



September 2005



ATASCADERO, CALIFORNIA

VISITOR/TOURISM ASSESSMENT



Atascadero, California • September, 2005

First impressions

...and some ideas to increase tourism spending.



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In September of 2005, a Tourism Assessment of Atascadero and the surrounding area was conducted and presented in a two-hour workshop. A "Tourism Assessment" is a process in which the area is looked at from the eyes of a visitor. No prior research was facilitated, no community representatives were contacted except to set up the project, and the town and surrounding area was "secretly shopped."

The assessment is a no-holds-barred look at the community from a visitor's perspective. It includes marketing, signage, things to see and do (attractions mix), critical mass, ease of getting around, customer service, availability of visitor amenities (information, rest rooms, parking, etc.), general appeal, and the community's ability to attract overnight visitors, who spend three times that of day visitors.

There are two primary elements to the assessment process:

- 1) A Marketing Effectiveness Assessment
- 2) On-site Assessment

In the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment two people were asked to plan trips into the region both as a leisure and business traveler. They are not told in advance what communities are actually being assessed. They are to use whatever resources they would typically use in planning a trip: travel guides, brochures, the internet, calling visitor information centers, etc.

The community has four opportunities to close the sale:

- Personal contact (visitor information, trade shows, etc.)
- Internet (websites)
- Brochures and printed materials
- Word of mouth (referrals, image)

In this process we test all four methods by contacting area visitor information services and attractions, looking for activities via the internet, requesting and reviewing printed materials, and asking visitors and regional contacts about their opinions of the area. This last method also includes looking at on-line articles, AAA Tour Book reviews, etc.

The findings determine how "visible" the community is during the research and whether or not the materials and/or per-

sonal contacts were good enough to “close the sale,” convincing the potential visitor to make either a day trip, stop, or an over-night stay.

The On-site Assessment process includes a look at enticement from freeways and highways (signs, billboards, things that would pull a visitor off the primary roadways), beautification, wayfinding (ease of getting around), visitor amenities (public restrooms, visitor information, parking), things to see and do, overall appeal of the community, business attractiveness (drawing power), signage (public and private), customer service, area attractions (things that might prompt a visitor to spend the night), retail mix (lodging, dining, shopping), critical mass (are these things concentrated in a pedestrian-oriented area?), availability of marketing materials and their effectiveness.

The “Recommendations” made herein are referred to as “suggestions,” as they were developed without consulting the local community. It will be up to the community to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

For every shortcoming or challenge we note during the assessment process, we have provided a low-cost suggestion (when possible) on how the challenge, obstacle or negative element can be corrected. It’s important to point out, that to increase the community’s tourism industry, fulfilling one or two of the suggestions will have little impact, but implementing a number of them, if not all of them, can have a profoundly successful impact on the community’s ability to tap into the tourism industry.

Implementation of these suggestions must be a community effort - involving both privately owned businesses as well as county and state agencies, where appropriate.

A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO or CVB, Chamber, etc.) cannot be successful if the tourism effort is not a community-wide effort.

Tourism is largely a private-sector industry, after all, the benefit of tourism is to convince visitors to come, spend money, then go

home. That spending takes place, primarily, in local businesses.

Product development is far more of a driving factor in tourism than marketing. After all, you must be able to deliver on your marketing promises. Visitors are drawn to activities, not cities or counties.

The Visitor/Tourism Assessment took place over a four day period - three days in the community, and one day spent assessing the marketing efforts, providing a low-cost overall assessment with ideas the community can discuss and hopefully implement.

Successful tourism translates to cash

- The idea is to import more cash into your community than you export. When local residents earn money in the community and spend some of it outside the community, this is referred to as “leakage.” Tourism is a way to fill that gap, importing cash into the community, without the necessity of having to provide extended social and other services.

Communities with successful tourism programs will see that the industry subsidizes the community, whereas communities which don’t have successful tourism programs find that they are subsidizing visitors - providing services which visitors use, but don’t leave enough money behind to cover the cost of having them available.

There are three kinds of tourism

• 1. Status quo

If you do nothing to further the tourism industry, you will still have an element of tourism, just by the fact that some visitors will pull off local highways or freeways for services (gas, food, lodging), and by the fact that the number one reason for travel is to visit friends or family. If you have residents, you will have tourism.

• 2. Getting people to stop

Getting people to stop is always the first priority of successful tourism. Imagine how successful the businesses in the community would be if just 50% of the vehicles traveling through (there are hundreds of thousands every year) pulled off the highway and spent just 30 minutes in your community.

And if there's a strong pull, imagine the money spent if visitors stayed two hours in the community, which almost always translates to additional spending.

• 3. Becoming the destination

You cannot be a successful tourism destination if you can't get people to stop. And to become the destination, you must have attractions (things to see and do) or amenities that will convince visitors to spend the night.

Overnight visitors spend three times that of day visitors, and nearly ten times that of visitors making a "pit stop."

The Four-Times Rule

• Visitors will make it a point of stopping or staying in your community if you have enough to offer to keep them busy four times longer than it took them to get there.

In other words, if a person has to drive 15 minutes to visit you, do you have enough for them to do to keep them busy for an hour? (4 times 15 minutes). If a visitor drives an hour, do you have the activities and amenities to keep them busy for four hours?

In a nutshell, if you hope to keep visitors overnight, you must make it worth the drive.

The more you have to offer, the further visitors will come, and the longer they will stay. This is why rural communities MUST typically market more than just the immediate downtown areas. You need to market neighboring communities, outdoor recreational opportunities, exploration, and discovery.

Finally, you must also be different. Too many communities promote "outdoor recreation" as a primary draw. But if residents living in the markets you're hoping to attract can enjoy the same activities closer to home, then why should they go out of their way or the extra distance to visit you?

Critical mass means cash

• While it may not be the primary reason *why* visitors come to your community, shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity - and where visitors spend the most amount of money - other than lodging.

