

VISIT SUN VALLEY



2023 – 2024 | **ANNUAL REPORT**

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR



DEAR COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS,

The past year has been a dynamic one for Visit Sun Valley, marked by both exciting opportunities and persistent challenges. Our mission remains steadfast: supporting the Wood River Valley’s vital visitor economy by encouraging travel to Sun Valley, particularly through commercial airline bookings. Tourism continues to drive nearly two-thirds of our local economy, making it essential to balance economic growth with the preservation of our community’s unique character and quality of life.

Our efforts focus on attracting like-minded travelers who value and respect Sun Valley’s natural beauty, arts, and culture. By targeting traditional nonstop flight markets during peak winter months and promoting visitation during quieter spring and fall seasons, we aim to sustain year-round economic activity. Through strategic digital marketing campaigns, we engage with past and prospective visitors, while our Ketchum Visitor Center enhances their on-the-ground experience. Recognizing the power of word-of-mouth in tourism, we’ve also expanded public relations efforts, earning positive media coverage that highlights the valley’s distinct appeal.

This year brought its share of challenges, including a below-average snow season, road construction disruptions, and smoke from summer wildfires. In response, we emphasized the diverse offerings of the Wood River Valley—beyond skiing—including vibrant arts and culture, exceptional dining, and breathtaking natural landscapes. The resilience of our local businesses and community has been truly inspiring.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to host the upcoming World Cup ski races in Sun Valley—a prestigious event that will shine a global spotlight on our community while providing a significant economic boost. As we navigate a competitive tourism landscape post-pandemic, we remain confident in Sun Valley’s strong positioning for sustainable growth in 2025 and beyond.

I am also delighted to announce Ray Gadd’s promotion to Executive Director. Ray’s leadership and deep appreciation for the Wood River Valley’s culture will be instrumental as we continue building a sustainable tourism economy.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to shape a thriving future for Sun Valley.

Sincerely,

MIKE BURCHMORE

Board Chair | Visit Sun Valley

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This report covers our fiscal year
October 2023 – September 2024.

OUR TEAM

Our team is comprised of a stellar group of core operators, Visitor Center staff, a Board of Directors, an Advisory Committee and outsourced contractors.

VISIT SUN VALLEY CORE TEAM

RAY GADD

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



KENDALL KIRKPATRICK
MARKETING & GRANT MANAGER

JESSICA MAYNARD
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

VISIT SUN VALLEY VISITOR CENTER TEAM



VISIT SUN VALLEY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**MIKE
BURCHMORE**
BOARD CHAIR



**ADELAIDE
SMITH-MASON**
AT-LARGE



**PETE
SONNTAG**
SUN VALLEY RESORT
Representative



**DAVID
LUHR**
CITY OF SUN VALLEY
Representative & Treasurer

VISIT SUN VALLEY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**JACOB
FREHLING**
EMERGING
DEMOGRAPHIC



**CANDICE
PATE**
AT-LARGE



**GRETCHEN
GORHAM**
CITY OF KETCHUM
Representative & Secretary



**JOHN
CURNOW**
ADVISOR

VISIT SUN VALLEY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**PADDY
MCILVOY**

Backwood's
Mountain Sports

**OUTDOOR
RECREATION**

**CASSIE
ABEL**

Wild
Rye

**LOCAL BUSINESS
ENTREPRENEUR**

**JEN
SMITH**

Sawtooth
Botanical Garden

**CONSERVATION &
SUSTAINABILITY**

**PAUL
HOLLE**

Sawtooth
Brewery

RESTAURANT

**EEVA
TURZIAN**

Sun Valley
Real Estate

REAL ESTATE

**BOB
BUERSMEYER**

Idaho First
Bank

FINANCE

**BROOKE
MCKENNA**

Hunger
Coalition

**NONPROFIT &
EDUCATION**

**TIM
JOHNSON**

Limelight
Hotel

LODGING

**HEATHER
LAMONICA
DECKARD**

EVENTS

**SHANNON
DALEY**

Gail Severn
Gallery

ARTS & CULTURE

**JOHN
MELIN**

Ketchum
Kitchens

RETAIL

**KIM
MACPHERSON**

Mountain
Rides

AT LARGE



VISIT SUN VALLEY CONTRACTORS

VIDEO PRODUCTION

Stellar Media

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Cara Shumate & Kate Elgee

MEDIA BUYING & WEB DEVELOPMENT

Bridge Business Development

PR Fahlgren Mortine

SEO RightNow Communications

CPA Sage Bookkeeping

PAYROLL & HR Ataraxis

WRITERS Hayden Seder

ENTITIES THAT HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED

Two Things – Creative Agency

Backbone – Partnerships Media Buying Agency



OTHER GROUPS

Recreation Group
Business Working Group
5B Can Working Group
Ketchum Business
Advisory Coalition
Fly Sun Valley Alliance
Board
SVED Board
Dark Sky Board

MISSION



PURPOSE

To create a better life for our mountain community and the experience of visitors through sustainable tourism with the strategy of right place, right message, right time.

