

Visit
ITHACA



**Ithaca/Tompkins County
Convention & Visitors Bureau**
2017 Annual Report





A Message from Peggy Coleman
VP, TOURISM/CVB DIRECTOR



Focus on Quality

In 2017, the CVB team focused on quality, including a concerted effort to increase and improve communications with tourism industry partners, the travel trade, and our higher education community.

We hosted several roundtables and presented educational sessions in 2017 ranging from What your CVB can do for You, to Ambassador Training, to Becoming Group Friendly. We worked to create more connectivity to niche industry segments, to help build visitor readiness including sessions specifically for Outdoor Recreation partners and Agriculinary Tourism partners. It's exciting to see the new collaborations, itineraries and getaway packages developed as a result.

The CVB created a part-time Agriculinary Tourism Coordinator position, supported by a Strategic Tourism Implementation grant, whose sole focus is to help local farmers and producers become visitor-ready and to create opportunities for tourism industry partners to collaborate in a Farm to Fork experience. As you will see later in the report, this position has made a positive impact in just five months.

In 2017, we welcomed new presidents to all three of our higher educational communities. Each has brought a new energy and a renewed spirit of collaboration to the county. We are grateful for the support we have received from the higher educational communities, especially for the CVB sales team, allowing us to invite international visitors to our community as well as potential sporting events. We look forward to continued partnerships into 2018 and beyond.

We continue to see record numbers of visitors at the Overlook at Taughannock Falls, serving more visitors in six months than the number of residents who live in the City of Ithaca. The addition of retail at the Overlook Visitor Center has helped to extend our destination brand to nearly 3500 visitors in 26 countries and 46 states who purchased "Ithaca is Gorges" gear.

The CVB will work to improve communications, systems, training opportunities, and targeted high-yield leads to provide the best return on investment possible to the residents of Tompkins County. We are proud to report that in 2016, visitors to Tompkins County spent \$197.8 Million, which generated \$25.9 Million in state and local taxes to the county. This visitor spending sustained 3,451 tourism industry jobs and provided \$673 tax relief per household in Tompkins County.

Safe travels,

Peggy Coleman
VP, Tourism/CVB Director

2017 Lodging Market Performance

	Tompkins	% Change YOY	NY Excl. NYC	% Change YOY	USA	% Change YOY
Occupancy Rate	57.6	-6.1%	53.2	-0.4%	65.9	+0.9%
Average Daily Rate	\$160.42	+1.9%	\$124.47	+1.1%	\$126.72	+2.1%
Revenue Per Available Room	\$92.44	-4.3%	\$66.20	+0.6%	\$83.57	+3.0%
Revenue	\$55,812,162	+4.2%				

- ✓ Total Visitor Touchpoints are up 6% over 2017
- ✓ The Overlook at Taughannock serves 20% of all visitor touchpoints
- ✓ Destination Brand expands to 26 countries thanks to new retail outlet at Taughannock

GOAL: Develop a comprehensive, coordinated strategy for providing more visitor information to campus visitors, including parents, alumni, prospective students and their families, and conference attendees.

RESULTS: The Visitor Experience and Sales teams engaged with over 25,000 visitors on campus and throughout the community. The addition of monthly touch base meetings with Cornell University and Ithaca College core teams have helped the CVB to increase its outreach to meeting and event planners, office professionals, prospective students.

Brand Awareness: Gorges Gear Goes Global!

Visitors from 26 countries and 43 states made purchases at the Overlook at Taughannock during 2017. The top countries outside of the US were Canada, United Kingdom, Israel, Germany, Australia and Russia. The top transactions from states outside of NY were PA, OH, NJ, CA, FL.

Total Sales: \$75,321

Total Receipts: 3,495

Average sale per transaction: \$21.55

Bragging rights: Priceless!

How May We Help You?

Chat continues to be utilized as an additional way for visitors to reach us and one they find extremely helpful.