Do you have a pedestrian-oriented shopping district? If not, can you create one? Many rural communities have been highly successful with the development of a two or three block long pedestrian “village” which would include visitor-oriented retail shops, dining, visitor information, restrooms, etc., all in an attractive, well-landscaped setting.

The general rule of thumb is seven to nine retail stores (more on that in a minute), and three or more dining establishments which can include sit-down restaurants, espresso bars, cafes, dessert and ice cream shops, etc.

“Visitor Retail” would include antique stores, galleries, collectibles, souvenir shops, T-shirt shops, outfitters, bike and jeep rentals, guided tour operations, activity shops (kites, hiking, climbing gear, etc.), home accents, jewelry, old-fashioned hardware stores, casinos, entertainment facilities such as movie theaters, pubs, etc.

By grouping these businesses together, you will create the “critical

mass” in a pedestrian setting that will draw visitors and will make it worth their while to stop and shop.

Have you ever noticed at major intersections you will see a Chevron, Union 76, Conoco, and Shell on each of the four corners? Or how about fast food franchises? McDonald’s, Burger King, Jack In The Box, and Wendy’s on each corner. You would think these places would avoid being next to the competition, but they know that visitors are drawn to the “critical mass” where they have multiple choices that are convenient.

Where are your visitor-oriented shops? If they are spread out, they will be marginally successful when it comes to tapping into visitor spending. Put them all together, and you have what it takes to get visitors out of their cars (or busses and RV’s) and into your stores.

Market the broader package

- Every community **MUST** market more than just the community in order to be successful with their tourism efforts.

Remember the Four-Times Rule and also remember that visitors don't stay within or care about boundaries - so market the attractions you have around your community that might keep people in the area long enough to translate to another meal, some shopping, or an overnight stay.

The more you have to offer "collectively," the longer visitors will stay. And the longer they stay, the more they spend.

You must be different or better than everyone else

- To become a destination community where you're the place visitors spend the night or multiple days, you must set yourself apart from everyone else.

In order to make your community "worth the drive" and/or "worth a special trip," you must be better or different from other competing communities.

Ashland, Oregon, previously a depressed timber town, adopted its Shakespeare Festival which runs nine months of the year and draws hundreds of thousands of visitors who spend an average of six nights in the community. It became "different" than other communities and the festival set it apart.

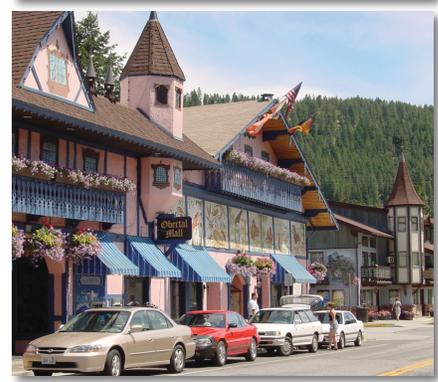
Leavenworth, Washington, another dying timber town, adopted a Bavarian architectural theme and all of their events revolve around the Bavarian theme. The town is one of the primary tourist attractions in Washington state, hosting more than two million visitors annually. They have something different to offer.

Okanogan County, Washington (just south of the Canadian border in central Washington) is an outdoor recreational paradise - but so are 37 of the 38 other counties in Washington. So why go to the Okanogan? Because they are the best. They researched guide books, newspaper and magazine articles, and pulled quotes they could use in their advertising ef-

forts. They started using quotes along the line of "Pinch Yourself, you're in Okanogan Country with perhaps the best cross country skiing on the continent."

This, and numerous other quotes, makes it "worth the extra drive" to visit Okanogan Country. They used third party endorsements to show that they are the "best."

Just look at how powerful movie ratings are when it comes to box office receipts. "Two thumbs up" carries a lot of weight.





Suggestion #1

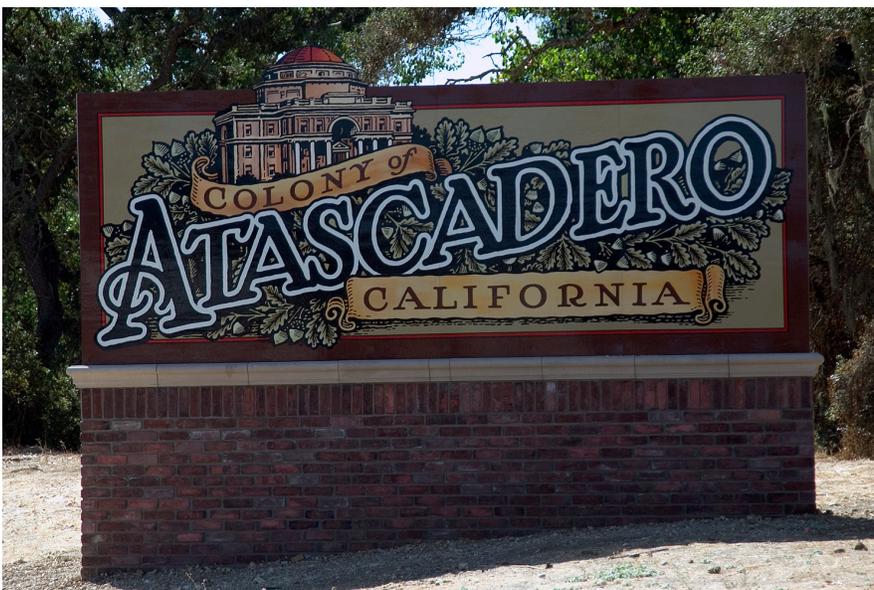
The signage for Atascadero states “Next 9 Exits,” but gives no clue as to which exit a visitor should take to reach downtown. We took each of the nine exits, and it wasn’t until we took the Traffic Avenue exit that we found it was the correct one for downtown. The other exits all place visitors either too far from downtown, or right onto El Camino Real among the strip malls.

