

FY 2021 ANNUAL REPORT





Who We Are

Our Mission, Purpose and Funding

Southern Delaware Tourism (SDT) is the Convention & Visitors Bureau for Sussex County, Delaware. As the destination marketing organization for the county, SDT's mission is to support and encourage the identification, development, and promotion of sustainable, year-round tourism in Southern Delaware that contributes to economic growth and improves the quality of life. SDT is led by a Board of Directors representing chambers of commerce, local businesses, and county economic development.

The CVB staff is comprised of the Executive Director, a Communications Manager, a Marketing Manager, and a Marketing Administrator.

Southern Delaware Tourism operates as a 501(c)6 non-profit business. Funding for the CVB is derived from the State of Delaware's Public Accommodations Tax.

A Letter from the Executive Director



Scott Thomas
Executive Director

Revival and Renewed Optimism

What a difference a year makes. Last year at this time we were walking a tightrope over a sea of uncertainties brought on by the global pandemic. We were riding a rollercoaster through each Governor's Executive Order and surrounding state's quarantine travel restrictions. It was a year like no other that forced us to do things differently.

As I observed last year, I am constantly reminded of the resiliency of our local tourism industry. Through great perseverance, creativity and government assistance, most of our tourism community made it to the vaccination finish line.

SDT made it too. Through the sound leadership of its Board of Directors and its talented and resourceful team, I am happy to report that the organization beat its revenue projections by 13% and poised for

its best year ever. The pent-up travel demand that we knew was coming is now materializing into more visitors to Sussex County than we have ever seen. Just over the past two months and into July, SDT revenue generated by the state hotel tax is eclipsing 2019 pre-pandemic numbers by 41%.

That is great news but presents our industry with more unprecedented challenges and byproducts of the pandemic such as severe labor shortages and maintaining quality controls on service and guest experiences.

SDT is committed to working with our county tourism partners to help guide visitors through the reawakening of travel to the county and helping them discover why Southern Delaware is such a special place.

I am extremely thankful for the resilience and perseverance of SDT's board and our community partners. I look forward to a successful FY 2022.

-Safe Travels!

FY 2021 Major Achievements

- Over 141,000 people visited SDT's website, VisitSouthernDelaware.com.
- SDT's advertising generated 15,681 hotel searches and 500+ hotel bookings.
- Through hosting and assisting travel journalists, SDT generated over \$2.3 million in publicity value for travel to Sussex County.
- SDT achieved DMAP certification from Destinations International and is now an accredited destination marketing organization recognized by the industry.
- By utilizing COVID-19 related federal and state grants and loans, SDT was able to implement four seasonal advertising campaigns to its top drive-from markets. This includes a 64% increased investment in its late spring 2021 campaign.
- SDT launched its Bike & Stay and Paddle & Stay hotel packages on its mobile app, SouthDel Sidekick, generating 600+ hotel room nights.
- Increased exposure for highlighting Southern Delaware's Culinary Coast™ as a major culinary destination. With the support of a variety of restaurants and state organizations, SDT has secured coverage in international, national and regional publications such as Conde Nast Traveler, Travel & Leisure, Food & Wine, National Geographic Traveler, Forbes, Martha Stewart Living, The Boston Globe and Philadelphia Inquirer.
- SDT won the bid to host the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) Eastern Chapter Meeting in June. 16 travel journalists attended and took part in familiarization trips around the area.
- SDT's 5th Annual Photo Contest resulted in submissions of over 700 photos with many now used towards promotional efforts.
- SDT distributed \$498,980 in funding grants to chambers of commerce (located in Sussex County) for local tourism promotion.
- SDT added 1,884 subscribers to its eScapes consumer travel newsletter bringing the total number of subscribers to 24,400.
- Our social media channels have attracted 10,919 followers on Facebook, 10,026 on Twitter and 4,381 on Instagram
- SDT produced 3 videos focused on stories unique to Sussex County, highlighting outdoor recreation and new attractions in Sussex County.