MISSION

Visit Sun Valley is committed to enriching the lives of our mountain community through a balanced level of tourism that focuses on economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, and the preservation of the Valley's vibrant character.

VISION

Sun Valley will be recognized as a leader in mountain resort lifestyle through sports, recreation, arts, and culture.

FOCUS

Efforts will continue to look for the next generation of visitors to foster sustainable tourism. Managing visitor expectation and educating them of the mountain culture before and during their trips will be a top priority.

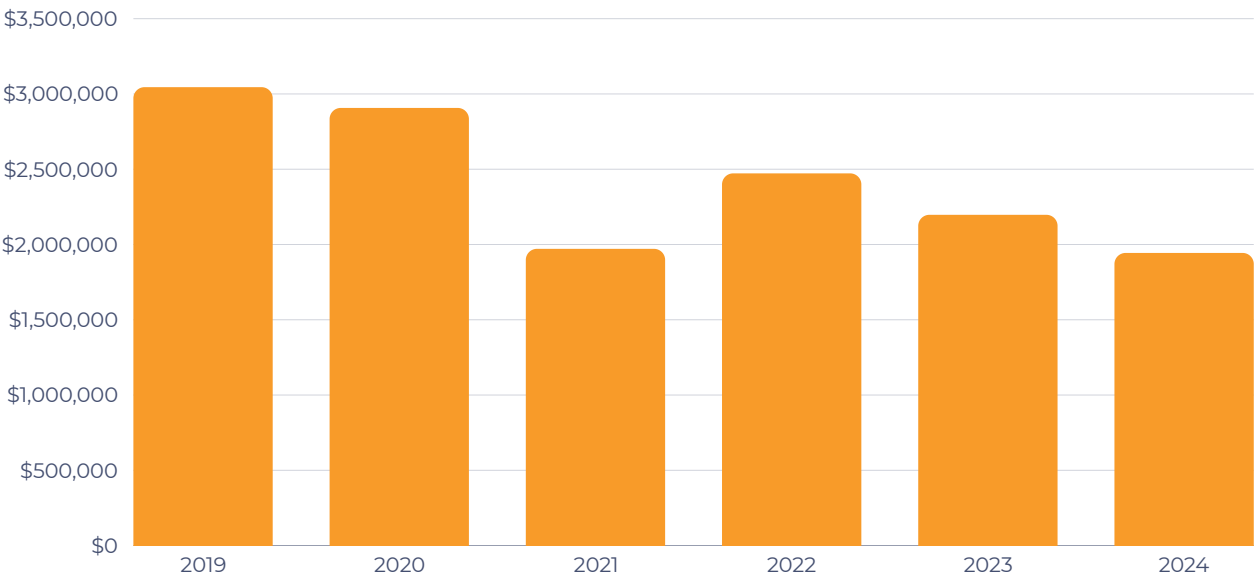
THE NUMBERS

A quick look at our funding sources and total budget over the years, as well as revenue vs. expenses for fiscal year 2024.

FUNDING OVER TIME

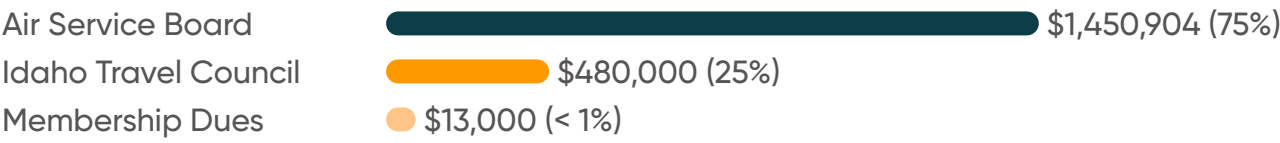
Funding sources come from a 0.5% Local Option Tax for Air Service which is applied for from the Sun Valley Air Service Board as well as from the Idaho Travel Council which collects a 2% travel and convention tax and distributes a portion of the funds to seven different regions through their grant application process. We have a small amount of income from membership dues via businesses that do not charge for local option taxes as well as interest income.