Always identify the primary exit that will get visitors to your core shopping district. From there visitors can be prompted to visit other areas of Atascadero through a wayfinding system.



Suggestion #2

Don’t allow banners on the backs of buildings – or on any buildings for more than 14 days. Banners are fine to promote special festivals or events, as long as they are only up for one to two weeks prior to the event. But they should not be used as permanent signage – they look cheap, and make the town look cheap as well.



Note

We noticed the “Colony of Atascadero” sign on the highway heading south into town. It was a little difficult to see at first, since it is down low, but it is a beautiful sign, and the logo is excellent. This sign sets the standard for Atascadero, and lets people know that Atascadero is a quality community.



Suggestion #3

Develop a wayfinding system. The dots are not connected. Only 5% of visitors will come into a visitor information center, if they can find that. A top priority for Atascadero should be the development of a wayfinding and signage system. It was very difficult to find the community’s attractions, amenities, and activities.

We found it very difficult to locate anything in the area. Signage was almost non-existent, and where there might be one directional sign for an attraction, it wasn’t followed up with others to be able to connect the dots.

A wayfinding plan would provide permanent signage to visitor attractions, amenities, and services including downtown, visitor information services, the parks, the golf course, etc. In addition, the signage will help create a stronger sense of place and entice visitors into the core downtown area.

Suggestion #4

Make Traffic Way the primary exit. After we took the fourth exit, we finally saw the “Atascadero – 3/4 mile” exit. The highway signs are confusing – first, they say “Atascadero – next 9 exits,” then the fourth sign states that it is the Atascadero exit.

This exit should be the primary exit to Atascadero’s downtown, and should be signed for Atascadero downtown.

Note

At this intersection there is no signage telling visitors where downtown is. Right or left?



Suggestion #5

Have the used-car sales sign removed. Instead develop wayfinding signage. Is this signage even allowed?



Suggestion #6

Replace the visitor information sign here.

On Hwy 101 south, there is a visitor information sign to this exit. There isn't one heading northbound. This sign is so small it's almost impossible to read, and should be replaced with a larger one.

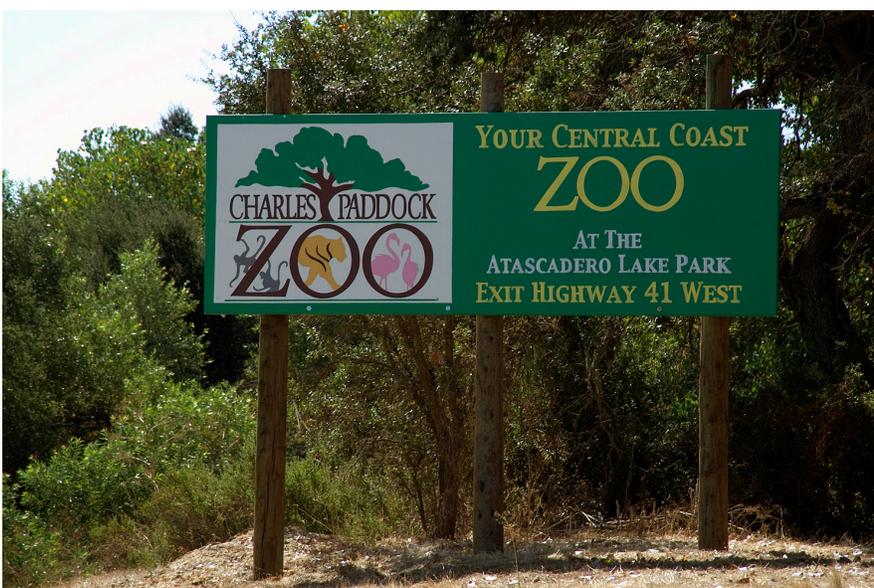
In addition, from here we weren't able to find the visitor information services at all. We learned later that they are located in the Outlet Mall, but we didn't notice them while we were in the Outlet Mall either. It's important to follow through with signage all the way until the visitor reaches the destination.



Suggestion #7

Remove the "Welcome to Atascadero" sign. Compare this sign with the "Colony of Atascadero" sign shown above. While it's wonderful to have these community service organizations in the area, their signs on the freeway are difficult to read, and don't provide a real gateway to the community.

The zoo sign is very nice, but it is difficult to read because there is too much text. It should be redesigned and moved closer to the freeway.



Suggestion #8

It is nearly impossible to read the zoo sign from the freeway (see center left photo). The sign should be where the community welcome sign is and the text much larger (see bottom right photo). Change the text to fewer words and more powerful reasons to visit the zoo.

Text on signage: The general rule is 1" tall letters for every 12' of viewing distance. In this case, the lettering should be at least 8" tall (at minimum). Passers by have four seconds to read signage. Never use more than eight words on any sign.

Regarding auxiliary organizational signs, consider placing them downtown where a person can stop the car and can see when and where travelling members can attend meetings.



Note

First impressions are lasting impressions. Always put your community signage where it will present a good impression of the community. Consider becoming affiliated with the Keep America Beautiful network (www.kab.org), above.



