

AGENDA –May 16, 2012

Strategic Tourism Planning Board Tompkins County

Wednesday, May 16, 2012
3:00 pm – 4:20 pm, CVB

Agenda

- April Meeting Minutes - 2 minutes
- Chair's Report – David Sparrow - 5 minutes
- Budget Committee Report – Rick Adie - 15 minutes
- Caroline Community Project – Rita Rosenberg – 5 minutes
- Strategic Tourism Plan Draft - Member discussion – Approve draft plan for public distribution - 40 minutes
- April CVB Report – Fred Bonn – 10 minutes

Attached (agenda packet):

1. March, 2012 draft STPB meeting minutes
2. 2013 Tourism Program Budget Projections
3. Strategic Tourism Plan Draft
4. April CVB Report
5. Slides - April 18, 2012 Strategic Tourism Plan presentation



MISSION:

The Strategic Tourism Planning Board is charged by the Tompkins County Legislature with providing oversight and strategic direction for tourism initiatives that *promote economic development* and *enhance the quality of life* in Tompkins County.

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) DRAFT Meeting Minutes – April 2012

Date: April 18, 2012
Time: 3:00-5:00pm
Location: Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Attendees:

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	✓	At-Large	Sue Perlgut	exc	Arts-Culture
Anthony Hopson	✓	Ithaca College, Vice-Chair	Sue Stafford	✓	TC3
Beverly Baker	✓	At-Large	Susie Monagan	✓	Arts-Culture
David Sparrow	✓	At-Large, Chair	Tim Joseph	✓	At-Large
Ethan Ash	Exc	Arts-Culture	VACANT		At-Large
Gary Stewart	✓	Cornell	Brett Bossard	✓	CAP, Non-Voting
Jon Reis	✓	Arts-Culture	Fred Bonn	✓	CVB, Non-Voting
Ken Jupiter	✓	At-Large	Gary Ferguson		DIA, Non-Voting
Paul Tatar	✓	Recreation	Jean McPheeters	✓	Chamber, Non-Voting
Rick Adie	✓	Lodging	Martha Armstrong	✓	TCAD, Non-Voting
Rita Rosenberg	✓	Agriculture	Will Burbank	✓	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Scott Wiggins	✓	Lodging	VACANT		Transportation, Non-Voting
Stuart Stein	✓	At-Large	Tom Knipe	✓	Staff

Also in attendance: Ronda Roaring, Kathy Wilsea (Tompkins County Planning Dept.), several Ithaca College students (guests of Anthony Hopson and Susie Monagan)

Agenda

1. March Meeting Minutes
2. Chair's report
3. Bylaws update and discussion
4. Budget Committee Report
5. Strategic Tourism Plan Draft
6. CVB Report

Discussion

1. Approval of minutes for March, 2012 STPB meeting - March Minutes were approved without change.

2. Chair's report - David Sparrow announced the Membership & Bylaws Committee will report on interaction with the Legislature's PDEQ Committee. PDEQ returned the bylaws to STPB for changes. The State Theatre has signed their contract with the Ticket Center. Tompkins County Planning Department has requested STPB commitment for a Comprehensive Plan action item to promote and assist in the development of the county's tourism attractions, including cultural, natural and commercial attractions. David has signed the letter of commitment. (Copy of request attached.)

David requested a report from the Beautification Committee. Beverly Baker reported the City of Ithaca's Forester has indicated she wishes to serve on STPB as an associate member. Jean McPheeters reported some 2012 funds will be used for the Stewart Park flagpole area. Some towns have not applied for the program, and Jean is willing to interact with them. The watering truck is being put to good use. QR codes are included on posters to aid in recruiting volunteer signups. A goal this year is to work on the three triangles near the Commons and maintain them during the upcoming construction. The triangle at Route 79 and Mitchell Street is being removed, and the committee will consider what to do there when the reconfigured intersection is completed.

Bylaws Update and Discussion – Beverly reported she just received the last comment today, and passed around an updated draft document. She reviewed suggested amendments and all were accepted. She will clean up the document and it will return to PDEQ.

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) DRAFT Meeting Minutes – April 2012

Budget Committee Report – Rick Adie reported they held their first meeting last week and established a schedule through July. They will be forecasting the 2013 room tax revenues.

Introduction of Guests - Three Ithaca Colleges students were present today, along with Danby resident and ilovethefingerlake.com website owner Ronda Roaring.