TOTAL BUDGET



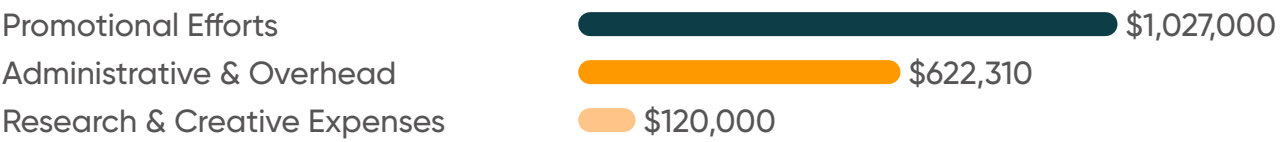
REVENUE VS. EXPENSES

2024 REVENUE



TOTAL REVENUE: \$1,943,904

2024 EXPENSES



TOTAL EXPENSES: \$1,769,310



YEAR IN REVIEW

Visitation returned back to record-breaking levels seen in 2019, despite a poor snow year, road construction, fire weather, and other hurdles.



WINTER & SPRING

We were looking forward to the winter season knowing that we would have the most amount of air service to date with nonstop flights from 6 major cities including the addition of daily service from Chicago on United. However, flights don't make the season what it's all about. With the El Nino weather pattern conditions, many people were left asking, "where's the snow"? With the 2022 winter fresh in everyone's minds, the lack of snow this year left people antsy for the true feeling of winter which never seemed to show up. The skiing and snowboarding on Bald and Dollar mountains were as good as they could be given the lack of natural snow. The extensive snow making infrastructure that Sun Valley Company has allowed for riding to actually happen. The crowds on the hills felt overwhelming at times due to the concentration of people on Upper College but the option to ride the lifts was worth it for most.

For those less inclined to tackle the mountain, the Nordic and snowshoeing trails north of Ketchum gave a more welcoming winter experience. Others took to downtown Ketchum, and Hailey as well as the Sun Valley Village. Shopping, dining, and event attendance was robust. Meanwhile, the hiking and fishing opportunities in the south Valley entertained those still embracing the fall-like conditions.

Winter annual events included the Boulder Mountain Tour and the Sun Valley Film festival. Additionally, Sun Valley was the host of the U.S Alpine National Championship for the second consecutive year. Growing and looking at new winter and spring events opportunities could greatly benefit these seasons.

When it came to visitation, the die-hard visitors still showed up. This year leaned more heavily to friends, family, and second homeowners versus the traditional "tourist". Enplanements were strong, especially right after Christmas whereas hotel bookings were much softer compared to the previous year.



SUMMER

Summer was a bit of a roller coaster ride. There were several challenges to navigate through the busiest time of year.

Road construction on Main Street left many businesses feeling burdened. Record temperatures along with the Bench Lake fire and surrounding wildfires brought smoky, undesirable conditions to the Valley. And an unfortunate accident at one of the signature events put a damper on things.

On the positive side of things, the weather showed up much earlier than in 2023. The activities and events have been bountiful and the overall vibe has remained rather upbeat.



FALL

As we moved into September, a wave of cold fronts and precipitation answered the prayers that many had been manifesting. Mother Nature's answer to the torment came in full force giving firefighters an opportunity to get a grip on the unyielding temperament from the ring of fire that surrounded our communities. Warm temperatures rose once again and the sense that we were given a second summer danced through a portion of September.

While the weather conditions came around, there were several other variables in September that kept that month from performing on par with 2023. An early Labor Day weekend, the absence of the Governor's Cup, and an advanced start to the school year proved to be daunting hurdles to overcome.

We jump started our fall campaigns to roll out in early August (much earlier than we would have traditionally done) in an effort to close some of the gap. By the end of August, we were grateful to see the occupancy rate shifting from being down -35% to -22%. Not great but much better than it could have been.