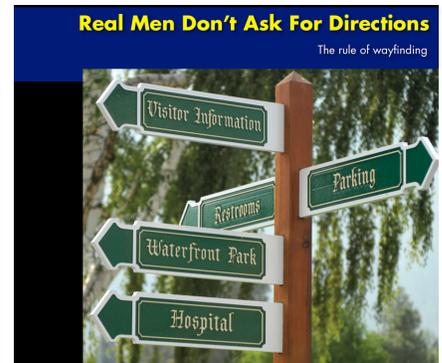


Suggestion #9

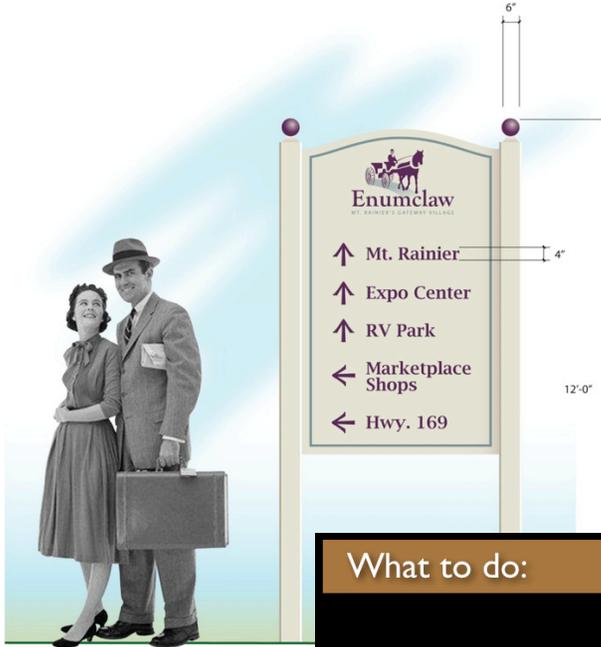
The only Atascadero attraction seems to be Heilmann Regional Park. This is the only attraction noted along the highway.

Your wayfinding system should start at the top (or base) of each exit (center left photo). The park is the only attraction or amenity with directional signage.

As you develop a wayfinding signage system, make sure it is decorative and fits the character of the community. Below are sample designs developed for North Adams, MA (bottom left); Oak Harbor, WA (bottom right); and Leavenworth, WA (below), a Bavarian themed town along the lines of Solvang.



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Note

The signage for Enumclaw, WA (left) fits their equestrian branding efforts.

Suggestion #10

We did find the main entrance to the park (below) but it didn't provide a good first impression. Consider some landscaping around the base of the sign or perhaps some screening of the industrial-looking items behind the sign.

What to do:

Every community should develop and implement a "Gateway, Wayfinding & Signage Plan"

- Wayfinding (connecting the dots - directional signs)
 - Gateways & entries (sense of arrival)
 - Attractions and amenities
 - Billboards and marketing displays
-
- Less than 5% of visitors stop at visitor information centers - IF they can find that!
-





Suggestion #11

The park's entrance is confusing. Is it open to the public or is this a Dove Reservation area (a place reserved for bird watching and doves)? Or is it a reservation-only park area? Add maps of the park, information.

Additionally, after following the golf course signs, we were very surprised to find that the golf course turned out to be a disc golf course (bottom right photo).



Suggestion #12

Redevelop the signage at the park to make it easier for visitors to figure out what's where. After looking through the woods we could see some green - apparently a "real" golf course. There weren't any signs for the regular golf course at all. There are plenty of opportunities to use park signage to cross promote other attractions in Atascadero. Instead, the kiosks are used to warn visitors of yellow jackets, mountain lions, fire danger, etc. - a missed opportunity.





Suggestion #13

Once we left the park, we decided to explore and turned right. Lo and behold, we accidentally found the golf course, which is beautiful, but easily missed and poorly promoted.

A visitor information kiosk should be placed at the golf course, once again, to cross-promote other area attractions, amenities and activities.

The golf course could use much better signage, and should let people know whether or not it is open to public play.





Suggestion #14

Consider calling the building something else: “Central Coast Museum” or something that would attract visitors. The “Atascadero Administration Building” sounds just like the name: a government building.

This sign should be removed since the building is closed, there is really nothing to see, and may be closed for quite some time.

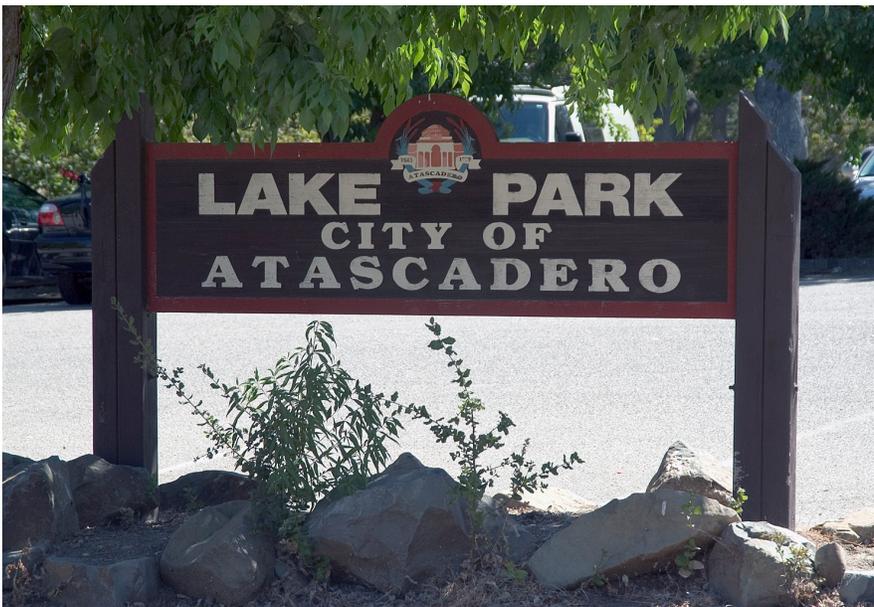


Suggestion #15

Promote the park, lake, boating, restrooms, etc. This is a great attraction for both residents and visitors.

The entrance sign to the zoo should be a monument sign, not just a billboard. Consider promoting on the sign activities and teasers, replacing the “your central coast conservation center.”

The city sign (bottom) should read “Atascadero Lake & Zoo” instead of “Lake Park,” which has little appeal. Noting that the city owns the park is not necessary. Always promote the experience, not the owner.



The zoo and park should be marketed together as one attraction. The more you have to offer, collectively, the further people will come and the longer they will stay.

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The park and zoo are a terrific attraction and well done and beautifully maintained. The front-line staff at the zoo did an excellent job cross selling to other area attractions, and do a terrific job engaging visitors.

