



FISCAL YEAR 2023

ANNUAL REPORT

EXPLORE ST. LOUIS

FY
23

TOURISM BY THE NUMBERS



\$5.89B

Tourist dollars.

Visitors spend an estimated \$5.89 billion annually in St. Louis City and County.
(2020 D.K. Shifflet/IHS Markit)



Convention delegates love St. Louis!

According to our attendee surveys at America's Center, 90% of convention attendees rate their experience in St. Louis as very good or excellent.



Tourism is among the largest employers in the region.

St. Louis' tourism industry supports the jobs of 91,000 hospitality professionals throughout the region, with 3,400 at America's Center.



300,000

We represent.

Our volunteers and part-time destination specialists interacted with more than 300,000 visitors across our six visitor centers and America's Center.

OUR PR EFFORTS YIELDED

1.4 BILLION

positive media impressions around the world.



\$240M

We're building for the future.

AC Next Gen is a \$240 million project in the heart of St. Louis' downtown innovation district.







WWW



We serve as St. Louis' virtual front door.

Explore St. Louis' website hosted 4.2 million visits in FY23.

-  **HOTEL**
-  **RESTAURANTS**
-  **ATTRACTIONS**
-  **TRANSPORTATION**

Tourism is good for the community.

The average trip spending of a leisure guest is \$1,039 according to the 2022 St. Louis Ad Impact Study.



1.15M


We connect Partners.

We generated 1.15 million outbound clicks for tourism entities featured on explorestlouis.com.



We're social.

Our combined social media platforms including Facebook, IG, Twitter and TikTok racked up 60,744,176 impressions and have a combined following of 388,434.





PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As I reflect on the past year, I'm heartened to report that our industry is approaching pre-pandemic performance levels with improvements in St. Louis city and county hotel metrics, event activity at America's Center and the continued development of new tourism assets throughout the community. Most importantly, these forces have combined to facilitate the return of our hospitality workforce, totaling some 90,000 St. Louisans who provide exceptional experiences to our guests day in and day out, making our industry the leading edge of economic development and attracting billions of new dollars to the St. Louis region each year. In fact, our visitor research consistently concludes that the warmth and hospitality of our workforce is one of St. Louis' greatest strengths, and the reason we celebrate our Hospitality Heroes each year at our annual meeting!

Hotel occupancy in St. Louis city and county grew by 10.6 percent to 57.4 percent compared to the year prior, while revenue per available room improved by an impressive 20.8 percent to \$76.98, suggesting strong visitor demand and pricing strength. Leisure travelers continued to play a key role in fueling our tourism economy as visitors enjoyed the rich and growing array of experiences including art, culture, food, sports and family entertainment. To showcase St. Louis' tourism innovation and exciting new attractions, events and exhibits, we took the show on the road to New York City where we held briefings for national media followed by group press trips to experience the destination first-hand. Along with our other media outreach efforts, these events led to 1.4 billion positive media impressions in outlets including the *New York Times*, *Forbes*, *AFAR* and *Travel + Leisure*.

Event activity at America's Center was up 11.5 percent over the year prior with 58 events attended by an estimated 558,373 delegates contracting for 229,798 hotel rooms as construction of AC Next Gen, the expansion and enhancement of America's Center, unfolded. Our Events, Public Safety, Meet St. Louis and Operations teams collaborated with many, including the Downtown Community Improvement District, St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, City of St. Louis, St. Louis Fire Department and hotel and attraction partners to create comprehensive and highly effective public safety measures. As a result of these combined efforts, we received outstanding feedback from organizers and attendees about their convention experience in St. Louis with many indicating desire to return for events in the future.

The year marked several important milestones on the path to completing AC Next Gen. In the fall of 2022, the circa 1960 privately owned parking garage at 7th and Convention Plaza and sky bridge across 7th Street were demolished, and the surface paved and gated for staff parking pending future development. Steel construction of the 72,000-square-foot exhibit space expansion was topped off in April and the enclosed loading docks on Cole Street took shape as seen on the cover photo. As we tour event organizers through the construction site, their reactions are enormously encouraging, usually beginning with one word: "Wow."

As I look to the future, we are excited to open our doors and debut what promises to be a world-class convention center experience that will proudly serve St. Louis well into the future.