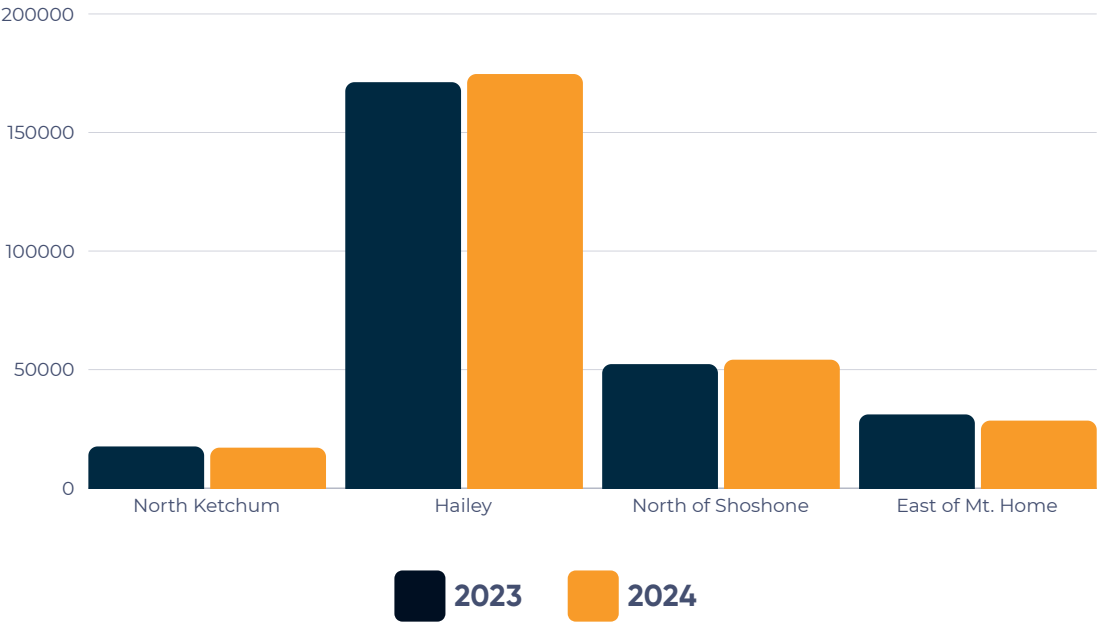
TOURISM INDICATORS

There are a number of “Tourism Indicators” that Visit Sun Valley currently tracks on a regular basis.

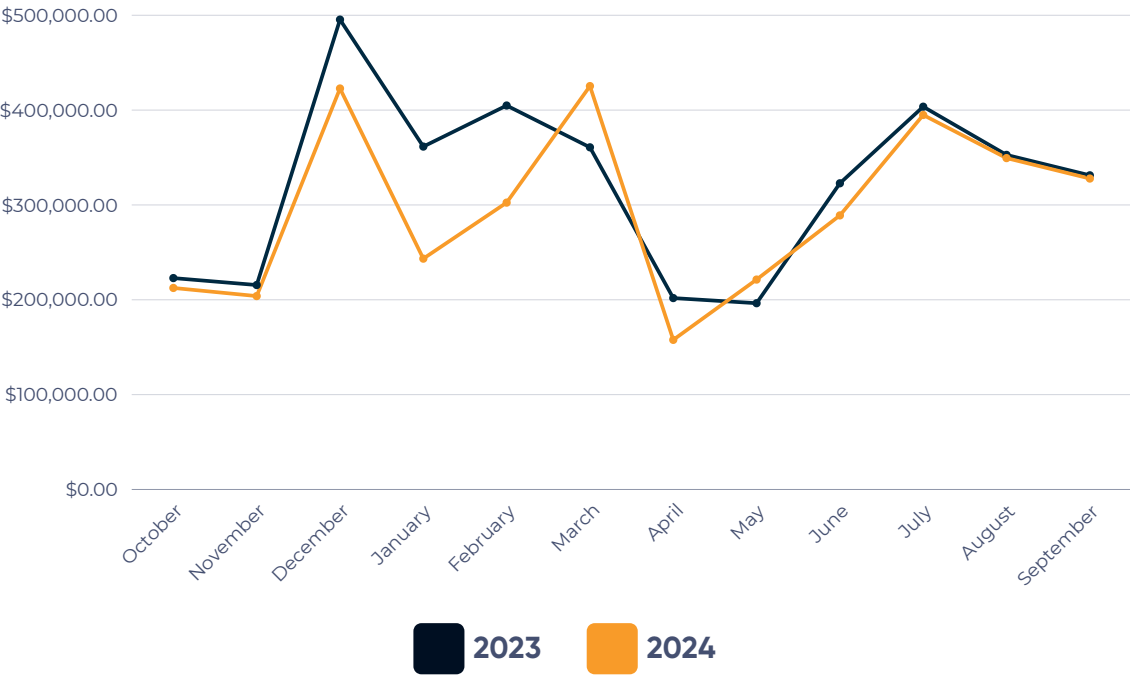
The primary metrics followed are lodging occupancy and rate, airline seat enplanements, and local option tax collections (primarily from the city of Ketchum). Other indicators include traffic counts, web traffic, and social media followers.

Stats are based on a fiscal year running October – September.