The banners (center far left) are well done and add character to the zoo.



Partnerships

The Paso Robles Wine Country brochure does a good job selling the experience, noting what's special about each winery, and what sets

each apart from the others. It also demonstrates the power of partnerships. You are a lot more effective as one loud voice than a number of small individual voices.

PASO ROBLES WINE COUNTRY
2005-2006
YOUR GUIDE TO THE AREA'S PREMIUM WINES

distinct different
PASO ROBLES

HIDDEN MOUNTAIN RANCH (HMR) — Come experience a part of Paso Robles wine history as you visit HMR Winery, one of the first modern wineries in the area. Our focus is on using only the highest quality grapes to produce small lots of fine wines. Visit HMR to enjoy the incredible views and exceptional wines. Open 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at 2740 Hidden Mountain Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446. 805-238-7143.

HUNT CELLARS — Enjoy Westside beauty and visit our warm and friendly tasting room. Sample our prestigious multi-media winning wines. Recognized as the next "Cult" winery, as well as one of the best wineries in the state of California, Hunt Cellars offers a memorable wine experience. Ploze on our spacious decks or grassy lawn. Private tastings available. Open daily 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Hwy. 46 West, 2875 Oakdale Road, 3 miles west of Hwy. 101, Paso Robles, CA 93446. 805-237-1600. www.huntcellars.com.

J. LOHR VINEYARDS & WINES — The perfect climatic conditions for Cabernet Sauvignon led Jerry Lohr to Paso Robles in 1988 where his vineyards now encompass 2,000-acres of red varietals. Winery production began with Seven Oaks Cabernet and now includes Hilltop Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Lost Bess Merlot, and the new Coulee Series of Grand Cru-style wines. Open daily, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. 6769 Airport Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446. 805-235-9800. www.jlohr.com

JUSTIN WINERY — Take a country drive to our "hip" wine and cheese bar to access internationally acclaimed Bordeaux blends—SOCCLES and JUSTIFICATION. Rhône varietals, dessert wines and limited release JUSTIN Wine Society wines. Tour our extensive wine caves, stay at the romantic JUST-Inn, dine nightly at the intimate Deterah's Room restaurant, and savor bistrot lunch weekends 12-4 p.m. 11880 Chimney Rock Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446. Open daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Saturday seasonally. 805-237-4143. 800-726-0488. Email: info@JUSTINwine.com. www.JUSTINwine.com

LAVENTURE WINERY — Coming from Bordeaux, Stephan Assou "fell in love with Paso" in 1986 and has worked to create the finest wines the wine field can give. Our unique Westside terroir provides the foundation for his classical viticulture and artisan winemaking skills. The proof of his passion for quality lies in our estate grown "Paso blends." Open 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Thursday-Sunday, and everyday by appointment. 2815 Live Oak Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446. 805-227-1588. Email: stephanwiner@com.net. www.laventurewine.com

LE CUVIER WINERY — There is firm empirical evidence to the effect that wild yeast and other varied wine pathogens die off sooner unless given an interesting environment within which to practice their art. Thus we dedicate ourselves to making life interesting for the wild yeasts who seem content to do all the work. Open 11 a.m.-5 p.m. daily. 6768 Adelaide Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446. 805-238-5706. www.lcwiner.com

LINNE CALODO — Linne Calodo takes its name from the rocky, limestone soil type of westside Paso Robles, and it's the soil. Winemaker Matt Trevisan sees as one of the essential building blocks for his wines...Producers of Rhône and Zinfandel blends... Supporters of sustainability... Experience the Linne Calodo wines Friday-Sunday 11 a.m.-5 p.m. or by appointment. 3845 Oakdale Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446. 805-227-0797. www.linnecalodo.com

LOCATELLI VINEYARDS & WINERY — "Experience the Taste of Tradition" — Proprietor Leslie and Rayette invite you to come and discover the history behind "the man on the label" while enjoying breathtaking views and carefully handcrafted estate vineyards. Located overlooking the peaceful Salinas River valley and historic Old Mission San Miguel, we welcome you. Salut! Open Friday-Sunday 11 a.m.-4 p.m. 8905 Cross Canyon Road, San Miguel, CA 93451. 805-467-0167. www.locatelliwinery.com

MADISON CELLARS — Ever wonder what full terror expression is? Come visit our tasting room and find out why Robert Parker calls our wines bold, dramatic, complex, copulent, and heady. Specializing in Bordeaux and Rhône wines, join our Wine Guild and experience a whole new wine club designed just for you. Salut! Open 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday. 1761 Ramada Drive, Paso Robles, CA 93446. 805-237-7544. Email: info@madisoncellars.net. www.madisoncellars.com

MALOY O'NEILL VINEYARDS — Experience handcrafted quality. Maloy O'Neill Vineyards is a small family-owned and operated vineyard and winery, specializing in premium handcrafted wines produced in limited quantities. O'Neill Vineyards has been a local supplier of premium quality grapes since 1982. Now come enjoy our award-winning wines! Orders by phone, fax, email or Web site. 5725 Union Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446. 805-238-7500 or 805-878-3382. Fax: 805-238-8412. Email: winery@maloyoneill.com. www.maloyoneill.com

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Note

Atascadero can promote itself as a hub to the Central Coast experience by creating partnerships and promoting Santa Margarita (left), Templeton (center left), Cambria (bottom left), and Paso Robles (bottom right photos). Paso Robles has a terrific downtown core area that is obviously evolving into a destination gathering area, something Atascadero needs to develop.





Note

In visiting the towns within 30 miles of Atascadero, we noted that few had the “critical mass” of at least 10 dining and treats-oriented businesses and 10 destination retail shops (galleries, gifts, collectibles, home accents, etc.). Morrow Bay, San Luis Obispo, and Cambria were good examples of critical mass. The number one activity of visitors around the world is shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting. It only takes a two lineal block area to achieve the critical mass necessary for additional visitor spending.

