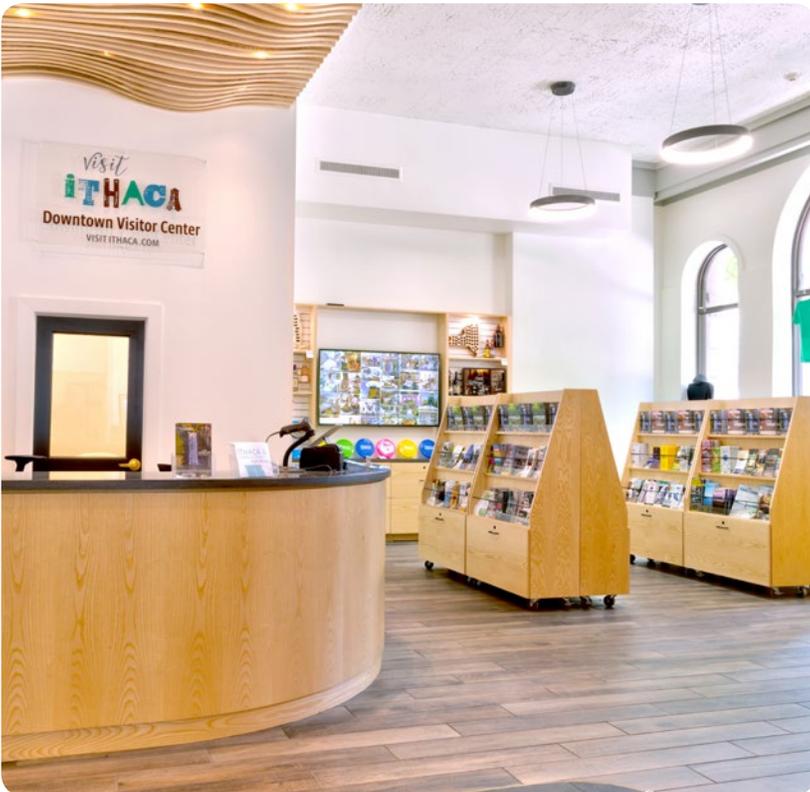




**Ithaca/Tompkins County
Convention & Visitors Bureau**
2019 Mid-Year Report
6 months ending June 2019/Q2





A Message from Peggy Coleman
VP, TOURISM/CVB DIRECTOR

It is my honor to share all that the CVB team has accomplished in the last six months.

The year-long visitor intercept interviews finished on June 30th and the updated Profile of Visitors to Tompkins County report will be presented to the Strategic Tourism Planning Board at the August meeting. This report is instrumental to formulating the next Strategic Tourism Plan for 2021 and beyond, to grow the tourism economy in Tompkins County.

As the visitor profile study work winds down, advocacy for a proposed conference center in downtown Ithaca is ramping up at a quicker pace. The proposed conference center is part of the Green Street Garage redevelopment project. Phase Two of the feasibility study indicates that the proposed center will position Tompkins County with the seventh largest meeting facility in upstate New York, opening the opportunity to grow the economy exponentially.

The beautifully designed Downtown Visitor Center opened mid-April in our new home at the Tompkins Center for History &

Culture. Please stop in to see our new space and to visit the other partners in this building of collaborative not-for-profits.

The Market NY grant implementation to promote craft cider and agritourism has produced some exciting successes: from a live presentation at the New York Times Travel Show in January to the Ithaca Craft Beverage Festival at Fulton Stall Market in NYC in June, we are raising awareness of our high quality cider producers and agricultural tourism partners, while influencing visitors to explore the unique vacation experiences Tompkins County offers.

Thank you for investing in our work to share this gorgeous place with the world.

Safe travels,

Peggy Coleman
VP, Tourism & Community Relations/CVB Director

Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau Staff Contacts

Peggy Coleman
VP, TOURISM & COMMUNITY RELATIONS/CVB DIRECTOR
Peggy@VisitIthaca.com

SALES & MARKETING

Heather Hughes
DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING
Heather@VisitIthaca.com

Erin Rafalowski
DIGITAL MARKETING MANAGER
Erin@VisitIthaca.com

Kendall Blizzard
AGRICULTURAL TOURISM
MARKETING COORDINATOR
Kendall@VisitIthaca.com