3,944 Total Chat Inquiries



- Lodging/Camping
- Waterfalls/Outdoor Recreation
- Events
- Attractions
- CVB/Chamber
- Off Line Chats
- Restaurants
- Transportation/Directions
- College Visits/Information
- Other/Misc.

"Excellent service and great for visitors to have access to someone for advice."

- Chat guest from Oleans, Ontario, CA



Welcoming Our Guests:

The Visitor Experience Department welcome centers and outreach efforts continue to be successful, demonstrating a 6% increase in touchpoints over 2016.

2017 Top Domestic Feeder Markets by Travel Party:
NY: 50% PA: 12% NJ: 7%

2017 Top Int'l Feeder Markets by Travel Party:
US: 84% Canada: 5% Israel: 2%
UK: 1% Germany: 1% China: 1%

Visitor Touchpoints YOY

	2017	2016	YOY% Change
TG Requests	3756	4376	-14.2
Phone Calls	1709	1850	-7.6
Website Chats	3944	3096	+27
DVC Walk In	6520	9932	-34.4
ESD Walk In	4543	7649	-40.6
TFSP Walk In	32,146	25,908	+24.1
Offsite Events	24,950	20,227	+23.3
Total	77,568	73,038	+6.2

- 40,017 Ithaca is Gorges Facebook followers
- 1,664,110 VisitIthaca.com pageviews
- Dedicated Agriculinary Tourism Coordinator on staff

GOAL: Enhance Visitor oriented capabilities of IthacaEvents.com

RESULTS: Our new events calendar has 138,163 page views, the most viewed page on the website! The search functions allow visitors to get event results based on their specific interests.

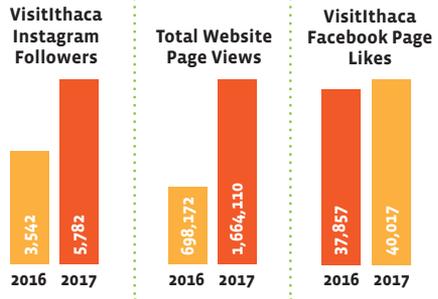
Dedicated Agriculinary Staff: Farming New Visitors!

The CVB now has a person dedicated to the development of visitor ready farms and culinary experiences, thanks to both a USDA grant and an STI grant from Tompkins County Tourism Program. Some early successes include 20 new visitor-ready farms, new photo stories about agriculinary tourism experiences, increased social media engagement, and an extremely successful countywide Open Farm Days in August 2017. The event brought in 640 people on the Saturday, and 756 on the Sunday of Open Farm Days weekend. 32% of these visitors were from outside of Tompkins County. The biggest draws were the animal farms, most notably Bel Canto Farm and Glenwood Farm which both received over 200 visitors.

	AUG	DEC
Followers	1,213	2,442
Engagement	4,500	10,000

Digital Growth

Website analytics, Instagram, and Facebook demonstrate that waterfalls still receive top engagement. Unique website users to VisitIthaca.com was 362,902 (2% growth over 2016). We also saw a 4.4% increase of website traffic from China, which we'd like to attribute to the work of the Sales team. #1 referral to VisitIthaca.com is Facebook.



Ithaca is People Instagram Takeover

Ithaca is People Instagram account continues to be curated by Tompkins County residents each week, resulting in a 67% increase of new followers in the first half of 2017.

“I really had fun, and we got a nice little bump in followers at the Johnson to boot.”

– Andrea R. Potochniak
 Editorial Manager,
 Herbert F. Johnson
 Museum of Art





PUBLIC RELATIONS

- ✓ 860 million+ media reach for Tompkins County
- ✓ Canadian Campaign generates nearly a half-million cross-border impressions
- ✓ PR: 2017 Emerging Nature Destination of United States!

Luxury Travel Guide 2017 Emerging Nature Destination of the USA

The CVB is proud to share that Ithaca has been named the 2017 Emerging Nature Destination of the United States by Luxury Travel Guide, just one of the many top tier features about our destination.