Paso Robles is evolving to a destination area, but is still lacking enough retail, although it is currently an excellent “dining district.”

Even the Factory Outlet mall (bottom photos) does not have the critical mass to make it a true visitor destination. Typically, outlet malls require at least 30 retailers to make them a true destination shopping attraction. We counted only 12 retailers at the mall.

What to do:

Create “open market” events or that type of atmosphere:

- Flea markets
- Farmers markets
- Arts & crafts fairs
- Include education & entertainment

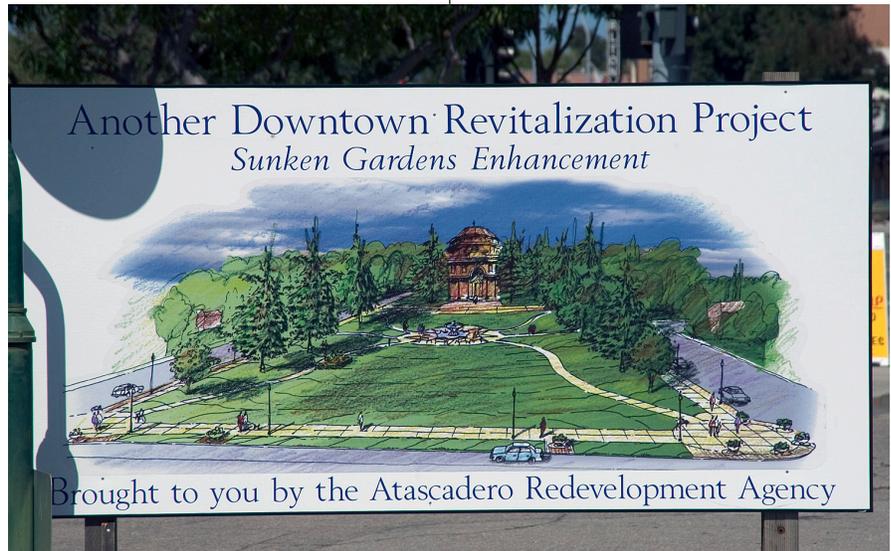




Note

A fabulous building. A great art museum, performing arts venue? Could be the anchor to the Sunken Gardens park.

While the Sunken Gardens will be a terrific project for the city, the real draw revolves around activities: creating gathering areas for arts and crafts fairs, farmers markets, entertainment, etc. Consider adding an amphitheater and other attraction-oriented venues in the park so it's much more than just open space.



Suggestion #17:

Add interpretive displays, information about the Administration Building (above and top).

The building's tragic damage from the earthquake is a story in itself. Telling the story of when it was built, what it has housed over the years, and the experience of going through the earthquake would make the building become an attraction even when not able to go inside.

The beautification efforts in the median (right) are excellent. Nothing sells as well as beautification.





Suggestion #18

The Carlton should consider adding rope lights around the building to call attention from Highway 101. It is easily missed from the highway and the sign, while historically accurate, doesn't have much pulling appeal so the building itself needs to be the draw. Rope lights around the architectural details will turn the building into a real show stopper at night.



Suggestion #19

Add potted flowers at every post surrounding the Carlton. Pull people in. Nothing sells like curb appeal. Notice the shops (far left) and the same shops (left) after adding pots. Which shops would pull you in? The Carlton is beautiful but needs the added touch of pots at each post, between the tables.





Suggestion #21

Consider changing the name of “Traffic Way.” Would you want to shop there? Even go there? It sounds like a place or street to avoid, particularly since visitors want pedestrian-friendly gathering areas.

Suggestion #22

Replace these banners with something decorative, something colorful. Use art, not text. Never use more than four words on a banner and make them fit the character of the community. Develop a set for downtown (once you have a name), and a different set to promote Atascadero. In Appleton, Wisconsin (bottom right), they use “It’s Showtime” to promote their performing arts center. Banners need to be decorative, colorful and artistic.



Suggestion #20

Give the downtown core area a name: something other than “downtown.” Perhaps “Colony Row,” or “Colony Place.” Provide actual gateways to the district. The sample, (left) is for the Beaumont, Texas entertainment district, Crockett Street.

Destination downtowns:

- San Diego: Gaslamp District
- Santa Monica: 3rd Street Promenade
- Santa Cruz: The Boardwalk
- Seattle: Pioneer Square
- Nelson, BC: Baker Street
- Portland, OR: Pearl District
- New Orleans: Bourbon Street, The French Quarter
- Sacramento: Old Towne
- Austin, TX: 6th Street

Giving downtowns a name, combined with actual gated entries, creates the “mall mentality” among businesses where they become partners as opposed to competitors - along the lines of antique malls. This way you are creating a true destination area for locals and visitors alike.

Create a sense of arrival that makes the visitor want to stop, and create a sense of place that makes the visitor or resident want to linger. Put out the welcome mat and put your name on the door.

TOURISM ASSESSMENT & SUGGESTIONS



Suggestion #23

Many of the businesses near the Carlton have done a good job of adding beautification, decorative signage, and the extension of window displays to exterior spaces. Others, however, can use some assistance in educating them about the importance of overall curb appeal. You can create a cooperative program for the purchase of hanging baskets, benches, trash receptacles, and pots.

Hanging baskets and potted flowers and greenery would add tremendously to downtown's appeal. Merchants WILL see a return on the investment.



Suggestion #24

Remove newspaper stands, Christmas lights, add curb appeal, different displays, signage, (above and below).

Consider developing a Main Street program for the core area of downtown, one block wrapping around the Carlton.





Suggestion #25

Many of the downtown merchants can use some assistance in developing better curb appeal, window displays, signage, etc.

Signs like the one shown to the left, leave visitors feeling that the community is not a safe place to be. Is most of the shopping in Atascadero unsafe? Signs like this should be removed.



