

The background of the entire page is a scenic photograph of a beach at sunset. In the foreground, there are large, green, rounded leaves of a coastal plant, possibly a sea purslane, hanging down from the top. Below them, a large, gnarled tree trunk leans over the sand. The beach is covered with a thick layer of dry, brown sticks and twigs. In the distance, a person is walking on the beach near the water's edge. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with the sun low on the horizon. The Fort Myers logo is positioned in the upper right corner, featuring the word 'fort' in a script font and 'MYERS' in a bold, sans-serif font, with the tagline 'ISLANDS, BEACHES & NEIGHBORHOODS' underneath.

fort
MYERS
ISLANDS, BEACHES
& NEIGHBORHOODS

Growing Together

**FY 2025–2026
Annual Plan**

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Introduction



Letter From the Executive Director

GROWING TOGETHER *Just Feels Right*

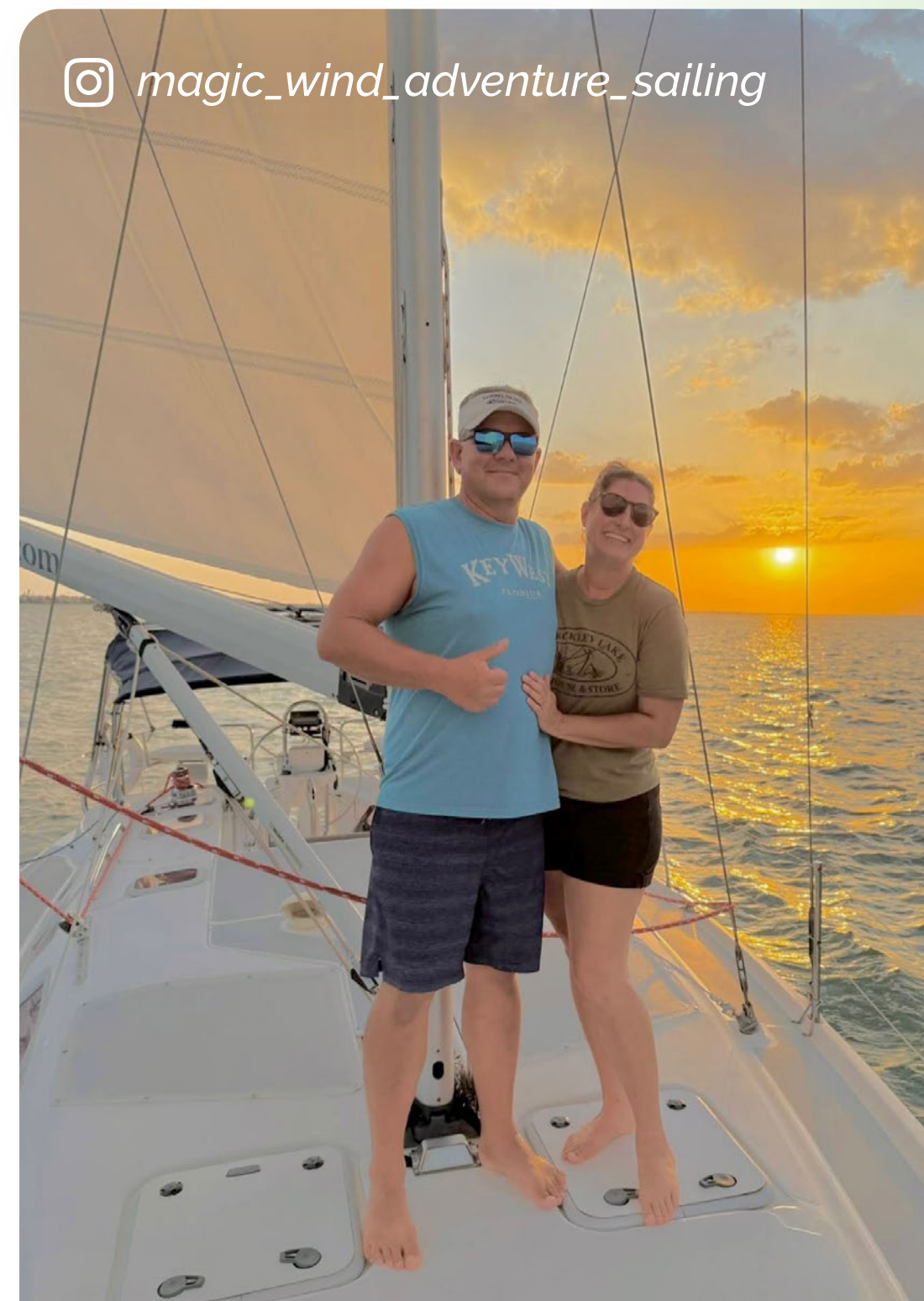
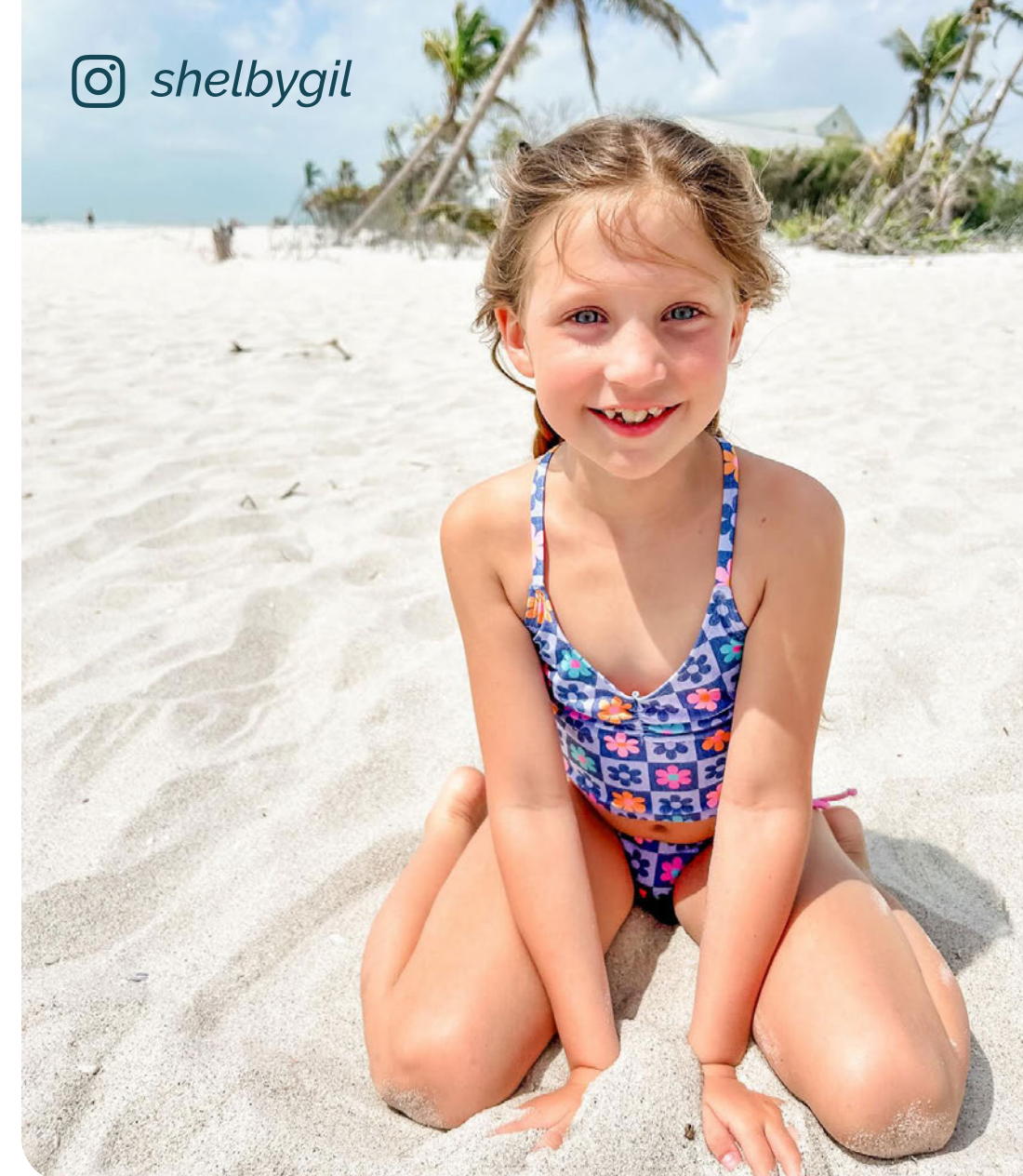
This past year, we've crossed an important threshold. From coastal recovery to the continued growth of our tourism product countywide, we've made remarkable strides on our shared journey. Our community continues to evolve. Roots run deep and together we help the greater Fort Myers area thrive. Every contribution nurtures growth, shaping a place where we can flourish, now and in the future.



As we look ahead, we know the market will be tougher in FY2025–26. Broader economic factors such as political headwinds, exchange rates, airline volatility, and soft group demand don't fit neatly into traditional marketing boxes. They call for something deeper: resilience, adaptability, and selectivity. We must focus on those visitors who see beyond the noise, who value our warmth and authenticity, and who continue to choose Fort Myers no matter the climate.

We also recognize that business performance has been uneven. Through our partner listening sessions, we've heard from many of you — some doing well, others facing slower bookings as visitors wait longer to plan. Occupancy has softened as supply has grown, and uncertainty lingers as we move into season. Yet we have come so far, and that progress is real.

The year ahead brings both challenges and bright spots. The international outlook remains mixed, with forecasts projecting a dip in 2025 before rebounding in 2026, aided by global events like the FIFA World Cup. Closer to home, there is reason for excitement as Southwest Florida International Airport continues to expand air service, now offering nonstop flights to 79 destinations. The construction of Concourse E, which will add up to 19 gates when complete, will strengthen our connection to the world and fuel long-term growth.





Across the destination, more properties and experiences continue to reopen and reimagine what makes Fort Myers special. Three new hotels are under construction and expected to open in 2026 — Captiva Island Inn on Andy Rosse Lane, HomeTowne Studios by Red Roof on Colonial, and Beachview Villas on Sanibel, with more new properties opening in 2027. Each new offering, large or small, reflects our collective progress and shared pride.

Our team remains focused on success, and we look forward to another year of collaboration with each of you. Together, we will keep listening, learning, and leading Fort Myers toward an even stronger future.



With gratitude and optimism,

Tamara Pigott

Tamara Pigott

Executive Director, Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau

Vision

To enhance our position as the premier tourism marketing organization by working with our partners to promote one of the world's best tourism destinations.

Mission

The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau serves the broader interests of the economy of Lee County by acting as an industry leader to market the entire area globally, facilitate travel to the area, and preserve and protect the area's unique attributes for the continual benefit of its residents and the travel and tourism industry.



Country Brand

02





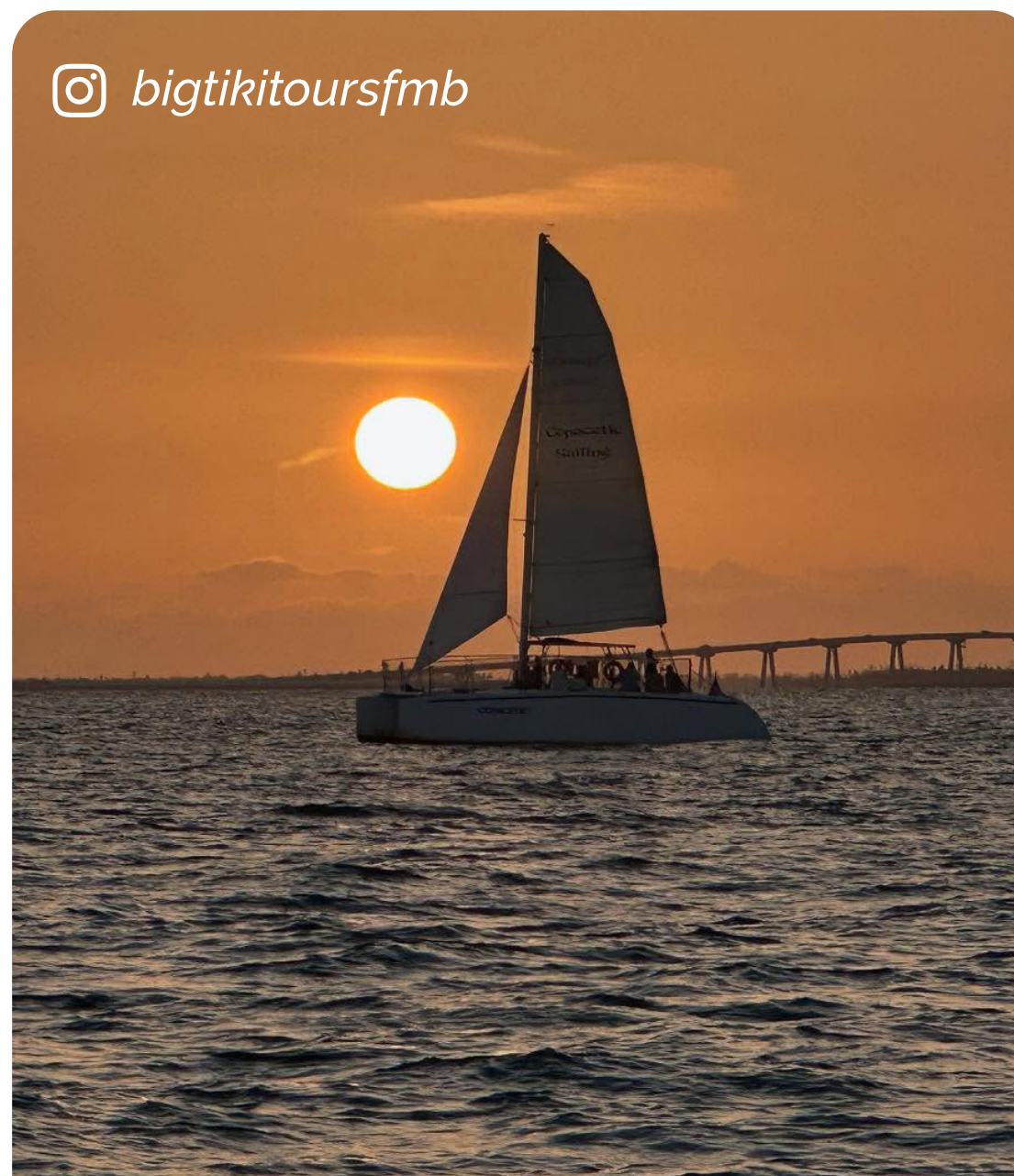
County Brand

As the role of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) continues to evolve, a consistent and clear Lee County brand is essential. To achieve this, we engaged residents, industry partners, business leaders, and elected officials to better understand the goals of our community. We also identified overarching themes related to the Lee County brand while collecting and analyzing facts and data related to the Lee County experience. The objective was to build a strong destination brand, boost local pride and increase our collective sense of community within one identity.

We connected insights gained from our community engagement survey to traveler data from our market research. Understanding how these motivations are so closely tied allowed us to create a brand that speaks to and emotionally connects with residents and travelers as well as the business and economic development communities.

Travelers are familiar with our destination as “Fort Myers” — they see it when booking flights to our airport and when driving south on I-75. We built on that familiarity in an inclusive way by including a secondary line that acknowledges our many communities and their strong identities as islands, beaches and neighborhoods. This name also provides the flexibility to identify on county, regional and departmental levels.





Our brand architecture, fueled by the insights we gained along the way, conveys what the Lee County brand stands for, how it is positioned against the competition, and how it emotionally connects with and motivates our audiences. It also guides us when reacting to changes in the marketing landscape.

At its core, our brand combines the fundamental need all travelers share with what Lee County naturally provides: the gift of time. People need time to relax and time to actively pursue their passions with the people they love most.

Above all else, this balance is what Lee County offers.

Brand Architecture

BRAND VALUES	Active • Connecting • Inspiring • Fresh • Fun
BRAND PURPOSE	We are a change of pace from the rest of the world. We create an environment that inspires visitors to take time to pursue their passions and make the most of every moment.
BRAND EXPERIENCE	This is our time • Always at our own speed Connected to the water • More time, more living
BRAND VOICE	Comfortable • Confident • Refreshing • Empowering • Passionate

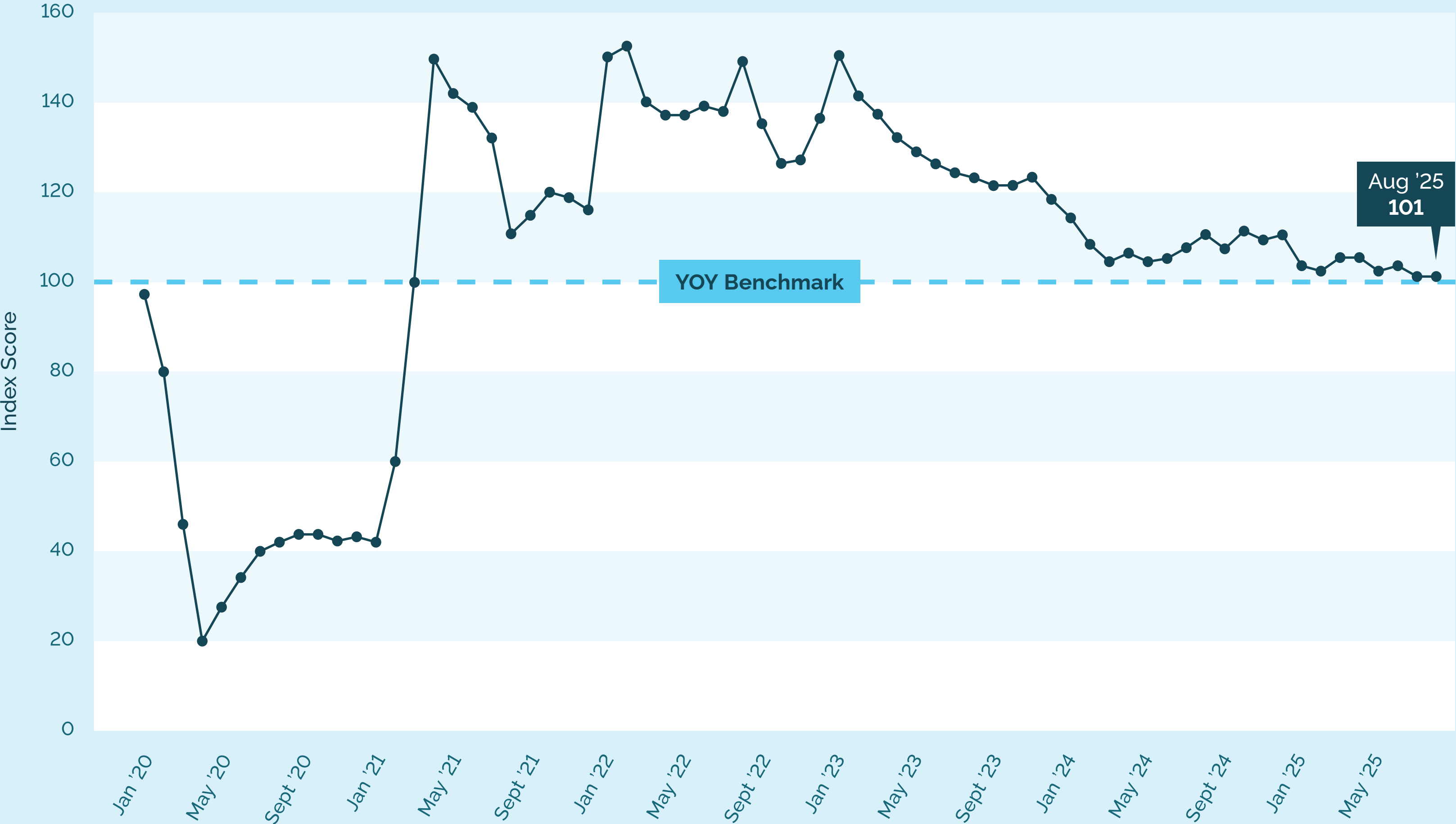
The background of the slide is a teal-colored image featuring a dense pattern of palm fronds. In the lower right, there is a semi-transparent inset showing a tropical beach scene with people relaxing on lounge chairs and a person in a hammock.

03

The Travel Landscape

Global Travel Health Index Score

Score relative to baseline reading of 100 for the same month in the previous year.



Source: Shift's State of Travel 2025

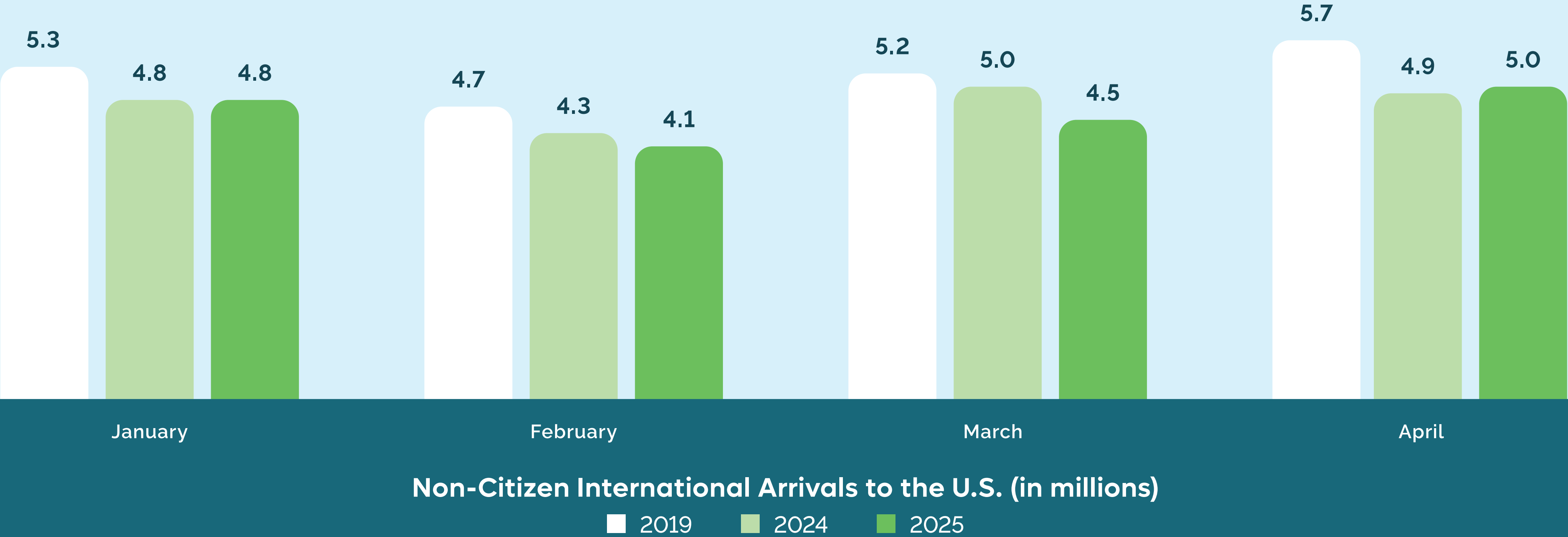
Global Travel Trends

The Global Travel Health Index Shows Moderate Growth

The Global Travel Health Index, which tracks 88 travel indicators across 22 countries, shows that the industry has settled into moderate growth levels and is expected to continue with that trend. As of August 2025, the index stands at 101, indicating 1% growth over 2024.

International Sentiment Toward the U.S. Remains Down as Inbound Travel Fluctuates

Skift Research's survey of inbound travelers reflects a decline in travel intentions to the U.S. over the past year. This is in line with declining inbound international arrivals year over year.



Source: Skift's State of Travel 2025, MMGY TCI Travel Intelligence, TRAVELSAT Net Sentiment Score

Domestic Travel Volume in the U.S. Remains Steady

As of Q2, the TSA reported 1% growth in passengers screened compared to the same period in 2024. Key holiday weekends continue to set records, with the TSA reporting almost 3 million passengers screened the Friday before Labor Day, the highest volume ever recorded for that date.

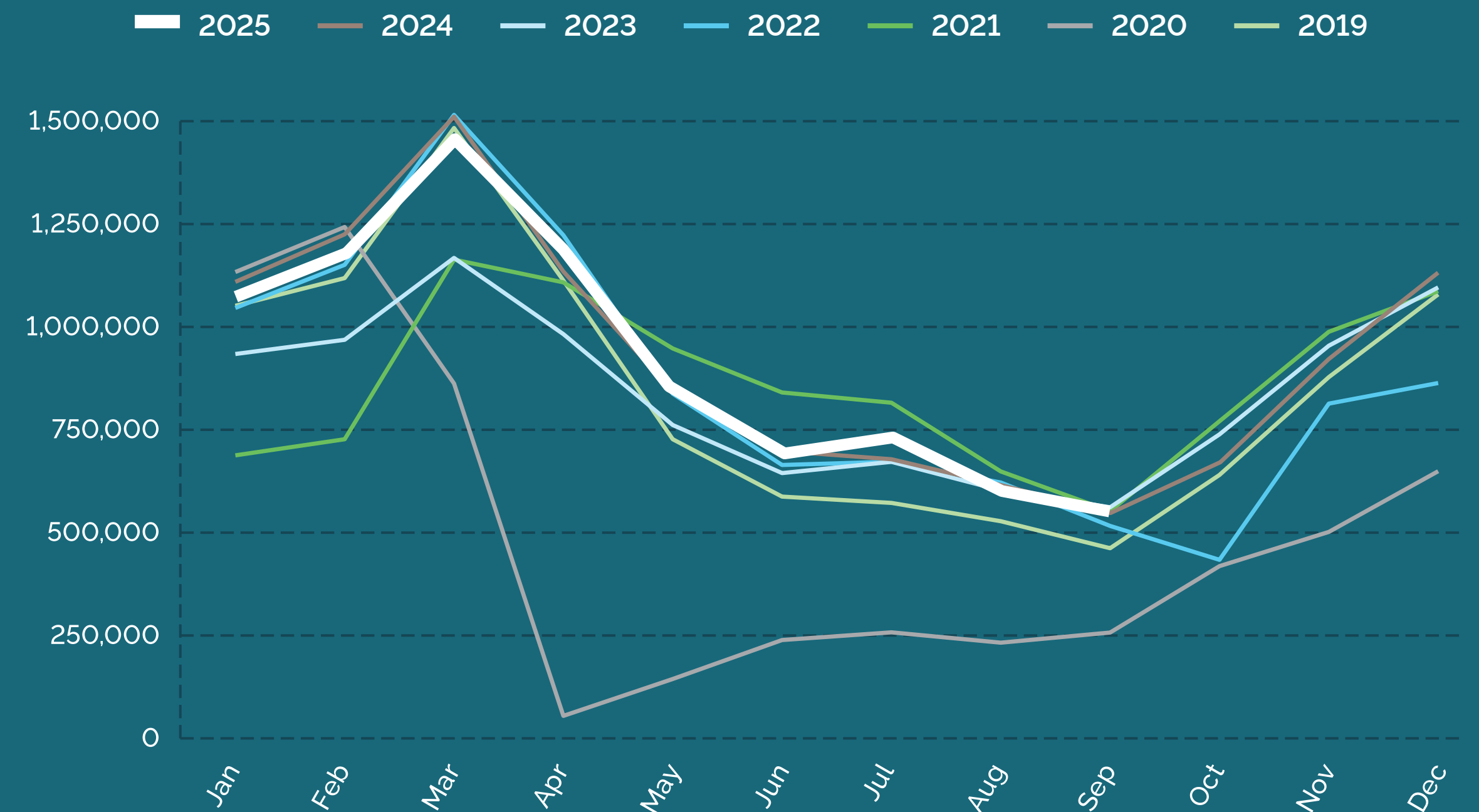




RSW Air Service Updates

Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) passenger traffic is relatively flat year-to-date compared to 2024.