Kitty Ratcliffe
President, Explore St. Louis



PROMOTING ST. LOUIS



LEISURE MARKETING

Our St. Louis celebrity TV campaign featuring Sterling K. Brown, John Goodman, Jenna Fischer, Andy Cohen, Nikki Glaser and others continues to be an entertaining and engaging way to share the St. Louis story. Seasonal campaigns run throughout the year.

The spring and summer advertising campaigns included broadcast and OTT television, digital (Google, Meta, Tik Tok) and the Cardinals radio network. Brand new 30 second St. Louis celebrity compilation TV spots aired in Chicago; Memphis; Kansas City; Champaign-Springfield-Decatur, IL; Paducah-Cape Girardeau; Peoria-Bloomington, IL; Springfield, MO; and Columbia-Jefferson City, MO. During Cardinals games on KMOX, 15 second drop-ins promoting attractions and events were read live by the announcers. The celebrity TV spots also ran during Cardinals games on Bally Sports Midwest. A unique advertising campaign was done in conjunction with the events taking place during Cards/Cubs games in London on June 24 and 25. Explore St. Louis had 10 taxis wrapped with St. Louis branding. The wrapped taxis took visitors and locals around London from June 19 to July 15 and generated great awareness and positive comments on social media.

During the fall season, our celebrity TV spots ran in smaller markets and digital advertising was event-based, designed to attract visitors for the weekend. Holiday-themed television spots promoted the wonderful array of holiday activities in St. Louis such as the numerous light displays and popular activities like Polar Express and Winterfest at the Arch. Over 80,000 website visits were generated for the campaign's landing page during the month of December. During winter months, on-going digital campaigns consisting of Google key words, display and retargeting ads as well as paid social media (Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok) continued to drive traffic to explore-st-louis.com and encourage winter visitation.

We are proud our campaign was recognized by industry peers with an HSMAI Adrian Silver Award and the Missouri Governor's Conference Award for "Best Marketing Campaign." In added recognition, TTRA's J. Desmond Slattery Award honored Explore St. Louis CMO Brian Hall for his marketing contributions to the travel and tourism industry.

MEETINGS & CONVENTION MARKETING

Digital, print and advertorial features were placed in a host of national meeting/convention trade outlets such as PCMA's Convene, MPI's Meeting Professional, USAE and many others. The campaign featured distinctions St. Louis has recently earned such as "Best Convention Center – Midwest," "Best City Park – Forest Park" and "America's Next Great Food City." Ads also highlighted the features and benefits of AC Next Gen, which will be available in early 2024.

The team also created an up-beat video collage of all the new and upcoming tourism developments and experiences available in St. Louis covering categories such as entertainment, the arts, sports, live music and meetings. Titled "What's New in the Lou," the video was distributed widely on social media and via eblasts to our meetings client database. It served as a rallying cry for the momentum St. Louis is experiencing.



DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Explore St. Louis is the virtual front door for the St. Louis region. Through various digital platforms, we engage a broad audience, influencing perceptions about St. Louis, giving visibility to local events and attractions and telling the story of what makes St. Louis an outstanding destination for leisure and business travel as well as meetings and conventions.

Our targeted e-communications are designed to spur action, whether digging deeper into a story on growth in regional travel in our weekly 5 in 5 or booking a trip to St. Louis to enjoy an event highlighted in our monthly "trip trigger" email. On social, we leveraged each outlet to drive engagement. Impressions on Facebook in FY23 reached 41,454,566, on Twitter we hit 921,960, Instagram reached 6,760,166 and on TikTok, we clocked 11,607,984 impressions. On explorestlouis.com, we focus on delivering actionable, relevant content. Our top-performing page is consistently 25 Things To Do. Our visitors are hungry for event information and ideas on what to do while they're in St. Louis, along with kid-friendly activities and outdoor adventures. In FY23, the site saw a significant uptick in engagement, with 4,189,282 sessions (up 15.77 percent from FY22), 3,352,686 users (up 23.23 percent from FY22) and 7,045,740 pageviews (up 7.36 percent from FY22).

PUBLIC RELATIONS

More than 1.4 billion impressions were earned via more than 275 stories during FY23, netting positive coverage of St. Louis as an innovative, vibrant and desirable destination. We hosted 83 storytellers, from journalists to influencers, who covered the region from a wide range of angles.