CVB Report – Fred Bonn had provided a report with the agenda. He reviewed highlights, and noted that Ithaca College hasn't finalized the contract with CVB for the diving championships, mentioned in the report. Fred and Jean had a meeting at the Holiday Inn about the hotel's renovation schedule. They will close on November 26, 2012 and plan to reopen in April 2013 with 80 rooms, ballroom renovation, lobby renovation, kitchen and restaurant renovation completed. The second tower construction will follow. Fred announced a position is open at CVB for an integrated marketing manager, and this is being advertised nationally.

Strategic Tourism Plan Draft – Tom Knipe provided background in a powerpoint presentation. He thanked the Planning & Evaluation Committee for the tremendous amount of work they have done, that resulted in the successful workshop, survey, and draft Strategic Tourism Plan. The fifteen focus area for the plan were on the wall around the room with detailed "potential actions". Tom pointed out the plan cannot include every idea that came in from the meetings. Carried over from the previous plan were Aims (not prioritized), Vision and outline. Not all of the old Strategic Actions were retained, and many new potential goals and actions are included in the draft. What is new: Chmura and Industry Info; measurements; program details; 14 policies; differentiation among goals, objectives, and actions; focus areas; outreach workshop and survey; and many potential actions that will become part of a separate living document. Some changes have been made to the policies identified in the plan, following discussion at PDEQ. PDEQ had requested a timeline for review of 60/40 split, and flesh-out of multi-year agreements.

The next step for STPB is to identify critical actions for the Plan. This can be up to three per Focus Area. Other possible actions will go into a separate, living document. Timeline includes a 20-day public comment period and discussion at PDEQ. Comments on the framework included Jean's preference to move the policy on multi-year agreements (page 11) to operations from evaluations. Branding was included in a policy (page 10) regarding long term destination brand value. Tom suggested that it may not be appropriate to use the plan to identify a specific brand strategy. Further discussion on branding will take place at the committee level.

Members were invited to help prioritize actions by placing one dot on their preferred "critical action" for each focus area. Following this exercise, Tom outlined next steps: he will compile data and bring to the committee to prepare the final draft for the public comment period. Tom requested that members review the draft that was distributed by email on 4/17 and submit comments via email to him to share with the P&E Committee.

Adjournment - David requested that members be sure to sign the attendance list. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.

Next Meeting Scheduled

Wednesday, May 16 – 3pm

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
DRAFT Meeting Minutes – April 2012**

Tompkins County

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

**121 East Court Street
Ithaca, New York 14850**

**Edward C. Marx, AICP
Commissioner of Planning
and Community Sustainability**

**Telephone (607) 274-5560
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February 17, 2012

Mr. David Sparrow, Chair
Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board
125 East Court Street
Ithaca, NY 14850

RE: Five-Year Implementation Plan – Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan

Dear David:

The Tompkins County Planning Department is preparing a revised five-year implementation plan for achieving the principles and policies of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan.

When the Comprehensive Plan was first adopted in 2004, a five-year implementation plan was included. That implementation plan identified 61 priority action items to be undertaken by the community to further the Comprehensive Plan. For each action item, a principal local agency (or agencies) in the community was identified.

Since the adoption of that first implementation plan, the community has begun or completed implementation on all but one of those action items, a 98% success rate.

Working with the County Planning Advisory Board, the Planning Department has drafted a new five-year implementation plan. Potential action items were gleaned from local and county plans developed in the last five years (including the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions element), from action items that were considered but excluded in the first implementation plan, and from suggestions at a public meeting held in 2010.

As with the original implementation plan, no action item will be included unless a principal local agency in the community has been identified and has agreed to act as such.

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
DRAFT Meeting Minutes – April 2012

We have identified an action item for which we think the Strategic Tourism Planning Board is the appropriate principal local agency. As with the original implementation plan, we are asking for lead agencies to commit to this role given existing resources. No additional funding from Tompkins County should be expected. We would like to list the Strategic Tourism Planning Board as the lead agency, with the Planning Department, for the following action item:

- Promote and assist in the development of the county's tourism attractions, including cultural, natural and commercial attractions.

The above action item will not be included with your agency listed as the principal local agency unless we receive a written confirmation from you. You may use the enclosed letter for that purpose.

If you have any questions, would like to suggest changes to the wording of the action item, or have any other concerns, please contact me, or Joan Jurkovich, at the Planning Department.