Total Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) Passengers



Source: [FlyLCPA.com/Business and Community/Reports and Statistics](https://www.flylcpa.com/Business-and-Community/Reports-and-Statistics)

RSW Air Service Updates

As of the October 2025 Air Service Update, Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) provides nonstop service to 78 destinations by 16 carriers, including new airline, Allegiant Air.

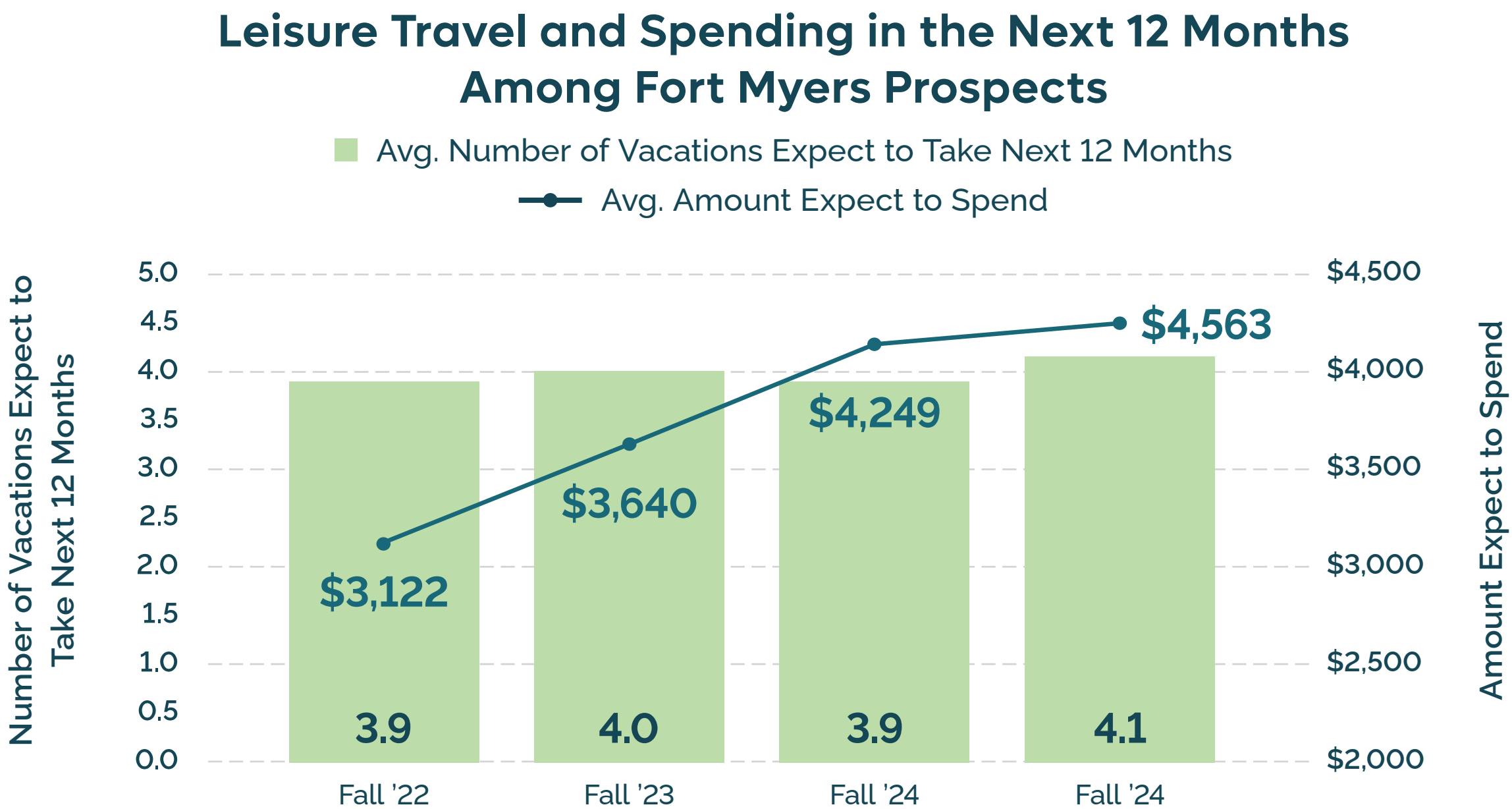
New flights include:

- Allegiant Air
 - Allentown, PA (ABE) - Weekly, starting Nov. 13, 2025
 - Appleton, WI (ATW) - Weekly, starting Nov. 21, 2025
 - Des Moines, IA (DSM) - Weekly, starting Nov. 21, 2025
- American Airlines:
 - Phoenix, AZ (PHX) - Limited holiday service, operating daily Nov. 20–Dec. 3, 2025 and Dec. 19, 2025–Jan. 6, 2026; Seasonal daily service Feb. 12–Apr. 6, 2026
- Breeze Airways:
 - Albany, NY (ALB) - Weekly, starting Dec. 17, 2025
 - Rochester, NY (ROC) - Weekly, starting Jan. 8, 2026
- Delta Air Lines
 - Salt Lake City, UT (SLC) - Daily, starting Dec. 20, 2025
- JetBlue Airways:
 - Islip-Long Island (ISP) - Weekly, starting Dec. 18, 2025
- Southwest Airlines:
 - Austin, TX (AUS) - Weekly, Mar. 5–Apr. 6, 2026
 - Chicago-O'Hare (ORD) - Weekly, starting Nov. 2, 2025
- Sun Country:
 - Appleton, WI (ATW) - Weekly, starting Jan. 30, 2026
- United Airlines:
 - Los Angeles, CA (LAX) - Weekly, Dec. 6, 2025–Mar. 2, 2026
 - San Francisco, CA (SFO) - Weekly, Nov. 15, 2025–Mar. 4, 2026

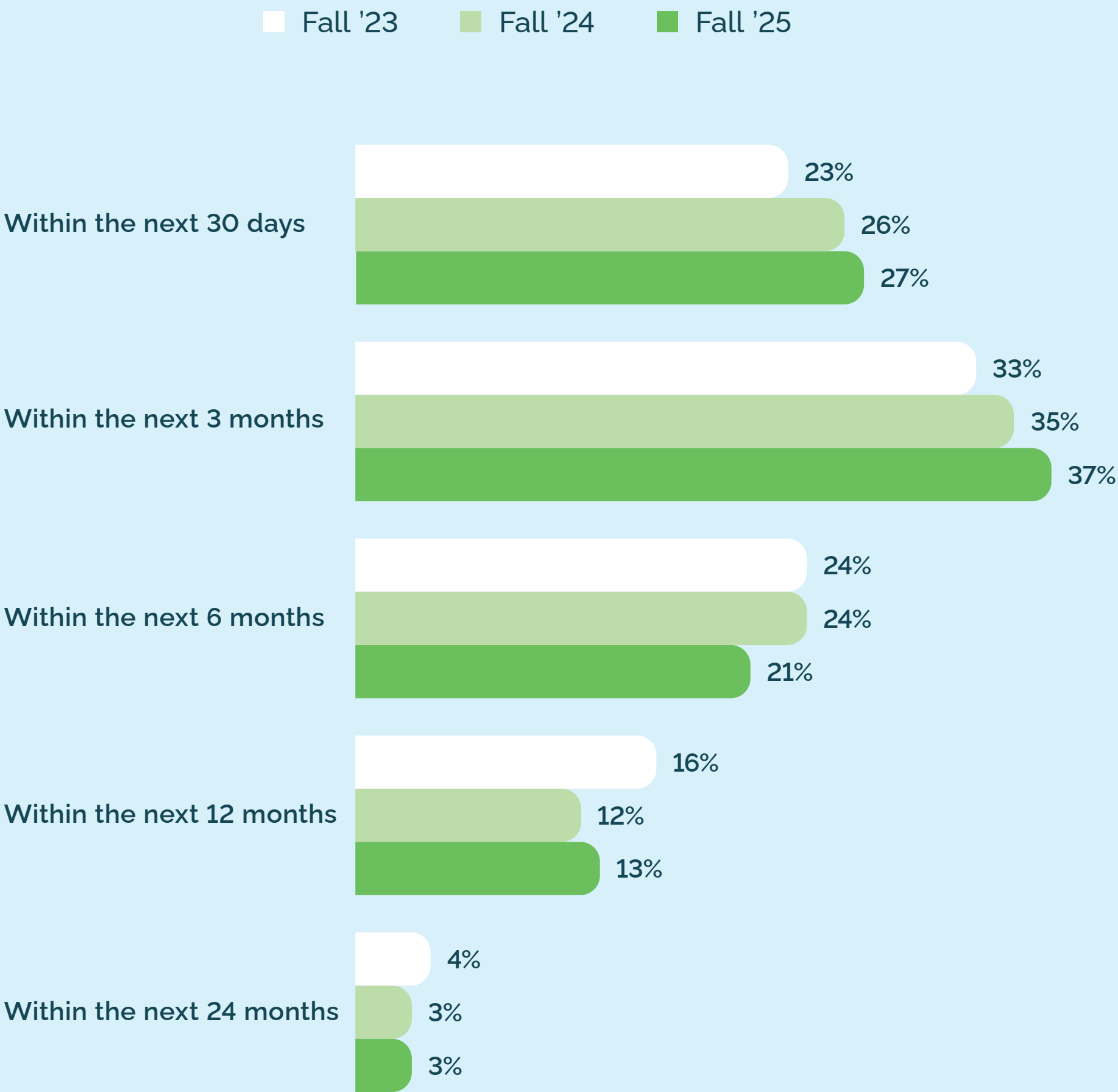
Source: [FlyLCPA.com](https://www.flylcpa.com) October 2025 Air Service Update

Fort Myers Prospect Leisure Travel Indicators (TSI)

Over 6 in 10 (64%) Fort Myers prospects are expecting to take their next leisure vacation within 3 months. Overall travel intent remains steady year over year and intended travel spend has increased, reflecting their expectation that travel accommodations and attractions will cost more than they have previously.



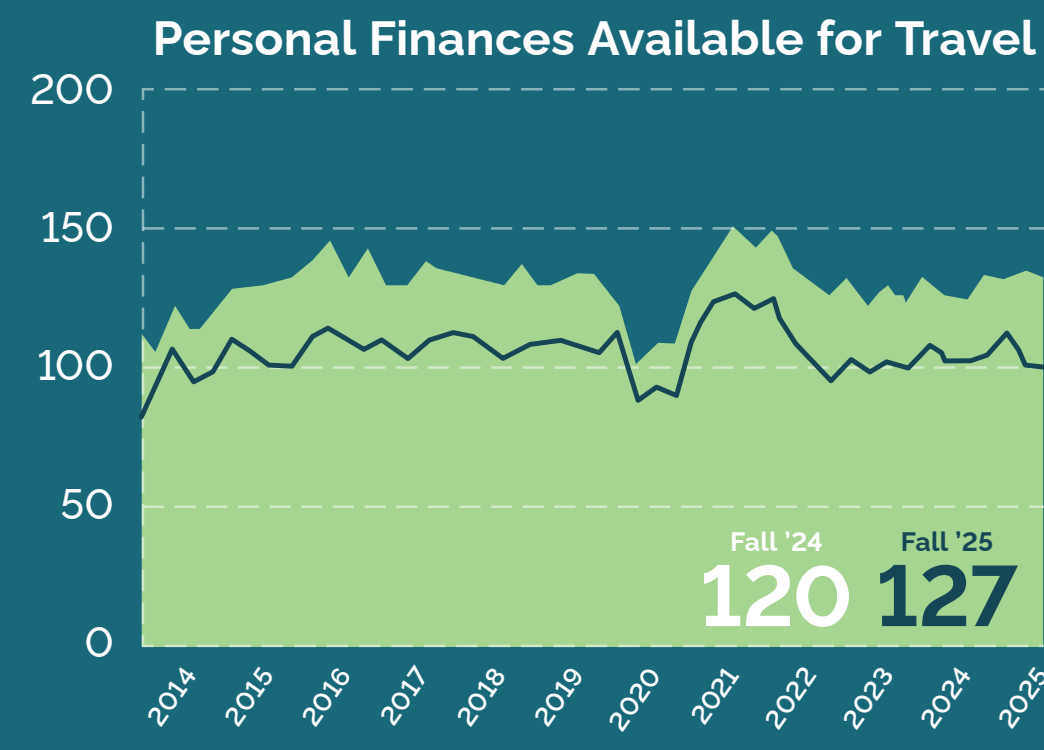
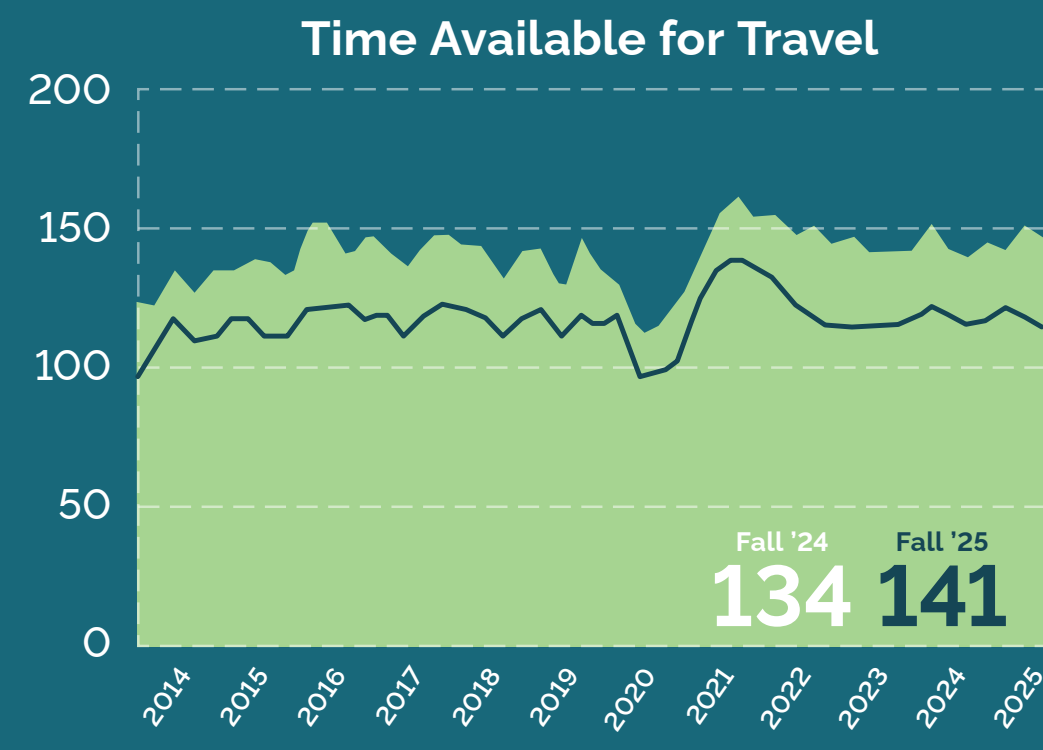
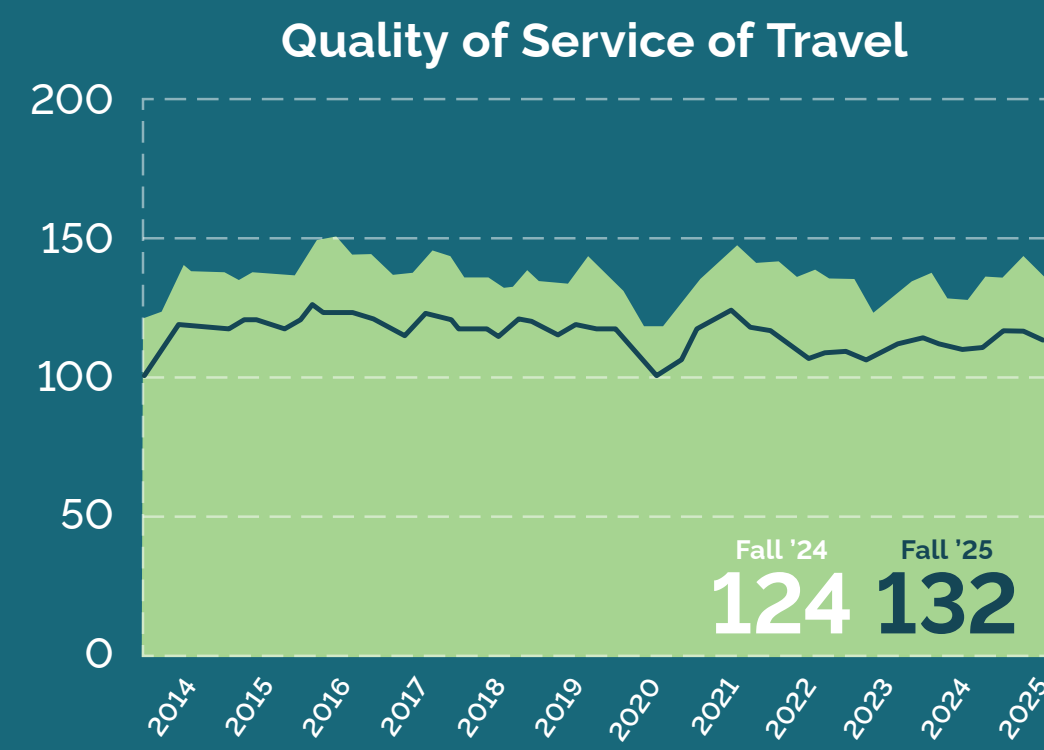
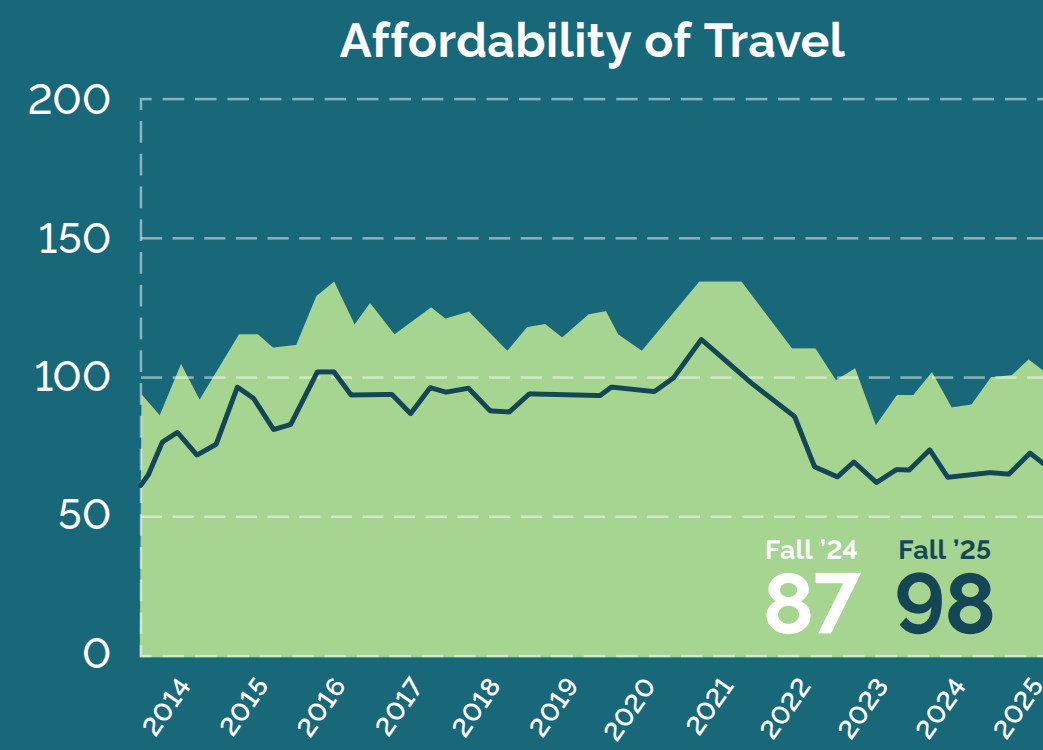
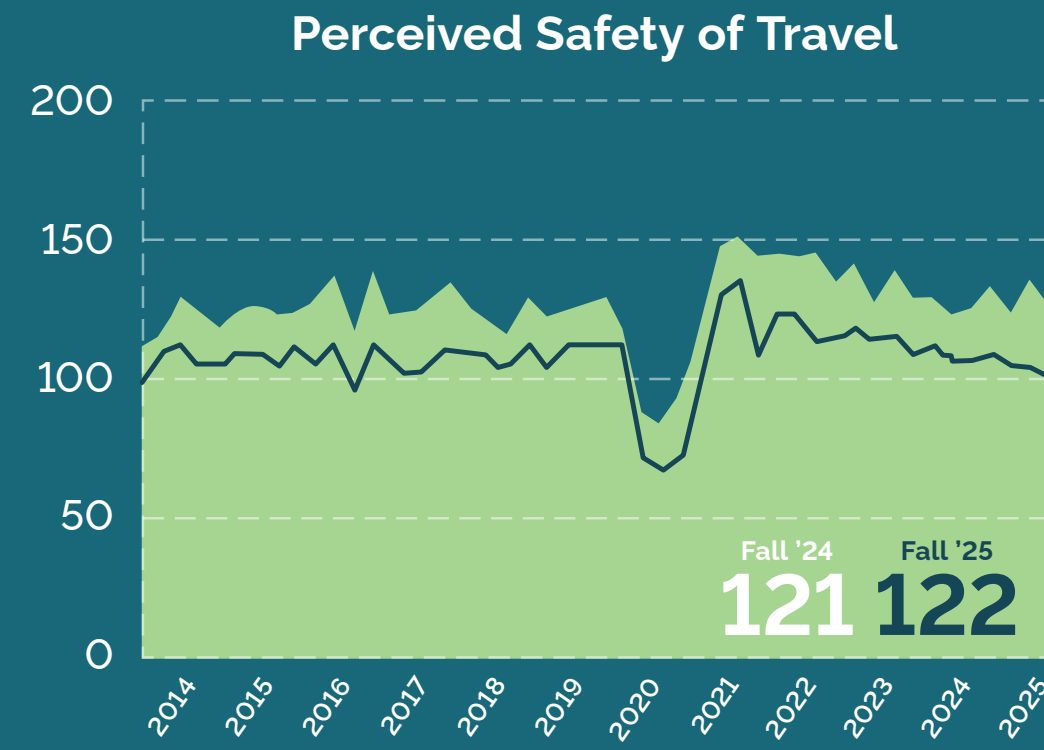
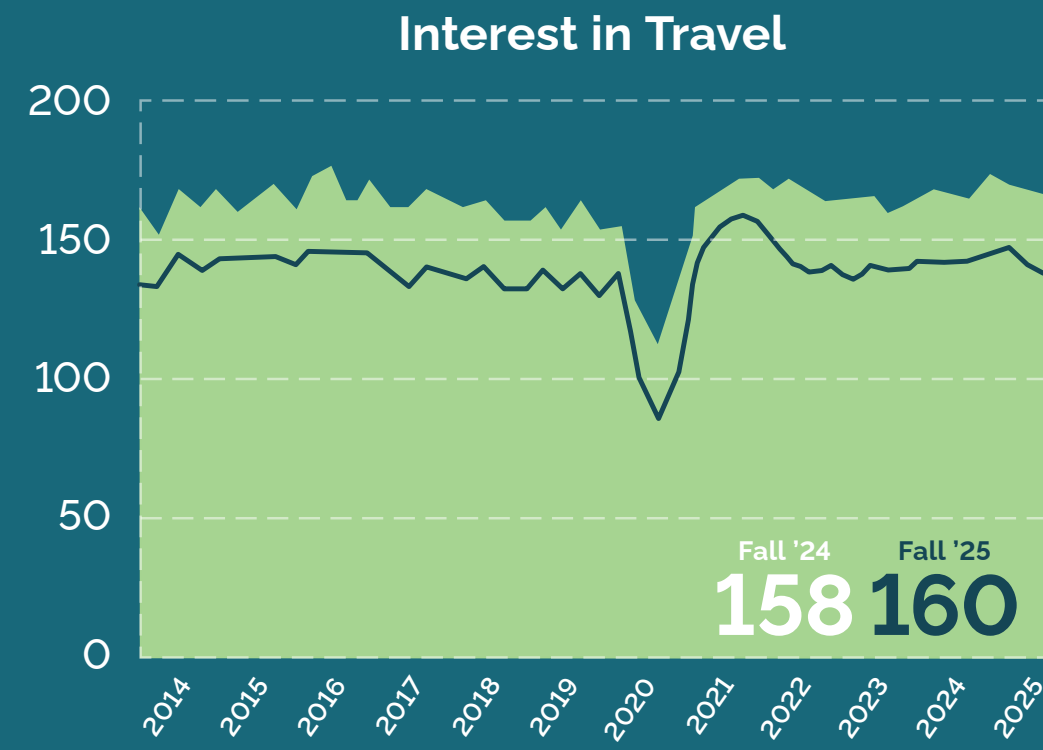
Expected Timing of Next Leisure Vacation Among Fort Myers Prospects



Source: MMGY's 2025 *Portrait of American Travelers*®
"Fall Edition - Lee County"