Suggestion #26

As downtown develops, get rid of two-hour parking limits. In a pedestrian-friendly shopping district, visitors will spend an average of four hours, usually including a meal. Around the country, because merchants cannot get their employees to park in designated areas, 2 hour parking limits are imposed by cities. In essence, this sends the message that since we can't get our employees to park elsewhere, we're going to punish our customers by forcing them to leave before they are done spending money.

IF you must have two-hour parking, then note places people can park for longer periods. There was no signage for RV parking areas, public parking lots, etc.



Suggestion #27

Consider a merchant-driven signage, display, and sandwich board program. The sandwich boards (top and center left) have very little appeal and do little to attract customers. Does the Frankie's Deli board (left) make you want to eat there?

The sandwich boards in Shasta, CA (top right) are decorative, narrow, and are excellent teasers to draw visitors into local stores.

Sandwich boards should only be allowed in front of the premise (on premise signage).



Your visitor information should be working 365 days a year, 24/7. Consider developing a gazebo kiosk in Sunken Gardens Park in Shasta, CA, along the lines of the one shown here, located in Beatty, NV. Make sure kiosks include brochure distribution and "must see attractions" in the area.

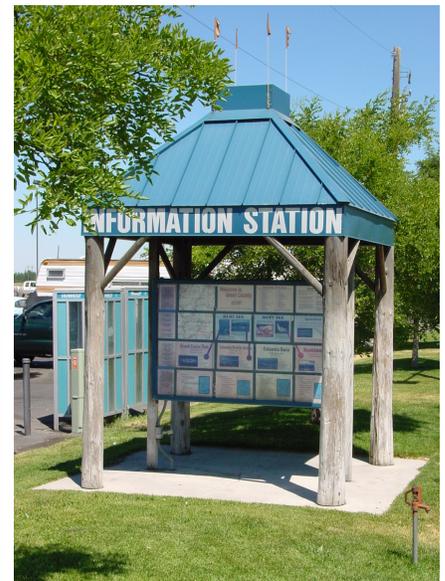
TOURISM ASSESSMENT & SUGGESTIONS

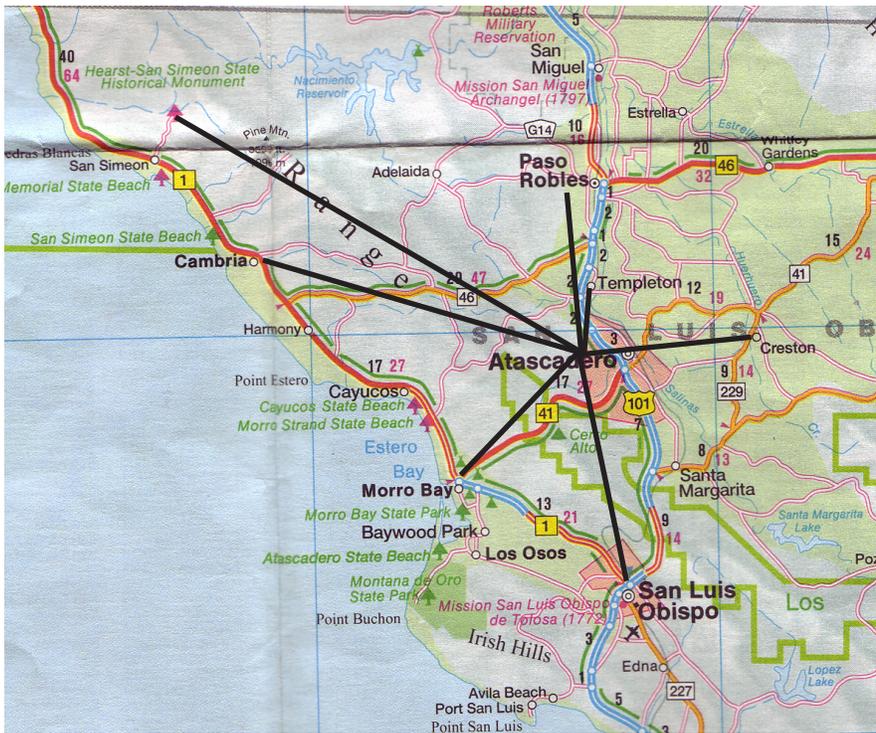


Note

There are a number of locations available for cross-selling activities, attractions, and visitor amenities. Visitor Information Kiosks should be placed at:

- the zoo
- Golf Course
- Each park
- Two locations downtown
- Chamber office





Suggestion #28

Become the “base camp” for the Central Coast experience, until you have the critical mass to become THE destination.

Suggestion #29

Make sure you sell experiences and not places. Visitors are interested in activities more than geography.

Sell the experience, not the place.

- Visitors enjoy experiences much more than cities or buildings.
- Sell activities, learning experiences, fun.
- Sell them on WHY they should visit your community, then WHY they should visit your business.

Avoid:

- Marketing counties
- Marketing cities

Visitors don't care about the name of the county or city (unless it's world renowned like Paris or New York.) They are interested in the activities they will experience once they arrive. Do you go to Anaheim or Disneyland?

Avoid these words:

- Explore
- Discover
- Outdoor recreation
- We have it all
- Naturally fun
- The four season destination
- Something for everyone
- Historic downtown
- Center of it all
- Gateway

These words are so over-used in tourism marketing that they no longer carry any meaning for a visitor.

Google Web Images Groups News Froogle Local more »
california central coast

Results 1 - 10 of about 30,700,000 for **california central coast**. (0.32 seconds)

Web

Cambria Vacation Homes
cambriavacationrentals.com Beautiful ocean front, ocean view & forest view homes.