Sincerely,

Edward C. Marx, AICP
Commissioner of Planning and Community Sustainability

Tompkins County Tourism Program – 2013 Budget Forecast

2013 Budget Forecast Process - (see attached .xls file titled "2013 budget forecast calculator")

1. Re-forecast 2012 room tax growth using most recent business intelligence (6%)
2. Re-forecast 2012 room tax revenues using the new growth % and ACTUAL 2011 revenues (\$2,036,716)
3. Re-forecast the amount going into unallocated reserves in 2012 based on above (\$98,021)
4. Added the above to the amount currently in unallocated reserves (\$165,892) to get a projected end of 2012 unallocated reserve balance of approximately \$264,000
5. Forecast 2013 growth using business intelligence (5%)
6. Forecast 2013 revenues (\$2,138,552)
7. Determined an amount to retain in unallocated reserves in 2013 budget (approximately 5% of budget or \$100,000+)
8. Determined to set aside funds for "strategic tourism plan implementation", and NOT assign these funds to specific programs in the 2013 budget request process currently underway (more on possible parameters for "strategic tourism plan implementation" funding below)
9. Determined a desired growth percentage in the 2013 budget that will be available for existing programs to apply for in the 2013 budget request process (3% - slightly higher than CPI).
10. \$2,140,874 - Amount available (in aggregate) to current programs to apply for in the 2013 budget request process.
11. \$160,000 - Amount available for strategic tourism plan implementation.
12. \$2,300,874 - Total 2013 budget.

Business Intelligence

- PKF model for Tompkins forecasts 6.9% growth in revPAR in 2012, 5.3% growth in 2013.
- 1Q 2012 TC Room Tax Revenues up 25% over Q1 2011 (but Q1 is the lowest revenue quarter, and there is less room to grow at busier times)
- Smith Travel 12 month through March 2012: RevPAR up 9.9%
- Smith Travel 2012 YTD: RevPAR up 12.8%
- Outstanding balance of unpaid tax determined to be a neutral factor for purposes of projection since 2011 incorporates non-payment, and we do not know if tax will be paid or not in 2012 and 2013.
- Changes in supply in 2012 and 2013 (Holiday Inn remodel, Fairfield Inn build) determined to be neutral or positive since HI rooms will be "dark" during slow season and Fairfield Inn rooms likely replace HI rooms for the balance of 2013.

Proposed Parameters for "Strategic Tourism Plan Implementation" funds

- Funds to be distributed through competitive process
- Must directly support strategic tourism plan implementation
- Specific application process for these funds to be determined in summer/fall 2012
- Existing programs/projects AND new programs/projects eligible to apply for strategic plan implementation funds
- Subject to 60/40 split? Requires discussion. Perhaps these funds fall outside of that requirement.
- Possible application timing: Winter '12/'13
- Preference for fewer, large projects that will make a big impact
- Amount available in 2013 budget: \$160,000 (*also possible to release \$80,000 in 2012, 80,000 in 2013...requires further budget committee and P&E discussion*)

TOMPKINS COUNTY TOURISM PROGRAM 2013 BUDGET CALCULATOR

2011 Actual Room Tax Revenues	1,921,431	from County Finance
2012 Growth - Re-forecast	6.00%	
2012 Revenues - Re-forecast	2,036,716	% over 2011 actual revenues
2012 Revenues - Budgeted	1,938,695	from approved budget
2012 Use of Reserves - budgeted	139,823	from approved budget
Back to Reserves from 2012	98,021	re-forecast 2012 revenues minus budgeted
4/27/12 Unallocated Reserve Balance	165,892	from County Finance
Projected End of 2012 Unallocated Reserve Balance	263,913	current unallocated reserves plus 2012 back to reserves
2013 Growth Forecast	5.00%	
2013 Revenues - Forecast	2,138,552	% over 2012 projected revenues
2013 Budgeted Use of Reserves for Existing Programs	2,321	2013 revenues minus desired 2013 release
2013 Amount Available for Existing Programs	2,140,874	
2013 Budgeted Use of Reserves for Strategic Plan	160,000	
2013 Budget Total	2,300,874	
Established 2012 Budget (including reserve allocation)	2,078,518	
Desired Growth in Budget to release in aggregate to existing programs	3.00%	slightly higher than CPI
2013 Amount Available for Existing Programs	2,140,874	to apply for in 2013 budget request process
2013 From Reserves for Existing Programs	-2,321	2013 revenues minus desired release.
Projected End of 2013 Unallocated Reserve Balance	101,592	2012 end of year, minus 2013 budgeted use



Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB)

Report to:

Strategic Tourism Planning Board

May 16, 2012

Submitted by: Fred Bonn, Director

MARKET UPDATE

Fairfield Inn – The 106 room Fairfield Inn broke ground earlier this month. If construction moves according to plan, the property will be open first quarter of next year.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

2013 Budget Submission – I will be working on my 2013 budget request to be supplied to the STPB over the next few weeks. The STPB budget committee is making allowances for budget growth factor of 3%. They will also be working on a process to fund an additional \$160,000 for projects / programs that will support the goals and objectives set forth in the soon to be release 2020 Tourism Strategic Plan.

Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway Cooperative Advertising – We are partnering with the tourism offices in Cayuga and Seneca County on two advertising programs to promote the Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway. (Just named by Yahoo! Travel as one of the 10 Best Road Trips in the US! See my attached clippings) The first program is a web travel site based program and the second is a printed advertisement in AAA Car and Traveler Magazine.

Integrated Marketing Position – We are accepting applications through Friday, 5/18. As of this time I have received materials from some strong applicants and am excited that this re-structuring will help us become a stronger and more impactful organization.

Updates to VisitIthaca.com – We have embedded a digital flip-book version of our travel guide on the VisitIthaca.com website. To date, we have had over 1500 users view the guide in this format. We are also in the process of making upgrades to our "Contact Us" page and are in the early stages of possibly incorporating a booking engine that would allow consumers to buy their hotel room/bed and breakfast stay on our website.

Finger Lakes Tourism Promotion Agencies Deskside Media Visits in NYC – Bruce Stoff will be in NYC May 23 & 24 along with other Finger Lakes Tourism offices to make media calls. This is part of our regional public relations cooperative that uses Quinn and Company. There will also be meetings scheduled with senior management at I Love NY and their PR agency of record, M. Silver and Associates.

GROUP SALES

Active America China – We continue to prepare for this appointment based show that I will be attending May 22- 24 in Minneapolis. We will have approx.. 24 appointment with Chinese group tour operators who have expressed interest in touring university cities in the United States.

Empire State Society of Assoc. Executives – Mary Rachun will be attending this annual show in Saratoga on May 31. Honestly, this event has fallen on tough times and we're not committing the same level of resources as we have in years

past. We're hopeful that the ESSAE will adopt the recommendations that are being made by offices like ours from across NYS to revitalize the event next year.

September Familiarization Tour for Group Tour Companies – We are in the process of finalizing an invitation only event for motor coach tour companies that will take place on Sept. 10 – 11. We're hopeful to have 20 companies attend based on contacts we've developed from attending several motor coach tour shows over the past three years.

VISITOR SERVICES

Hospitality Star Customer Service Training Program – Dates for this annual hospitality frontline staff customer service training have been set for June 19-20. The program is free to Tompkins County tourism-related businesses and organizations. Please speak with me if you or any of your staff are interested in attending.

Requests for Information – We are seeing a dramatic increase in the number of requests for travel information in our office with weekly requests up between 75% and 100% over last year. If this trend continues, we may need to look at a budget adjustment to cover postage expense.

NEW YORK STATE TOURISM

2011 Economic Impact Study – We have been told to expect our 2011 report any week now and there's a good chance it will arrive between the time I write this report and when the board meets. If that's the case I will provide a review of the findings at the board meeting.

EARNED MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS – Attached to my report are clippings from recent media stories that our office has had a hand in as well as a few stories that feature Ithaca that were not influenced by our office.