2025 Traveler Sentiment Score

■ Sentiment for Fort Myers Prospects — Baseline for U.S. Adults Surveyed



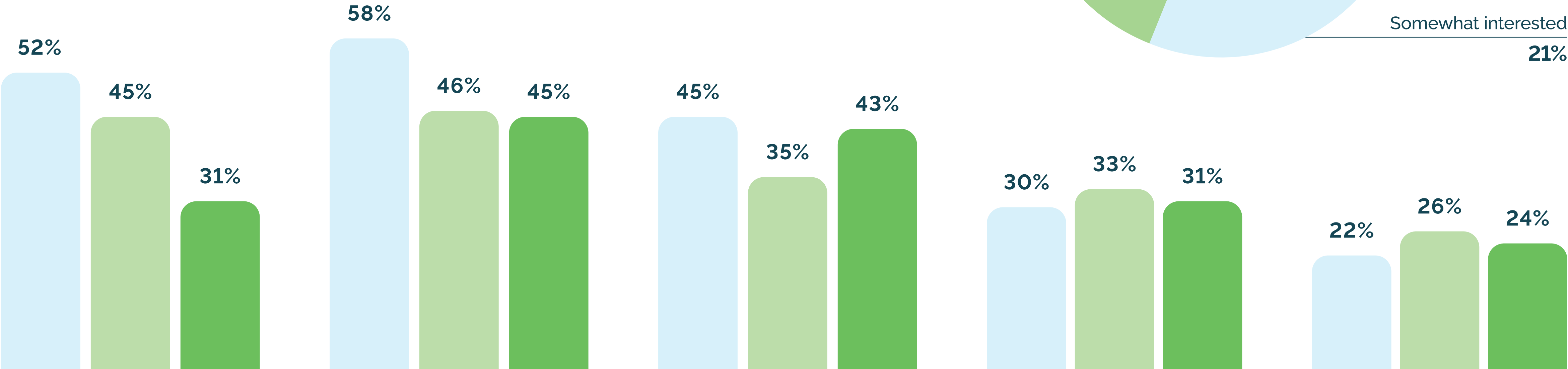
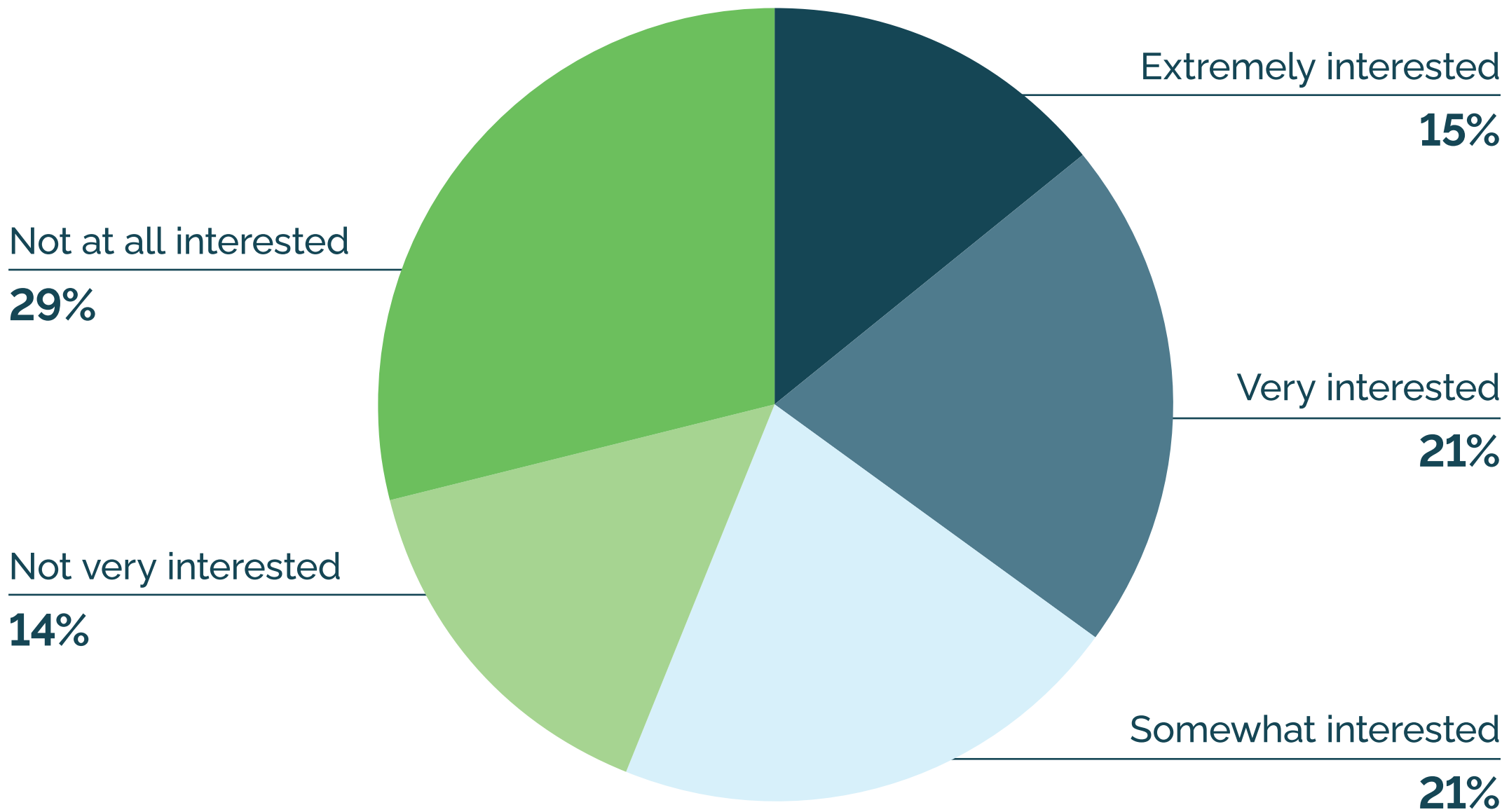
Travel Sentiment Score

Lee County prospects travel sentiment has increased across all categories since Fall 2024. Interest in travel remains strong, and travelers are indicating more time and personal finances available for travel.

Source: MMGY's 2025 Portrait of American Travelers® "Fall Edition - Lee County"

Travel Intent

Overall interest in visiting Fort Myers remains steady year over year, with just under 4 in 10 (36%) U.S. leisure travelers showing interest in visiting. Interest is rising among Gen Xers, in line with this group's increasing travel interest across all leisure travel.

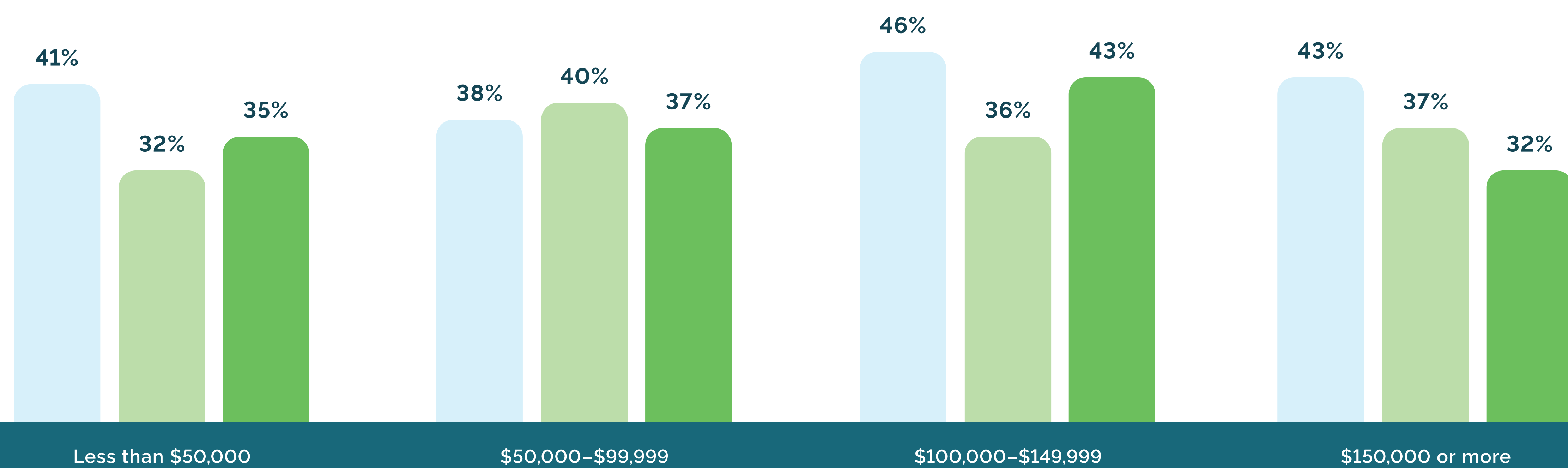


Interest in Visiting Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods by Generation

■ Fall '23 ■ Fall '24 ■ Fall '25

Travel Intent (continued)

Compared to Fall 2024, interest among households earning \$100,000 to \$149,000 has considerably increased.

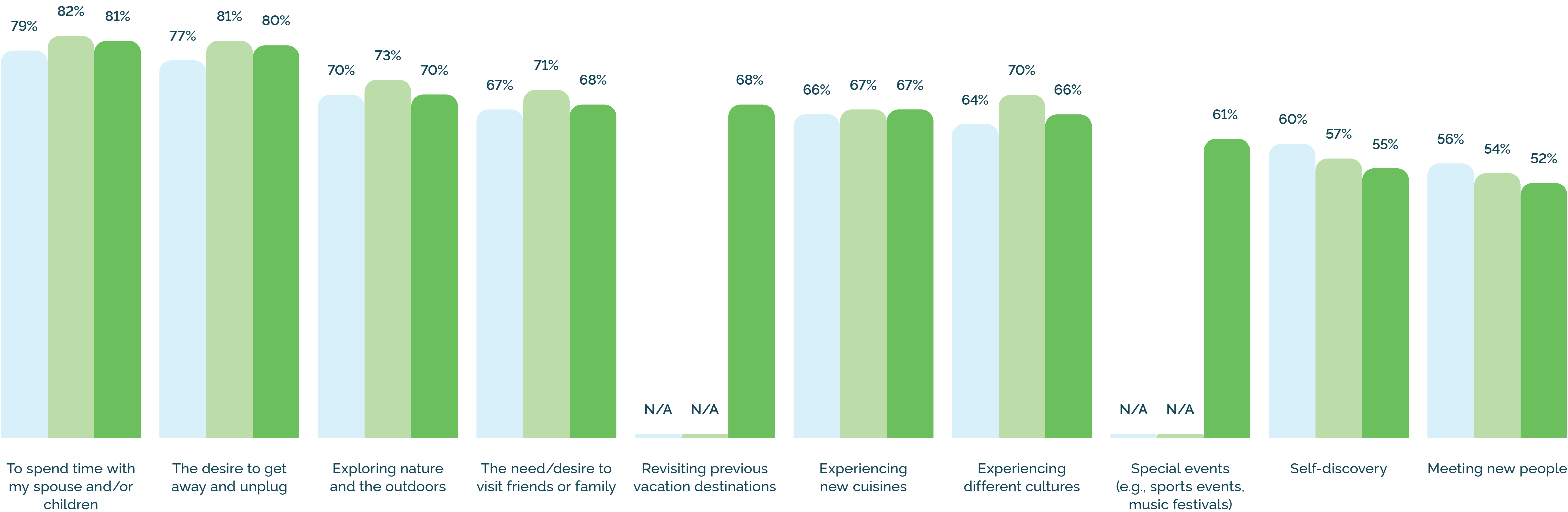


Interest in Visiting Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods by Household Income

■ Fall '23 ■ Fall '24 ■ Fall '25

Travel Motivators

Getting away and spending time with family remain the top two travel drivers for Fort Myers prospects.

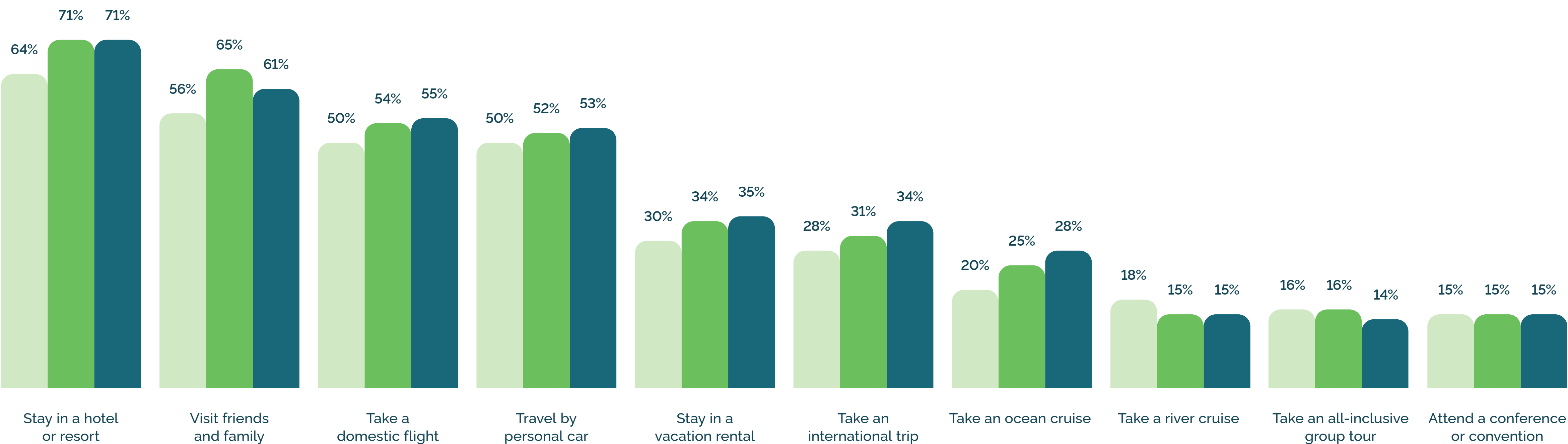


Vacation Motivators for Fort Myers Prospects

Fall '23 Fall '24 Fall '25

Travel Expectations

While travelers continue to anticipate hotel stays as part of their upcoming vacations, an increasing number of Fort Myers prospects indicate interest in short-term vacation rentals. Interest in international travel and ocean cruises are also on the rise, indicating desires to diversify travel experiences and try something new.



Travel Expectations in the Next 6 Months for Fort Myers Prospects

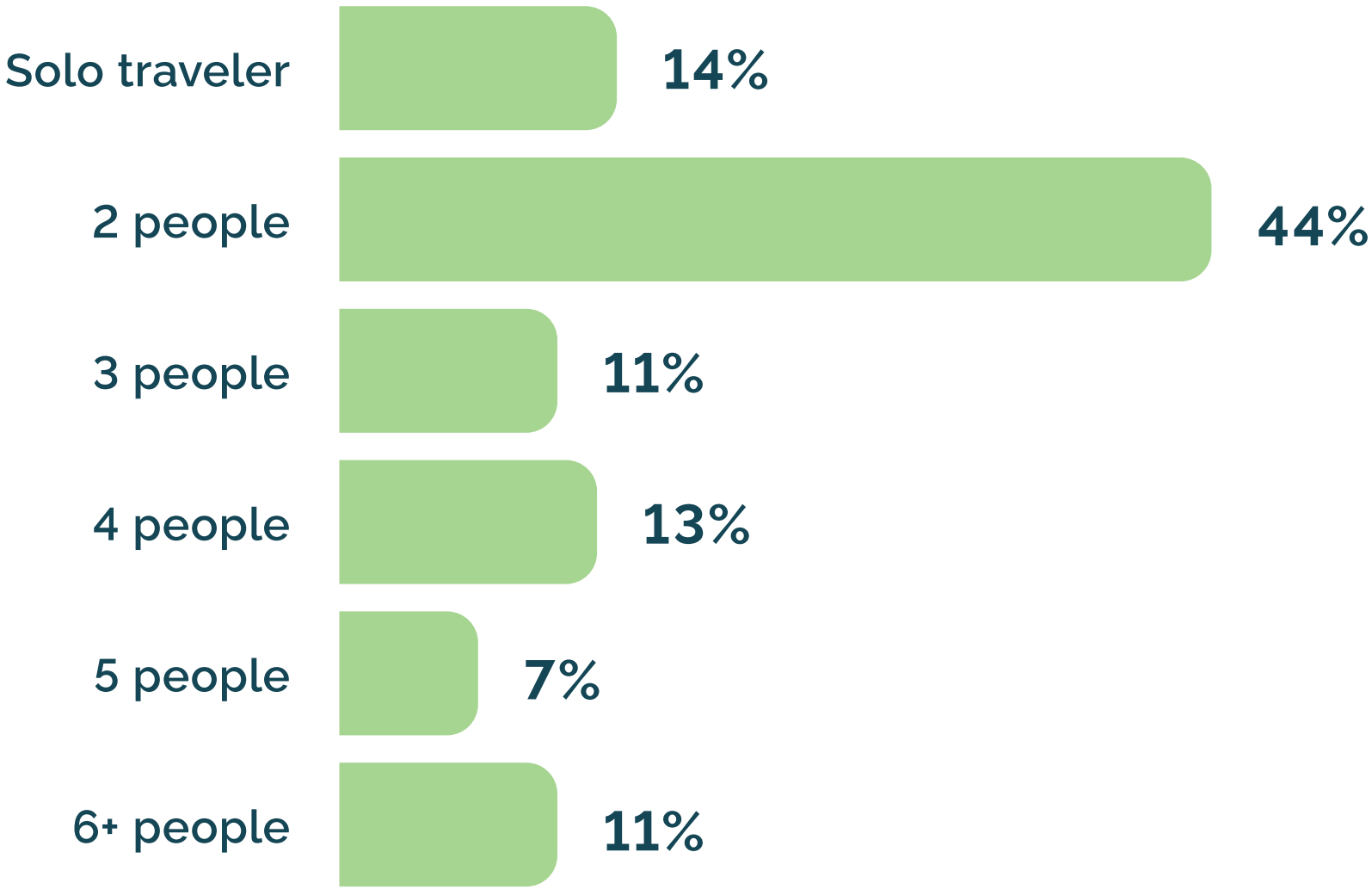
Fall '23 Fall '24 Fall '25

Travel Party

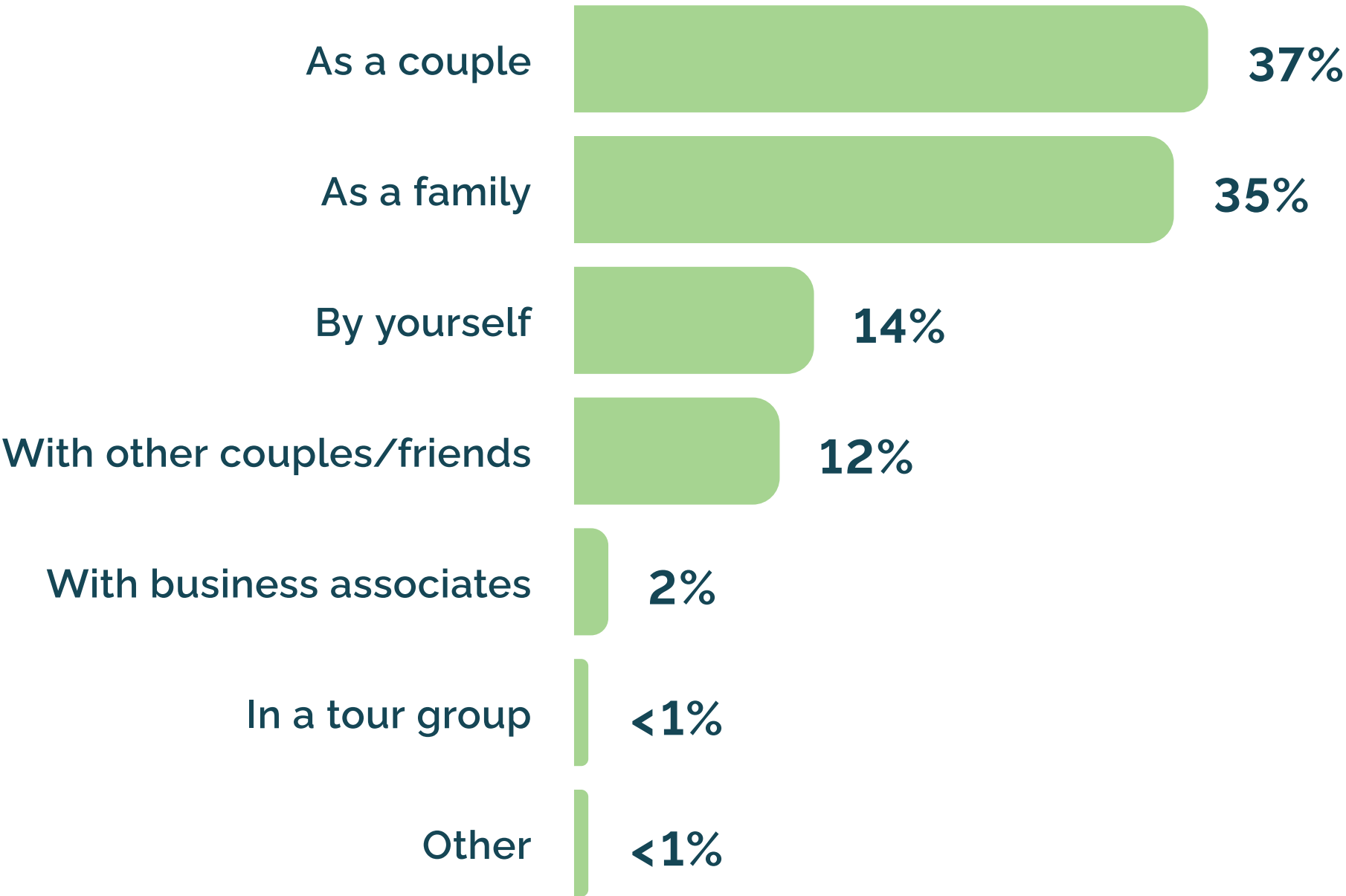
The majority of visitors to the Fort Myers area travel as a couple or family. Of the 35% of visitors traveling with their family, 25% traveled with children under the age of 18.



Travel Party Size and Composition



Travel Party Type



Arrivals

Azira measures arrivals to Lee County, giving us insights on a range of information including the visitor's origin market, their length of stay and the places they visited. We use this information to build strategies for target markets, booking windows and different activities to promote in our advertising.

In FY24/25, Azira observed 1.25 million visitors — with 82% of visitors spending at least one night in Lee County. Visitors tend to stay an average of 3.5 nights, up about half a day compared to last year.

Arrival volume is trending in-state, with Tampa, Miami and Orlando representing 30% of all visitation. However, the greatest share is still coming from the fly markets, with nearly 60% of arrivals coming from 500-plus miles away. This includes increased share in visitation from Minneapolis, Philadelphia and Boston compared to FY23/24.

Source: Azira/Tourism Economics





Booking Windows

According to Sojern ecosystem data, over 40% of flight bookings occur more than a month in advance, however, 45% of hotel bookings occur within the week of arriving in destination. This suggests that travelers plan where they are going to visit in advance, but take longer to commit to their accommodations. 50% of lodging bookings were made for 2–7 days with an average stay over 3 nights. (Source: *Sojern*)

Expedia data shows nearly 24% of bookings are completed within 31–60 days of travel, and the second-highest volume (19%) occurs 0–6 days out. Visitors trend toward longer booking windows ahead of winter and spring high seasons and shorter booking windows as we transition to summer and fall. (Source: *Expedia*)

Expedia data indicates longer stays in vacation rentals, as 46% of vacation rental stays last 6–9 days. Historically, the summer season brings a higher volume of vacation rental stays lasting six days or more, aligning with the overall average. (Source: *Expedia*)



Media Consumption

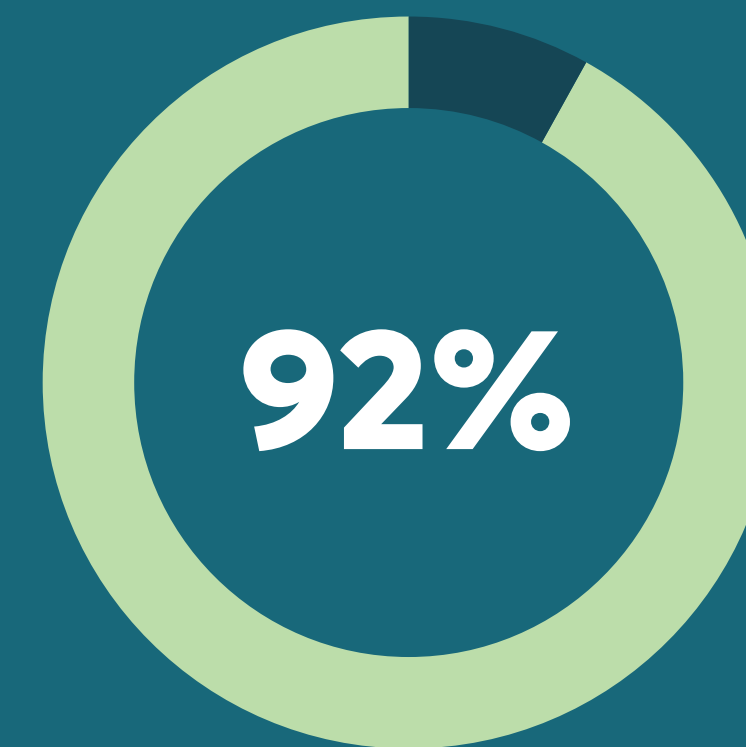
Social Media and Influencers Increasingly Drive Travel Decision-Making

Social platforms now play a pivotal role across the entire customer journey. Over half (56%) of consumers say they trust bookings shared by creators, while 64% credit them with introducing travel options they wouldn't have found on their own.

Source: *Shift State of Travel 2025*



of consumers use social media to research products and services before they buy.



of consumers say they are more likely to trust a brand they engage with on social media.



of users have made a purchase from a brand they first discovered on TikTok.

Competition builds for consumer attention.

U.S. adults will spend 12 hours and 46 minutes per day with media in 2026. Second-screening is the norm; 78% of the population now multitasks on different devices when consuming media.

Source: *eMarketer*

Audio connects with consumers throughout their day.

94% of adults 25–54 are reached through digital audio streaming channels. Users spend an average of 1 hour and 25 minutes daily listening to streaming audio and an additional 24 minutes listening to podcasts daily.

Source: *MRI/Simmons, eMarketer*

Ad-supported streaming TV continues to grow.

45% of TV viewership occurs on a streaming platform, which is the highest share of viewing to date. 64% of U.S. connected TV users prefer ad-supported content if it allows them to pay less for streaming services.

Source: *Nielsen Gauge May 2025, eMarketer*

Social media fuels wanderlust.

Gen Zers and millennials are 145% more likely to have their destination choice influenced by social media than boomers and Gen Xers. They are also twice as likely to turn to social media for travel guidance.

Source: *TripAdvisor Winter Travel Beats Report October 2024*

Time spent on social is beginning to plateau but remains high.



Instagram

35 minutes per day



Facebook

29 minutes per day



YouTube

42 minutes per day



Pinterest

15 minutes per day



TikTok

48 minutes per day

 *metrolagoons*



 *islandtimecruises*



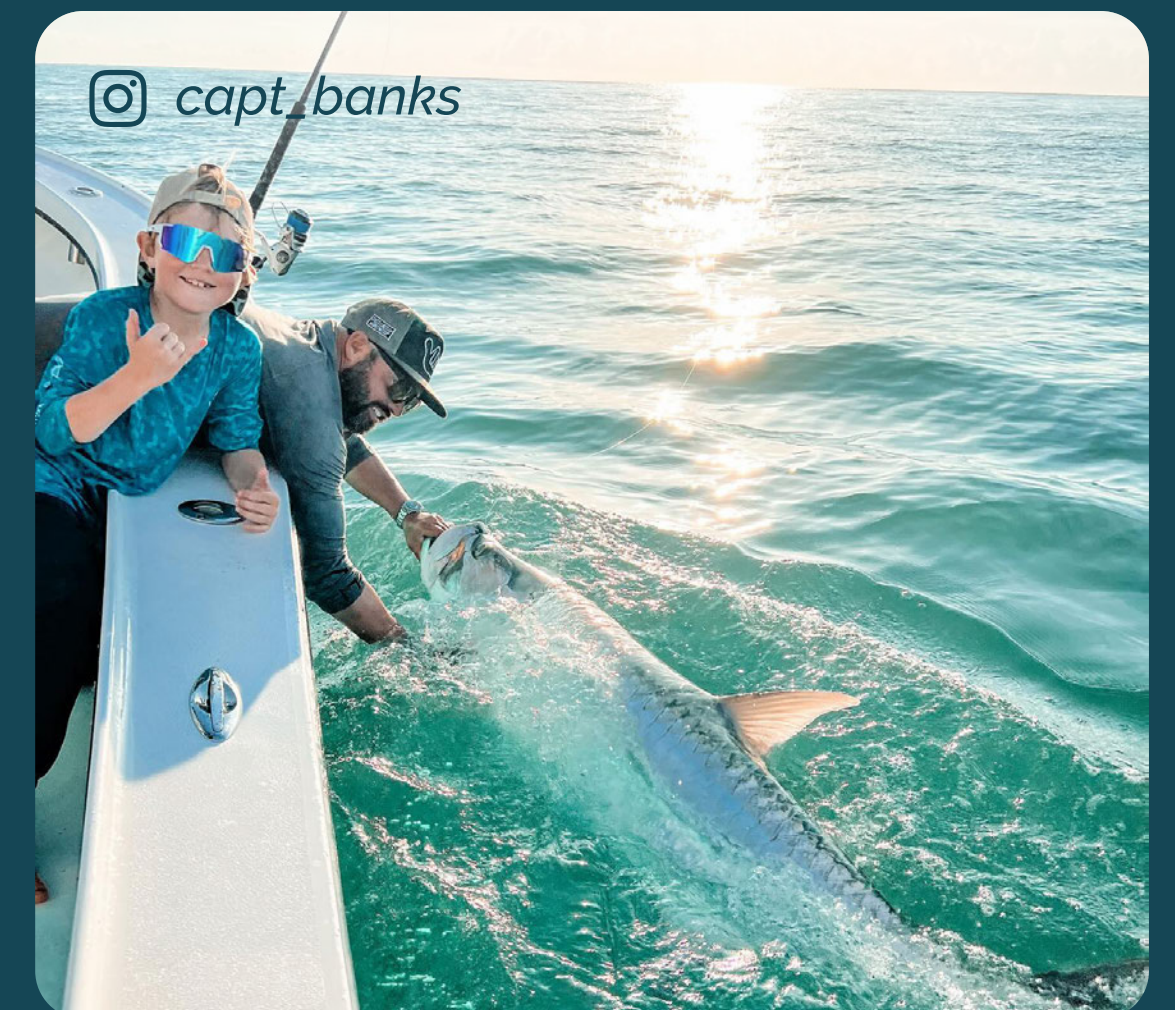
 *explorewithomar*



 *youngvintagelife*



 *capt_banks*



 *marksoutdoorshots*



Meeting Planner Insights

Meeting planners in 2025 remain strongly committed to in-person events (94% actively planning).

Rising costs, particularly venue, AV, and food and beverage, dominate the concerns for this group. Midsize meetings are most popular, with room blocks most often falling in the range of 51 to 250 rooms, though larger programs remain a part of the mix.

Cost and accessibility are the top drivers in destination selection. Off-site restaurants, beaches and wellness

activities such as golf, spa treatments and outdoor recreation are central. Destinations perceived as budget-friendly, service-oriented and conducive to team-building are increasingly favored.

Source: Custom Northstar Survey of Meeting Planners

Meeting planners rely on word of mouth from other planners, destination websites and group FAM trips when looking for destinations to recommend.

Source: Northstar Meetings Group Perception Study



Weddings Insights

Seventy-six percent of brides use social media to help plan their wedding. Instagram and Pinterest are the most used social platforms for planning.

Source: Bridal Guide 2025 Wedding & Engagement Survey



FY25/26 Plan

04

Marketing

Overarching Plan Objective:

Drive increased visitation and visitor spend.



Core Pillars of Success

Defined Measurement Strategy

Provide a clear purpose for each objective and associated measures of success to match the consumer journey. Continue to refine the VCB's research program so that data and KPIs can be used more easily to share market insights over time, including quality of place.

Purposeful Planning

Maintain a full-funnel approach, aligning media, messaging and audiences with travel motivators, organizational objectives and evolving destination attributes.

Friends and Relatives

Continue establishing visiting friends and relatives (VFR) as a target market.

Data-Led Strategies

Leverage vendor data and insights to reframe targeting strategy, aligning segments with changing guest patterns.

Be Ready

Keep an agile approach, knowing that changing destination conditions may require ongoing pivots in strategy, targeting and execution.

Uplift Partners

Support consumer brand messaging with co-op programming based on partner needs and feedback.

Thought Leadership

Identify opportunities to support placemaking efforts that positively impact the visitor economy and enhance quality of life for residents.

Champion Tourism Impacts

Seek out opportunities to educate partners and residents, and demonstrate the impacts of optimizing the visitor economy.

Approach to Seasonality

Overview

Launch media in market 60 days before each season to align with search and booking windows as travelers begin planning their trips.

SEASONALITY		
SEASON	TRAVEL PERIODS	MEDIA FLIGHTING
Winter	Dec 1–Mar 14	Oct 1–Dec 31
Spring	Mar 15–May 31	Jan 1–Mar 31
Summer	Jun 1–Aug 31	Apr 1–Jul 4
Fall	Sep 1–Nov 30	Jul 5–Sep 30



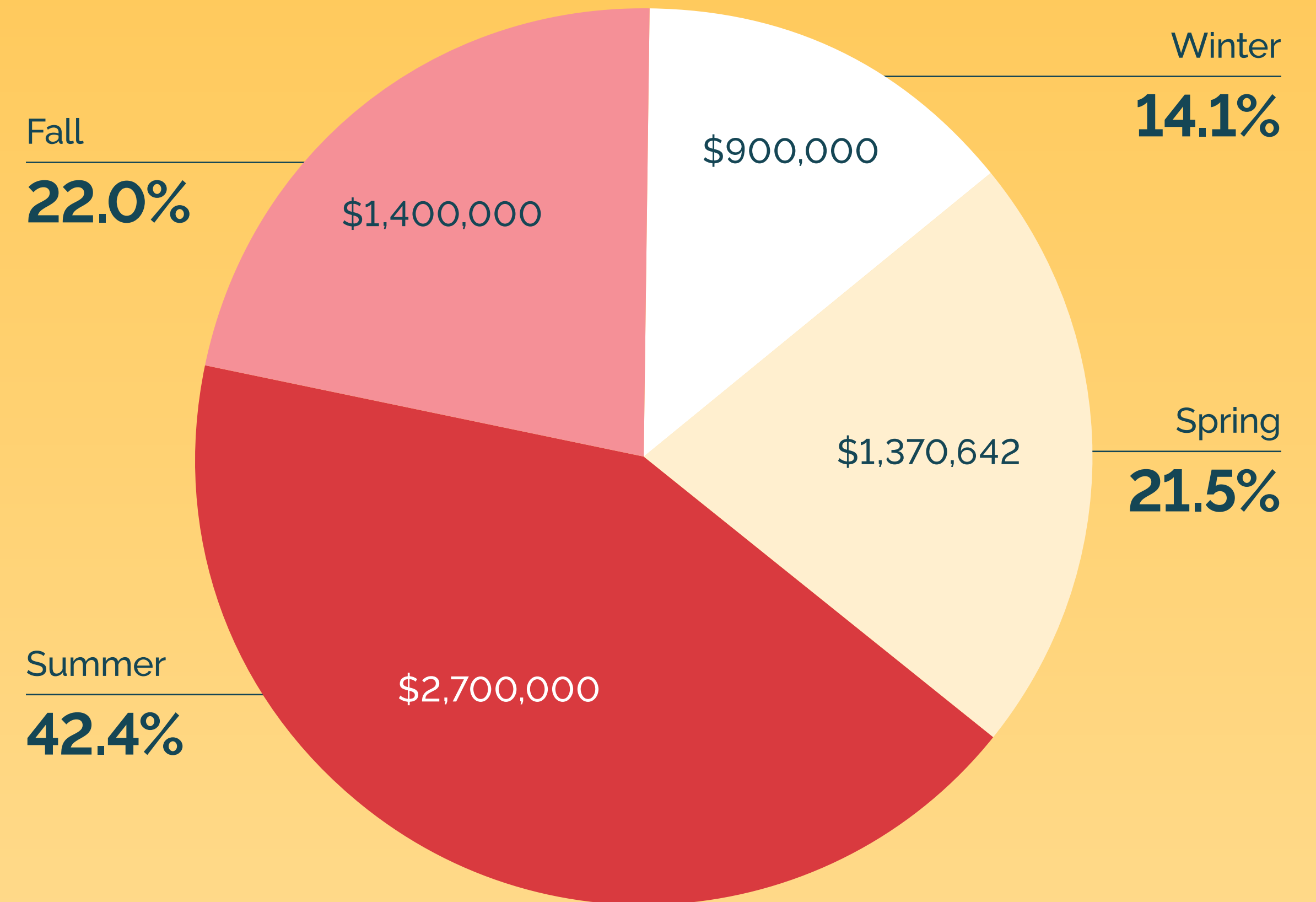
FY25/26 Domestic Seasonality and Target Markets

MARKET	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL
Travel Periods	Dec 1–Mar 14	Mar 15–May 31	Jun 1–Aug 31	Sep 1–Nov 30
Media Flighting	Oct 1–Dec 31	Jan 1–Mar 31	Apr 1–Jul 4	Jul 5–Sep 30
In-State	Atlanta, Miami, Orlando, Tampa	Atlanta, Miami, Orlando, Tampa	Atlanta, Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, Tampa, West Palm Beach	Atlanta, Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, Tampa, West Palm Beach
	20%	20%	35%	30%
Out-of-State Tier 1	Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New York	Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New York	Boston, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C.	Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis, New York
	50%	50%	45%	45%
Out-of-State Tier 2	Baltimore, Cincinnati, Denver, Hartford, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Washington, D.C.	Baltimore, Cincinnati, Denver, Hartford, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Washington, D.C.	Baltimore, Denver, Detroit, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Raleigh	Baltimore, Denver, Hartford, Philadelphia, Raleigh, Washington, D.C.
	30%	30%	20%	25%
ALWAYS-ON: NATIONAL TARGETING BASED ON TRAVEL INTENT				

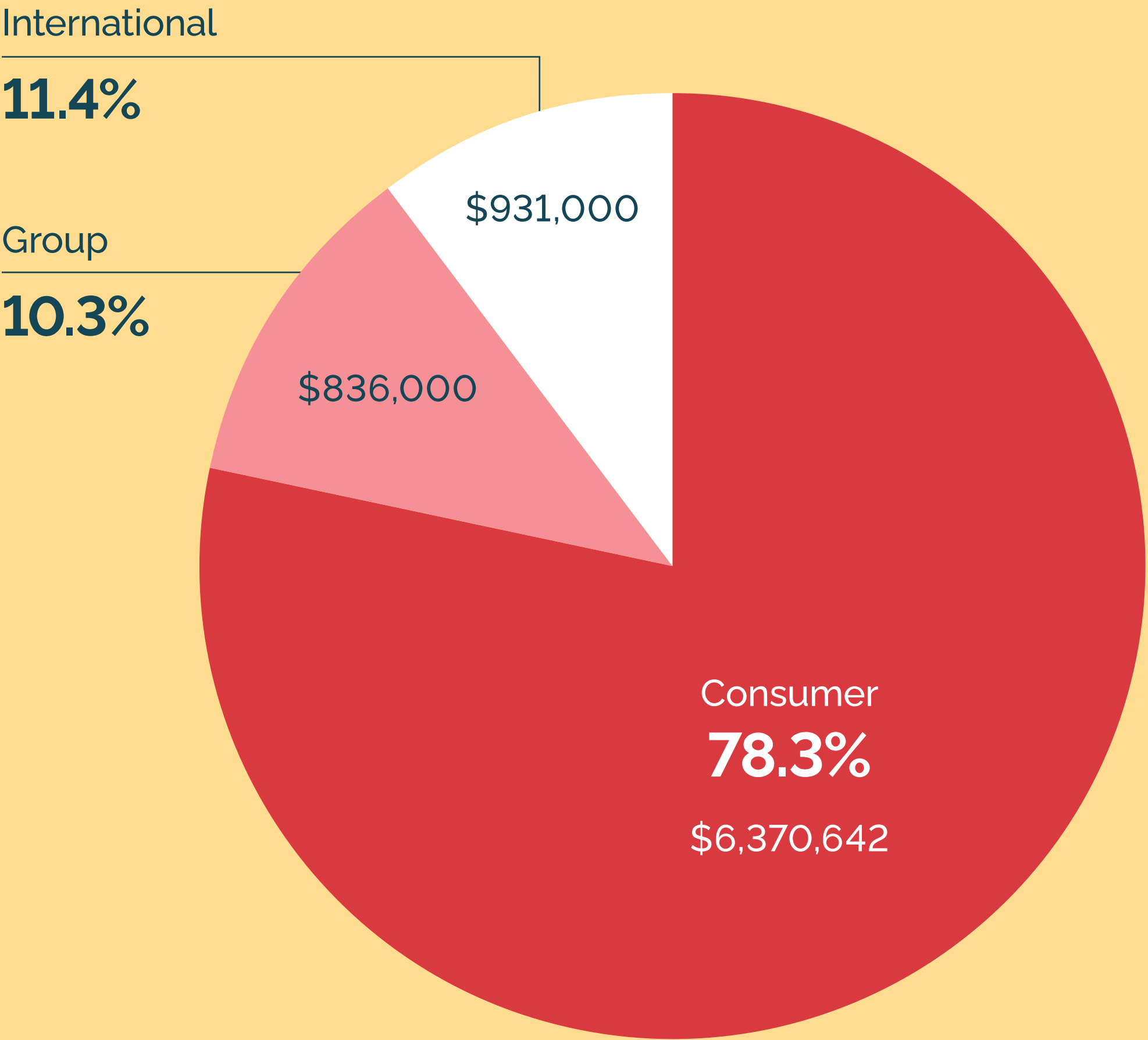
Bolded markets are new or adjusted compared to previous year.



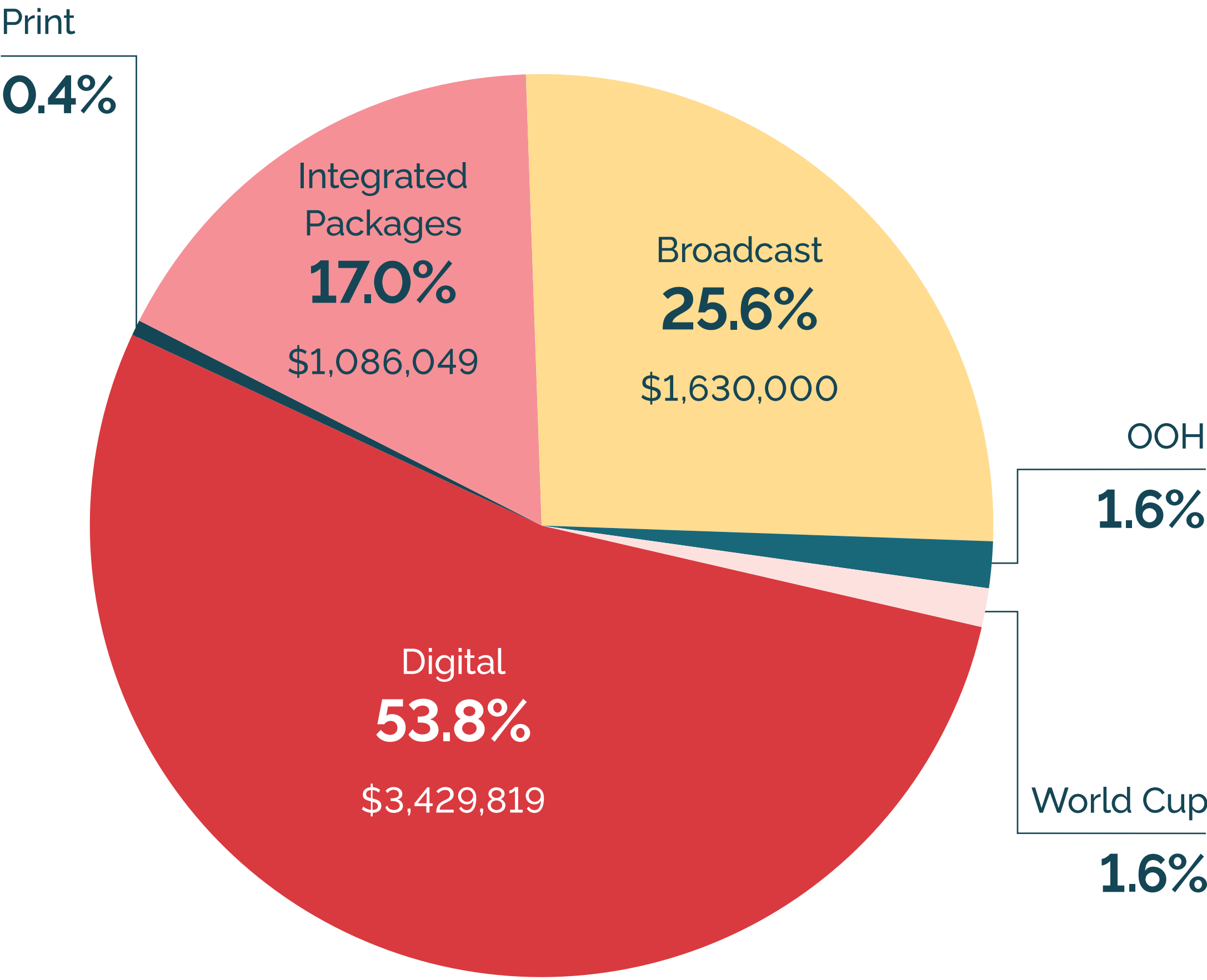
FY25/26 Seasonal Consumer Investment



FY25/26 Audience Allocation



FY25/26 Consumer Media Mix



Approach to Markets

Maintain a **market strategy** focused on both **traveler intent** and **geolocation**.

Deploy a **data-driven** approach to evaluate both **historical** and **emerging markets**.

Customize **markets** and **seasonal weighting**, adjusting to the **unique needs** of each season.





Target Audiences

Audience Strategy

- Focus audience strategies to reach a more qualified audience based on who is currently visiting.
- Continue leaning into addressable audiences and leverage for year-round, 1:1 prospecting.
- Utilize contextual, behavioral, purchase, search, and social targeting to capitalize on demonstrated intent.
- Target visitors who came before Hurricane Ian and encourage them to return.



Addressable Audiences

Social Sophisticates

Social Sophisticates are active and wealthy travelers. They are conscientious consumers who value quality over price, are extremely brand loyal, and have high expectations of the services they receive. They read reviews before they purchase and want their brands to be environmentally friendly and socially responsible.



Travel Interests:

Parks, Wildlife, Nightlife, Active Vacations

Ages:

45-64

Household
Income:

\$155K+

95%

Married

28%

Have Children





Addressable Audiences

Family Fun-Seekers

Family Fun-Seekers are family-focused, sociable trailblazers. They lead busy lives, so spending time together and making new memories are important to them. They prefer vacations where they can do a lot of activities together as a family, and lifestyle presentation is also a high priority.



Travel Interests:

Parks, Amusement Parks, Boating, Camping, Golfing

Ages:

35-64

Household
Income:

\$135K

98%

Married

100%

Have Children





Addressable Audiences

Savvy Explorers

Savvy Explorers are community-centric, bring diverse perspectives and immerse themselves in local culture. When traveling, having new experiences is a big deciding factor in their choices, and they place an emphasis on unique culinary opportunities. They also like to research online recommendations ahead of time.



Travel Interests:

Eco-Travel, Arts and Culture, Photography, Zoos

Ages:

25-54

Household
Income:

\$87K

71%

Married

52%

Have Children





Addressable Audiences

Timeless Travelers

Timeless Travelers are health-conscious, easygoing and put comfort first. Most are retired or empty nesters. Spending time and celebrating special occasions with friends and family is important to them. They enjoy their leisure time and a slower pace of life.



Travel Interests:

Parks, Wildlife, Boating, Camping, Golfing, Personal Health

Ages:

55+

Household
Income:

\$150K-
\$750K

81%

Married

51%

Have Children





Addressable Audiences

Affluent Adventurers

Affluent Adventurers are pragmatic, open-minded and curious explorers. They seek culinary experiences but are known to prioritize their health, also pursuing outdoor activities and natural environments. They are loyal to brands they like and prefer brands that make them feel valued.



Travel Interests:

Local Food, Hiking, Fine Dining, Galleries

Ages:

45-64

Household
Income:

\$250K+

90%

Married

45%

Have Children



Consumer Approach

- **Data-Led Strategies:** Utilize vendor data and insights to reframe targeting strategy, aligning segments with evolving guest patterns.
- **Expand Reach:** Evolve loyalist approach and continue reaching new audiences, building awareness and testing new opportunity markets.
- **Power of Publishers:** Leverage buying power and exclusive access to launch innovative packages with new publishers and titles.
- **Integrated Messaging:** Expand editorial content library, coordinating messaging with creative and audience strategies based on funnel phase.
- **Promote Bookings:** Focus on driving overall bookings with dedicated approaches for vacation rentals and hotels.
- **Uplift Partners:** Support brand messaging with co-op programming based on partner needs and feedback.

Key Vendors:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| • AFAR | • Pinterest |
| • Atlas Obscura | • Priceline |
| • Condé Nast | • SXM Media
(Pandora, Stitcher) |
| • Expedia | • Sojern |
| • Garden and Gun | • Spotify |
| • Matador Network | • Tastemade |
| • Meta | • Tripadvisor |
| • The New York Times | |
| • People Inc. | |

Integrated Media Approach

Conde Nast Traveler “Women Who Travel” Podcast spots

Estimated impressions: 400,000

:30 audio spots will run on the “Women Who Travel” podcast, along with our custom article focused on promoting a girls trip.

The New York Times Easy Sheet Pan Dinners sponsorship

Estimated impressions: 1,120,000

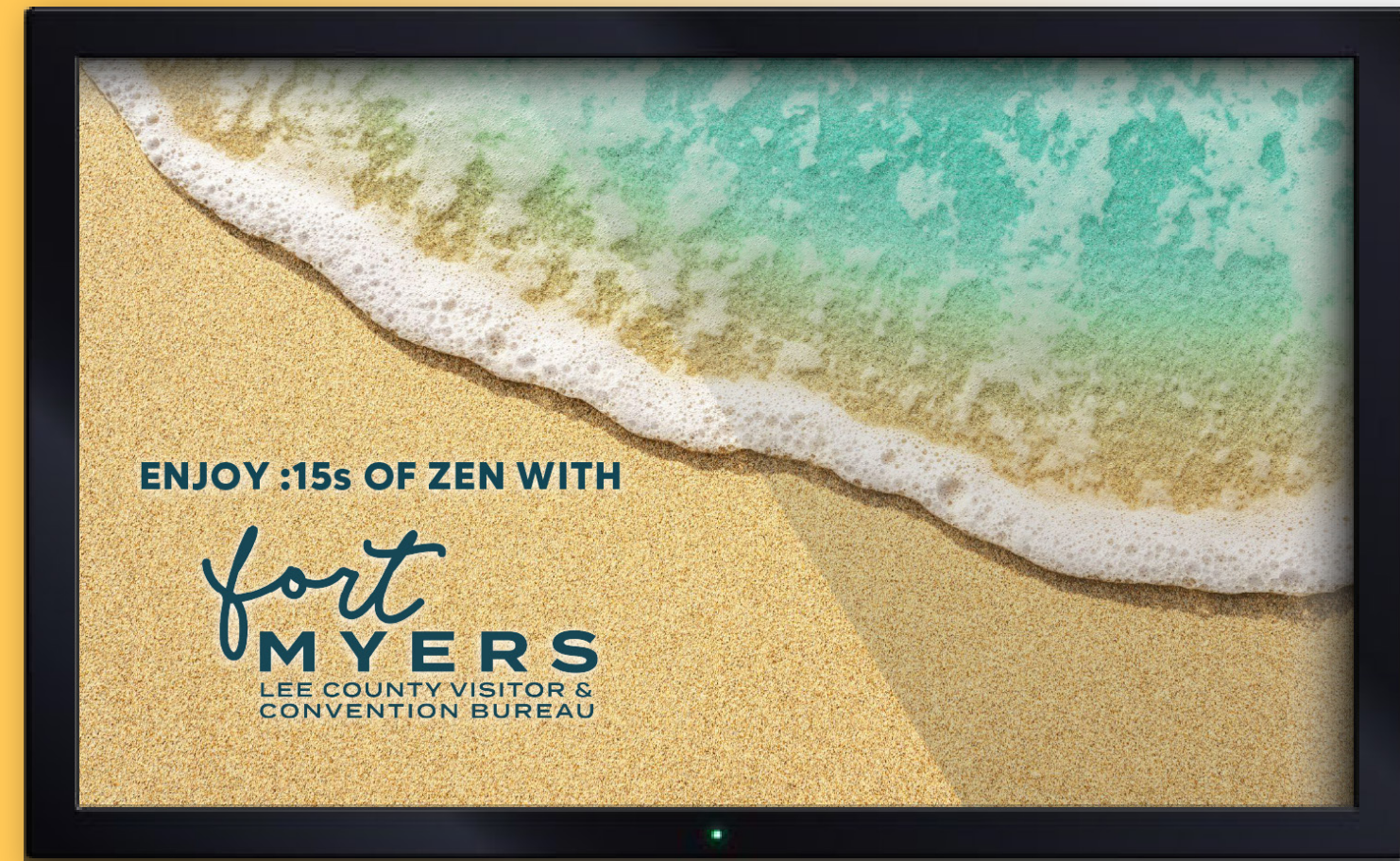
This package includes a 2-month exclusive sponsorship on The New York Times Easy Sheet Pan Dinners page. Content is being designed to reach busy families looking for quick meals and promote stress-free planning and relaxation in Fort Myers.