The PR team stepped up its in-person pitching this year. In October, we treated a tenacious group to a cross section of St. Louis experiences, from a paddle on the Mississippi to a tasting at Still 630. In spring, we hit New York and showcased a panel of the region's top arts organizations at Gateway to the Arts, an event that teed up an arts-focused FAM that resulted in a feature in *Forbes* declaring Grand Center "the most exciting emerging arts district in America." In addition, we partnered with the teams at the Gateway Arch and Lodging Hospitality Management to host a What's New in the Lou FAM, welcoming 17 writers for a three-day experience that netted dozens of media hits, including a piece in the *New York Times* listing St. Louis as having one of the nation's "great walks." Many individual media trips were hosted in FY23 as well, resulting in *AFAR* naming The Grove as one of the best food neighborhoods in the U.S. and *DSM Magazine* offering a guide to the "ultimate long weekend" in St. Louis.

Locally, Explore St. Louis has been extensively featured on radio and television, highlighting great ways to get out and be a tourist in your own town, from coverage of the St. Louis Auto Show to top picks for celebrating June-teenth. In addition, we've seen some strong local print coverage, including a feature in *Ladue News* positioning the AC Next Gen project as a "\$240 million transformation [that] will completely reimagine meetings and events in the city."

Earned media reach of over

1.4 BILLION
IMPRESSIONS



PR Highlights

Gateway to the Arts

In March, we brought the incredible St. Louis arts scene to New York City, featuring interviews with the leaders of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the Kranzberg Arts Foundation, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, the Pulitzer and the Saint Louis Art Museum moderated by Vanessa Cooksey of the Regional Arts Commission. We had 20 national media in attendance.

Arts FAM

From May 16 to 19, we hosted a three-day FAM focused on the arts tied to the Gateway to the Arts event we hosted in New York. The FAM featured an all-arts itinerary, with stops at the institutions featured during the event as well as some other artful gems that tell the story of the breadth of creative life in St. Louis.

What's New in the Lou FAM

In partnership with the Gateway Arch and LHM, we hosted a regional media FAM in April focused on what was new and noteworthy in the St. Louis region for inspired summer travel. Media attended various sporting events, got a tour of the new CITYPARK stadium, enjoyed lunch on a Gateway Arch Riverboat, explored the entirety of City Foundry and played games at Armory STL. We hosted 17 media from a variety of regional outlets.

MPI Honors Kitty Ratcliffe

Kathleen "Kitty" Ratcliffe, president of Explore St. Louis and America's Center Convention Complex, was lauded by colleagues from around the world at the 2023 Meeting Professionals International President's Dinner on June 14, 2023 for her exceptional leadership and contributions to the convention and tourism industry.

ASSISTING OUR MEETING & CONVENTION CUSTOMERS

DESTINATION SALES

For the most part, the “cautious optimism” of the previous two years has given way to full-on confidence. This is specific to small and mid-sized meetings of 100 to 700 people and mirrors the local trends in St. Louis as small meetings lead volume YOY increased 85 percent and continues trending in that direction.

America's Center groups are averaging 1,400 to 1,700 rooms on peak. Groups are signing contracts very short term and not committing too far out, which is the most common thread with competing destinations. FY23 city-wide trends for St. Louis noted that lead volume was flat YOY for America's Center, so to promote a healthy funnel for the future, site inspection activity is increasing, and we are engaging groups around the story of AC Next Gen.

Solicitation Shift

Understanding our future pace needs, we enlisted the Meetings Database Institute (MDI), identified accounts with the highest chance to book and established the appropriate time to solicit. MDI recently completed Market Deployment Road Maps for each salesperson and their respective territories. These road maps will be combined with travel schedules and action plans to provide our sales team with a list of accounts and the ability to optimize sales efforts.

Based on the increasing role of intermediaries, we engaged major organizations like Conference Direct, Helms Briscoe, HPN and Maritz by designating a liaison from our staff, participating in their strategic partnership agreements and taking part in their branded tradeshow.

