute tour operator marketing co-ops and conduct 350+ travel trade sales calls working with the CRUSA overseas representatives
- Continue enhancements to www.capitalregionusa.org with additional itineraries and photo/video content
- Increase social media audiences via Facebook and Instagram accounts in all key markets with over 600 total posts
- Create and distribute 60,000 copies of the CRUSA Holiday Guide in three languages
- Participate in UK and German Brand USA marketing campaigns
- Continue to improve and expand the Allied and Affiliate membership programs

RFPs



RFP's

Merchandise RFP

VTC will seek a new contract for our official Virginia is for Lovers merchandise.

Paid Advertising/Agency of Record RFP

VTC aims to increase awareness and consideration for Virginia as a vacation destination and turn that consideration into visitation through bookings and actual arrivals. To do this, VTC is seeking a creative contractor and media contractor to develop innovative marketing campaigns, strategies, and programs that will assist in increasing the 'state's share of domestic tourism markets.

Publications/Virginia.org Advertising RFP

The Virginia Travel Guide, Virginia Golf Guide and Virginia.org website provide valuable content to consumers and media seeking travel inspiration and information about Virginia. VTC is seeking a contractor to manage the production of these publications and the implementation of the online display advertising program, bringing an innovative and creative approach to engaging these highly qualified audiences.

THANK YOU!