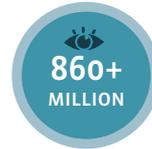
A Welcome Surprise: Cross Border Showcase

Our continued partnership with the largest Canadian tourism campaign in the country, including inserts in the Toronto Star, has reached approximately 350,000 people out-of-market in 2017. Radio Spots aired averaged a total of 120,000 listeners in 5 targeted regions in the Canadian market.



2017 County Specific Media Reach 860,856,865

The CVB's pitching efforts helped Ithaca & Tompkins County reach over 860 million people with features in media outlets such as Pure Wow, WCNY, Thrillist, Live for Live Music, New York Times Travel Section, Travel + Leisure, LA Times, and Food Network.



The New York Times

- ✓ Trade show attendance brings 115 appointments with tour operators
- ✓ 45 leads converted to bookings, \$1,201,092 in revenue, 4,301 projected room nights
- ✓ 3 FAM tours for international groups from UK/Ireland and China

GOAL: Market Themed International Group Travel

RESULTS: Partnered with I Love NY & Brand USA to host three familiarization tours for 27 people representing 26 companies from China, UK, Ireland and Scotland.

Meetings: Building Tools & Rebuilding Relationships

The Sales team create the tools needed to better represent our destination to meeting, conference, and event planners including: new downtown meeting event imagery, more robust website content, more compelling profile sheet, new content for LinkedIn and NewYorkMeetings.com. By adding of a dedicated meeting and conference sales manager in March, we grew partner and campus engagements to 76 in the last three quarters of 2017 and have nurtured 200 relationships.

Tour & Travel: Hello World!

In 2017, the Sales team partnered with I Love NY & Brand USA to host three familiarization tours for 27 people representing 26 companies from China, UK, Ireland and Scotland. Our new presence on VisitUSA-UK in late September has already delivered 156 profile views, 164 views on the Ideas section (What to do in Ithaca, Craft Beer, Gorges ½), 70 views on brochure section (Travel Guide, Cayuga Lake Wine Trail), and 20 views on our group tour video.

“What a FAB.U. LOUS tour for a bus full of “girlfriends,” ranging from 35 to 85!!! I never heard so much spontaneous applause or happy cheers...or so much chatter!! Our 52 ladies absolutely loved each and every meal and attraction.”

– Sandy from Starr Bus Charters and Tours, NJ

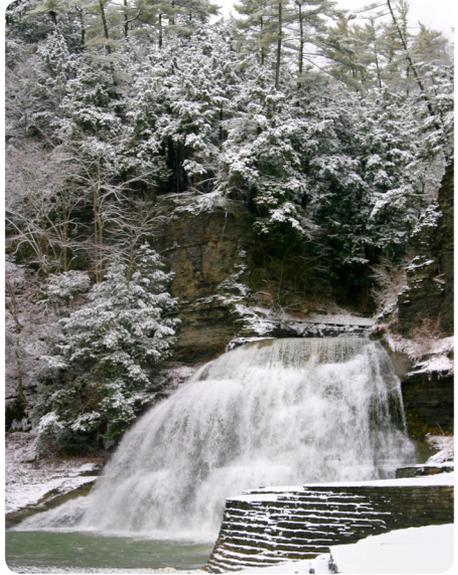


	2016	2017
Meet/Conf	11	31
Athletic	23	5
Tour/Social/Wed	82	41
Total Leads	116	77
Potential Economic Impact	\$2,108,225	\$2,612,882

	2016	2017
Meet/Conf	2	17
Athletic	13	4
Tour/Social/Wed	61	24
Total Booked	76	45
Conversion %	65.5%	58.4%
Actual/Booked Economic Impact	\$1,184,180	\$982,814

Top reason stated for lost business is insufficient facilities. In April 2017, the results of a feasibility study conducted by Hunden Strategic Partners, indicated that there is pent up demand for a conference center in downtown Ithaca. Work continues see this critical tourism infrastructure project move forward to fruition.

2017: Another great year in Tompkins County!





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Visit Ithaca is a division of the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce