

Southern Delaware Tourism

THE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU FOR SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE

FY 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



Our Vision

By collaborating with community stakeholders, SDT will position Sussex County, Delaware to thrive as a premier travel destination.



OUR CORE VALUES (TRIP)

Transparency: Communicate honestly and respectfully by providing positive and consistent tourism messaging and be proactively open to stakeholder and community scrutiny; Uphold the highest standards of integrity and stewardship by demonstrating honesty, fairness and trustworthiness in action and intent.

Relevancy: Stay closely connected and involved in stakeholder and community shared values, by using data-driven evidence, to promote balanced economic development, sustainable tourism, and quality of life; Do great things together by challenging assumptions to foster innovation and to promote continuous improvement by seeking personal and professional growth.

Inclusion: Create a more diverse and inclusive SDT by respecting and valuing broad participation in stakeholder and community dialogue while embracing diversity of thought in decision-making; Build public support and engagement around the shared vision of making Southern Delaware a premier tourist destination by leveraging our collective genius.

Passion: Generate excitement, nurture ideas, inspire excellence and find creative ways to eliminate obstacles for cultivating SDT's growth and prosperity.

Who We Are

Our Purpose and Mission

Southern Delaware Tourism (SDT) is the Convention & Visitors Bureau for Sussex County, Delaware. SDT is led by a Board of Directors representing chambers of commerce, local businesses, and county economic development. The CVB staff is comprised of the Executive Director, a Communications Manager, a Marketing Manager, and a Marketing Specialist.

Southern Delaware Tourism operates as a 501(c)6 non-profit business. Funding for the CVB is derived from the State of Delaware's Public Accommodations Tax. As the destination marketing organization for the county, SDT's mission is to support and encourage the identification, development, and promotion of sustainable, year-round tourism in Southern Delaware that contributes to economic growth and improves the quality of life.



A Letter from the Executive Director



Scott Thomas
Executive Director

Travel is Back

Although travel may not be back universally, visitation is booming in Sussex County. Last year's renewed optimism has continued as more and more travelers are hitting the road again with much pent-up demand still sorting its way out from the pandemic. In the northeast and mid-Atlantic regions, they are coming to Southern Delaware. Located within a four-hour drive to almost 30% of the U.S. population, Sussex County is a nearby travel destination for many yet exudes a much farther away feel so many new and return visitors are seeking. This attribute is something that SDT continues to build on through its marketing and storytelling of the area.

SDT had its best revenue year ever this past fiscal year 2022.

Revenue generated by the state hotel tax eclipsed SDT's previous high mark (set in FY 2017) by 52%. Visitation continues to increase.

That is the good news. The bad news is that severe labor shortages and diminishing workforce housing continue to handicap many businesses. These are two components that directly affect the quality of guest experiences that is so critical to our tourism and hospitality industry. SDT will continue to advocate and work with the community towards more solutions to these constraints.

This past April, SDT's Board of Directors and staff participated in a strategic retreat that paved the way for us to construct and adopt a five-year plan. This strategic plan includes community collaboration in telling our destination's story and making Sussex County such a special place to visit and experience. I hope that you join us.

As our organization grows, I am extremely thankful for the support, resilience and perseverance of SDT's board and our community partners. I look forward to another successful year ahead.

-Safe Travels!

FY 2022 Major Achievements

- **226,020** people visited SDT's website, VisitSouthernDelaware.com.
- **40,760 hotel searches** and **\$937,414 in hotel bookings** were generated by SDT's advertising efforts *Source: ADARA Impact*.
- **\$4.2+ million** in publicity value for travel to Sussex County was generated by hosting and assisting travel journalists.
- Increased the marketing budget by **63%** due to the utilization of COVID-19-related federal and state grants along with state Public Accommodations Tax (PAT) reinvestment; thereby, implementing four seasonal advertising campaigns to its top drive-from markets.
- Increased exposure for highlighting Southern Delaware's Culinary Coast™ as a major culinary destination. With the support of a variety of restaurants and state organizations, SDT has secured coverage in international, national and regional publications such as Travel & Leisure, Food & Wine, National Geographic Traveler, Forbes, Liquor.com, Men's Health, The Boston Globe and Philadelphia Inquirer. In June, SDT staged a Culinary Coast™ pop-up event at Rockefeller Center in NYC and hosted 22 journalists representing 50 national and regional media outlets.
- Created a comprehensive five-year **Strategic Plan** to guide SDT's efforts in community collaboration, operations, and promoting Sussex County as a premier travel destination.
- **30** destination marketing professionals, from throughout the region, experienced Southern Delaware's unique attractions at the April 2022 spring quarterly meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance (MATPRA) in Dewey Beach hosted by SDT.
- Sponsored the **6th Annual Photography Contest** and obtained **160** additional photo submissions to SDT's media galleries for use in promotions, marketing, and advertising.
- **\$873,472** in funding grants were distributed to chambers of commerce (located in Sussex County) for local tourism promotion.
- **14,000** followers on Facebook, **10,300** on Twitter, and **6,093** on Instagram; experiencing increases in followers across all media platforms.