Booking Pace & Key Groups

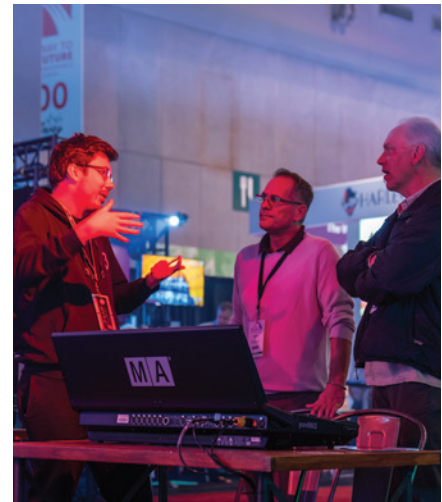
The team booked 287,906 room nights for the year. There was an increase YOY in smaller-groups as there was high volume in the 300-peak-rooms-and-less category. The pace contribution from the smaller groups was almost 68,000 room nights. Key groups secured for 2023 included National CASA/GAL Association for Children with 3,106 room nights (rmn); Health Connect with 5,355 rmn; and Rodan and Fields with 12,063 rmn. Key groups for 2024 include American College Hockey Association with 7,455 rmn and NRIVA with 2,350 rmn. In 2025, key groups include Church of God with 11,996 rmn, and in 2026, the Association of Computing Machinery with 2,895 rmn, International Association for Identification with 4,600 rmn and Gainsight with 3,653 rmn.

Lead Volume/Demand Generation

Overall lead volume increased YOY from a total of 730 leads in FY22 to 1,163 in FY23; 425 of the 433 increase came from groups under 300 room on peak. Total leads booked grew from 262 in FY22 to 377 in FY23. The partnership agreements with Conference Direct, HPN and Helms Briscoe contributed to a portion of the increase in lead volume. To support demand generation, the sales team had over 5,000 proactive sales activities including prospecting calls, sales calls, customer appointments, site inspections and lunch-and-learns.

Tradeshows & Sales Missions

The sales team had success with an aggressive travel schedule targeting all major customer events. They attended 12 tradeshows in FY23, including IMEX in Vegas and Frankfurt, PCMA, RCMA and Destination Showcase. The team also attended industry conferences such as MPI WEC, PCMA Educon and MPI Chapter Meetings. Sales missions to key feeder markets included Chicago, DC, Maryland, Virginia, Philadelphia, Minneapolis and Kansas City.



MEET ST. LOUIS

The objective of Meet St. Louis is to understand the strategic meeting needs of clients and translate those needs – with the help of Explore St. Louis partners – into unique, customer-focused service plans designed to make the most of their St. Louis experience.

The team kicked off the year with Team Beachbody in August, featuring a Super Workout with celebrity trainers. Market Street was closed for seven blocks to accommodate 10,000 participants. In the same month, St. Louis hosted a two-week convention for A.E.A.O.N.M.S. (Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine), which ended with the Imperial Parade in downtown St. Louis and a \$50,000 scholarship donation made to Harris-Stowe State University.

In September, Joyce Meyer Ministries returned to St. Louis for the Annual Women's Conference after five years. Then, we began the new year with FOCUS, which brought its SEEK23 conference to St. Louis for the first time.

Throughout the winter, America's Center Convention Complex was covered in volleyball courts for three Capitol Sports tournaments. Each event continues to grow, necessitating increased capacity for space at America's Center and The Dome as well as housing in the area. Meet St. Louis also connected athletes and their families with attractions and food and beverage options to enjoy during their stay.

United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) – which hosted its last convention in St. Louis in 2017 – arrived in March. The convention opened with a celebration focused on the St. Louis arts community, spotlighting the St. Louis Black Repertory Company as well as St. Louis native Josephine Baker.

To close out the year, the United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation (USGIF) and American Society of Military Comptrollers hosted back-to-back conventions with attendees and sponsors from the military industry. The high-profile conventions featured a high level of security and advanced technology.

Other Meet St. Louis projects this year include active support of "A Day in the Life of a Convention" storytelling and video archive; active support of National Customer Advisory Board meetings in December 2022 and June 2023; and workforce development support. We hosted an intern from the St. Louis Youth Jobs program in the summers of 2022 and 2023, and we onboarded two new team members, Meet St. Louis manager and Meet St. Louis program manager, in order to enhance client support.