*Olive Mannella,
family content creator*



 **Cooking**



Tastemade Moment of Zen sponsorship

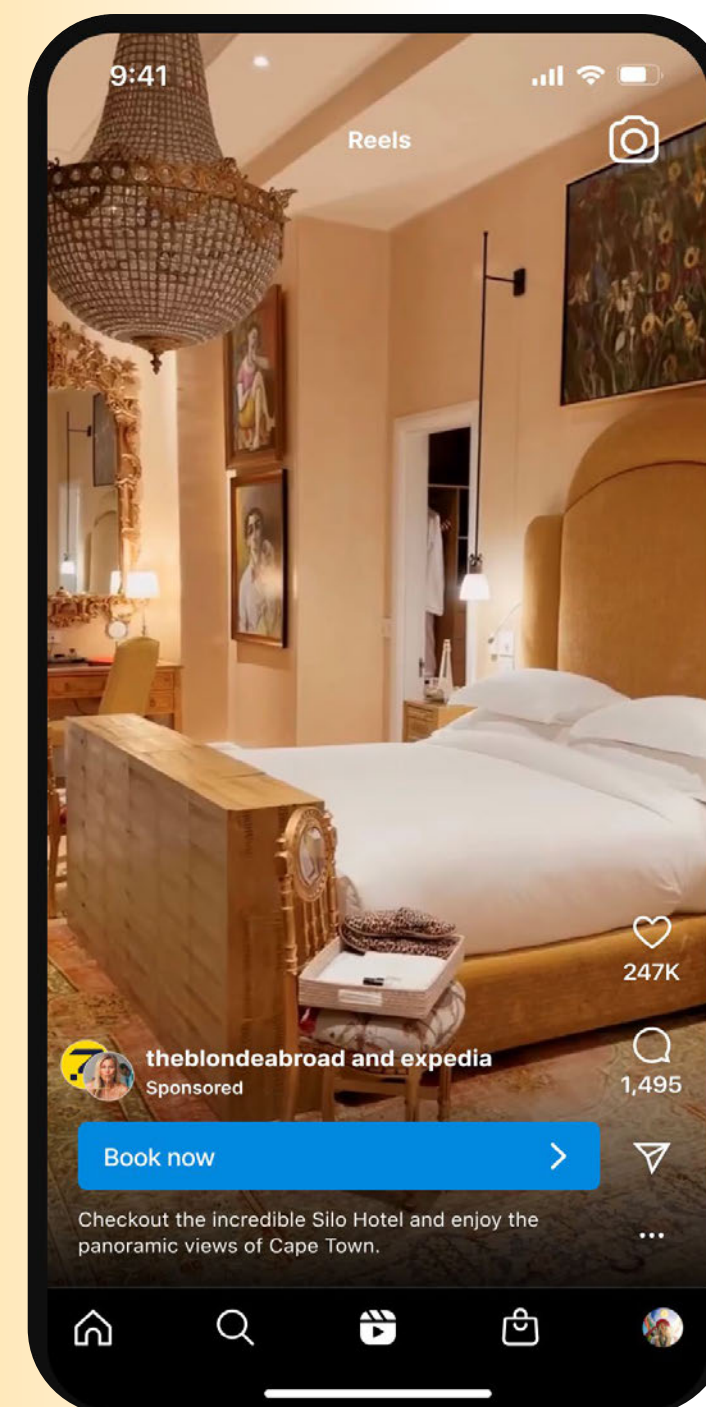
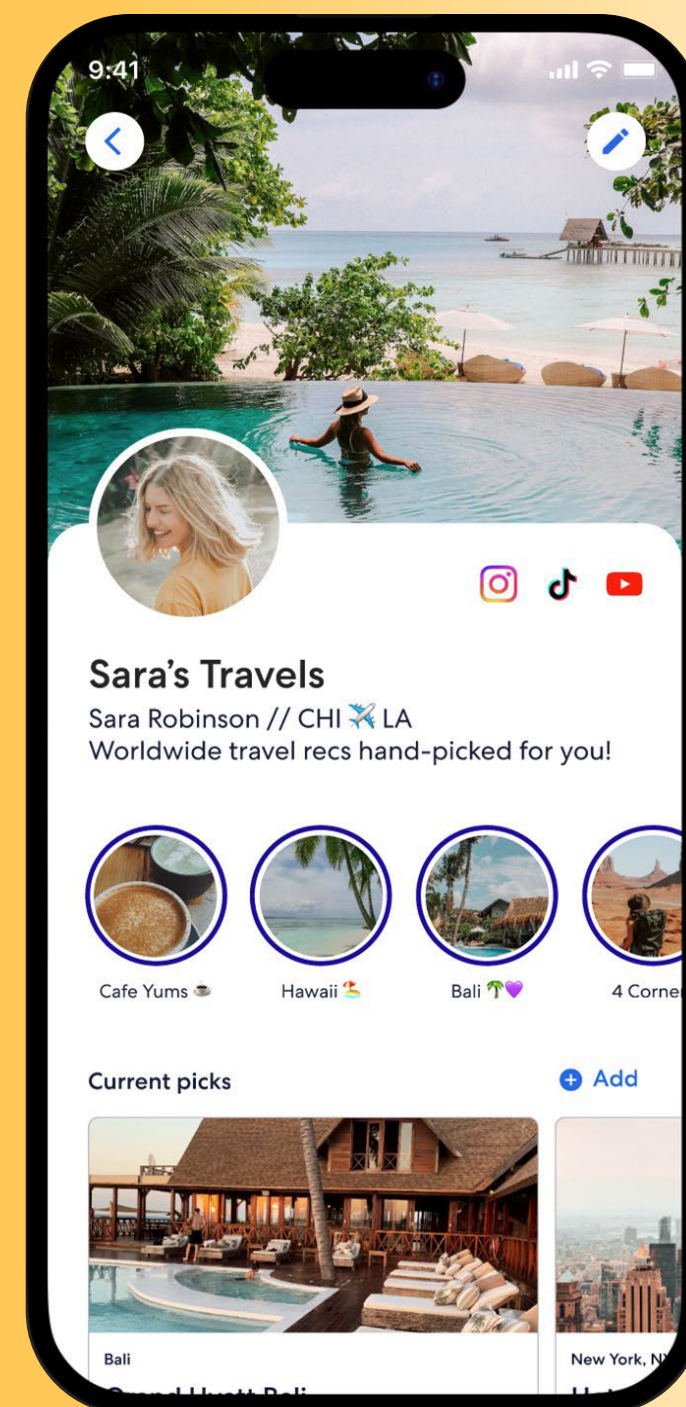
Estimated impressions: 750,000

A :15 streaming ad spot will be shown across Tastemade's streaming channels, capturing a moment of zen in the Fort Myers area. Examples include beach waves crashing or nature sounds.

Expedia Travel Shops

Estimated impressions: 3,500,000

Travel Shops serves as a home for a creator's or business's collections, stories and curated trips. Shops are year-round storefronts with the partner's name, shop name, bio, photo, social handles, and collections. This combines social and bookings into an e-commerce solution where partners can continue to direct their audiences to their curated travel recommendations.



Expedia OneKeyCash promotion

Estimated impressions: 1,000,000

This promotion offers the opportunity to drive travelers to the destination by incentivizing bookings with bonus OneKeyCash, Expedia's reward currency. The advertising budget would go toward subsidizing the discount for consumers.

Hopper National Plan Your Vacation Day promotion

Estimated impressions: 30,000

National Plan Your Vacation Day will be promoted via a mobile notification from the Hopper app. The promotion will include brand opportunities including a social media giveaway.

Matador Network photoshoot

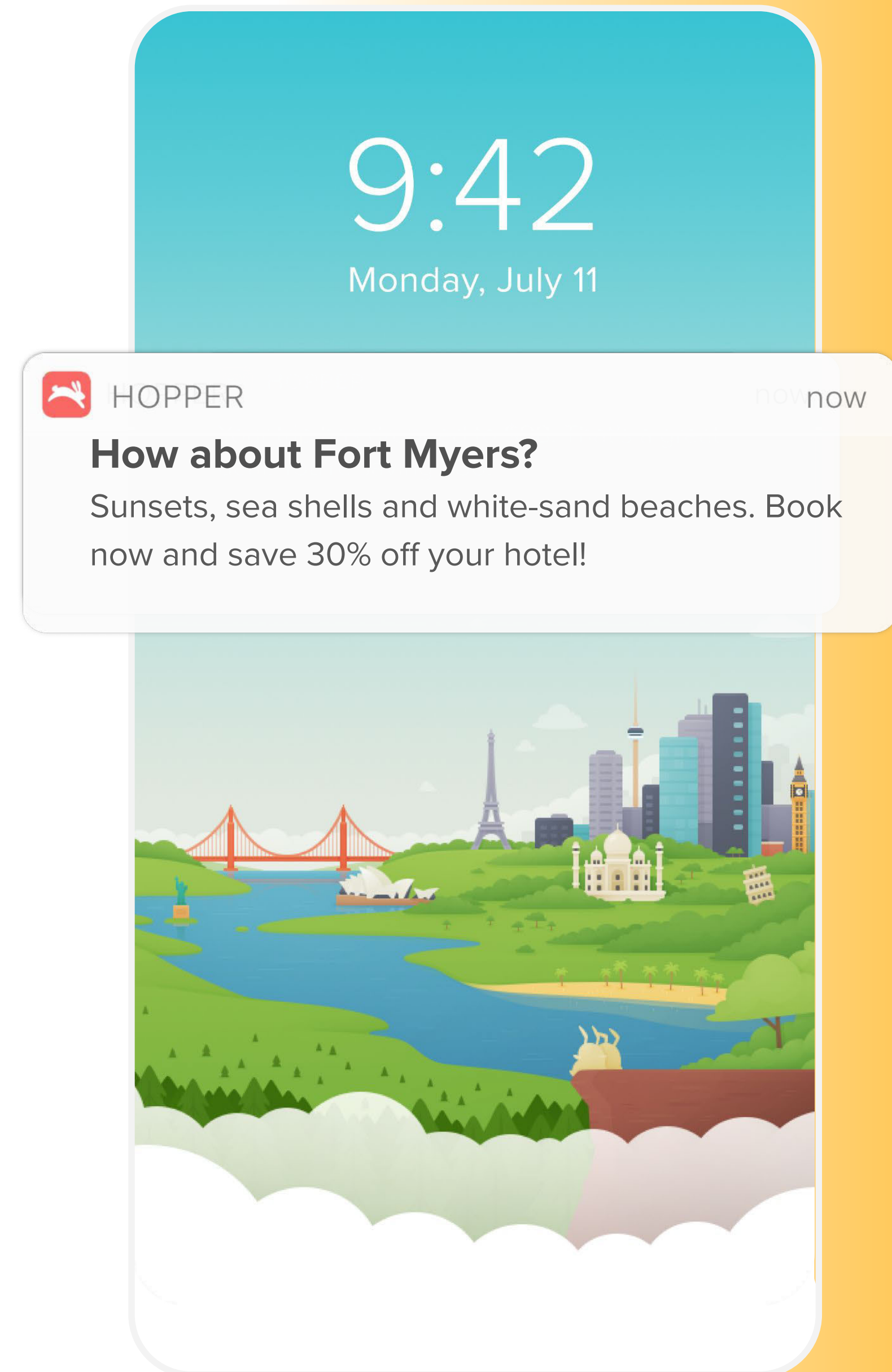
Estimated impressions: 4,875,000

Matador will produce 30 still images during their in-destination shoot. The images will be used to create 3 custom content articles that will be promoted on Matador's website, social and email channels to their audience.

Tripadvisor Memory Makers Video

Estimated impressions: 6,407,051

Tripadvisor will shoot two in-destination videos with a first-person POV. The content will focus on multigenerational travel and things to do as a family, and will include social and video traffic drivers to this custom content.



Group Approach (Meeting Planners, Travel Advisors, Weddings)

- Maintain partnerships with proven performers while testing new publishers, platforms, placement types, and targeting.
- Align with key windows of planning activity and relevant publisher content.
- Continue focus on educational editorial content.
- Grow database of qualified leads for remarketing.
- Support group brand messaging with co-op programs featuring conversion tactics.

 gabsursela



Meeting Planners:

- EproDirect
- Florida Trend
- FSAE
- The Meeting Magazines
- Meetings Today
- Northstar Meetings Group
- Prevue Meetings & Incentives
- Skift Meetings
- Sojern

Travel Advisors:

- Expedia TAAP
- Northstar Agent at Home
- Questex
- Recommend
- Travel Weekly
- VAX Vacation Access
- Wellness Travel University

Weddings:

- Bridal Guide
- David's
- Garden & Gun
- Honeyfund
- Meta
- Pinterest

Integrated Media Approach

David's Honeymoon Giveaway

Estimated impressions: 500,000

This program includes three custom emails promoting a Fort Myers honeymoon giveaway to the David's audience. Promotion includes display banners, email and social media mentions.

Garden & Gun Weddings custom content

Estimated impressions: 1,400,000

Branded content article highlights different wedding venues in the destination. Promotion will be included on social media and Garden & Gun's newsletter.

Travel Weekly Ambassador Experience

Estimated impressions: 900,000

In collaboration with Visit Florida, two travel advisors will visit our area to experience it for themselves and then share their experience and promote across Visit Florida's resource page, a co-op webinar, Travel Weekly's digital guide, social posts, and emails.





Expedia TAAP webinar and custom content

Estimated impressions: 500,000

One month promotional campaign including TAAP (Travel Agent Affiliate Program) Academy article educating travel advisors on the destination. Package is inclusive of a 30-minute webinar presentation, display banners, email, and dedicated landing page. Advisors are entered to win a 2-3 night stay during the promotional period of the campaign.

Northstar Meetings Group custom quiz

Estimated impressions: 300,000

Month-long sponsorship including a 3–5 question custom quiz with leads provided following the quiz completion as well as a giveaway for quiz completers. Promotion includes display banners, newsletter and social promotion.

Northstar Meetings Group Ambassador Program

Estimated impressions: 500,000

Northstar curates and vets a list of meeting planners with social followings and then shares for final selection and approval. The meeting planner attends a FAM trip and promotes on their social channels. Northstar amplifies social content to a targeted audience of travel professionals and consumer travelers via paid social advertising.

Channel Mix

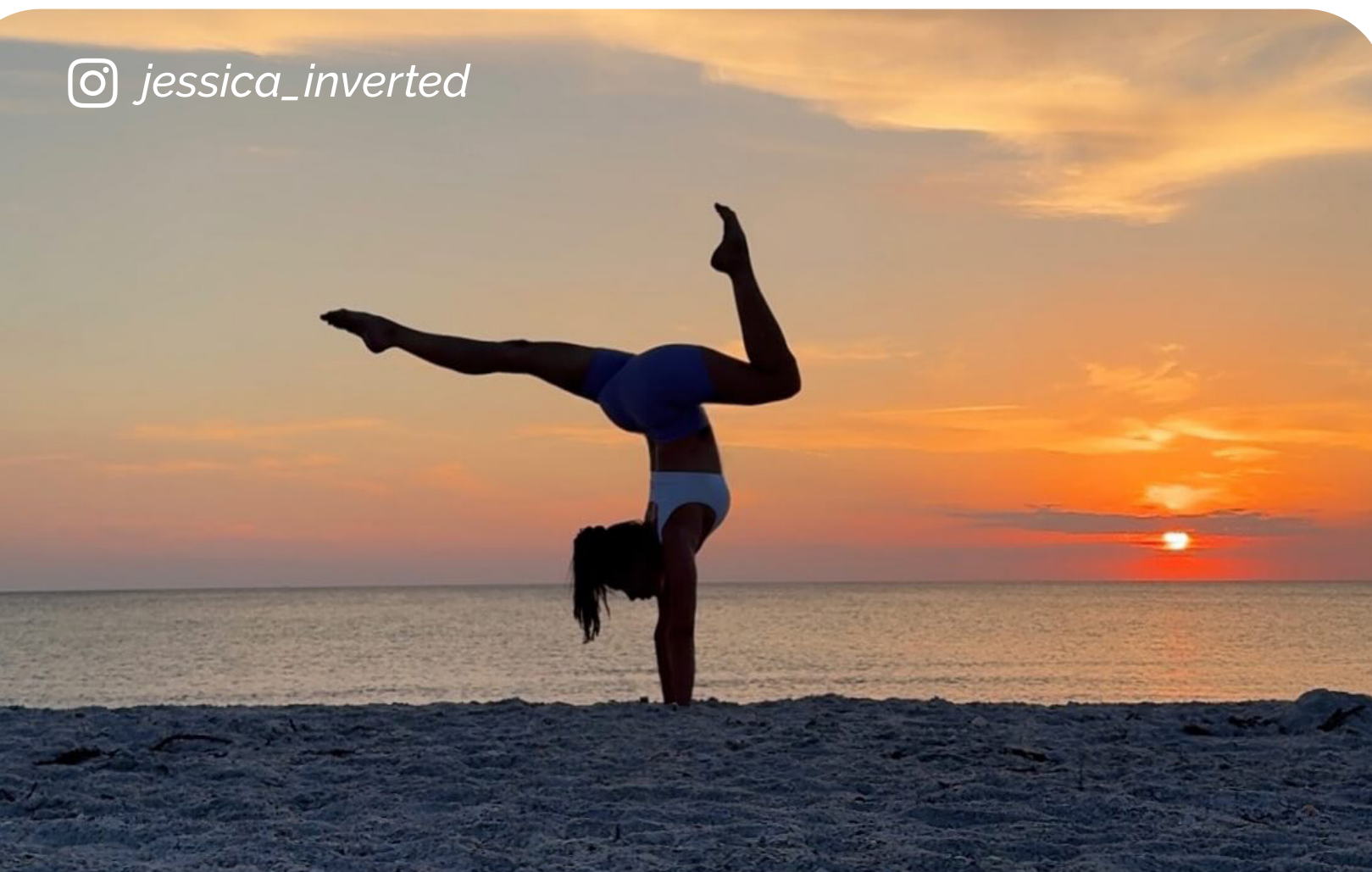
International Approach

- Incorporate recommended Brand USA programs that include travel intent targeting.
- Continue to invest through direct publishers in order to maintain ongoing presence and co-op program opportunities.
- Maintain international market seasonal flighting to reach visitors during their key travel seasons.

Key Vendors:

- Air Miles
- Booking.com
- Expedia
- Lastminute.com
- Skyscanner
- Sojern
- Tripadvisor

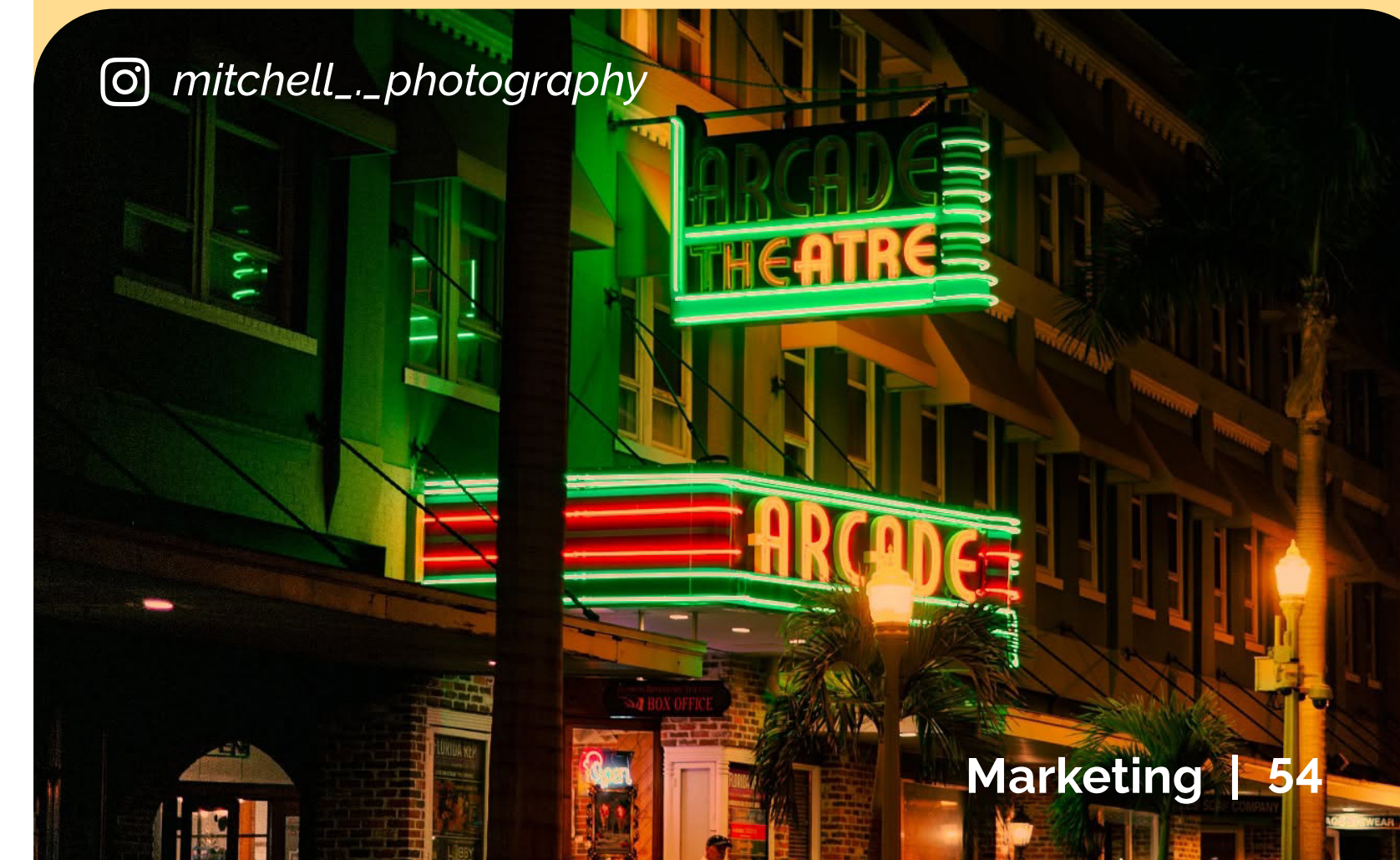
📷 *jessica_inverted*



📷 *bigtikitoursfmb*



📷 *mitchell...photography*



Integrated Media Approach

Booking.com partnership

- Booking.com is a prominent online travel agency with a strong presence in international markets.
- Bookable properties include hotels and vacation rentals.
- Placements will include custom landing pages per market with translation support available for Germany as well as custom digital placements.

Brand USA Opti Campaigns

(Germany and U.K.)

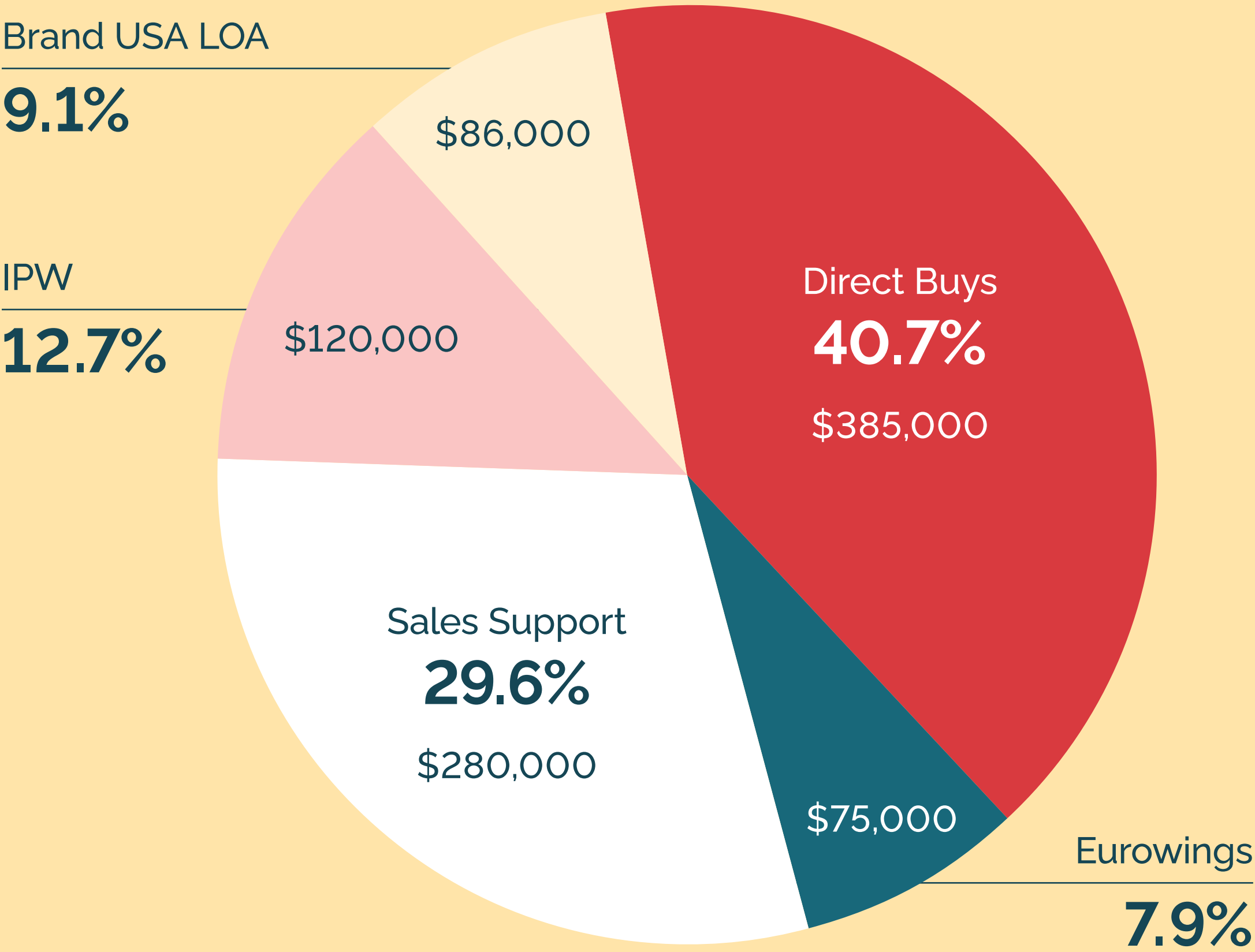
- These campaigns include placements across Booking.com, Expedia, Kayak, and on the Brand USA AmericaTheBeautiful.com page.
- Campaign will target travel intenders, utilizing Brand USA's first-party data and targeting look-alike audiences.

Brand USA Canada Loyalty Marketing Program (Air Miles)

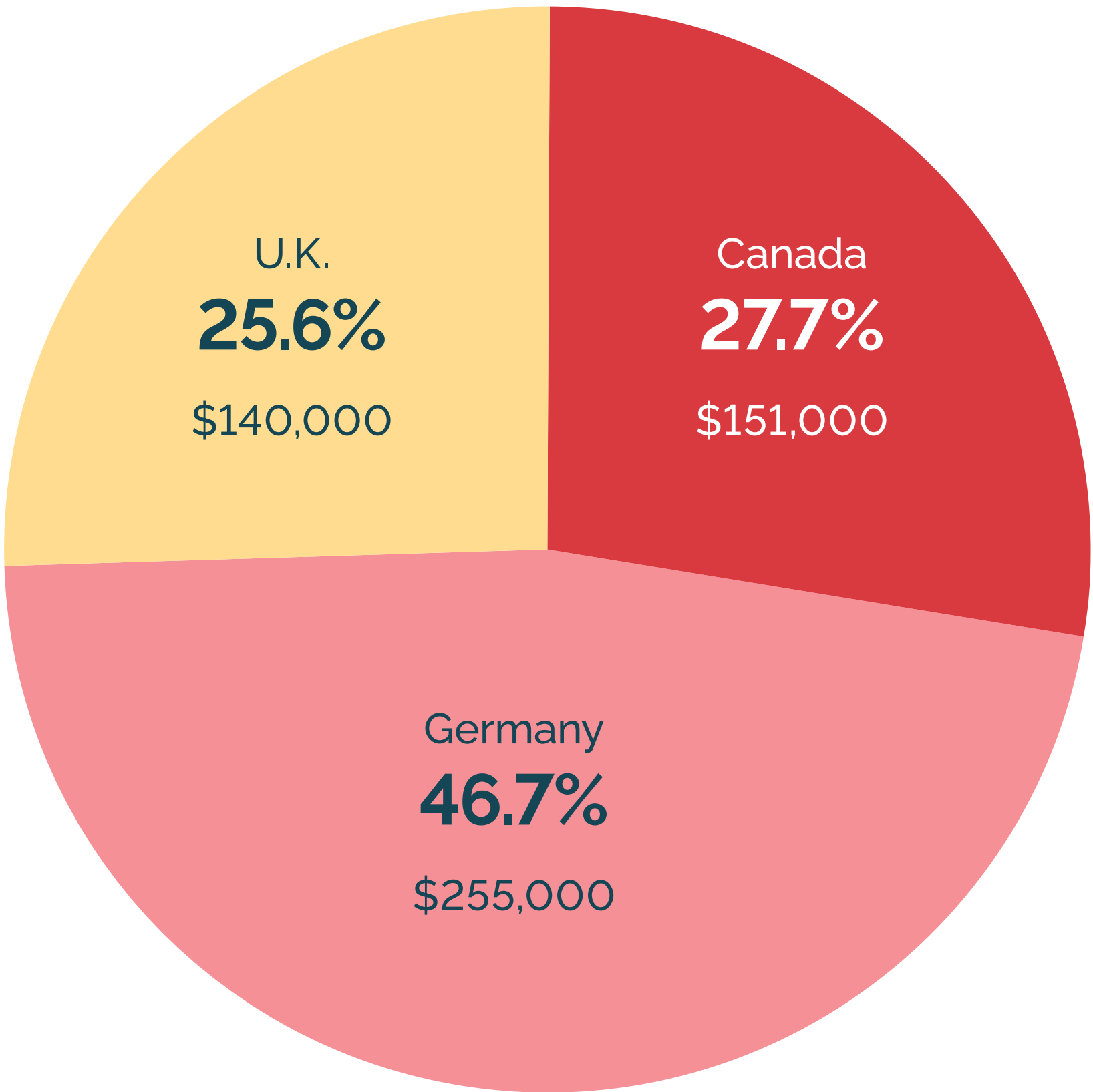
- Brand USA has partnered with Air Miles, Canada's most-recognized loyalty program on a program that reaches Canadian customers throughout their travel planning journey. Air Miles has over 9.4 million active collector accounts, representing approximately two-thirds of all Canadian households.
- This program will leverage the Air Miles travel booking engine to engage with collectors looking for ways to utilize their loyalty points to encourage them to book travel U.S. destinations.
- Placements will include display banners, a custom landing page, email, and mobile notifications.



FY25/26 International Consumer/Sales Support Media Mix



FY25/26 International Consumer Market Mix



Owned Channels: Overviews, Strategies and Tactics

ControlTower Platform

Overview

ControlTower allows us to make several personalizations across [VisitFortMyers.com](https://www.visitfortmyers.com) and [IslandHopperFest.com](https://www.islandhopperfest.com) websites based on known user data.

- **Expansion of Personalized Website Experiences**
 - The website concierge module is located on the homepage of [VisitFortMyers.com](https://www.visitfortmyers.com) and triggers a complete refresh of the content when a user answers the question “Who Are You Traveling With?” We will expand this personalized experience to other high-traffic web pages, including Things to Do and Places to Stay. Collecting first-party user data allows us to create target audiences that mirror our paid media efforts.



Creating a unified digital ecosystem.



- **Newsletter Sign-Up Optimizations**
 - We have given our newsletter sign-up modals a redesign to match the look of the Just Feels Right campaign. Also, we'll be adding newsletter sign-up modals to the Island Hopper website to increase our number of subscribers.
- **Focus on Event-Driven Strategies**
 - We will highlight event-based travel experiences through personalization campaigns tailored to website visitors' preferences.

Web

- **AI Search Optimization**

- Artificial intelligence (AI) search optimization helps us understand how we are performing compared to other destinations in AI-powered travel searches. Data reveals where website content is missing or underperforming, allowing us to make adjustments accordingly and ultimately improve AI responses about our destination.



- **Content Management**

- Continue to expand our efforts to repurpose content for various channels.
- Further integrate robust and engaging content produced by publishers as part of paid media packages.
- Create visual-heavy landing pages showcasing the latest video and image assets, organized by activity, event, neighborhood, and more.

- **Website Chatbot**

- Republish the AI-driven chatbot trained on website content. The chatbot features local partners and helps travelers answer common trip-planning questions.

- **Webcams**

- Position ourselves as the authority on the rebuilding of the Fort Myers Beach Pier beginning in 2026. This would include sharing regular project updates and time lapses on social, email and more.
- Consider adding a Cape Coral webcam on 47th Terrace for the Restaurant District.
- Utilize the webcam network for Santa Sightings during the holidays.

- **Co-Op**

- Continue to promote destination co-op partners through featured business listings and personalized content placements to enhance partner visibility on the website.

📷 metrolagoons



📷 heatherleighneff



📷 marksoutdoorshots



📷 wildgina



Social

Overview

Social media allows us to drive meaningful engagement and destination awareness. We will continue to build genuine, connected communities across our social channels and leverage compelling content, influencer partnerships, and seasonal storytelling to inspire travelers to plan their next visit.

Social

- **Generate awareness and visitation by creating engaging social-friendly content and video that lines up with audience interests.**
 - Inspire travelers with engaging, discoverable content that highlights our area's unique experiences.
 - Develop content that is savable, sharable, and either informs, educates or entertains.
 - Continue to test new creative formats (carousel itineraries, broadcast channels, trending Reels, Threads) while following best practices.
 - Expand reach through search optimization as well as alignment with ongoing social media and general travel trends.
 - Balance variety in content themes with purposeful, ownable storytelling.
- **Continue to build strong, engaged communities across all social channels by connecting with audiences in authentic and meaningful ways.**
 - Build deeper relationships by meeting travelers where they are with genuine, platform-specific content.
 - Elevate proactive community management by engaging in conversations beyond our own channels (hashtags when appropriate, UGC, trending moments).
 - Prioritize **quality over quantity**, focusing on effective storytelling over volume.
 - Maintain a consistent, authentic brand voice that reflects inclusivity, diversity and timeliness.



- **Prioritize and amplify our influencer partnerships by engaging a range of content creators to boost destination awareness and inspire audiences to plan their next trip.**
 - Work with 2–3 influencers each quarter, complemented by larger campaigns tied to major trends, messages or initiatives.
 - Develop an ongoing local ambassador program to feature timely events and experiences while curating additional social assets.
 - Continue to expand content focus beyond travel to highlight unique messages and experiences (arts, history, van life, accessibility, and other lifestyle areas).
 - Coordinate key messages and content with core seasonal priorities.
 - Expand content deliverables across formats and platforms.
 - Highlight key destination experiences authentically, keeping seasonal trends in mind.

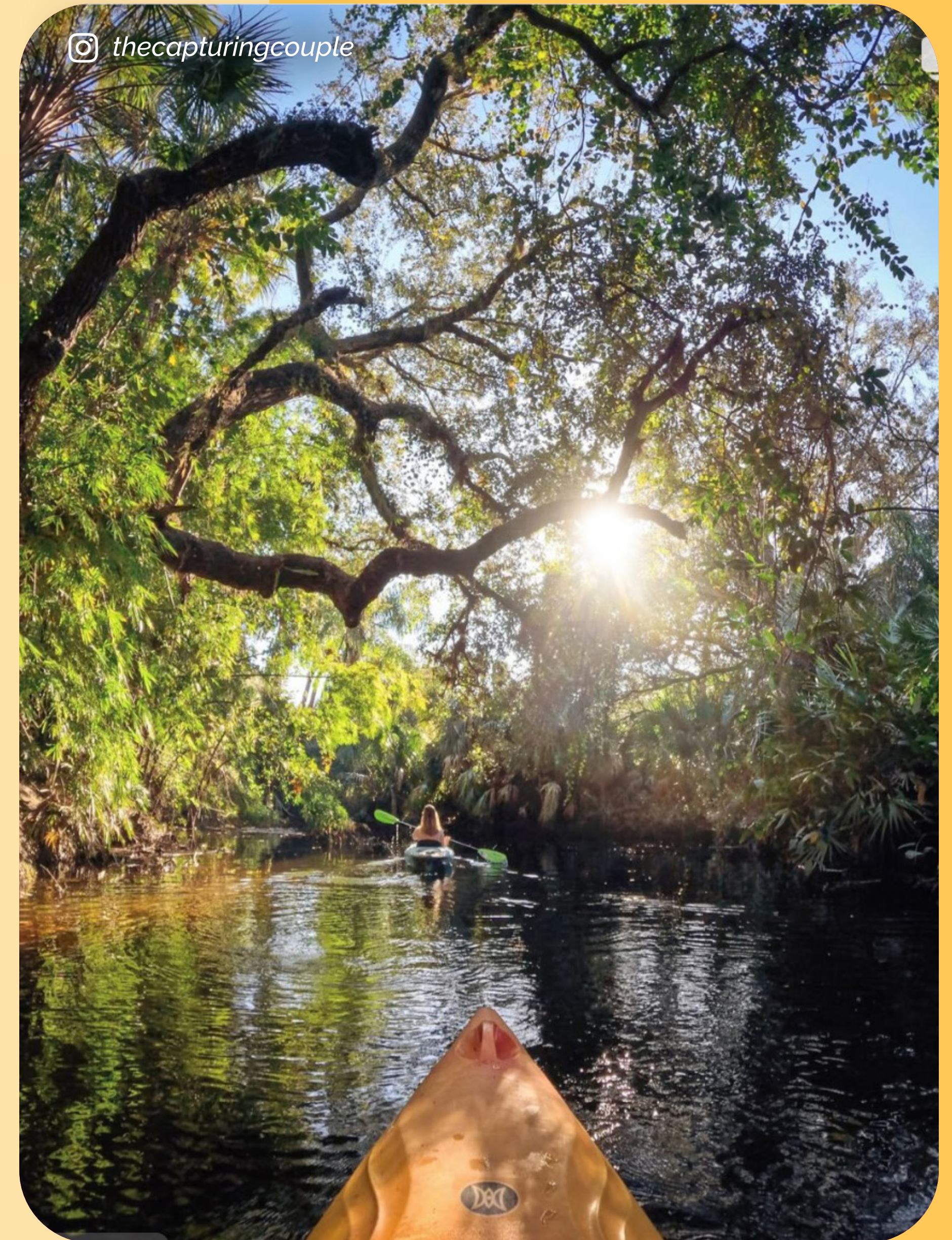


Messaging Strategy

Brand Story Pillars

Purpose

- Align our core assets and values with those of our audiences in order to connect emotionally.
- Drive conversion by motivating our audience to engage with messages that interest and inspire them.
- Optimize messaging to resonate with our audiences and build a foundation of learning.



On the Water

Being on, in and around the water is key to local life. From the Gulf to the islands and every waterway in between, Lee County protects its nature and wildlife for all to enjoy.

Bright Spots

Every Lee County neighborhood has its own unique identity. They're what make the area so special and set the backdrop for stories that inspire visitors to have a different experience every time they visit.

Off the Water

On land, Lee County's unique geography and abundant natural offerings provide sights, sounds and adventure unavailable elsewhere. This includes visual arts and culture, musical performances, breweries and distilleries, and walkable downtown areas.

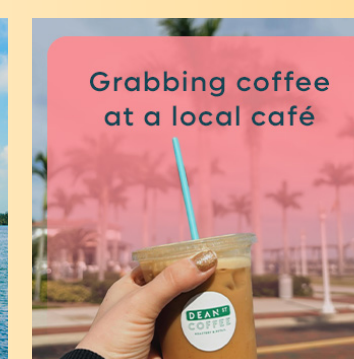
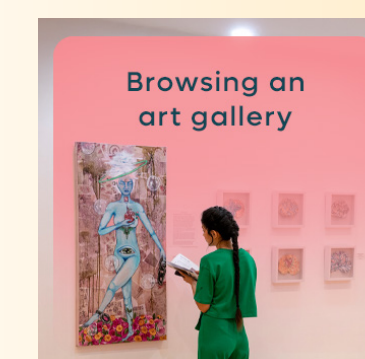
Shoulder-Drop

There's a relaxed vibe in Lee County that puts visitors at ease as soon as they arrive, from our slower-paced lifestyle to locals' friendly, laid-back nature, and from regional flavors to a variety of museums, historic sites, shopping districts, and more.

Just Feels Right Brand Campaign

Our audiences are living with multiple stressors on a daily basis. They're looking for ways to escape feeling overwhelmed. Whether they're traveling as a family or without kids, we'll appeal to their desire to feel they're in the right place and empower them to put their well-being at the top of their to-do list.

The Just Feels Right campaign shows how much easier it is to feel relaxed, adventurous, connected, playful, and curious throughout our islands, beaches and neighborhoods. On every trip, you're free to enjoy whatever you do, big or small, because you can let go of what's weighing you down. Everyday worries melt away. Simple joys become more vivid. There's finally time to feel whole again.





Just Feels Right Brand Campaign

We're showing that the Fort Myers area is the place to follow what feels right and reclaim your sense of being present. Because when you find your place, you keep coming back.

Watch the [Just Feels Right introduction video](#).





Digital Visitor Guide

The 2026 Visitor Guide builds on the success of our digital-only format, immersing potential visitors in the sights and sounds that print simply can't capture. With mobile usage far surpassing desktop, this year's edition will elevate the mobile experience through a responsive, magazine-style design. The new guide will surprise and delight users, inspiring them to vacation in the Fort Myers area and making trip planning effortless with integrated QR codes and direct links to our website.

Sales

The Sales team is committed to driving domestic and international travel trade business to Fort Myers by focusing on high-value markets, building strong partnerships and creating opportunities that deliver measurable returns. With evolving economic conditions and increasing competition across Florida, our strategies are centered on quality over volume, ensuring we attract the types of travelers and groups that generate the most impact for Lee County.

Our goal is to position Fort Myers as the premier destination for small to midsize groups, social gatherings and high-value international visitors who are drawn to experiences rooted in nature, wellness and authentic culture.



Core Pillars of Success

The following five pillars serve as the foundation for how we will approach the marketplace in FY25/26. They reflect both the strengths that set Fort Myers apart and the realities shaping today's travel environment. Together with our partners, we will use these pillars to guide decisions, maximize opportunities and deliver long-term economic impact for Lee County.

High-Value Traveler Focus

We prioritize visitors and groups who deliver the greatest economic impact to Lee County. That means cultivating affluent international travelers, premium leisure segments and right-sized meetings that match the scale and character of our destination.

Air Service and Accessibility

Air connectivity is the foundation of our success. Sustaining and expanding both domestic and international service into RSW is critical for driving leisure and group demand. Sales efforts will continue to support routes, build relationships with airline partners and demonstrate strong destination demand.

Experience-Driven Sales

The Fort Myers area is not a commodity destination. Our approach highlights the authentic experiences that set us apart — wellness, sustainability, outdoor recreation, cultural heritage, and unique venues that inspire connection. We sell not only hotel rooms and meeting space but also the destination experience that elevates every visit.

Partner Accountability and Collaboration

Our industry thrives when we work together. We will continue to engage hotels, attractions and trade partners through co-op programs, joint missions and training opportunities. Transparent ROI reporting and pacing goals ensure every effort is measurable and aligned with shared success.

Agility and Resilience

Tourism is influenced by shifting economies, weather events and political climates. Our sales strategy is built to adapt quickly. By staying proactive and flexible, we ensure Fort Myers remains competitive and flexible in an ever-changing landscape.

Meetings and Groups

Overview

Nationally, group and meetings business continues to recover, though booking windows remain shorter and attendance sizes are smaller than pre-pandemic norms. Fort Myers' strength lies not in convention-scale business, but in hosting intimate, high-quality gatherings that create a strong sense of place.

We will continue to pursue corporate, association, SMERF (social, military, educational, religious, fraternal), and wellness-related groups that align with the destination's offerings.





Strategy: Position Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods as the destination of choice for small to midsize meetings and events

Tactics:

- Develop targeted messaging that promotes Fort Myers' relaxed coastal setting and diverse meeting venues.
- Conduct direct outreach to corporate, incentive, association, and SMERF planners emphasizing the benefits of smaller, more meaningful gatherings.
- Highlight unique offsite experiences such as beach receptions, island excursions, and outdoor wellness activities that differentiate the destination.
- Use storytelling and testimonials from successful meetings to demonstrate Fort Myers' capacity and service quality.

Strategy: Strengthen relationships

Tactics:

- Maintain active engagement with HelmsBriscoe, ConferenceDirect, Maritz, and other leading third-party planning networks through regular communication and sales missions.
- Participate in key industry trade shows, including MPI, Connect, PCMA, IMEX and others, to expand destination visibility and generate new leads.
- Host high-impact familiarization (FAM) tours that showcase signature properties, walkable meeting districts, and post-meeting leisure options.
- Provide meeting planners with refreshed destination toolkits, including visuals, itineraries, and venue updates.

Strategy: Drive year-round group business

Tactics:

- Continue the Island Incentive program to encourage new and repeat business during shoulder and summer months.
- Collaborate with Florida-based associations and regional organizations to capture in-state meetings that align with off-peak availability.
- Develop co-op promotions with partner hotels and attractions that add value for planners booking outside peak season.
- Position Fort Myers as a cost-effective yet premium alternative to larger Florida destinations.

Leisure Sales

Overview

The domestic leisure market remains highly competitive, with travelers expecting flexibility, value and unique experiences. The rise of multigenerational and experiential travel plays directly to Fort Myers' strengths.



Strategy: Strengthen Lee County's presence in key feeder markets

Tactics:

- Focus on high-potential feeder markets in the Midwest and Northeast, where brand awareness is already strong.
- Conduct sales calls in cities with strong air lift to reinforce destination accessibility.
- Engage travel advisors who sell to niche segments such as eco-tourism, wellness and multi-generational vacations.

Strategy: Build relationships with top-performing travel advisors and tour operators

Tactics:

- Partner with travel advisors and tour operators specializing in experiential, family, and multi-generational travel.
- Host targeted FAM tours that showcase authentic local experiences, beaches, and nature-based attractions.
- Develop co-op campaigns with top-producing operators that feature customized itineraries appealing to family and experience-driven travelers.
- Provide sales tools and destination training to advisors to increase confidence in selling Fort Myers as a year-round vacation destination.

Strategy: Expand niche market engagement to drive year-round visitation

Tactics:

- Engage travel advisors who sell to niche segments such as eco-tourism, wellness, and adventure travel.
- Collaborate with partners to highlight unique wellness retreats, eco-friendly lodging, and sustainable tourism experiences.
- Strengthen partnerships with AAA offices and retail agencies that serve key feeder states, ensuring Fort Myers remains top-of-mind for Florida-bound travelers.
- Align niche promotions with VCB marketing campaigns to extend reach and reinforce consistent destination messaging.



More romantic with every *moment*



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fort MYERS
ISLANDS, BEACHES & NEIGHBORHOODS

More romantic with every *moment*



START HERE

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ISLANDS, BEACHES & NEIGHBORHOODS

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Weddings Campaign

In partnership with Bridal Guide Magazine, this campaign continues to highlight our breathtaking backdrops. This year, refreshed display banners further capture how the special feeling of a destination wedding shines across the islands, beaches and neighborhoods of Fort Myers.

More romantic with every *moment*



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ISLANDS, BEACHES & NEIGHBORHOODS

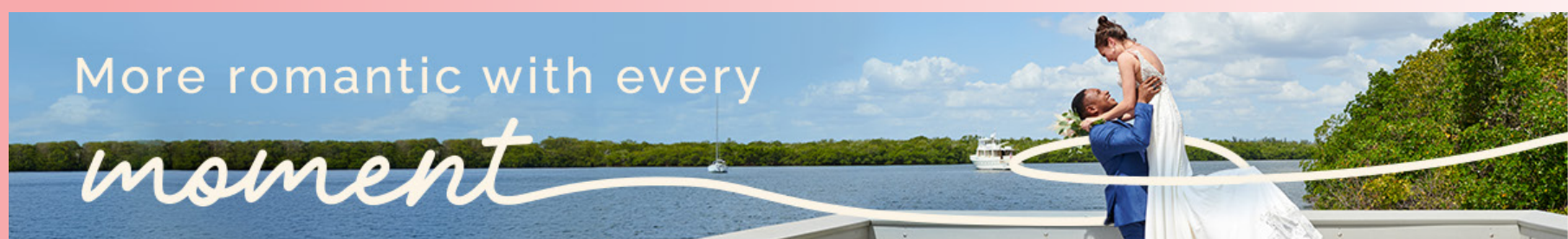
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Meetings Campaign

When looking for the ideal meeting location, meeting planners want specific details about prospective destinations. Our new interactive video's seamless functionality tailors the viewing experience to the exact content each planner desires. Our cheerful video host guides viewers through the experience while delivering personality and poise.

Additionally, our meetings print and digital campaign features a split-screen approach that shows how our natural settings support the kind of relaxation and inspiration that allow for creative thinking and productive outcomes. When work meets play, meeting planners meet their clients' goals and expectations, proving once again that Fort Myers helps meeting planners create more successful meetings.



International Sales

Overview

International visitation remains an important part of Fort Myers' tourism economy, though political sentiment, exchange rates and tariffs continue to create headwinds. Our focus is not on broad market volume but on affluent travelers who prioritize experiences over politics and remain resilient to economic fluctuations. International visitors stay longer, spend more and align with Fort Myers' experiential strengths.



Strategy: Strengthen presence in core international markets

Tactics:

- Focus efforts on Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Nordic countries where brand awareness and air connectivity are strongest.
- Launch joint marketing initiatives with Visit Florida, Brand USA, and airline partners to increase visibility in key source markets.
- Host in-market sales missions and participate in major travel trade shows to maintain Fort Myers' presence with top tour operators and advisors.

Strategy: Attract affluent travelers through premium positioning and storytelling

Tactics:

- Emphasize Fort Myers' luxury-adjacent experiences such as private eco-tours, boutique resorts, and wellness escapes.
- Partner with high-end travel sellers, including Virtuoso, Signature, and niche OTAs, that serve affluent, experience-driven audiences.
- Curate elevated FAM tours for top-tier advisors and media to showcase the destination's sustainability, culture, and hospitality.
- Integrate storytelling that connects Fort Myers' coastal beauty, creative culture, and slower pace of life with the needs of premium travelers.

International Sales

Strategy: Expand partnerships and explore emerging markets

Tactics:

- Work with airlines and tour operators to sustain and grow international service into RSW, demonstrating strong traveler demand.
- Develop co-op campaigns with luxury tour operators and travel consortia to reach affluent audiences in Latin America, particularly Brazil.
- Coordinate with international vendors to ensure reporting focuses on affluent traveler engagement rather than broad exposure metrics.
- Foster collaboration with other Florida destinations to offer multi-destination itineraries that appeal to long-haul international travelers.



Public Relations

Our Communications team generates earned media coverage that amplifies our exposure in both domestic and international markets. Through proactive media outreach, compelling press materials and immersive press trips, we share the unique stories and experiences our destination offers. These efforts consistently lead to increased visibility in top-tier publications, travel blogs, broadcast segments and more, helping to positively position our brand to a global traveling audience.



Strategy: Build Brand Awareness

Strengthen recognition of the Fort Myers area among visitors, residents, media, and business partners through targeted media relations. Efforts will focus on expanding FAM opportunities, engaging with priority markets and growing the in-state drive market.

Tactics:

- Host at least 40 journalists throughout the year to showcase the destination's diverse seasonal experiences. Use media targeting tools to identify and connect with top writers and publications in feeder markets.
- Incorporate trending themes into pitches, including wellness travel, book-inspired getaways, road trips, strip-mall surprises (experiences unique to the Fort Myers area), and the “townsizing” trend — where

younger travelers are opting for smaller, slower-paced destinations with personal, nostalgic appeal.

- Highlight the family-friendly appeal of Fort Myers year-round, particularly in summer when value is highest. Include the perspectives of kids and teens, who increasingly influence household travel decisions through exposure to platforms like YouTube and TikTok.
- Coordinate closely with the marketing team to align media relations with paid campaigns for maximum visibility.
- Partner with local businesses that have strong international ties to create more authentic and engaging experiences for visiting journalists.





Strategy: Maximize Media Exposure

Expand the destination's reach by leveraging media opportunities at both domestic and international levels.

Tactics:

- Engage South Florida drive-market media with hyper-relevant story ideas, immersive “micro-FAM” opportunities, and influencer partnerships. Tie pitches to timely hooks such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup and Fort Myers as a fresh Miami alternative.
- Join the America250 initiative to secure placement on the official website and promotional channels. Highlight unique local events and programs that connect the area to America's story, drawing visitors and strengthening community pride.
- Provide journalists with comprehensive multimedia support — high-quality video, audio and technical resources — to enhance coverage.



Strategy: Elevate Media Coverage in Emerging Markets

Increase visibility in Latin America and other rising markets through strategic collaborations and storytelling.

Tactics:

- Collaborate with Visit Florida to host media from key Latin American markets, including Brazil and Colombia. Take part in coordinated media missions that align with target audiences, seasonal travel trends and market demand.
- Work with other Florida DMOs to build joint itineraries that showcase multiple destinations for international journalists.
- Collaborate with our international contractors to uncover new, market-relevant story opportunities.

Strategy: Connect & Captivate with Communication Tools That Engage

Leverage storytelling platforms and media relationships to spotlight the destination, highlight partner successes and share compelling narratives locally about our work and the value of tourism to the Lee County economy.

Tactics:

- Connect journalists with local tourism partners to craft authentic, engaging stories that highlight what makes the region unique.
- Produce 12 monthly Partner Spotlight videos featuring local businesses and industry leaders.
- Produce 12 monthly Shellcast podcast episodes and collaborate with the marketing team to expand distribution and audience reach.
- Maintain a fresh, curated library of b-roll and photography, providing journalists with impactful visuals to enhance storytelling.



Destination Development

Through careful planning and industry collaborations, our Destination Development team shapes the natural assets, events and attractions of Lee County into meaningful experiences that draw visitors, boost the economy and enhance everyday life for residents.