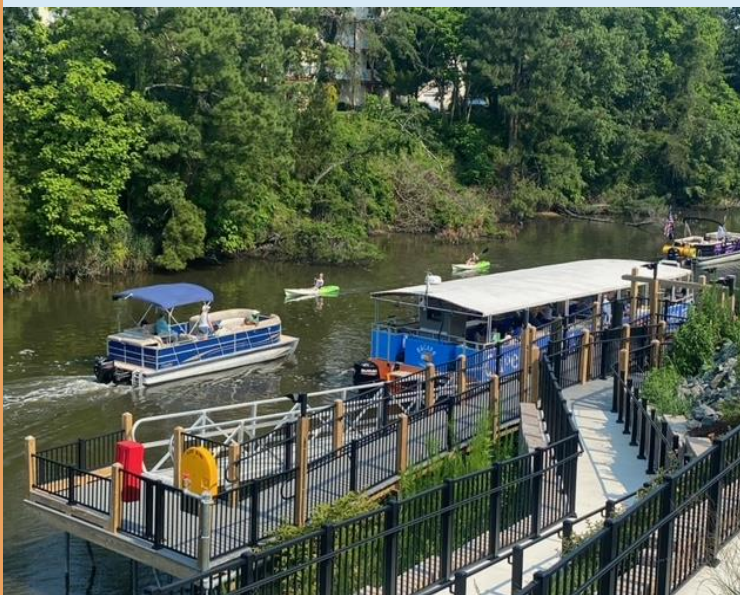


Travel and Tourism Impact

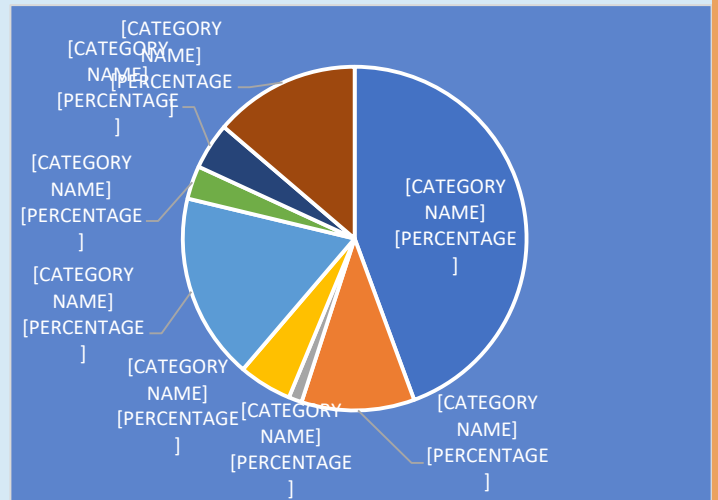
Sussex County

- Generates \$2.3 billion in visitor spending
- Tourism supports 19,750 jobs in the county
- Brings new money into the community
- For every \$1 spent directly by a visitor, another \$1.20 is generated in indirect sales to the local economy
- Helps diversify and stabilize the local economy
- Attracts additional businesses to our area (“It Starts With a Visit”)
- Contributes to the state and local tax base and saves each Delaware household approximately \$1,564 in taxes annually
- It would take only 160 more visitors to support a new Delaware job
- Every 230 visitors pays for a Delaware public school student for the year

Source: 2019 Delaware Tourism Office Value of Tourism Report



Where Visitors Are Staying



Source: 2022 Southern Delaware Tourism Visitor Survey Report

Top Ten Visitor Activities

1. Going to the Beach
2. Dining Out
3. Tax-Free Shopping
4. Going to Festivals / Special Events
5. Visiting Breweries & Wineries
6. Visiting Museums / Historic Sites
7. Cycling
8. Antiquing
9. Engaging in Cultural Arts
10. Guided Tours

Southern Delaware Tourism Board of Directors

Bonnie Hall, Nanticoke Indian Association and Current SDT Chairperson

Matthew Parker, Registered Representative of Rosemont Wealth Management and Current SDT Co-Chairperson

Benjamin Gray, Past SDT Chairperson

Scott Anthony, Money Mailer of Delaware

Terry Carson, Executive Director of the Western Sussex Chamber of Commerce

Drew DiFonzo, Vice President of Operations, TKo Hospitality

Mike Dunmyer, US Wind

Morgan Edgar, Hospitality & Tourism DECA Advisor

Carol Everhart, President & CEO of the Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce

Karen Falk, Executive Director of the Milton Chamber of Commerce

Jamie Hayman, Hayman Creative Promotional Products Agency, Inc.

Maggie Lingo, General Manager of the Beacon Motel

Fred Mast, Managing Shareholder of Jefferson, Urian, Doane & Sterner, P.A.

Kristin Miller, Forever Media

Nancy Pinera, WSFS Bank

Linda Price, Executive Director of the Greater Georgetown Chamber of Commerce

Bill Pfaff, Director of the Sussex County Economic Development Office

Betsy Reamer, Executive Director of the Lewes Chamber of Commerce

Nicole Rogers, Executive Director of the Milford Museum

Jo Schmeiser, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Milford

Kevin Thompson, Financial Advisor, Edward Jones

Lauren Weaver, Executive Director of the Bethany-Fenwick Area Chamber of Commerce

Jessica Welch, Delaware Tourism Office

Southern Delaware Tourism Staff

Scott Thomas, Executive Director

Tina Coleman, Communications Manager

Lana O'Hollaren, Marketing Manager

Morgan Lacy-Adams, Marketing Specialist



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