Smith Travel Report for Tompkins County – March, 2012

Occupancy (%)	2012
	Mar
This Year	52.8
Last Year	52.7
Percent Change	0.1

Year To Date	
2011	2012
45.9	49.2
46.6	45.9
-1.6	7.3

Demand	2012
	Mar
This Year	25,335
Last Year	25,237
Percent Change	0.4

Year To Date	
2011	2012
63,721	68,410
64,728	63,721
-1.6	7.4

ADR	2012
	Mar
This Year	123.26
Last Year	118.43
Percent Change	4.1

Year To Date	
2011	2012
113.25	119.00
102.22	113.25
10.8	5.1

Revenue	2012
	Mar
This Year	3,122,672
Last Year	2,988,724
Percent Change	4.5

Year To Date	
2011	2012
7,216,627	8,140,790
6,616,691	7,216,627
9.1	12.8

Ithaca / Tompkins County CVB Dashboard – April 2012

Visitor Information Services – April 2012

- Requests for information fulfilled in April: 3,269 up 351% over April 2011
- YTD Requests for information through April: 8,742 up 286% YTD over 2011 YTD

Visitor Center Traffic - April. 2012:

- East Shore Drive: 526 (5% over 2011)
- Downtown Visitor Center: 266 (-.30% over 2011)

VisitIthaca.com Stats - April. 2012 & YTD April. 2012

April 2012	2012	2011
Visits	29,036	38,537
Pageviews	104,700	131,856
Pages/Visit	3.61	3.42
Avg. Time on Site	4:03	3:17
YTD April 2012		
Visits	96,475	103,639
Pageviews	349,428	378,920
Pages/Visit	3.62	3.65
Avg. Time on Site	3:51	3:28

Facebook – as of 5/9/12

- Lifetime “Likes” – 9,151 (+342 since April)

Group Sales – April. 2012

Leads Distributed	8
Prospects Generated	3
Sales Kits Distributed	8
Prospects converted to Leads	1
Groups Assisted/Service	8
Site Visits Conducted	5

Group Sales Lead Status Report – April, 2012

Lead sent date	Event account	Event status	Event start date	Event end date	Total Requested Room Nights	Multiplier	Economic Impact	Source
4/12/2012	Princeton Women's Tennis	Booked	4/21/2012	4/22/2012	6	260	\$1,560	Repeat Business
4/3/2012	Regional Partnerships for Equity Conference	Booked	5/18/2012	5/19/2012	50	260	\$13,000	CU Referral
2/17/2012	Germano Wedding	Booked	6/8/2012	6/9/2012	20	353	\$7,060	Local Referral
4/12/2012	FL Wrestling Club	Booked	6/8/2012	6/10/2012	40	260	\$10,400	Call-in
4/12/2012	Hornsby Wedding	Booked	7/12/2012	7/14/2012	30	353	\$10,590	Accommodation Referral
11/29/2011	Wechsler Wedding	Booked	7/13/2012	7/14/2012	100	353	\$35,300	Call-in
10/25/2011	Taggart Wedding Reception/Guest Rooms	Booked	7/21/2012	7/22/2012	200	353	\$70,600	Local Referral
12/6/2011	Klippel Wedding	Booked	8/9/2012	8/10/2012	40	353	\$14,120	Call-in
1/12/2012	Barnes Wedding	Booked	8/17/2012	8/18/2012	200	353	\$70,600	Local Referral
12/8/2011	September 2012 legal Training	Booked	9/19/2012	9/24/2012	140	260	\$36,400	Repeat Business
11/21/2011	Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training	Booked	10/8/2012	10/11/2012	40	260	\$10,400	Email Request
3/26/2012	Princeton Soccer	Booked	10/26/2012	10/27/2012	28	260	\$7,280	Accommodation Referral
3/26/2012	Princeton Field Hockey	Booked	10/27/2012	10/28/2012	20	260	\$5,200	Accommodation Referral
1/26/2012	Turkey Shoot- Varsity Tournament	Booked	11/2/2012	11/4/2012	200	250	\$50,000	Repeat Business
1/26/2012	Turkey Shoot- JV Tournament	Booked	11/9/2012	11/11/2012	200	250	\$50,000	Repeat Business
3/23/2012	Saratoga Springs YMCA	Booked	3/15/2013	3/17/2013	120	260	\$31,200	IC Referral
4/20/2012	Engineering Dept. Forum	Booked	6/15/2014	6/18/2014	67	260	\$17,420	CU Referral
3/21/2012	Fulton County YMCA Flying Fish	Booked	3/15/17/13	3/17/2013	65	260	\$16,900	IC Referral
5/3/2012	IC September Volleyball Tournament	Definite	9/7/2012	9/8/2012	84	260	\$21,840	IC Referral
12/1/2011	Carefree Capers	Definite	10/2/2012	10/5/2012	26	353	\$9,178	ABA
4/11/2012	NYS Collegiate Tennis Tournament	Definite	10/12/2012	10/14/2012	192	260	\$49,920	IC Referral
4/16/2012	IC October Volleyball Tournament	Definite	10/12/2012	10/13/2012	53	260	\$13,780	IC Referral
5/3/2012	IC Wrestling Tournament	Definite	11/1/2012	11/2/2012	200	260	\$67,600	IC Referral
1/27/2012	NYS PHSSA Girls Swimming/Diving Championships	Definite	11/15/2012	11/16/2012	300	250	\$75,000	Ithaca College
3/20/2012	2013 YMCA Swimming Championships	Definite	3/15/2013	3/17/2013	500	260	\$130,000	IC Referral
4/17/2012	Butterbaugh Wedding	Definite	6/15/2013	6/15/2013	40	353	\$14,120	Call-in
2/6/2012	NYS PHSSA Girls Swimming/Diving Championships	Definite	11/21/2013	11/22/2013	300	250	\$75,000	Ithaca College
4/5/2012	Hunter Wedding	Lead	7/13/2012	7/14/2012	30	353	\$10,590	Accommodation Referral
10/25/2011	UCMA Spring 2012 Conference	Tentative	6/6/2012	6/7/2012	40	260	\$10,400	Repeat Business
2/17/2012	Pittsburgh Motorcoach Group	Tentative	7/10/2012	7/11/2012	52	353	\$18,356	ABA
2/2/2012	Mary Kay Sales Leaders 32nd Fall Retreat	Awaiting Client Response	10/5/2012	10/6/2012	80	260	\$20,800	Call-in
4/27/2012	High Peaks Audubon Society	Awaiting Client Response	10/19/2012	10/21/2012	81	353	\$28,593	CVB Generated
8/17/2011	Pharmacists Society of the State of NY	Lost	5/30/2012	6/2/2012	175	260	\$45,500	ESSAE
7/26/2008	CSEA Retiree Delegates Conference 2012	Lost - lack of meeting space	8/19/2012	8/23/2012	100	260	\$26,000	CVB Generated
10/26/2010	MTA Gathering	Lost - lack of participation	6/18/2012	6/21/2012	240	260	\$62,400	Email Request
3/9/2012	Rochester Chrome Divas	Re-issue	6/1/2012	6/2/2012	20	260	\$5,200	Email Request
3/30/2009	NYS Public Employees Federation	Withdrew	10/11/2012	10/17/2012	240	260	\$62,400	CVB Generated
2/29/2012	Road Scholar	Cancelled	6/11/2012	6/14/2012	60	260	\$15,600	Repeat Business
8/30/2011	Medical Retreat	Cancelled	9/27/2012	9/28/2012	120	260	\$31,200	Email Request