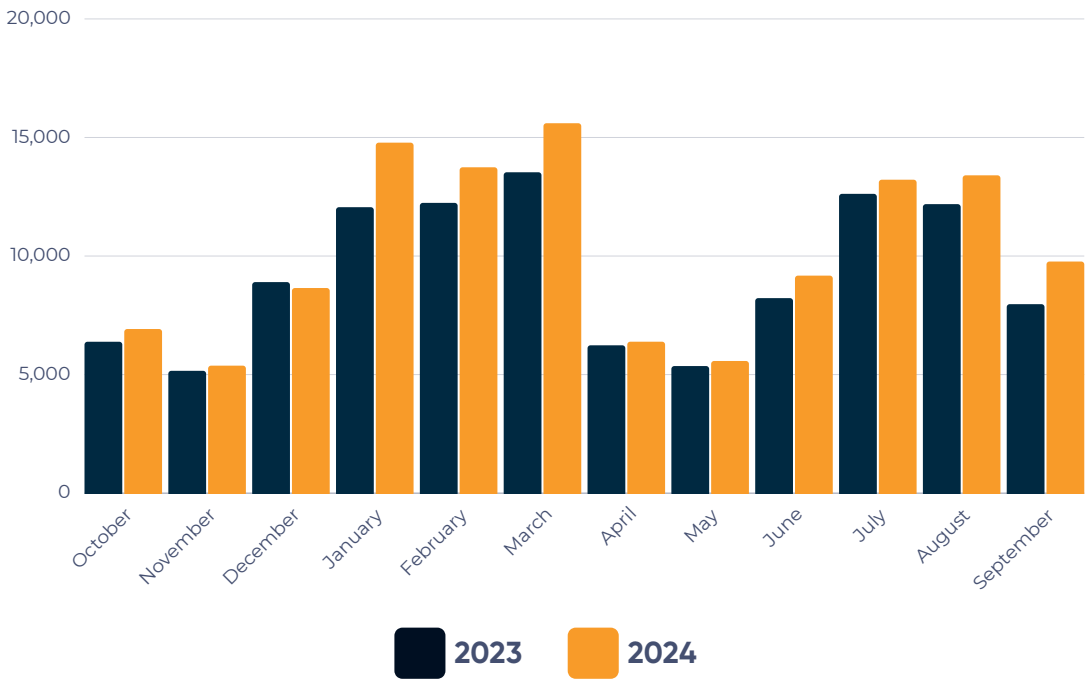
TRAFFIC COUNTS



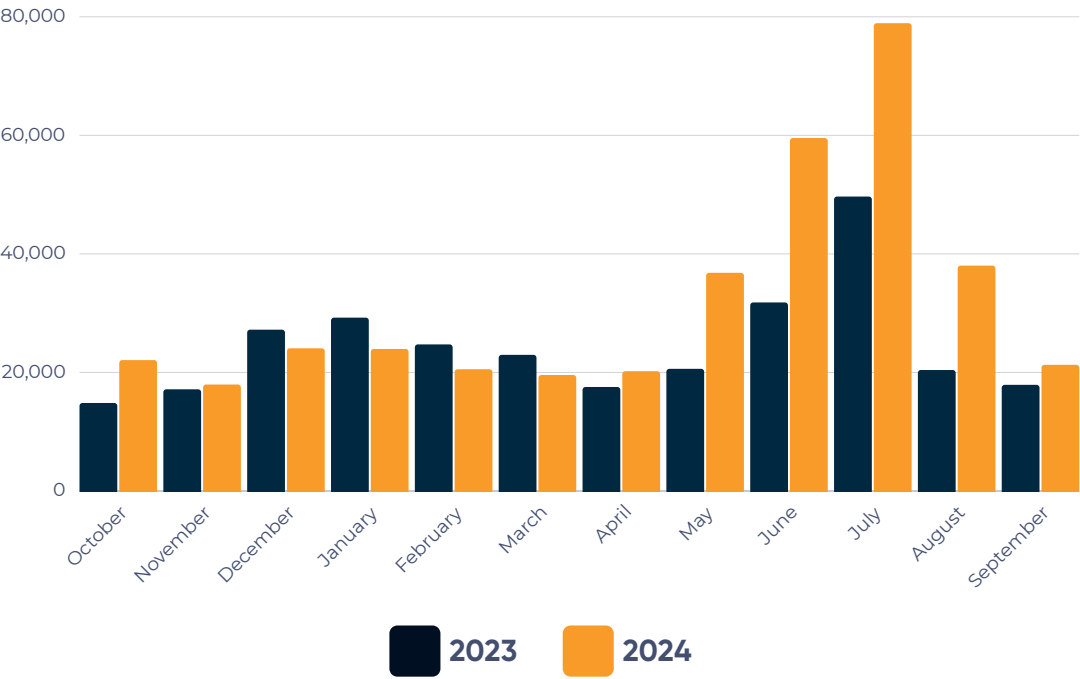
KETCHUM LOCAL OPTION (LOT) TAX



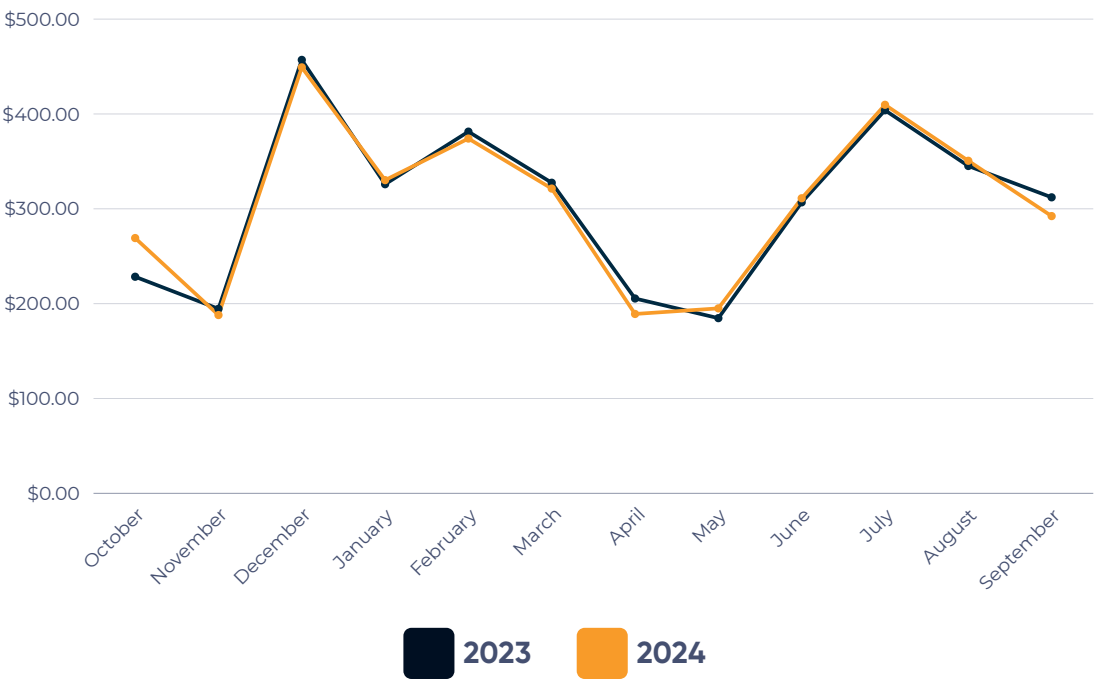
AIRLINE ENPLANEMENTS



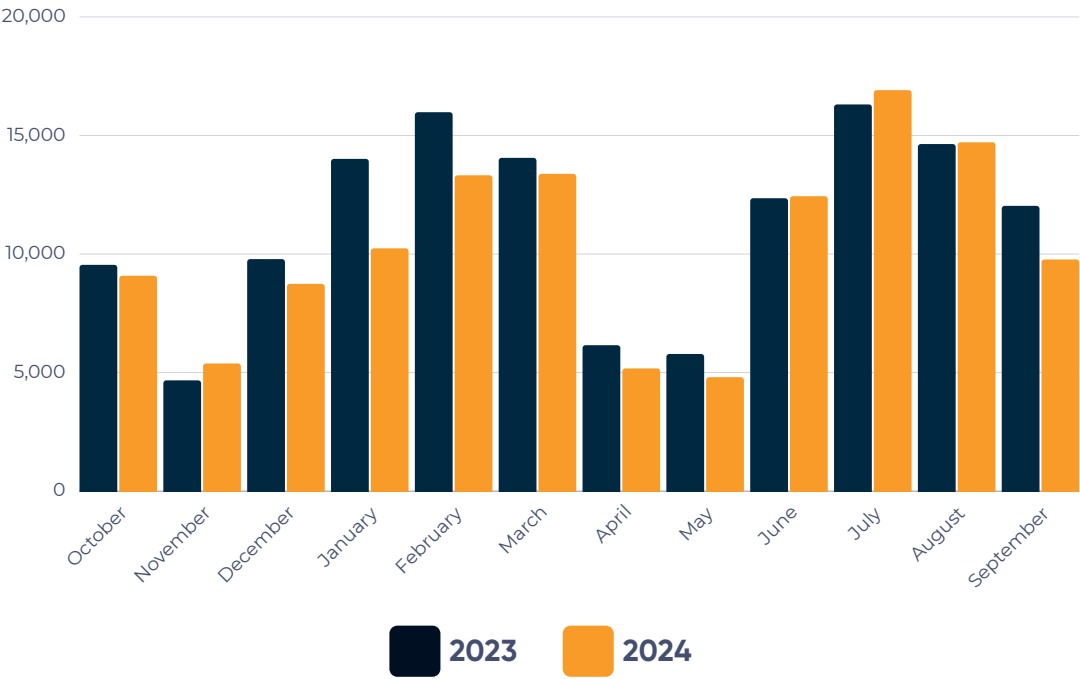
WEBSITE SESSIONS



HOTEL AVERAGE DAILY RATE



ROOM NIGHTS SOLD



Stats are based on a fiscal year running October – September.

MARKETING & PR

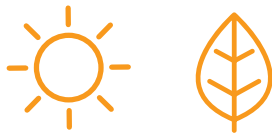
A look at our top priorities, target markets, target audiences, and partnerships, plus advertising and PR efforts for the fiscal year.

SEASONALITY



#1 PRIORITY
WINTER

We put emphasis on the winter season with 70%-75% of our promotional budget allocated to this season based on the conditions listed prior.



Looking to fill the gaps during need periods where we can deliver a quality experience.

MARKETS



