



Q4 2019 - CVB Report to the Board

Work on the conference center project ramped up in the last quarter of 2019, with many meetings to educate the community, lodging partners, and elected officials. Vecino is still including the conference center in the Green Street Garage redevelopment project. A final determination will be made in March.

The CVB team gathered for a strategic planning retreat, to review the 2019 work plan, fine tune messaging for the remaining of 2019 and to plan our work for 2020.

Marketing:

Digital -

We saw an increase in organic and direct traffic to VisitIthaca.com – with an 11% increase in new users. Visit Ithaca planned to pause Google ads in October as a test to see how traffic would be impacted. The site already has good momentum from the summer months and October visitation proved to be strong with a well-established seasonal appeal. In terms of demographics, we saw a slight increase in sessions from NY & PA with the largest increase from NJ & IL.

Fall Foliage Report page had 728 pageviews with over 50% of the traffic from outside NY. *5 Best Fall Hikes* page had 1,086 pageviews up from 465 in 2018.

	October – December	% change
Website VisitIthaca.com		
Sessions 2019	112,419	+ 9%
Sessions 2018	102,866	
Unique Users 2019	88,661	+ 12%
Unique Users 2018	78,817	
Pageviews 2019	240,628	
Pageviews 2018		
Travel Guide Flipbook views 2019	1,354	-12%
Travel Guide Flipbook views 2018	1,542	
TG Flipbook links clicked 2019	124	+ 77%
TG Flipbook links clicked 2018	70	

Agriculinary Tourism – Website: “Cider” pages

	Q4 2018	Q4 2019	% change
Page views	3402	6391	+87
Unique page views	2449	5702	+132
	1:15	2:43	+111
Entrances	425	2551	+500

Finger Lakes Cider week was partially in October, which boosted our traffic. The good news is that visitors continued to spend the same amount of time on site during months when there were no events.

To fulfill our Market NY grant obligation and to create new exposure for our producers, Kendall worked with a number of partners to create new events for the 2020 Winter Recess Teacher Festival including a new tasting event at the Tompkins Center for History & Culture, Hazelnut Kitchen/Redbyrd Pairing Dinner, Valentine’s Day Dinner at South Hill Cider plus others.

Cider related press coverage during Q4 included:

- [New York's Cideries Bring the Tradition of Wassailing to the Finger Lakes](#) – **Smithsonian (5.81 million reach)**
- [Why cider, which can be as complex as wine, belongs on your Thanksgiving table](#) – Washington Post
- [Ithaca is ‘gourd-geous’: Welcome to Gourdlandia, where the world’s most versatile vegetable is transformed into art](#) **Roadtrippers**
- Escapemaker.com did a Heritage Radio Network interview mentioning the Visit Ithaca Cider Bus! <https://heritageradionetwork.org/podcast/its-fall-yall-with-bob-lewis-and-caylin-sanders/>
- Eve’s Cidery and Redbyrd were included in an article by Elin McCoy in **Bloomberg (21.5 million UMV)** entitled [Why Cider Should be the Official Drink of Thanksgiving](#)
- Heritage Radio Network – [Hard Core](#)
 - Podcasts
 - [A Very American History of Cider](#) – features Ithaca
 - [Taste of Place](#) – Ithaca focused episode
 - [Where the Lab Meets the Orchard](#) – features Ithaca
 - [Foraging a New Path](#) – features Ithaca
 - [Storytelling and Selling](#) – features Ithaca
- Related editorial
 - [HRN’s Ithaca Guide for Cider Lovers](#)
 - [The Cider Apple of the Future](#)

PR & Communications -

We hosted the following media throughout Q4:

- **Heritage Radio Network.** The crew is working on the first few episodes of their new **cider show** in which Ithaca/Tompkins County will be featured.
- **Mary Moore Mason**, Editor of **Essentially America**, a top consumer travel publication in the UK and now many other parts of Europe.
- **Kelly Chandler**, writing a piece for Australian travel publication **Get Lost Magazine.**

Additional media coverage garnered:

- **Matador Network, 3.8 million UMV** Featured an article written by hosted writer Elizabeth Sherman, "[The Best Place to Drink Cider this Fall is Ithaca, NY.](#)"
- Danielle Benjamin, Blogger from **Wanderlust on a Budget** who we hosted in September posted the first of a few articles she has planned for her blog for Ithaca: <https://wanderlust-onabudget.com/glamping-in-ithaca/>
- Visit USA UK posted several blogs on their website including:
 - [Goat Yoga from Lively Run](#)
 - [Feature of Top Instagrammable Spots](#)
 - [Top Hiking Trails](#)
- **Forbes (UMV: 29,788,885; clip here)** included the Finger Lakes region in his roundup of "[Three Exceptional Fall Getaways for Northeast Travelers](#)," citing fall scenery, parks, wineries, and the Cider Express Bus.
- **Destination I Do (9,818 UMV)** released the [online version](#) of its [Spring 2019 full print feature](#) on hosting weddings in the Finger Lakes – a result of hosting writer Carolyn Steere last year! The outlet posted its article to **61.2k Twitter followers** and to **27k Instagram followers** with a link in their IG bio that leads to the article.
- **Working Mother (433.5k UMV)** listed Wizarding Weekend among the "[10 Best Fall Festivals for Families to Visit in 2019.](#)"
- **BELLA NYC (636 UMV)** syndicated [last week's Forbes piece](#) in an article naming the Finger Lakes [a quick fall getaway from NYC.](#)
- **Travel Channel (UMV: 9,434,757)** included Firelight Camps in its slideshow of the [Prettiest Glamping Spots for a Fall Getaway](#), noting that the camp is open through the first week of November.
- **Glam.com (UMV: 6,744)** named Firelight Camps as one of the [18 Best Glamping Destinations Around the Country](#), touting the region's surrounding outdoor adventures.
- **Thrillest** Featured Ithaca in this article by Carol Cain, "[Best Small Cities in America to Visit for a Weekend.](#)"
- Resulting from the sending of cider samples from the region, **Paste Magazine online (4.2 million UMV)** included three cideries in its roundup of "[8 Artisanal Cideries You Need to Discover.](#)" The article is currently live on the "Drink" page of the outlet's website. Congrats to the teams who worked with us to send bottle samples to writer Amy Glynn!
- **The Spa Insider (12,237 UMV)** featured August Moon Spa's Maple Walnut Sugar Scrub in a list of "[Fall and Holiday-Inspired Spa Treatments.](#)"
- Tompkins County received great exposure in the **Toronto Sun(9.3 million UVM)** as a result of our hosting Brad Hunter. Partners included in his article [Ithaca Impresses: small N.Y. college town packs wallop](#) include: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Cornell Botanic Gardens, Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Rogues Harbor, Taughannock Falls State Park, August Moon Spa, Moosewood Restaurant, and many more.
- The Finger Lakes region was featured in the **AFAR (876,568 UMV)** annual [Where to Go in 2020](#) list highlighting our region-wide "100 Ways to Celebrate Women Empowerment in the Finger Lakes" list. The piece suggests a visit in August to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, mentioning notable stops from Belva Lockwood Inn to Young Lion Brewing, with links directly to the list and all mentioned stops! The formal clip can be [found here](#).
- I LOVE NY launched a brand-new campaign, the [Build Your Own Bucket List sweepstakes](#)! Visitors to ILOVENY.com will choose three attractions from the 2020 Bucket List for a chance to win a dream vacation for four. Visit Ithaca is featured in the Finger Lakes bucket list package. The campaign had seen over 40,000 impressions.

- I LOVE NY also featured our community in the following blogs during Q4 2019:
 - [Your New York State Winter Bucket List - 11/15/2019](#)
 - [*Cross-Country Skiing](#)
 - [Shop at 10 of the Best Main Streets in New York State - 11/21/2019](#)
 - [What to Do in New York This December - 11/27/2019](#)

Sales:

We believe in developing our team members, so they can better support our industry partners and drive economic development to the county. Sarah completed her course work for the Certified Travel Industry Specialist program, a partnership between the American Bus Association and Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis.

Sarah provided a meet and greet for Footprint Tours at the Taughannock Falls Overlook. This was the first company which Sarah met with when first joined the CVB in 2013, perfectly demonstrating an example of the sales cycle for group tours.

Sarah has been nurturing relationships with receptive tour operators to grow international visitation. Year to date, New World Travel, a receptive operator providing bookings for international clients, has booked 115 room nights, up from 92 room/nights in 2018.

David Walton transitioned from the Meeting & Conference Sales position with the CVB to the Chamber in early October. Sarah and Peggy continued to support the meetings market while we searched for a new Meeting & Conference Sales Manager, following up from sales calls made in September and sharing leads to our partners.

Peggy & Sarah were both busy preparing for American Bus Association Marketplace in early January 2020. Sarah is representing Visit Ithaca and Peggy is representing the NYS Destination Marketing Organizations.

Throughout Q4, 25 leads for a total of 4,045 incremental room nights were sent out with a total potential estimated economic impact of over \$9.6 M if all leads converted to bookings.

Visitor Experience:

October showed the Downtown Visitor Center as flat for the first time this year. It's key to note signage on the building and our new sandwich board didn't go up until late September/October. The Downtown Visitor Center began to see an uptick in traffic in November, and December counts downtown increased 149% over December of 2018.

Plans for the 2020 Winter Recess Teacher Festival are well under way, with the Visitor Experience team selling sponsorships, and uploading all these wonderful opportunities for teachers. We are thrilled to welcome Visions Federal Credit Union as the Presenting Sponsor of the 2020 festival. Kudos to the team for additional ad sales and sponsorships totaling \$39,900 marking a significant increase over 2019. This additional sponsorship will underwrite a long overdue upgrade to the IthacaLovesTeachers.com website in time for the 2021 festival.

Jodi and Rachael attended Destination International Visitor Services Summit where Jodi served on a panel about training programs and discussed the new Arrival to Departure (A2D) Tourism Training program. Great Guest Relations, advocacy, LGBTQ travel and accessibility were some of the topics of sessions.

We're proud to announce that a total of 148 hospitality industry members were trained as Arrival to Departure Tourism Training Champions in 2019 – exceeding our goal for year 1 of the program. A calendar of live classes has been created for 2020 and will be posted soon.

By the Numbers:

	Q4 2019	Q4 2018	YOY % Change	YTD 2019	YTD 2018	YOY % Change
Phone	444	506	-12	2152	1686	+27
ESD Traffic	708	609	+16	3941	3967	-0.6
DVC Traffic*	1423	1035	+37	4909	6003	-18
Taug. Traffic	5761	3854	+49	35636	36748	-3
Chats	593	710	-16	2972	3632	-18
TG Requests	629	532	+18	5462	3904	+39
Off-Site Events	4670	9200	-49	24451	22035	+10
Total	14228	16446	-13%	79523	77975	+2%

*2019 Closed DVC for 2 weeks in April due to construction delay at TCHC.

*No exterior signs on DVC at TCHC April-mid September 2019. Window signs installed in October.