Sarah Imes
TOUR & TRAVEL MANAGER
Sarah@VisitIthaca.com

David Walton
MEETING & CONFERENCE
SALES MANAGER
David@VisitIthaca.com

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Jodi LaPierre
DIRECTOR OF VISITOR EXPERIENCE
Jodi@VisitIthaca.com

Rachael Atkins-Walpole
SITE SUPERVISOR,
TAUGHANNOCK OVERLOOK
Rachael@VisitIthaca.com

Diane Hemly
SITE SUPERVISOR, DOWNTOWN
Diane@VisitIthaca.com

Ryan Shehu
SITE SUPERVISOR, EAST SHORE DR.
Ryan@VisitIthaca.com

Maia Cooke
SENIOR VISITOR
EXPERIENCE SPECIALIST
Maia@VisitIthaca.com

VISITOR EXPERIENCE SPECIALISTS:

[Josh Brooks](#) | [Cameron Coughlin](#) | [Beth Duff](#) | [Danielle Hemly](#) | [Steen Kittredge](#) | [Matthew Janson](#) | [PeiPei Liu](#) | [Jessica Plue](#) | [Justin Scheidweiler](#) | [Leah Vaccaro](#)

INTERNS:

[Gina Landry](#) | [Valentine Jean Jacques](#)

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

- ✓ Through the end of June, our three visitor centers have seen traffic from 49 states and 48 countries.
- ✓ The Visitor Experience Department has reached over 9,400 college visitors at nine off-site events through June.
- ✓ The Taughannock Visitor Center is still the busiest of our three visitor centers, welcoming over 8,700 people since opening in May.



The Visitor Experience team recently conducted a “FAM”iliarization tour for 23 local and regional tourism industry representatives. This program helps people serving visitors gain more knowledge about popular attractions throughout the county and helps them provide better customer service. The group is pictured here at the Taughannock Falls Overlook Visitor Center.

2019 By the Numbers

5 Top Domestic Feeder Markets by Travel Party after NYS

Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, Florida, California

5 Top International Feeder Markets by Travel Party after USA

Canada, Israel, Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands

Visitor Touchpoints

	2019	2018	YOY% Change
Phone	1,117	573	+95%
ESD Traffic	1,298	1,186	+9%
DVC Traffic*	1,198	1,872	-36%
TFSP Traffic	10,021	9,762	+3%
Chats	1,024	1,659	-38%
TG Requests	3,020	2,241	+35%
Off-Site Events**	10,495	5,020	+109%
Total	28,474	22,313	+28%

* Due to the Downtown Visitor Center being closed temporarily for relocation

** Increase in off-site events as we explore more opportunities in monthly meetings with local colleges

MARKETING

- ✓ Visit Ithaca kicked off the summer season with a successful marketing workshop and brochure exchange with over 50 area tourism partners in attendance.
- ✓ Travel guide requests via the website are up 45% with 1,724 travel guide requests through mid-June.
- ✓ Lodging availability online has been utilized 13,031 times from Jan. – June.
- ✓ Outdoor recreation Google ads are outperforming prior year’s pay per click ads. Impressions are up over 76,000 and clicks are up 80.3%

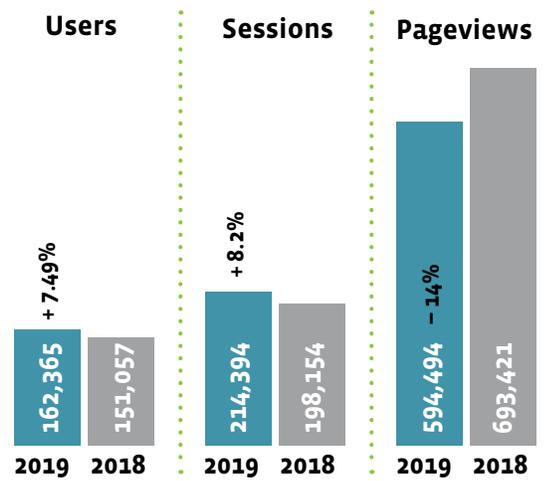
VisitIthaca.com

In overall website usage users and sessions are increasing. While pageviews are down slightly year-over-year, our digital marketing company confirms that this is a positive outcome because it is evidence that users are accessing the information that they are seeking more quickly.