#1 PRIORITY
NON-STOP
FLIGHTS

We focused on the markets that fly nonstop into Sun Valley. They include: Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, and Chicago.



Additional flight markets:
Boston & New York



Shoulder season drive markets:
Boise, Twin, Idaho Falls, & Salt Lake City

TACTICS

TARGET AUDIENCES

Skewing younger



IKON & Mountain Collective Pass Holders



Active families



Avid Activity Participants in our nonstop flight markets – skiing/snowboarding, mountain biking, hiking, fly fishing, etc.



Second homeowners, friends & family, repeat visitors

PARTNERSHIPS

- Journal of Lost Time
- Ori
- Freeskier
- NPR
- Whalebone
- The New Fly Fisher

DISPLAY MEDIA

- Google PMAx
- Flight Aware

MONTHLY EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

These focus on the upcoming happenings for the month and include:

- Seasonal Happenings
- Events
- Press Hits
- Latest Blogs
- Flight Information

OTHER TACTICS

- What We’re Made Of & 24hrs in Sun Valley blog content
- Local Initiatives such as “Feel it All” movie screening & conversation on mental health in mountain resort communities



24HRS WITH A LOCAL

24 Hours with a Local: Monarch’s Blair Brown

by Hayden Seder

January is a time of resolutions and new beginnings, when the promise of a new year drives us all to do better—especially for our minds and bodies. Blair Brown is no stranger to incorporating wellness for mind, body, and soul into her daily life. In 2023, Blair founded Monarch in Ketchum, a full-body wellness center with a variety of practitioners, devices, and treatments (like cold plunge, infrared sauna, lymphatic massage, etc.). After moving to



