

FY 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Southern Delaware

Beaches are just the beginning™

Play ✨ Eat ✨ Shop ✨ Explore ✨ Discover ✨ Be Inspired

Discover Our Jewels

Small towns, big fun!

Outdoor Adventures

On land, on the water, in the air

Year-Round Fun

Festivals abound all year round

Tax-Free Shopping

In unique boutiques, outlets & antique shops galore

Explore the Culinary Coast™

Your taste buds will never be the same





Who We Are

Our Mission, Purpose and Funding

Southern Delaware Tourism (SDT) is the Convention & Visitors Bureau for Sussex County, Delaware. 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. 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 Administrator.

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.

A Letter from the Executive Director



Scott Thomas
Executive Director

Silver Linings in this Cloud?

It was rolling along so well. SDT was on its way to its best year ever revenue-wise. We were all busy meeting face-to-face and planning for a vibrant spring and summer and just like that.... our world seemed to stop spinning. Although it will be some time before the COVID-19 Cloud dissipates, I would like to think that the darkest days are behind us. Does every cloud really have a silver lining? Even when the cloud takes the form of a global pandemic and disruptor of disruptors? If it pertains to the way our hospitality and tourism community has responded to this hit-in-the-face freight train, then the answer is YES.

In times like these, I am constantly reminded of the resiliency of our local tourism industry. With each day, our partner businesses and organizations have been adapting to the

COVID climate and moving targets presented by Delaware's economic reopening constraints. As of June, our hotels are filling up again largely due to staff making guests feel safe and comfortable by instituting additional public health measures and practices. We at SDT have been adapting as well, utilizing new communication tools to stay connected with our team and partners. More resources have been invested in educating our visitors on navigating and adhering to COVID-19-related travel planning and expectations while spending time here. We are reminding visitors of the many safe, fun experiences found in Southern Delaware that this pandemic has brought a renewed appreciation towards.

Many of these practices and reinventions will stick after our economic recovery, making our industry stronger. Maybe the brightest silver lining is the reminder of how vital our area is as a destination and the prosperity presented by tourism. You don't know what you got until it's gone.

-Safe Travels!

FY 2020 Major Achievements

- Over 101,300 people visited SDT's website, VisitSouthernDelaware.com, generating 24,555 hotel searches and 3,218 flight searches.
- SDT's advertising attracted 72,681 visits to its website.
- Through hosting and assisting travel journalists, SDT generated over \$1.5 million in publicity value for travel to Sussex County.
- SDT produced 3 videos focused on stories unique to Sussex County, highlighting outdoor recreation, history, and culture.
- By working with our vendors to suspend advertising campaigns in the spring and securing \$18,000 as part of a grant from the University of Delaware Sea Grant Program, SDT was able to design and implement a recovery marketing campaign, targeting close-by drive-from markets and highlighting safe summer travel to Sussex County.
- SDT launched its mobile app, SouthDel Sidekick, making it easier for visitors and residents to explore and discover Sussex County. Hotels in the county are using it as a concierge tool for their guests.
- With its partners and working with the national agency Baltz & Co., SDT launched a PR campaign highlighting Southern Delaware's Culinary Coast™ as a major culinary destination.
- SDT exhibited at 3 consumer travel shows and qualified 2,020 contacts.
- SDT produced two photo contests, accumulating 258 high resolution photos to be utilized towards its promotional efforts.
- SDT distributed \$575,000 in funding grants to chambers of commerce (located in Sussex County) for local tourism promotion.
- SDT added 3,218 subscribers to its eScapes consumer travel newsletter bringing the total number of subscribers to 22,516.
- 157 people attended SDT's Annual Tourism Awards Luncheon for which SDT presented four awards and industry keynote speaker, Mariah Calagione.
- Assisted the Sussex County Economic Development Office in creating the "Keep Sussex Strong, Locals Buying Locally Matters" advertising campaign.
- Our social media channels have attracted 8,451 followers on Facebook, 9,866 on Twitter and 2,662 on Instagram



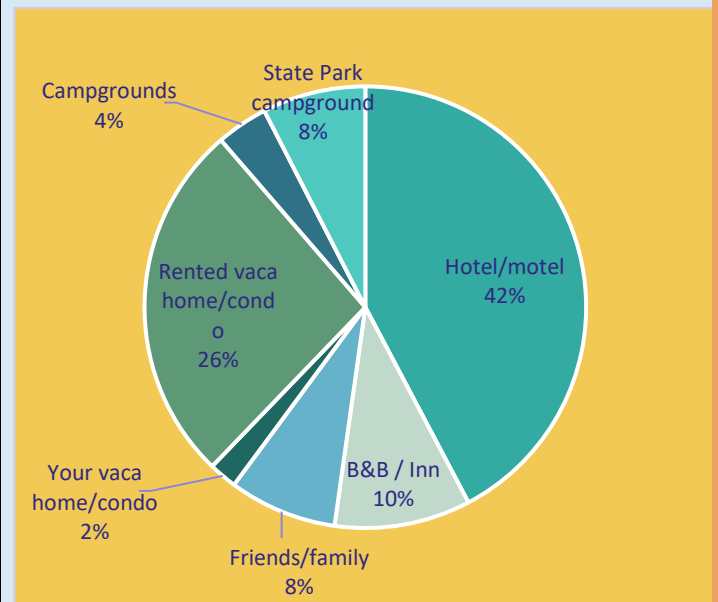
Travel and Tourism Impact

Sussex County

- Generates \$2.1 billion in visitor spending
- Tourism supports 19,000 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 \$1,562 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



Where Visitors Are Staying



Source: 2019 Southern Delaware Tourism Visitor Survey Report

Top Ten Visitor Activities

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

Southern Delaware Tourism Board of Directors...

Benjamin Gray, General Manager of the Bellmoor Inn & Spa and Current SDT Chairperson
Bonnie Hall, Nanticoke Indian Association and Current SDT Co-Chairperson
Anne Brown, Executive Director of the Milton Chamber of Commerce
Terry Carson, Executive Director of the Western Sussex Chamber of Commerce
Ron Derr, Manager of PKS & Company, P.A.
Carol Everhart, President & CEO of the Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce
Josh Grapski, Managing Partner of La Vida Hospitality
Mary Susan Jones, General Manager of the Microtel Inn & Suites
Elizabeth Keller, Director of the Delaware Tourism Office
Claudia Leister, Executive Director of the Milford Museum
Maggie Lingo, General Manager of the Beacon Motel
Rob Marshall, Owner of the Atlantic Oceanside Dewey Beach Resort
Fred Mast, Managing Shareholder of Jefferson, Urian, Doane & Sterner, P.A.
Marie Mayor, Owner of Lavender Fields Farm
Matthew Parker, Registered Representative of Rosemont Wealth Management
Bill Pfaff, Director of the Sussex County Economic Development Office
Wesley Paulson, Executive Director of Clear Space Theatre
Betsy Reamer, Executive Director of the Lewes Chamber of Commerce
Jo Schmeiser, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Milford
Lauren Weaver, Executive Director of the Bethany-Fenwick Area Chamber of Commerce

Southern Delaware Tourism Staff...

Scott Thomas, Executive Director
Tina Coleman, Communications Manager
Lana O'Hollaren, Marketing Manager
Caitlin Chaney, Marketing Administrator