Efforts to keep the Visit Ithaca website content fresh to meet visitors’ needs are always ongoing. Some popular landing pages and blog postings this year have included:

- **The Top 5 Experiences to Warm up Winter**
627 pageviews up **46%** from last year
- **New in 2019! Unplug and Connect in Nature**
457 pageviews
- **New in 2019! Craft Cider**
415 pageviews
- **New in 2019! Pride Month in Ithaca**
855 pageviews
- **4th of July Fireworks Roundup**
4,177 pageviews up **62%** year-over-year

Ithaca.com Website Usage



Ithaca Trails

Earlier this year Visit Ithaca incorporated the popular IthacaTrails.org website under the VisitIthaca.com umbrella to aide with website maintenance. We are happy to say the site is performing well!

IthacaTrails.org

	2019	2018
Pageviews	87,393 up 36%	64,286
New Users	24,990 up 1,370%	1,699

Social

Social Media Audiences Grow



	2019	2018
Instagram VisitIthaca	9,676	6,694
Facebook VisitIthaca	40,606	39,497
Facebook Farm2Fork	3,195	3,027
Facebook Winter Recess	1,729	1,627

Agriculinary Tourism Keeps Growing!

Visit Ithaca was instrumental in the planning and success of an Agriculinary Tourism Conference held in March with 130 people in attendance. The conference offered a full day of informational break-out sessions including panels focusing on seed-to-table initiatives, special event hosting, and marketing. A highlight was the keynote presentation by the incredibly successful agri-tourism business Becker Farms.

In January, Visit Ithaca pitched the idea that partner Sarah Barden, owner of Ithaca is Foodies, do a live demonstration at the **New York Times Travel Show** to represent Ithaca/Tompkins County and the Finger Lakes Region. Sarah created a presentation and food tasting to showcase the amazing options throughout the region to put together a charcuterie board, or picnic made up of local foods when visiting the area. The presentation was extremely well received.

What were people saying:

“Best presentation of the day!”

“We do a lot of traveling and always try to eat local along the way. Ithaca is on our ‘must-go’ list now.”



Ithaca Craft Beverage Festival

Among the many efforts to promote opportunities to experience craft cider throughout the region through the Market NY grant, one of the most successful so far was the Ithaca Craft Beverage Festival, held at Pier 17 in the South Street Seaport District in NYC on June 9th. Visit Ithaca tabled in collaboration with EscapeMaker.com, along with seventeen of our craft beverage and tourism partners, offering tastings, visitor information, food pairings, and a glimpse of the experiences awaiting visitors to Ithaca and Tompkins County. It was estimated that there were around 8,000-10,000 people in attendance at the craft beverage festival.



PUBLIC RELATIONS

- ✓ Hosted two influencers featuring LGBTQ+ friendly sites leading up to the World Pride Day celebrations in NYC. Both influencers had a combined social media following of over 2.1M on Instagram, 1.19M on Twitter, and 3.7M on YouTube.
- ✓ A total of eight media/influencers have been hosted in the first six months of 2019 including a group from the North American Travel Journalist Association.
- ✓ Over 50 notable articles and posts have included Ithaca & Tompkins County as a result of media pitching efforts in the last six months.

Some Notable Mentions

- **TripAdvisor** features Ithaca in a list of “North America’s 18 Best Lake Towns.”
- **Forbes** features, “10 Inspiring Trips to Celebrate International Women’s Day.” The article includes Finger Lakes foodies: Sarah Barden of Ithaca is Foodies, Autumn Stoscheck of Eve’s Cidery, and Melissa Madden of Finger Lakes Cider House among others.
- **Lonely Planet** rolled out an article, “Under the Radar USA: Why Ithaca is More than Gorges.”
- As a result of last summer’s media tour, **Destination I Do Magazine** featured a full article on weddings in the Finger Lakes in its Spring 2019 issue, including a full-page image of New Park Retreat.
- **Forbes** unveiled the article “10 American Cities for Family Friendly Travel” by Sandra MacGregor. It features Ithaca in the list and mentions sites such as The Museum of the Earth, Ithaca Children’s Garden, The Cayuga Nature Center, and Experience! The Finger Lakes.



Ithaca Gets Love on Instagram

Matt Benfield (@mr.benfield) and Omar Ahmed (@omartakespix) continue to promote and discuss their love for the Finger Lakes region to their combined 93.7K Instagram followers, with Matt posting a photo from his trip to Ithaca, NY encouraging his followers to stop by the region after NYC Pride.