(Ithaca CVB and Cayuga Wine Trail worked together to earn this story)

10 great all-American road trips



By Elissa Richard | Yahoo! Travel – Tue, Apr 10, 2012 6:00 PM EDT

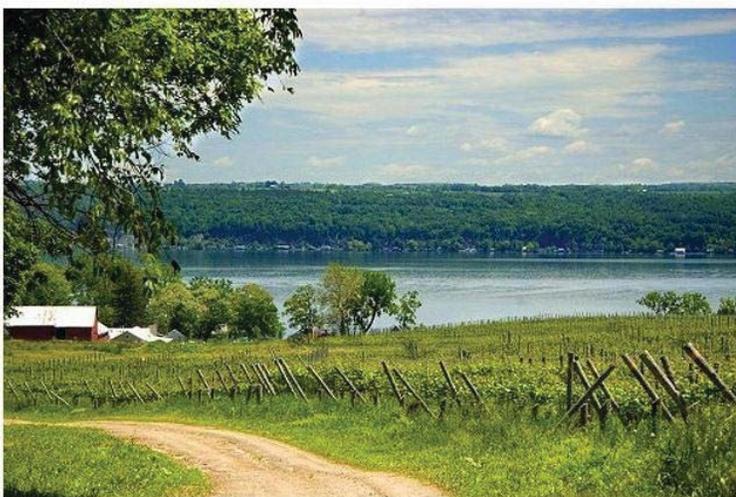
Answering the call of the open road is practically an American rite of passage. These 10 distinctive all-American road trips, inclusive of both roads less traveled and tried-and-true, pave the way through the country's finest landscapes, from [California](#) coastline to Rocky Mountain ranges to [Florida](#) beaches—and beyond. So put the pedal to the metal, crank up those tunes, and roll down those windows to gaze upon America the beautiful as it rolls by.