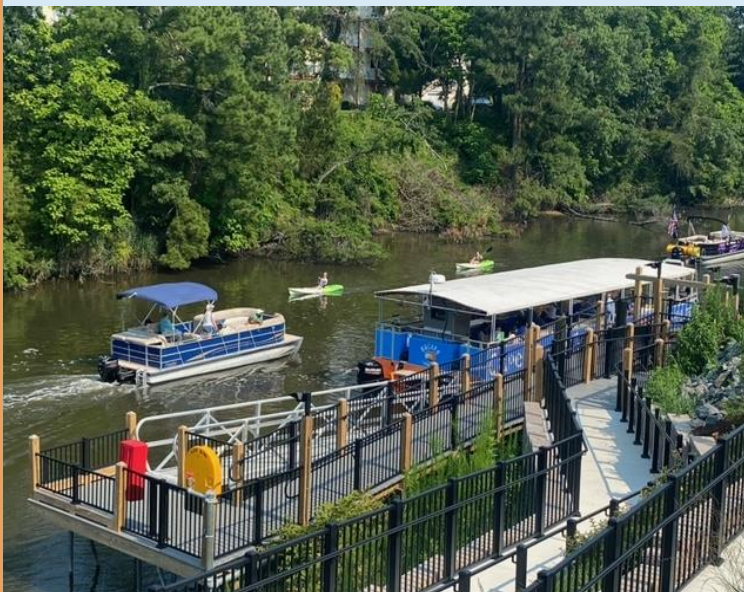


Travel and Tourism Impact

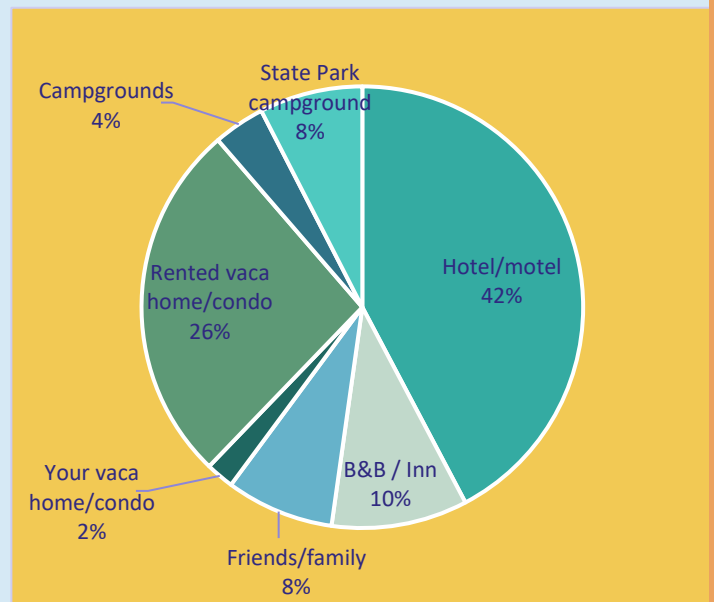
Sussex County

- Generates \$2.3 billion in visitor spending
- Tourism supports 19,750 jobs in the county
- Brings new money into the community
- For every \$1 spent directly by a visitor, another \$1.20 is generated in indirect sales to the local economy
- Helps diversify and stabilize the local economy
- Attracts additional businesses to our area (“It Starts With a Visit”)
- Contributes to the state and local tax base and saves each Delaware household approximately \$1,564 in taxes annually
- It would take only 160 more visitors to support a new Delaware job
- Every 230 visitors pays for a Delaware public school student for the year

Source: 2019 Delaware Tourism Office Value of Tourism Report



Where Visitors Are Staying



Source: 2019 Southern Delaware Tourism Visitor Survey Report

Top Ten Visitor Activities

1. Dining Out
2. Going to the Beach
3. Tax-Free Shopping
4. Visiting Breweries & Wineries
5. Going to Festivals
6. Visiting Museums / Historic Sites
7. Cycling
8. Antiquing
9. Engaging in Cultural Arts
10. Fishing

Southern Delaware Tourism Board of Directors

Benjamin Gray, Area General Manager of the Delaware Resort Collection, EOS and Current SDT Chairperson

Bonnie Hall, Nanticoke Indian Association and Current SDT Co-Chairperson

Anne Brown, Executive Director of the Milton Chamber of Commerce

Terry Carson, Executive Director of the Western Sussex Chamber of Commerce

Carol Everhart, President & CEO of the Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce

Jamie Hayman, Hayman Creative Promotional Products Agency, Inc.

Mary Susan Jones, General Manager of the Microtel Inn & Suites

Elizabeth Keller, Director of the Delaware Tourism Office

Claudia Leister, Executive Director of the Milford Museum

Maggie Lingo, General Manager of the Beacon Motel

Rob Marshall, Owner of the Atlantic Oceanside Dewey Beach Resort

Fred Mast, Managing Shareholder of Jefferson, Urian, Doane & Sterner, P.A.

Matthew Parker, Registered Representative of Rosemont Wealth Management

Linda Price, Acting Director of the Greater Georgetown Chamber of Commerce

Bill Pfaff, Director of the Sussex County Economic Development Office

Betsy Reamer, Executive Director of the Lewes Chamber of Commerce

Jo Schmeiser, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Milford

Lauren Weaver, Executive Director of the Bethany-Fenwick Area Chamber of Commerce

Southern Delaware Tourism Staff

Scott Thomas, Executive Director

Tina Coleman, Communications Manager

Lana O'Hollaren, Marketing Manager

Caitlin Chaney, Marketing Administrator