North American Travel Journalist Association media tour hiking Buttermilk Falls gorge trail

SALES

- ✓ Over 113 appointments with group and international tour and travel planners were conducted at shows so far in 2019.
- ✓ Visit Ithaca exhibited at the annual ESSAE tradeshow and co-hosted a client event for more than 120 meeting planners in conjunction with Ithaca Marriott Downtown, the Statler Hotel, and Hotel Ithaca.
- ✓ Visit Ithaca’s combined sales efforts have resulted in an estimated economic impact of over \$1,654,650 for Ithaca and Tompkins County.



Meetings/Conferences/Athletic events

Despite being down a meeting and conference sales team member for a portion of the first half of 2019, efforts were still being made to market Ithaca and Tompkins County as a top meeting destination. Spring sales calls were made in partnership with the Ithaca Marriott Downtown and The Hotel Ithaca to several association meeting planners in the capital district. Visit Ithaca sponsored a table at the Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Annual Gala where our guests included key planners from Capitol Hill Management Company, Helms Briscoe, and the NY Farm Bureau.

	2019
Leads Sent	31
Leads Booked	15
Potential Economic Impact	\$1,266,815

Group Tour/Leisure:

In addition to our first-time attendance at the Receptive Tour Operator Summit this spring in NYC where Sarah had an opportunity to meet with 17 tour operators specializing in international business, we hosted our first receptive tour operator workshop for local tourism partners. Visit Ithaca also attended four group tour conferences resulting in the following:

- American Bus Association:** 36 appointments
- Heartland Travel Showcase:** 23 appointments
- Travel Alliance Partners:** 26 appointments
- Pennsylvania Bus Association:** 11 appointments

	2019
Leads Sent	25
Leads Booked	20
Potential Economic Impact	\$427,836



Sarah Imes, Tour & Travel Manager meets with Receptive Tour Operators at the RTO Summit earlier this year to further grow international tourism.

Downtown Visitor Center Renovation is Complete

After an extensive investment of time and resources, the brand-new Downtown Visitor Center at the Tompkins Center for History & Culture officially opened in mid-April. The recently renovated East Shore Drive Visitor Center, our new site on the Downtown Ithaca Commons and our seasonal visitor center at the Taughannock Falls overlook, are all open and welcoming visitors.



Visitor Journey Arrival to Departure Training Program

The Visitor Journey Arrival to Departure (A2D) Tourism Training program has trained over 70 participants from twenty organizations since full roll-out in December 2018. The program is well on its way of reaching the goal of training 100 A2D Champions by the end of 2019.

Winter Recess / Ithaca Loves Teachers

The annual Winter Recess / Ithaca Loves Teachers festival continues to successfully draw teachers and “teacher’s pets” to Ithaca and Tompkins county in mid-February. This year’s week-long festival provided an estimated \$175K in economic impact to our area economy. 4,328 teachers, school district employees, and their family members and friends participated in this year’s events and took advantage of the many promotional offers and deals. Participants came from twelve states, with 85% residing in the Finger Lakes region. 41% of attendees reported that this was their first time attending the event.



Atlas Obscura with Ithaca is Gorges (Ithaca & Tompkins County Tourism). Paid Partnership

This branch of the 14th Dalai Lama's personal monastery will soon be home to the 83-year-old monk's official library and museum.

ATLASOBSCURA.COM
Namgyal Monastery
This peaceful gem in upstate New York

588K+ SOCIAL AND NEWSLETTER IMPRESSIONS

Atlas Obscura
Browse party flyers, vinyl recordings, photos, and more from hip hop's origins in the Bronx at the Cornell University Library. (Sponsored by @VisitIthaca)

Cornell Hip Hop Collection
This set archive of original recordings and photos uncovers the early days of hip hop culture.

10:16 AM - 28 Feb 2019

Atlas Obscura Collaboration

Visit Ithaca worked with Atlas Obscura on a campaign that ran from March through May. The campaign included the addition of two new permanent places added to the Atlas Obscura directory: Namgyal Monastery and Cornell’s Hip Hop Collection. The campaign resulted in 588K social and newsletter impressions and true engagement of followers.

Atlas Obscura
Page · 1.2M like this · News & Media Website

Mar 14 · This peaceful gem in upstate New York was chosen as the future home of the 14th Dalai Lama's Library and Museum. – atlasobscura.com

84 Comments 477 Shares