PR

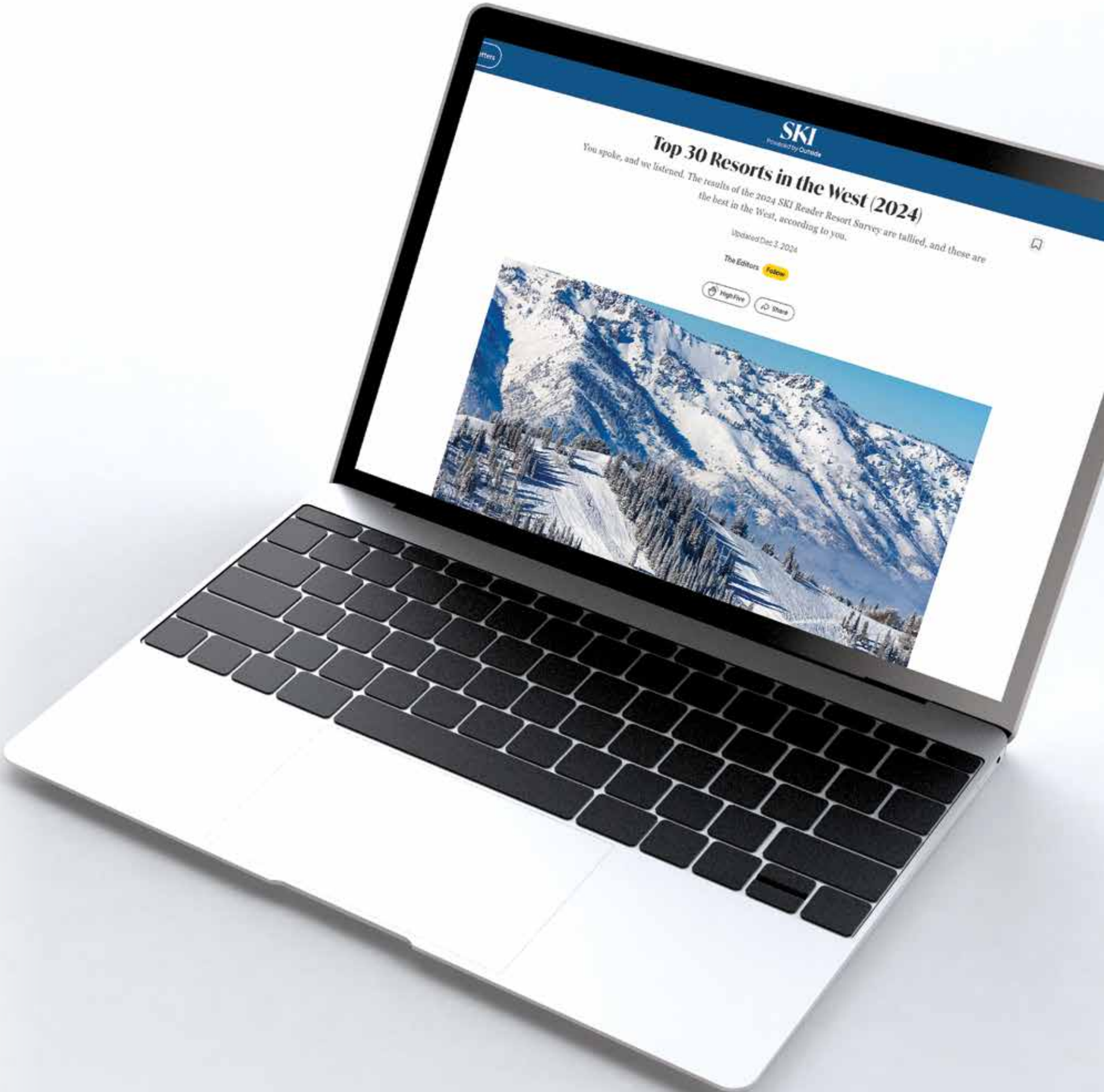
HOW WE APPROACH IT

- Outreach, media inquiries, media, hosting, & media missions
- We ventured to Chicago in October 2023 and hosted a media event to build awarenss for the daily nonstop winter flight from Chicago to Sun Valley

TOP MEDIA HITS

- Forbes* Why Sun Valley Keeps Winning Best Western Resort From 'Ski Magazine'
- Freeskier* 4 Sun Valley Entrepreneurs That Live and Work in Ketchum Full-Time
- Whalebone* Stay Sunny
- Forbes:* Sun Valley Resort: A Relaxed Mountain Retreat For Four Seasons Of Adventure
- Boston Magazine* A Traveler's Guide to Sun Valley
- Forbes* Sun Valley Is A Modern Ski Experience With A Nod To The Past
- Pride Journeys* Celebrate Pride in Sun Valley
- Sports Illustrated* The Most Beautiful Gravel Race in America
- Journal of Lost Time* Higher Ground Series: Heart & Soul - Sun Valley, Idaho
- Thrillist* This Idaho Festival Actually Encourages You to Follow the Herd
- National Geographic* National monuments are underrated—these are some of our favorites
- Travel + Leisure* These Are the Top Destinations for 2025, According to Amex Travel

Plus [many more...](#)



VISITOR CENTER

Visit Sun Valley's Visitor Center goals are to provide exceptional customer service to guests and potential guests, as well as to identify new and innovative ways of meeting guest's needs.

VISITOR CENTER STATS

TOTAL VISITORS ASSISTED
IN PERSON
12,122

↑ 2%

TOTAL VISITORS ASSISTED
VIA EMAIL & CHAT
393

↓ 17%

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SUMMER & FALL

- Hiking & Biking trails
- Redfish Lake & Stanley area
- Fishing

WINTER

- Lift Ticket pricing
- Galena Lodge area
- Nordic Skiing

ALL SEASONS

- Things to do
- Dining recommendations
- Live music events
- Airport Transportation: taxis & shuttle information

DIGITAL VISITOR INFORMATION KIOSK

We relocated our digital information kiosk from the Visitor Center to the Friedman Memorial Airport.

We chose to move this digital kiosk from its location at the Visitor Center to the airport to spread our reach.



GIVEN THE CHALLENGES...



THINGS PANNED OUT
WELL FOR THE VALLEY.

THANK YOU.



VISIT SUN VALLEY

CONTACT US visitsunvalley.com | (208) 726-3423

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