Throughout the year, we also hosted committee participation for the Missouri Governor's Conference on Tourism, DMO Biz Ops Conference, St. Louis Downtown CID Grand Selection Committee, City Parks Alliance Park Study Tour and TTRA Annual Meeting.

Meet St. Louis was actively involved in the St. Louis Downtown Community Improvement District's Special Event public safety committee and worked with Lodging Hospitality Management (LHM) on the Yellow Vest program to identify hotel security protocols during citywide conventions, as well.

Awards and recognition include the Park Central Development Business Impact Award (Jennifer Poindexter) and the MPI St. Louis Area Chapter Planner Member of the Year and Chapter Leader of the Year (Jennifer Poindexter).

ASSISTED

322
GROUPS

including

29

CONVENTIONS
at America's Center and

34

PLANNING VISITS





OPERATING ST. LOUIS' LARGEST EVENT FACILITY

America's Center
Convention Complex hosted

58 EVENTS

generating

229,798

CONTRACTED ROOM NIGHTS

attended by an estimated

558,373

DELEGATES

America's Center hosted 58 events this year, including the U.S. Geospatial Intelligence Foundation and American Distilling Institute conferences, the Legacy Dance Championships, USA Fencing's North American Cup and five Battlehawks home games that broke records and filled The Dome with ka-kaws. Combined, the conventions, meetings and events drew tens of thousands of people to downtown St. Louis.

Last fall, the circa 1960s garage adjacent to The Dome and the sky bridge spanning 7th Street was demolished. The former garage's footprint presently serves as Team-Park, a surface lot for Explore St. Louis staff.

FY23 saw tremendous progress on AC Next Gen, as well. The steel structure of the new 72,000-square-foot exhibit space was topped off in April. When completed in early 2024, the exhibit space will feature an attractive new façade, a west entrance and lobby on Martin Luther King Drive and controllable natural light.

Adjacent to the new exhibit space, a food farm will grow fresh produce and a new outdoor gathering space will serve the needs of convention attendees. We are also doubling the number of loading docks on the north side of the complex. The loading docks will be enclosed, improving aesthetics by concealing the large trucks arriving day and night.

During all of this activity, the operations team is committed to creating the best experience possible for visitors. They are actively involved in ensuring the safety of our guests and have been working with the downtown CID, SLMPD, and many others in providing a secure environment for America's Center, both inside and out.

AMERICA'S CENTER FY23 EVENTS

Team Beachbody	July 4-19, 2022
The Church Network Annual Meeting	July 18-22, 2022
MSG Ventures (Private Event)	July 20-August 2, 2022
Oddities & Curiosities Expo 2022	July 22-23, 2022
Pentecostal Assemblies of the World Annual Summer Convention	July 29-August 6, 2022
Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis Urban Expo	August 4-8, 2022
AEAONMS Annual Convention	August 8-19, 2022
Monat Global Monations 2022	August 29-September 12, 2022
St. Louis Police Foundation Luncheon	September 2-6, 2022
American Distilling Institute Annual Conference	September 13-17, 2022
SecureWorld Expo	September 14-15, 2022
Joyce Meyer Ministries Annual Women's Conference	September 18-24, 2022
St. Louis American Salute to Excellence	September 29-October 2, 2022
2022 LTD Summit	October 4-9, 2022
United States Postal Service First Day of Issue Ceremony Program	October 13, 2022
Bands of America Super Regional Championship	October 13-15, 2022
DMO BizOps	October 16-19, 2022
Western Governors University Regional Graduation	October 19-22, 2022
National Association for Home Care & Hospice Annual Convention	October 20-26, 2022
Journalism Education Association National High School Journalism Convention	November 8-13, 2022
Varsity Spirit Athletic "Gold" Championship	November 18-20, 2022
Missouri Wedding & Bridal Expo	November 18-20, 2022
Gateway Dirt Nationals	November 20-December 5, 2022
Hot Chocolate 15K 5K Expo	December 2-3, 2022
Fellowship of Catholic University Students SEEK Conference	December 29, 2022-January 7, 2023
St. Louis Auto Show	January 8-17, 2023
Monster Jam	January 18-23, 2023
Annual St. Louis RV Vacation & Travel Show	January 24-30, 2023
Dot Foods, Inc. National Business Meeting	January 25-28, 2023
TransWorld Tradeshows	January 30-February 6, 2023
Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Town Hall Event	February 6-7, 2023
Capitol Sports Dennis Lafata Gateway Bid Classic	February 8-13, 2023
Capitol Sports President's Day Classic	February 14-21, 2023
Team Central Gymnastics Academy St. Louis Classic Gymnastics Invitational	February 23-26, 2023
Higher Education User Group Alliance 2023	February 23-March 1, 2023
Builders Home & Garden Show	February 23-March 6, 2023
University of Missouri-St. Louis Bridge Program	March 2-4, 2023
Legacy Dance Championships St. Louis Regional	March 3-5, 2023
USITT Annual Conference & Stage Expo	March 10-19, 2023
XFL Game 1	March 12, 2023
XFL Game 2	March 16, 2023
Capitol Sports MEQ Weekend I	March 21-26, 2023
Capitol Sports MEQ Weekend II	March 27-April 3, 2023
XFL Game 3	April 7-9, 2023
XFL Game 4	April 13-16, 2023
USA Fencing North America Cup	April 18-25, 2023
XFL Game 5	April 20-23, 2023
Goldfarb School of Nursing Spring Commencement Ceremony	April 21, 2023
EFM, Inc. Gateway to Innovations	April 24-27, 2023
Marian Middle School – Marian Magic	April 28-29, 2023
Digital Solutions Cooperative	May 1-13, 2023
Missouri Bridal & Wedding Expo	May 7, 2023
Oddities & Curiosities Expo 2023	May 12-13, 2023
Applause Dance Competition	May 12-14, 2023
US Geospatial Intelligence Foundation GEOINT Symposium	May 18-25, 2023
American Society of Military Comptrollers ASMC PDI	May 27-June 3, 2023
Dot Foods, Inc. Dot Innovations	June 8-16, 2023
Woodard Events, LLC Scaling New Heights	June 21-29, 2023