10 great all-American road trips



By Elissa Richard | Yahoo! Travel – Tue, Apr 10, 2012 6:00 PM EDT

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Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway (Photo: Evan Yokum/Sheldrake Point Winery)

Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway
[New York](#)

Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway [New York](#)

Just four hours northwest of [New York City](#), the bucolic Finger Lakes region comprises the surprise setting for the largest [wine](#)-producing region east of California. Oenophile road-trippers in the region can (responsibly) please their palates (Riesling and Gewurztraminer varietals reign supreme), while zipping along pastoral two-lane country roads lined by rolling vineyard-covered hills, patchworks of farmland, and the "finger"-like assortment of 11 thin, parallel, glacially carved lakes.

Hit the 87-mile Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, which circles the [Cayuga](#) lakeshore, and provides haven for some of the region's finest wineries (try Sheldrake Point Winery), historical Women's Rights movement sites (visit the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls), and prime access to the region's natural bounty (don't miss Taughannock Falls State Park).

<http://travel.yahoo.com/ideas/top-10-all-american-road-trips.html?page=all>

(Ithaca CVB was not involved with this story)

5/08/2012 @ 3:15PM | 9,204 views

The Best Cities For Finding Employment Right Now



[Jacquelyn Smith](#), Forbes Staff

With the employment picture finally perking up in some major metropolitan areas, job seekers might be tempted to limit their job search to the areas with the healthiest employment numbers. But low unemployment doesn't always mean it's the *best* place for finding a job.

While cities with low unemployment might be the *easiest* areas for some to land a job, there may be little diversity in the industries hiring, the cost of living can be high, and the required skill sets can be too specific.

The human resources firm [Adecco Staffing U.S.](#) looked at the U.S. cities with the fullest employment, according to the Department of Labor, as well as internal data around job growth and demand, and then determined which areas are the best for finding a job. The ranking reflects considerations such as: the diversity of industries in the city, the cost of living, the range in size of companies offering employment, and high level of education among its residents. All those factors were weighed equally.

[In Pictures: The Best Cities For Finding Employment Right Now](#)

The top spot goes to the Washington, D.C.-Arlington-Alexandria, Va. metro area, where the unemployment rate is 5.5%, as of March 2012. From March 2011 to March 2012, the unemployment level dropped by .3%, indicating that an already strong market is improving.

“Washington, D.C. and Arlington both have a large population of degreed individuals which matches the skill sets that are seeing the most demand right now; business and professional services, engineering and healthcare,” says Bob Kovalsky, a senior vice president of Adecco Staffing. “Additionally, the proximity to Washington, D.C. means a large number of organizations have local ties or offices in the area, regardless of industry.”

In terms of a quality of life, the area offers strong school systems, consistent mass transit, which makes for easy commuting, and a number of colleges and universities, Kovalsky adds.

The Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, Texas area, which has an unemployment rate of 6.0%, holds the No. 2 spot. “Austin has really become known as a great place to live as the city is known for its diversity and cultural

activities,” says Kristy Willis, a senior vice president at Adecco Staffing. “This combination has encouraged companies to flock to the area as a high level of local universities ensures a large, highly skilled pool of talent.”

Austin, which is home to the University of Texas and many other higher education institutions, is just one of many college towns in which local businesses do heavy recruiting locally, knowing that there are plenty of educated, talented candidates in the area.

No 3. Ithaca is another example of city with a diverse and highly educated labor force. With employment at 5.9%, Ithaca remains one of the few expanding economies in New York, according to Adecco.

“Ithaca shares the same characteristic of Austin and the Washington, D.C. area of having a number of colleges and universities close by, and the area is seeing strong growth in the technology and biotech sectors,” says Lauren Griffin, a senior vice president at Adecco Staffing. Cornell University also conducts a good amount of research in the area which increases employment, she adds.

Ithaca’s top hiring industries right now are education, manufacturing, tourism and technology.

“With all these cities having unemployment rates below the national average, it certainly shows that a job seeker doesn’t need to live in one of the United State’s top large cities to find job opportunities,” says Janette Marx, a senior vice president at Adecco Staffing. “From a national perspective, those Americans with a college degree that are looking for work are at a higher advantage, particularly in the sectors we’re seeing demand in.”