Strategy: Tourist Development Tax (TDT) Funding Programs

Provide oversight and management of the annual **Beach & Shoreline** and **Attractions & Events Marketing** funding programs in accordance with TDT guidelines and governing statutes.

Tactics:

- Annually review and update program guidelines; share changes via webinars.
- Monitor project progress and the reimbursement process continuously.
- Evaluate the return on investment (ROI) of funded projects to ensure alignment with program goals.





Strategy: Sustainability

Promote sustainable tourism by developing immersive, experience-based itineraries and integrating them into our marketing, sales and public relations efforts.

Tactics:

- Explore opportunities in culinary tourism, agritourism, ecotourism, and other experiential travel.
- Leverage the **Bandwango** platform to create destination trails, challenges and digital passports throughout our area.
- Foster the development of arts and culture experiences that yield opportunities for collaborative partnerships with other visitor-facing businesses.
- Launch and grow the partnership with **Kind Traveler**, becoming Florida's first destination offering a guest give-back opportunity through select properties.
- Promote the **Florida Green Lodging Program** to hotel partners, aiming for a 5% increase in certified properties.
- Develop voluntourism experiences in collaboration with groups such as **Keep Lee County Beautiful**, **Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation**, and **Lee County Parks & Recreation**, combining education with community service.

Strategy: Community Engagement & Industry Relations

Actively engage with our community and industry stakeholders to foster collaboration, share resources and co-create new experiences that highlight the destination and increase bookings.

Tactics:

- Oversee the **Island Hopper Songwriter Fest** to ensure partner satisfaction and ongoing quality improvement — without focusing on expansion.
- Present regularly to community and industry organizations to educate them about VCB initiatives and partnership opportunities.
- Identify potential collaborators to co-develop new events and experiences.
- Ensure we hold leadership roles in key industry organizations, including:
 - Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism
 - American Shore and Beach Preservation Association
 - Florida Shore & Beach Preservation Association
 - Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association
 - Florida Festivals & Events Association





Strategy: Placemaking

Support the collaborative development and enhancement of our public spaces to strengthen community identity and foster a sense of place.

Tactics:

- Define and communicate the unique story of each neighborhood.
- Incorporate local art into the design of rebuilt beach park facilities.
- Manage and promote our network of neighborhood **webcams** (currently 13) to showcase live destination views.
- Expand the interactive neighborhood **mural program**, aiming for at least one mural in each community (currently 7 completed).
- Stay engaged with **City Nation Place** to identify creative ways to empower community partners to tell their stories and elevate our destination's identity.

Sports Development

The Sports Development team's mission is to attract, promote and retain amateur athletic events and sports-related conferences for Lee County. As the premier destination for leisure tourism and sporting events, the team's goal is to foster growth and economic development for the local community through new and repeat events.



Strategy: **Drive Demand and Diversify Lee County's Tourism Economy Through Sports**

Tactics:

- Produce 180,000 hotel room nights in Lee County through sports tourism events and business activities.
- Enhance the sports tourism initiative by identifying and diversifying markets of opportunity.
- Identify and host a new sports association meeting annually.
- Attract a minimum of 20 international teams to participate in Lee County sports tourism events.
- Retain 90% of our sports business as repeat business.
- Identify opportunities with VCB brand integration to promote our area as a premier global sports destination.
- Attend industry trade shows including, but not limited to, the TEAMS Conference + Expo, Sports ETA Symposium, Sports Express, etc.

Strategy: **Expand Collaboration Across Government Organizations and the Community**

Tactics:

- Leverage local signature sports events, such as preseason MLB baseball, the City of Palms Basketball Classic and the Fort Myers Tip-Off, to build relationships and support our efforts and those of the Economic Development Office (EDO) in attracting media, clients and site selectors.
- Identify new shared-use sports facilities within the community.
- Collaborate with our Sales team to attract sports-related conferences and events.
- Maintain up-to-date sports metrics on the Lee County Performance Dashboard.

Strategy:

Improve Communication About the Value of Sports With Residents and Local Businesses

Tactics:

- Increase communication of sports activity to the hospitality industry in Lee County.
- Partner with Lee County Community Engagement and Communications to share sports tourism successes and “quality of life” stories with our residents.
- Report regularly to the hospitality industry, educating them on past and future sports activity, business development and economic impact derived from sports events.
- Work collaboratively with Parks & Recreation to ensure that sports tourism has a positive impact on residents when facility access is desired.
- Promote the use of sports tourism as a placemaking tool to enhance our efforts and those of the Economic Development team.



Visitor Services

Located within Southwest Florida International Airport, our office — alongside our dedicated Tourism Ambassador volunteer program — focuses on enhancing the visitor experience through tourism support, airport assistance and community engagement for both travelers and residents in the Fort Myers area.

Beyond the airport, we actively promote Lee County at special events, support our tourism partners across the region and serve as an emergency liaison for the traveling public during times of crisis. We also take pride in recognizing exceptional service through the Elaine McLaughlin Outstanding Hospitality Service Awards (E Awards), which honors local residents and tourism professionals who exemplify hospitality excellence.



Visitor Services Programs

Southwest Florida International Airport

Since 1990, our knowledgeable and friendly Tourism Ambassadors have been assisting the traveling public, answering over 900,000 questions annually. They staff five Visitor Information Booths throughout the terminal and also roam the airport to provide hands-on, personalized support. Multilingual ambassadors greet international travelers and collaborate with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to offer translation assistance, helping to ensure a smooth arrival experience for guests from around the world.

Special Projects

Tourism Ambassadors assist at conferences, conventions, festivals, sporting events, and community events by providing a quality Lee County experience for visitors and residents.

Hammond Stadium and JetBlue Park

We also collaborate with Lee County Sports Development to extend our hospitality into the community. We operate two Visitor Information Booths at Hammond Stadium and JetBlue Park, which are staffed by Tourism Ambassadors during spring training and special events, ensuring that fans and attendees receive the same friendly, informative service enjoyed by travelers at the airport.

Elaine McLaughlin Outstanding Hospitality Service Awards (E Awards)

This program recognizes extraordinary customer service professionals in the hospitality and allied industries as nominated by visitors and residents.

Project Cookie

This initiative provides comfort and support to passengers affected by severe weather or extended travel delays. In collaboration with airlines and airport staff, we offer a welcoming presence, a listening ear and cookies, bringing a touch of kindness and reassurance during stressful travel situations.

Visitor Assistance Program

Specialized assistance is provided to travelers during emergencies or crises. We work closely with accommodations, airlines, law enforcement, transportation, government, foreign consulates, and medical services to provide emergency support to visitors and their families.

Strategy:
Maintain Our Strong Commitment to Delivering Personalized Customer Service to Every Visitor and Resident We Serve

Tactics:

- Increase the number of Tourism Ambassadors from 145 to 155 to maintain service quality during airport construction and ensure adequate staffing once the expanded airport is complete.
- Incorporate an overview of the VCB into onboarding, its community impact, the value of tourism, and the essential role of a Tourism Ambassador.
- Increase the number of roaming Tourism Ambassadors from two to three per shift to meet the growing demand for visitor and resident assistance within the airport.
- Encourage five Tourism Ambassadors to attend Guests First classes and obtain the Certified Guest Service Professional (CGSP) designation to enhance customer service skills.

Strategy:
Enhance Destination Awareness Among All Tourism Ambassadors to Empower Them to Confidently Share Local Knowledge With the Traveling Public

Tactics:

- Increase the number of annual familiarization (FAM) tours for Tourism Ambassadors from 19 to 24 to provide more opportunities for firsthand destination experience and deeper local knowledge.
- Distribute a monthly destination newsletter to all Tourism Ambassadors, featuring upcoming events, airport and airline updates, and tourism product news.
- Create summaries of each FAM to display on the screen in the volunteer break room, ensuring all Tourism Ambassadors can review key insights even if they were unable to attend.

Strategy: Expand Our Community Connections to Build Stronger Partnerships With Industry Partners and the Local Community

Tactics:

- Provide visitors and residents at RSW with updated listings of local events to support our community partners and encourage visitor participation in regional activities.
- Continue to raise awareness of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program by ensuring the program's lanyards are available at all Visitor Information Booths and providing training for every Tourism Ambassador on how to support individuals with hidden disabilities.
- Collaborate with industry partners to increase the number of E Awards sponsors from 22 to 28, thereby providing greater support and recognition opportunities for E Awards winners.



Guests First Program

Great destinations are not just defined by beaches, attractions or events. They are remembered for how they make people feel. The Guests First program is our community-wide commitment to delivering unforgettable visitor experiences through exceptional hospitality, adaptability and a strong sense of place.



Guests First Program

Overview

As the first point of contact for many travelers, our hospitality workforce plays a powerful role in shaping how visitors experience and talk about Lee County. In an era when expectations are higher than ever, standout service is more than just nice. It's a competitive edge that drives satisfaction, strengthens our reputation and fuels economic growth.

Developed with the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute, Guests First (GF) equips hospitality employees with the skills, confidence and mindset to deliver service that delights, recovers when things go wrong and creates moments worth sharing.

The program's focus areas — recovery, personalization, knowledge, passion, commitment, inclusion, and personality — ensure that every interaction leaves a positive and lasting impression.

Participants can also earn the internationally recognized Certified Guest Service Professional (CGSP) designation, the industry's highest honor for service excellence. This certification not only benefits individual careers but also elevates the standard of service across our destination, turning first-time guests into loyal return visitors.





Core Objectives

Design Experiences They Return For

Train local businesses to adopt a strong service culture that fosters guest loyalty.

Hospitality Unleashed

Deliver service that resonates emotionally, turning moments into memories. Visitors feel genuinely welcomed, understood and cared for, leading to stronger emotional ties to the destination, positive word of mouth and increased loyalty.

Elevate. Every. Experience.

Ensure the workforce interacting with visitors is trained in customer service best practices tailored to tourism. Service should be intentional and guest-centered.

Strategy: Promote the Value of Guests First

Tactics:

- **Highlight Benefits:** Communicate the advantages of improved employee competence and a more satisfying workplace culture, leading to greater customer satisfaction, increased revenue and repeat visitation for Lee County businesses.
- **Ensure Accessibility:** Make GF customer service training easily accessible to all Lee County hospitality businesses.
- **Certification Preparation:** Use GF education modules to prepare participants for the Certified Guest Service Professional (CGSP) exam, the highest global recognition of guest service excellence in hospitality and tourism.

Strategy: Keep Guests First Content Engaging and Relevant

Tactics:

- **Leverage Technology:** Utilize digital tools and technology to enhance engagement and broaden the reach of the GF program.
- **Update Content Regularly:** Develop and refresh GF training content to ensure it remains current, relatable and aligned with industry trends.
- **Customize Training:** Tailor and adapt training sessions to meet the specific needs of participants, ensuring positive learning outcomes.

Strategy: Monitor and Analyze Program Results

Tactics:

- **Achieve Certification Success:** Set a goal of a 100% pass rate for the CGSP program, reinforcing its status as the pinnacle of guest service excellence.
- **Evaluate Success:** Continuously monitor, evaluate and report on the program's effectiveness based on our targets, adjusting as needed to ensure ongoing success.

FY25/26 Targets Summary

SOURCE		FY25/26 TARGETS
OVERARCHING		
Bed Tax	Audited Returns	\$49.1M
PAID MEDIA (Including Paid Search and Paid Social)		
Impressions	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	606M
Total Engagements	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	82M
Total Inquiries	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	510K
CPM	Contracts	\$12.00
Added-Value Placements	Contracts	\$3.5M
SOCIAL		
Website Referrals	Sprout Social	810K
Video Views	Sprout Social	22M
Total Social Media Engagements	Sprout Social	4M
Total Influencer Impressions	Sprout Social	5M
Total Social Impressions	Sprout Social	145M

FY25/26 Targets Summary

	SOURCE	FY25/26 TARGETS
EMAIL		
Website Leads: Unique Open Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	32%
Website Leads: Click Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	1.75%
Unsubscribe Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	0.20%
All Leads: Partner Referrals	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	20K
WEBSITE		
eNews Sign-Ups (Leisure, Meetings and Weddings)	Google Analytics 4	18,000
Average Pages/Visit	Google Analytics 4	1.75
Average Session Duration	Google Analytics 4	2:50
Accommodations Referrals	Google Analytics 4	5.00%
Dining Referrals	Google Analytics 4	0.4%
Activities Referrals	Google Analytics 4	1.6%
Engagement Rate of Organic Search Sessions	Google Analytics 4	82%
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT		
Event Marketing	Events Supported	12 events funded
Attractions Marketing	Applications	35 attractions funded
Placemaking Initiatives	Bandwango Passports/Murals	5 passports/4 murals
Beach & Shoreline (TDT) Funding	Projects Funded/Amount	23 projects totaling \$30.4M
Kind Traveler “Every Stay Gives Back” Partnership	Participating Properties	5 lodging/charitable partners

FY25/26 Targets Summary

	SOURCE	FY25/26 TARGETS
MEDIA RELATIONS/PUBLIC RELATIONS		
Media Impressions	Ad Service	5.5B impressions
Media/Journalists Hosted	VCB Count	40
Partner Mentions	VCB Count	250
INDUSTRY RELATIONS		
Guests First Participants	VCB Count	500
Guests First Trainings	VCB Count	50
Awards Recognition	VCB Count	500 nominations
Tourism Ambassadors	VCB Count	15 new Tourism Ambassadors
SALES – DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL		
Meeting/Conference Conversion	Simpleview	45,000 room nights (group)
Meeting Leads	Simpleview	400,000 room nights (group)
Wedding Leads	Simpleview	130 wedding leads
FAM Trips/Site Inspections	VCB Count	55 domestic & international travel professionals
Destination Education/Client Events (Webinars, Podcasts, Training Classes, Events)	VCB Count	60 destination education events
Community Engagement	VCB Count	60 local organization meetings or events

FY24/25 Performance

05



FY24/25 Targets Reporting

SOURCE		FY24/25 TARGETS	FY24/25 RESULTS
OVERARCHING			
Bed Tax	Audited Returns	Projected \$47.9M	\$46.8M
PAID MEDIA (including Paid Search and Paid Social)			
Impressions	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	733.7M	1.1B
Total Engagements	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	74.5M	78.5M
Total Inquiries	Google Ads/Google Campaign Manager/Paid Social	411K	637K
CPM	Contracts	\$12.00	\$8.49
Added-Value Placements	Contracts	\$3.2M	\$4.3M
SOCIAL			
Website Referrals	Sprout Social	845K	808K
Video Views	Sprout Social	17M	20M
Total Social Media Engagements	Sprout Social	2.2M	3.9M
Total Influencer Impressions	Sprout Social	NA	4.8M
Total Social Impressions	Sprout Social	145M	125.8M

FY24/25 Targets Reporting

	SOURCE	FY24/25 TARGETS	FY24/25 RESULTS
EMAIL			
Website Leads: Unique Open Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	34%	30%
Website Leads: Click Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	3.40%	1.4%
Unsubscribe Rate	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	0.20%	0.16%
All Leads: Partner Referrals	Salesforce/Google Analytics 4	28.5K	16.5K
WEBSITE			
eNews Sign-Ups (Leisure, Meetings and Weddings)	Google Analytics 4	19K	15.5K
Average Pages/Visit	Google Analytics 4	1.85	1.71
Average Session Duration	Google Analytics 4	1:40	2:49
Accommodations Referrals (Jan–Sep)	Google Analytics 4	6.95%	3.97% (Jan-Sep) 3.61% for full FY
Dining Referrals (Jan–Sep)	Google Analytics 4	0.55%	0.33% (Jan-Sep) 0.31% for full FY
Activities Referrals (Jan–Sep)	Google Analytics 4	1.60%	1.47% (Jan-Sep) 1.36% for full FY
Engagement Rate of Organic Search Sessions	Google Analytics 4	80%	81%
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT			
Event Marketing	Events Supported	12 events funded/2 new venues	13 events funded/2 new venues
Attractions Marketing	Applications	35 attractions funded/2 new attractions	35 attractions funded/4 new attractions
Placemaking Initiatives	Bandwango Passports/Murals	3 passports/4 murals	3 passports/2 murals
Beach & Shoreline (TDT) Funding	Projects Funded/Amount	15 projects totaling \$12.5M	16 projects totaling \$12.7M

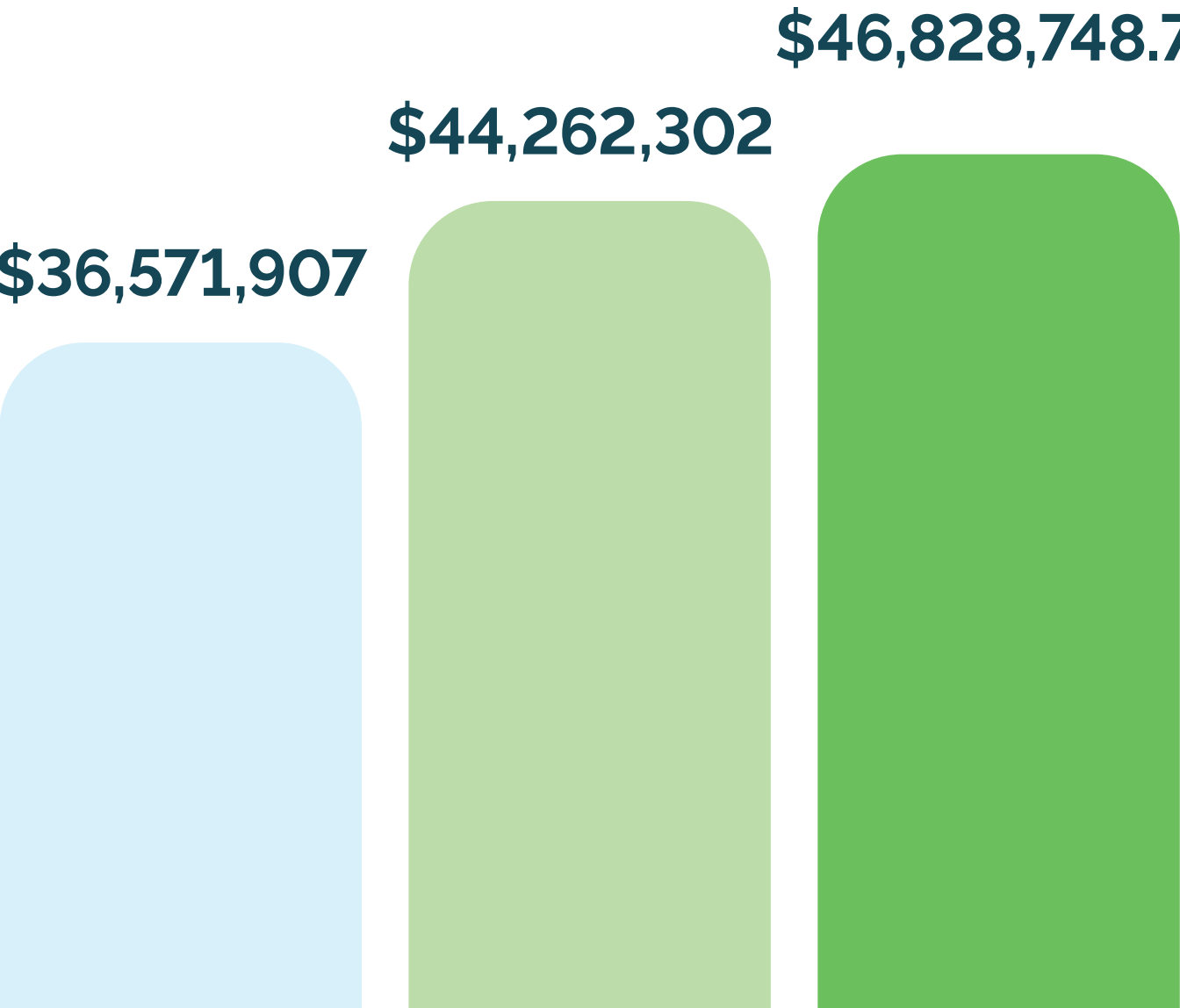
FY24/25 Targets Reporting

	SOURCE	FY24/25 TARGETS	FY24/25 RESULTS
MEDIA RELATIONS/PUBLIC RELATIONS			
Media Impressions	Ad Service	4B impressions	7.5B
Media/Journalists Hosted	VCB Count	15	66
Partner Mentions	VCB Count	Maintain number of members (partners) mentioned in articles at 100	283
INDUSTRY RELATIONS			
Guests First Participants	VCB Count	525 Guests First participants	442 participants
Guests First Trainings	VCB Count	Host a minimum of 50 training sessions	44 training sessions
Team Tourism Events	VCB Count	Host a minimum of 2 events	Hosted 1 event (E Awards)
Awards Recognition	VCB Count	Encourage 800 nominations	1,320 nominations
Tourism Ambassadors	VCB Count	Add 20 new Tourism Ambassadors	21 new Tourism Ambassadors
SALES – DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL			
Meeting/Conference Conversion	Simpleview	Achieve 47,000 room nights contracted by partners from VCB leads	42,740 room nights (group)
Meeting Leads	Simpleview	Achieve 463,000 group lead room nights sourced by VCB	334,238 room nights (group)
Wedding Leads	Simpleview	160 leads sourced by VCB	108 wedding leads
FAM Trips/Site Inspections	VCB Count	50 domestic and international travel trade professionals	64 travel professionals
Destination Education/Client Events (Webinars, Podcasts, Training Classes, Events)	VCB Count	50 destination education events	75 events
Community Engagement	VCB Count	60 local organization meetings or events	62 events