ENGAGING OUR PARTNERS

Engaging our partners remains a top priority for Explore St. Louis. The department worked to increase our in-person engagement, recruitment of partners and outreach to community stakeholders. This, in turn, allowed us to continue to learn how Explore St. Louis can best serve our industry during these ever-changing times. Overall, we welcomed over 50 new partners and expanded our reach throughout the region, uniting partners under the common goal of economic growth through tourism. These new partners included new hotels and venues built in the region such as the 21c Museum Hotel St. Louis, Puttshack and Hearth & Soul. Our efforts led to a 96 percent partner retention rate among our 900 partner businesses and organizations – one of the highest retention rates of any destination in the country.

PARTNER CONNECTION EVENTS

In-person events both large and small continued to connect our partners to each other and the community, with small events like Coffee with Explore St. Louis being well attended. Partnership continues its supporting role with the St. Louis Civic Pride Foundation as the organizer of the Civic Pride Explorer Series. These events gave partners the opportunity to explore new venues like CITYPARK and Armory STL, while also reconnecting with staple attractions like the Missouri Botanical Garden, Third Degree Glass Factory and Grant's Farm.

ANNUAL MEETING

In FY23, the annual meeting was bigger and better than before. Celebrating the beginning of our construction on AC Next Gen, the event moved to our exhibit halls at America's Center. This became one of the best-attended events in our history with over 650 partners and stakeholders gathered to celebrate our industry. The event recognized the accomplishments of multiple award winners along with over 150 Hospitality Heroes. In addition, the St. Louis Civic Pride Foundation honored Robert F. O'Loughlin of Lodging Hospitality Management as the 2022 winner of the Kim Tucci Heart of St. Louis Award.

PARTNER HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

This year's celebration welcomed over 300 partners to the "Jack Frost Ballroom" for delicious food, drinks and dancing. Monetary and non-perishable food donations increased by 30 percent from the previous year. Overall, the Virtual Food Drive yielded \$1,450 for the St. Louis Area Foodbank and provided over 6,300 meals for St. Louisans in need.

NATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK

In May, Explore St. Louis brought back Lights, Camera, Tourism, our live broadcast event with KSDK Channel 5 celebrating tourism in St. Louis. With over 100 live audience members and hundreds more viewing from home, we took over the Kirkwood Performing Arts Center to give a behind-the-scenes perspective of new tourism developments, the vibrant St. Louis arts scene, Missouri wine country and even pet-friendly hotels.