Performance

BED TAX

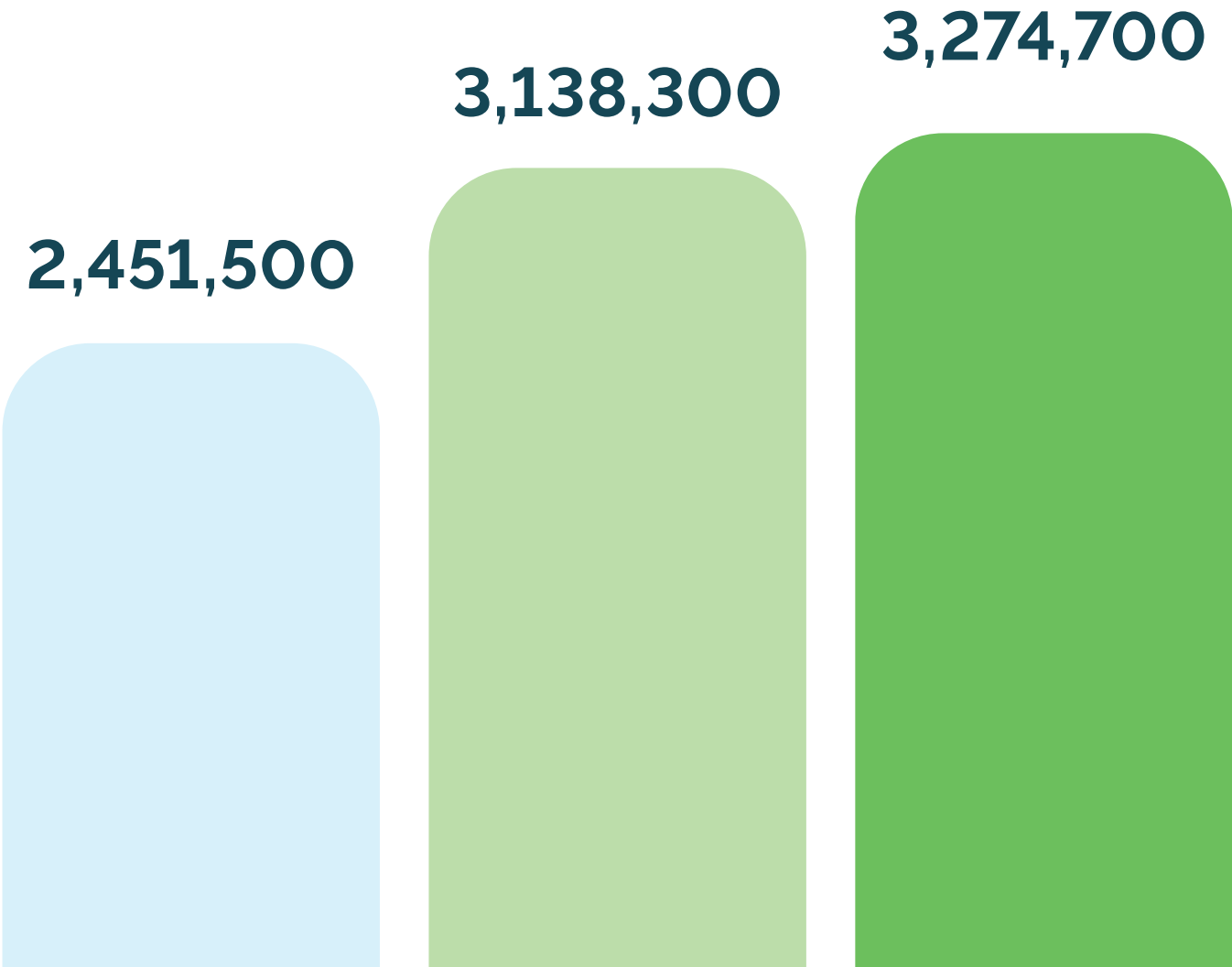
Source: Lee County Clerk of Court



FY22/23 FY23/24 FY24/25

NUMBER OF VISITORS

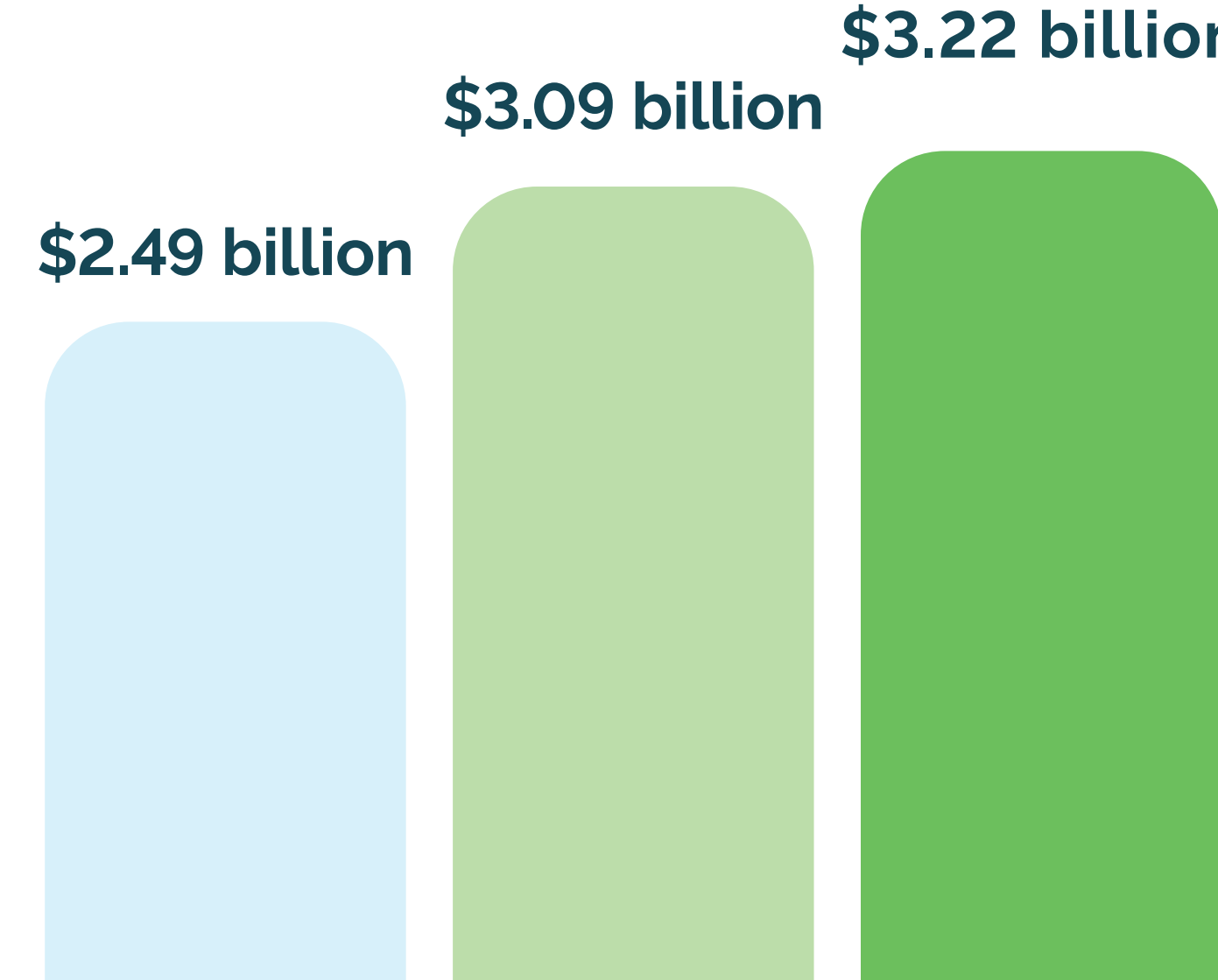
Source: Downs & St. Germain Research



FY22/23 FY23/24 FY24/25

VISITOR EXPENDITURES*

Source: Downs & St. Germain Research



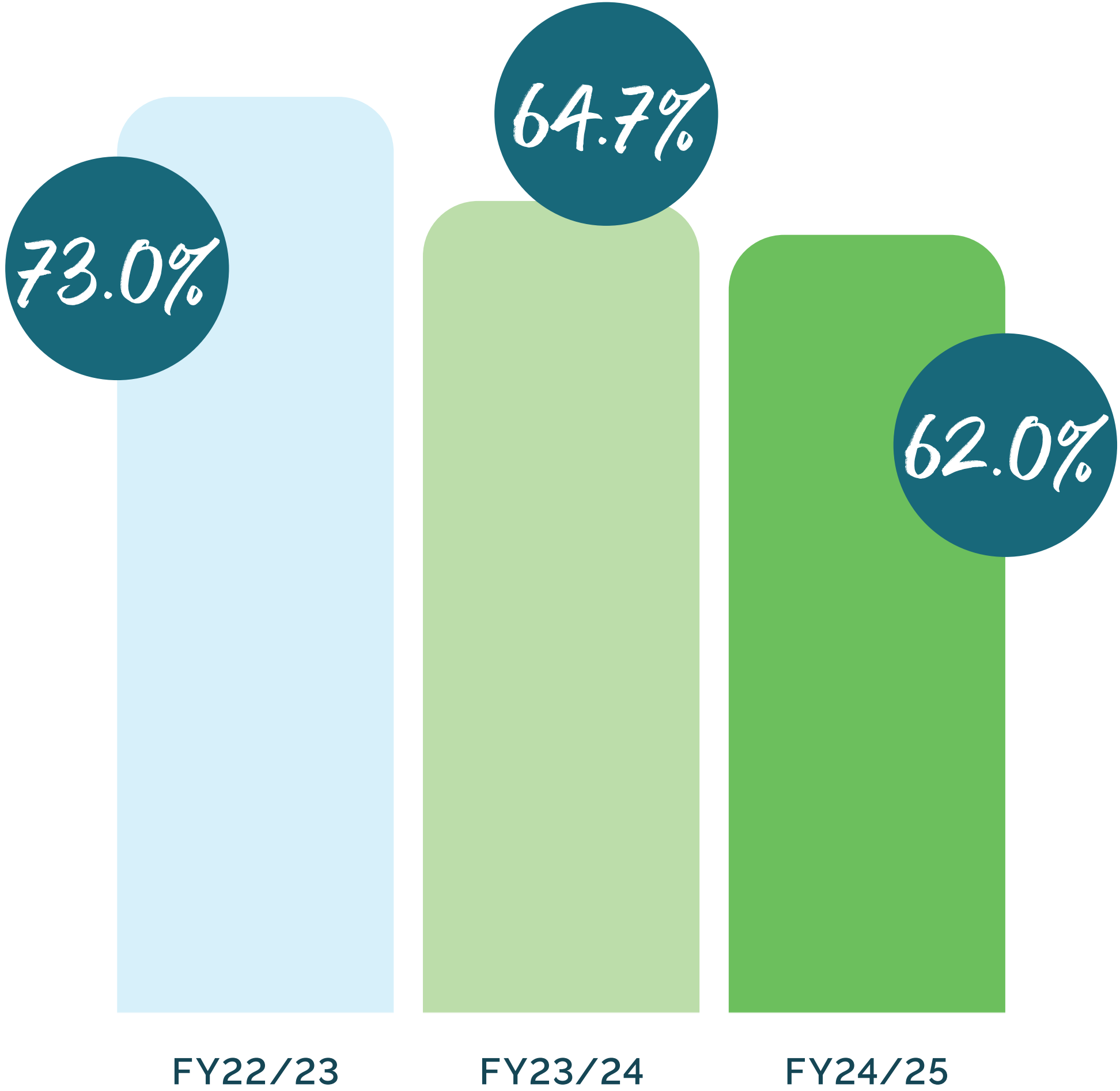
FY22/23 FY23/24 FY24/25

For more detailed information, please visit our [Performance Dashboard](#) on LeeVCB.com

*Visitor Expenditures includes accommodations, restaurants, entertainment, shopping, transportation, groceries, and other expenses.

Lodging Performance

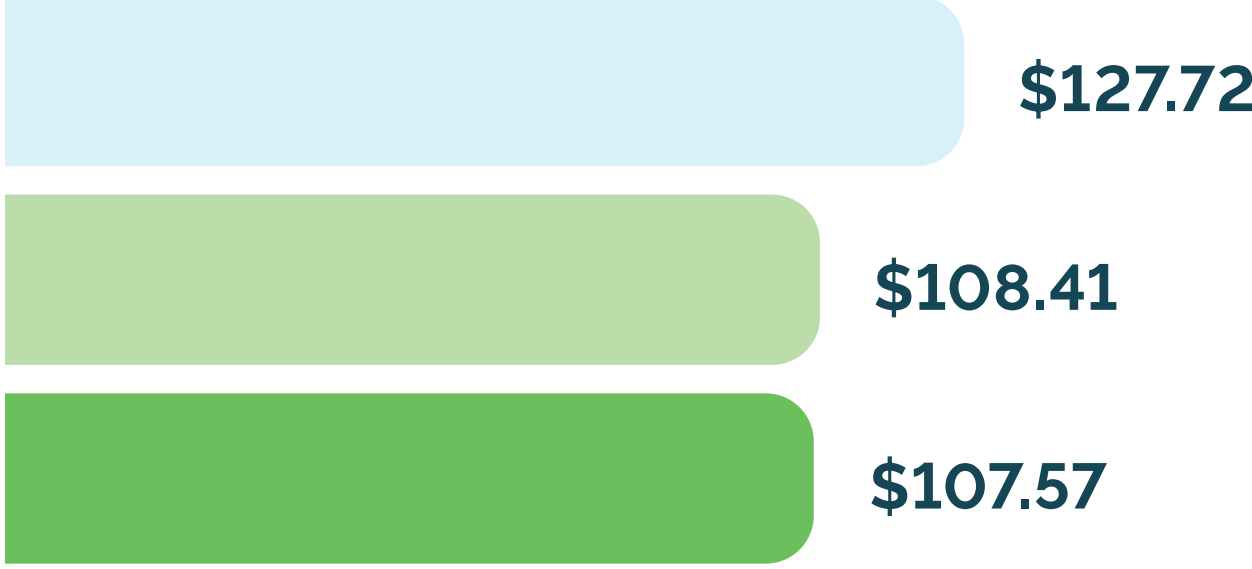
OCCUPANCY



ADR



RevPAR



SUPPLY



FY22/23 FY23/24 FY24/25

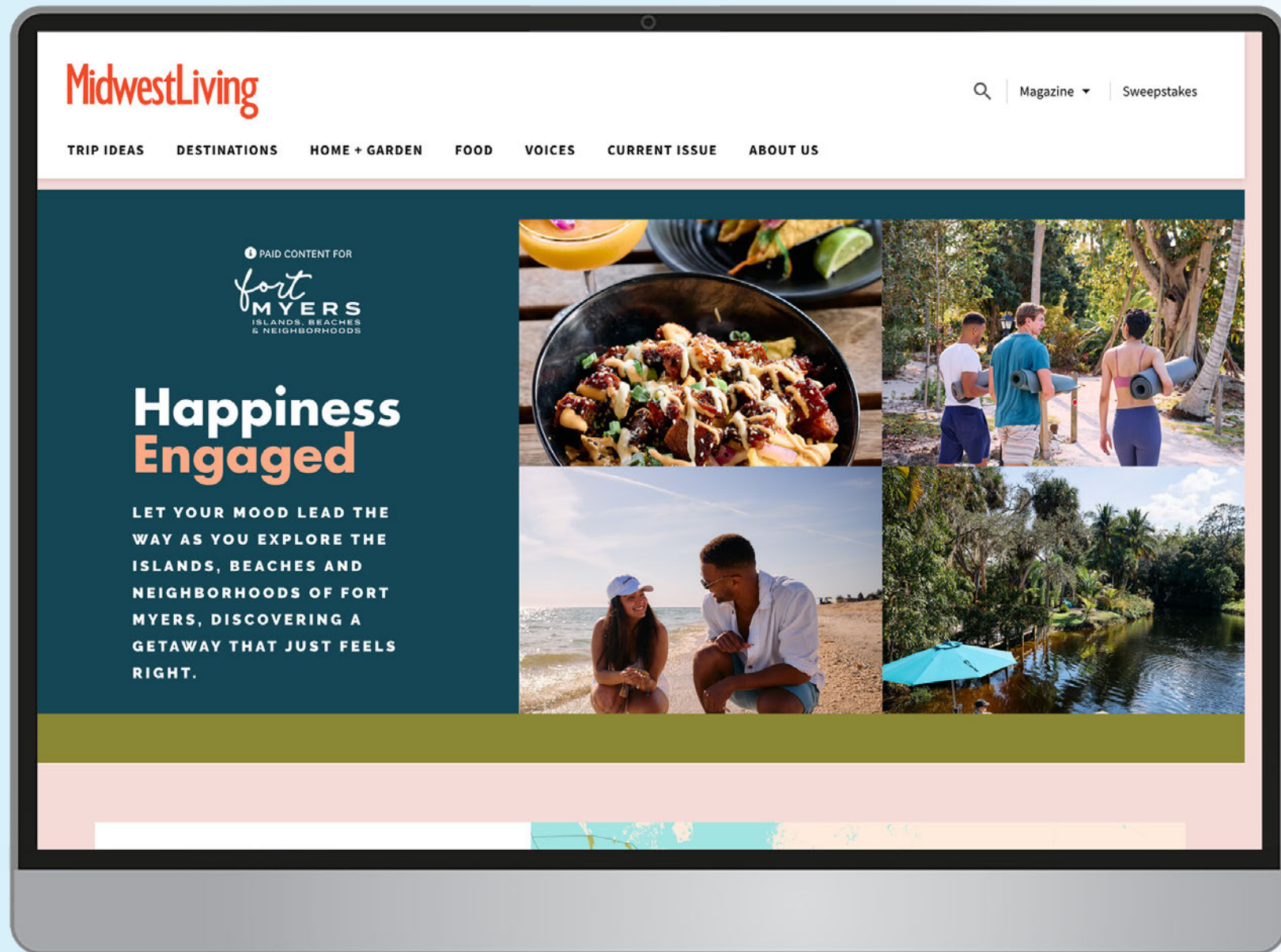
FY24/25

Paid Media Highlights

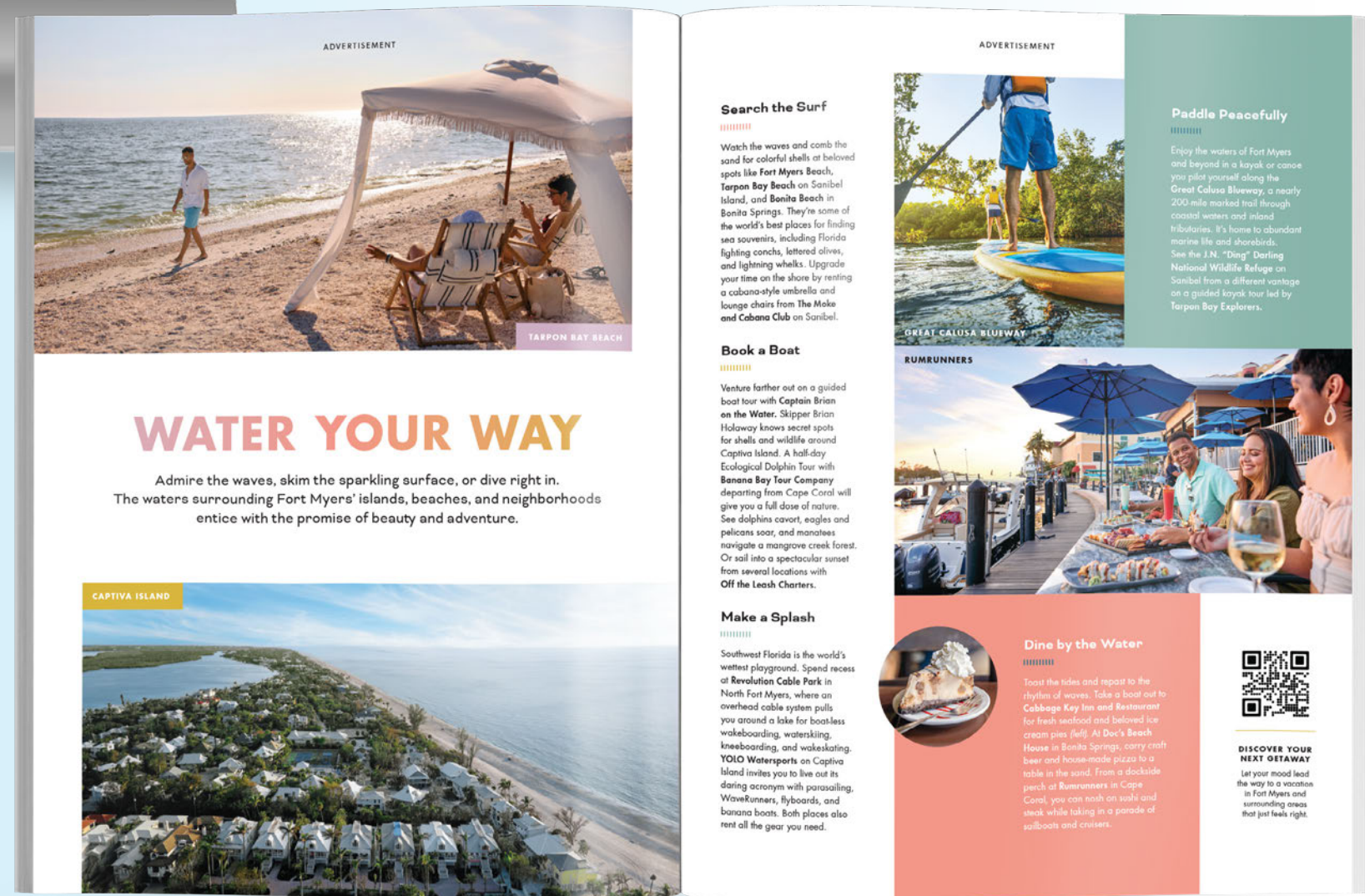
- Travelzoo – Broadcast Event and Custom Showcase
- Garden & Gun – Sunday Supper event
- The New York Times – Custom Content
- Matador custom articles
 - 7 Unique Experiences You'll Love in Southwest Florida
 - 8 Ways to Spend Your Vacation Outside in Sunny Southwest Florida
 - In Southwest Florida, Outdoor Dining Is More Than a Meal — It's an Experience



Travelzoo Broadcast Event



Mega Campaign
Destination Site



Mega Campaign Spreadvertorials

Paid Media Highlights

• Mega Campaign

As part of this integrated package, People Inc. conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of our branded content at increasing key brand metrics for Fort Myers.

The following brand attributes stood out for those who saw the campaign:

- Offers a vacation that allows you to relax and unwind, but also be active and adventurous
- Offers a wide variety of activities
- Is a great choice for families

Top vacation rental booking motivators included waterfront access, dining and entertainment, and resort-style amenities. **70%** of exposed consumers reported taking or planning action—most often exploring accommodations, pricing trips or researching rentals. There was a **6% increase** in purchase intent from consumers who saw the campaign. The highest increase was for the 45–64 age range, with a **13% increase** in purchase intent.

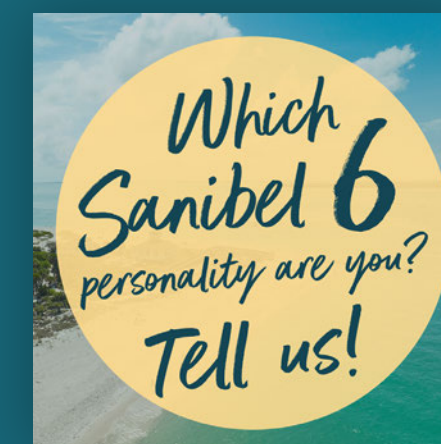
Paid Media Highlights

- Hopper Visit Florida Sale
- Expedia Hotel Co-Op
- Just Feels Right Bike Share Out-of-Home



Social Highlights

- National Seashell Day social content
 - 308k impressions
 - 32k engagements
 - 10% engagement rate
- Influencer content
 - Over 4.8M total impressions
 - Top two posts by engagement rate:
 - Local Savor the Shore Reel (12.92%)
 - Just Feels Right Carousel (9.58%)



Awards

- **Flagler Awards 2025**

- Direct Marketing Gold (Henry) Award for "A Bird's-Eye View of Fort Myers" interactive, augmented-reality direct mailer
- Specialty Marketing Silver Award for 2024 "Savor the Shore" Campaign

- **Adrian Awards 2024**

- Digital Videos Silver Award for Matador Golf Video Series
- Digital Technology Bronze Award for Webcam Network "Eyes on Fort Myers"
- Advertising/Print Collateral Bronze Award for "A Bird's-Eye View of Fort Myers" interactive augmented-reality direct mailer

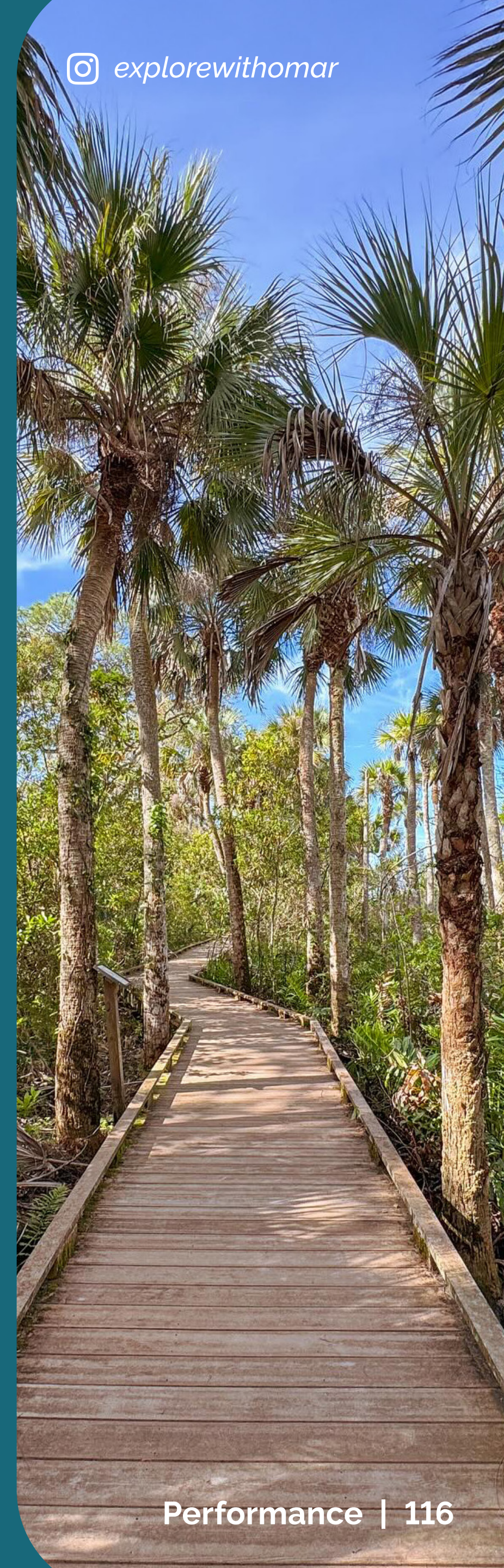
- **Sunsational Awards 2025**

- First place for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest Website
- First place for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest Television Spots
- First place for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest Radio Spots
- First place for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest Promotional Video
- First place for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest Banners
- First place for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest Mobile App
- Second place for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest T-Shirt



Accolades

- "The 50 Best Places to Travel in 2025" - *Travel + Leisure*
- "15 Best Beach Towns in Florida" - *Travel + Leisure*
- "The Most Romantic Weekend Getaway in Every State" - *Thrillist*
- "The best beaches in the U.S.: Hidden gems and iconic shores across the country" - *The Manual*
- "The best places to visit in Florida for every type of traveler" - *The Manual*
- "The 10 Best Things To Do On Captiva Island, Florida" - *Southern Living*
- "The 15 Best Beaches For Shelling" - *Southern Living*
- "14 best spring break destinations in the US" - *The Points Guy*
- "This Sheller's Paradise Was Named One Of The Best Beach Towns In The South" - *Southern Living*
- "15 Top Gulf Coast Beaches to Visit" - *U.S. News & World Report*
- "The South's Best Beach Bars 2025" - *Southern Living*
- "The 20 Best Beaches in Florida—From Romantic Islands to Family-friendly Spots" - *Travel + Leisure*
- "The 5 Best Restaurants in Fort Myers for a Sunny and Flavor-Filled Gulf Coast Escape" - *Woman's World*
- "19 Florida Beaches That Could Pass For The Caribbean" - *Southern Living*
- "15 Beaches with the Best Shells in the World" - *Reader's Digest*
- "21 Best Beaches in Florida, From South Beach to Amelia Island" - *Condé Nast Traveler*
- "6 Quiet Florida Beaches With Incredible Shelling—And Hardly Any Crowds" - *Southern Living*
- "I've lived in Florida for over 25 years. These 6 islands probably aren't on your radar — but should be" - *Business Insider*



Staff Directory and Contractors



VCB Staff Directory

Tamara Pigott
Executive Director
tpigott@leegov.com

Pamela Johnson
Deputy Director
pjohnson@leegov.com

Alison Giesen
Destination Development
Coordinator
agiesen@leegov.com

Amanda Auer
Operations Manager
aauer@leegov.com

Angela Mitchell
Marketing Manager
asmith4@leegov.com

April Green
Fiscal Manager
agreen2@leegov.com

Ashley Smith
Brand Campaign Manager
asmith4@leegov.com

Audrey Graf
Fiscal Officer
agraf@leegov.com

Brandon Leslie
Visitor Services Coordinator
bleslie@leegov.com

Brian Ososky
Chief Marketing Officer
bososky@leegov.com

Bryelle Benzing
Digital Marketing Manager
bbenzing@leegov.com

Candice Cocco
Senior Tourism Sales Manager
ccocco@leegov.com

Charm Evans
Global Sales Manager
cevans@leegov.com

Crystal Wanke
Hospitality Customer Service
Training Specialist
cwanke@leegov.com

Erin Junkin
Customer Service Specialist
ejunkin@leegov.com

Erin Lester
Senior Sales Manager
elester@leegov.com

Fran Belasco
Operations Director
fbelasco@leegov.com

Jackie Parker
Communications Manager
jparker2@leegov.com

Jami Smith
Sales Coordinator
jasmith@leegov.com

Jennifer Walla
Leisure Sales Manager
jwalla@leegov.com

Lesley-Ann Thompson
Director of Marketing
lthompson@leegov.com

Miriam Dotson
Communications Manager
mdotson@leegov.com

Moiria Larkin
Visitor Services Supervisor
(RSW)
mlarkin@leegov.com

Nancy Macphee
Destination Development
Manager
nmacphee@leegov.com

Natalie Duran
Sales Coordinator
nduran@leegov.com

Nicholas Gallant
Operations & Research
Coordinator
ngallant@leegov.com

Nyell Philp
Visitor Services Coordinator
nphilp@leegov.com

Ray Sarracino
Director of Communications
rsarracino@leegov.com

Simone Behr
Director of Visitor Services (RSW)
sbehr@leegov.com

Thomas Derathé
Operations Specialist
tderathe@leegov.com

Tiffany Gobert
Fiscal Officer, Sr.
tgobert@leegov.com

Vanessa Gomez
Marketing Coordinator
vgomez@leegov.com





Sports Development Staff Directory

Jeff Mielke

Executive Director
jmielke@leegov.com

Connie Keenan Buchanan

Office Administrator
cbuchanan@leegov.com

Quinn Bourque

Business Development Manager
qbourque@leegov.com

Contractors

USA

Betsy Bush

National Sales Manager, Northeast
bbush@leegov.com

Lauren Hyps

National Sales Manager, Midwest
lhyps@leegov.com

Canada

Andrew Ricketts

Public Relations Manager
andrew@voxinternational.com

Jeanette Faria

Account Manager
jeanette@voxinternational.com

Germany, Austria & Switzerland

Gabrielle Kuminek

Public Relations Manager
fortmyers@gce-agency.com

Nadia Bourgault

Sales & Marketing Manager
fortmyers@gce-agency.com

United Kingdom, Ireland & Scandinavia

Freddie Softley

Sr. Vice President, FINN Partners
fortmyers@finnpartners.com

fort
MYERS
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