We facilitate success for more than 900 partners.

AT **96%**

OUR PARTNER RETENTION RATE

is one of the best in the country.



SELLING ST. LOUIS TO GROUPS

Room nights booked
for group travel were

UP
85
PERCENT
in FY2023

ASSISTING FILM PRODUCTIONS

The Leisure Travel Sales Department also takes point for the St. Louis Film Office. In FY23, the department worked with production crews on more than 44 productions ranging from short films to reality TV shows, assisting with locations, permits and general information. After many years without a state film incentive, SB94 was passed and was signed by the Governor in July. The state film incentive will go into effect later this year.

The Leisure Travel Sales Department (LTS) is responsible for the group tour market, both domestic and international. We assist with family reunions, military reunions, motorcoach groups and the wedding market. We facilitate tours throughout the St. Louis area, and we take to the road to promote group travel as well. The LTS department's participation in various events included representing St. Louis at the Student & Youth Travel Association Conference, Brand USA Week, World Travel Market, the National Tour Association's Travel Exchange, Travel South's International Showcase, American Bus Association, International Inbound Travel Association, ITB, Missouri Group Travel Exchange and the U.S. Travel Associations' IPW.

Get To Know Your St. Louis, an e-newsletter directed to the travel trade highlighting a partner who works in the group tour market, which launched last year, is still engaging the travel planners. LTS also increased the number of staff with the addition of a full-time coordinator.

Along with Explore St. Louis, the World Trade Center, Greater St. Louis Inc. and the Department of Economic Development hosted several members of the travel trade and media in London for the St. Louis Cardinals vs. the Chicago Cubs games at London Stadium.

The LTS department booked 6,576 room nights, an 85 percent increase from the previous year, fulfilled 78 requests for the STL Track Packs for motorcoach tours, and conducted 305 scheduled appointments during the trade shows with travel planners, representing a 36 percent increase.



WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

The visitor services team achieved our fiscal year goal of visitor interactions with 302,890 engagements at our area visitor centers and America's Center Convention Complex. This represents a 6 percent increase over FY22.

We provided welcome program staff and volunteer support for 57 conventions and events during FY23. Volunteer activity increased by 18 percent over the year prior, serving 7,067 hours, which represents a payroll savings of over \$100,000.

Tourism Trash Force momentum continued with the addition of two events, one in fall and one in spring. Between the two, we had nearly 90 participants from the hospitality community cleaning up downtown. Media coverage increased with interviews on KMOV and KSDK along with an article and series of photos in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and on STLToday.com.

We brought together tour partners to publish a new edition of the sightseeing tour brochure. In support of our partners, we blitzed 28 downtown hotels, sharing the new colorful brochure and goody bags with items donated by the tour partners.

We refreshed both of our airport visitor centers with colorful new graphics and updated Explore St. Louis branding.

We're actively working to re-grow our volunteer team with in-person presentations and display signage at visitor centers, as well as through referrals. To help build momentum and generate new ideas, we launched a volunteer advisory committee in the spring. Members represent a cross section of experience and volunteer assignments.

We resumed FAM tours in fall of 2022 and have taken our front-line staff and volunteers to new and revamped sites in St. Louis city and county on three themed tours during the fiscal year. The FAMs are a popular volunteer motivational and recruitment tool, and they also serve as an important training tool, familiarizing our front-line team on St. Louis' tourism assets.



MORE THAN
300,000
visitors engaged with our first-impression force.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

CHAIRMAN

Stephen M. O'Loughlin
President & CEO
Lodging Hospitality Management

VICE-CHAIRMAN

David Robert, CHA
CEO & Manager
Midas Hospitality, LLC

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Theona Simbrat
General Manager
Marriott St. Louis Grand

COMMISSIONERS

Lucien Blackwell
Associate
RBC Capital Markets

Charles M. Downs III
Managing Partner
Sugarfire, Hi-Pointe, Cyrano's, Boathouse

Mary Elizabeth Grimes
President
Marian Middle School

Amanda Joiner
General Manager
The Ritz-Carlton, St. Louis

Alper Oztok
General Manager
Four Seasons Hotel St. Louis

Steven Peate
Vice President & General Manager
River City Casino and Hotel

Keith Robinson
President
APRI – St. Louis Chapter



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