California Central Coast Online Business and Travel Directory
Business, travel and entertainment directory for the section of coast between San Simeon and the Pismo Beach area. Also includes weather, photo gallery, ...
www.centralcoast.com/ - 41k - Sep 11, 2005 - Cached - Similar pages

Central Coast Tourist Home Page
Informational alerts on the Central Coast of California ... map of California counties with central coast Just moving in? We have information on schools, ...
www.centralcoasttourist.com/ - 49k - Sep 12, 2005 - Cached - Similar pages

Central Coast Tourism Council - Serving the Central Coast of ...
Vacation, travel and visitor's guide to California's Central Coast. Accommodations and campgrounds guide, free maps and calendar of events.
www.centralcoast-tourism.com/ - 9k - Cached - Similar pages

San Luis Obispo County California Travel Guide by SLO County VCB
San Luis Obispo County VCB offers complete California central coast travel guide to San Luis Obispo County hotels and restaurants, San Luis Obispo County ...
www.sanluisobispo.com/ - 39k - Sep 11, 2005 - Cached - Similar pages

Central Coast Links : California Central Coast Business ...
A business and community directory / guide for the Central Coast of California including San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties.
centralcoastlinks.com/ - 18k - Sep 12, 2005 - Cached - Similar pages

California's Central Coast Travel & Tourism: WorldWeb.com Travel ...
A California's Central Coast travel and tourism travel maps, photos and other visitor information
www.centralcoast.worldweb.com/ - 49k - Sep 11, 2005 - Cached - Similar pages

California Central Coast Marketing To ...
The California Central Coast offers a truly unique

Even when developing websites, make sure the focus is on activities, not city names and places. Will visitors find Atascadero if you search for “California coast wineries”?

Google Web Images Groups News Froogle Local more »
california central coast wine

Results 1 - 10 of about 2,480,000 for **california central coast wine**. (0.92 seconds)

Web

The California Wine Club
www.cawineclub.com Wines not found in local stores. 3 bottles for the price of 2.

Bedford Thompson Winery | California Central Coast Wine Country
Producer of Chardonnay, Syrah, Cabernet Franc and other varietal wines in Santa Barbara wine country.
www.bedfordthompsonwinery.com/ - 4k - Sep 12, 2005 - Cached - Similar pages

San Luis Obispo County California Travel Guide by SLO County VCB
San Luis Obispo County VCB offers complete California central coast travel ... The world-renowned California wine country of the Paso Robles wine country in ...
www.sanluisobispo.com/ - 39k - Sep 11, 2005 - Cached - Similar pages

Wine Tasting-Wine Country Vacations-Central Coast of California ...
San Luis Obispo County California wine country offers superb wine tasting for day trippers and truly memorable wine country vacations.
www.sanluisobispo.com/site/link/index.cfm?contentID=53 - 80k - Cached - Similar pages

Morro Bay California Central Coast Wine Country Vacations, Tours ...
The Embarcadero Inn Hotel at Morro Bay California presents wine country vacation tours and lodging including wine tasting and afternoon wine country tours ...
www.embarcaderoinn.com/activities-wine.php - 20k - Cached - Similar pages

home1.gte.net/otruba/sb_wine.html
Similar pages

From California's Central Coast Wine Country
FROM CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST WINE COUNTRY: CENTRAL COASTING: any travelers to Los Angeles are still unaware that "wine country" exists a mere two-hour ...
www.psyd.com/travel/ctips/centralcoast.html - 25k - Cached - Similar pages

Central Coast Wine Classic
The 2006 Central Coast Wine Classic is scheduled for Thursday through Sunday, ... Experience the beauty and diversity of California's Central Coast!

TOURING CALIFORNIA'S Central Coast

California's Spectacular Central Coast

Search Region Map Attractions Area Events Wineries Mileage Chart

Press Releases

COAST STARLIGHT
Full service restored

The Central Coast of California comprises seven coastal counties of the Golden State, lying between Santa Cruz, two hours south of San Francisco, and Oxnard, about an hour north of Los Angeles. The Central Coast comprises some 300 miles of the state's inimitable coastline and 14,333 square miles of spectacular—and spectacularly varied—California landscape. The region encompasses half a dozen mountain ranges, and more than half of California's 21 historic Jesuit missions.

Search our Member Database for Lodging, Restaurants, Shopping, Tours and more

Sideways Press Release

Where to Stay

Use our listings to make advance reservations at one of the area's fabulous luxury resorts or a charming bed and breakfast inn. Or plan to stay at a hotel or motel where everything you need is within walking distance. For the ultimate in relaxation indulge yourself in one of the many "Spa Packages" available at fine hotels, resorts and spas in the region. Whatever you're looking for in the way of accommodations you're sure to find it on the Central Coast.

Where to Play

Visitor Bureaus and Chambers of Commerce (listed for each city) will have complete details on recreation in that region. As you make your travel plans, be assured that a delightful array of options await you no matter where you choose to stay.

Visitor Tips

On behalf of the Board of Director and members of California's Central Coast Tourism Council, I wish to welcome you to our beautiful region. Whether this is your first visit or a return trip, the area is a vista of scenic pleasures to suit your perfect California vacation.

If you are traveling between Los Angeles and San Francisco our cities and beaches welcome your visit with small town hospitality. We have it all: History, with 11 of the historic California Missions, Recreation, from

Suggestion (continued)

All too often, communities are too focused on promoting geographic boundaries, cities, counties, or are far too generic in the marketing efforts. Promoting "unique shops, galleries and restaurants" is something EVERY community in the U.S. can boast having. Always promote things that visitors will not find closer to home. Even private businesses that make you worth a special trip.

When promoting experiences (we're in the Experience Economy), consider the following: Would you rather visit Napa County or Napa Valley? Napa Valley sounds like an experience - a destination. Would you be drawn to a "historic downtown" or an "historic shopping district," which sells the experience or activity (shopping), in a great setting (historic).

Suggestion #30

The city needs to develop visitor information on its site, or at least a link to visitor info.

Home

ATASCADERO

Atascadero is located in the heart of the Central Coast, offering a blend of natural beauty and a rural lifestyle. There are many activities for the entire family including the Charles Paddock Zoo, the beautiful Atascadero Lake Park, and the local outlet stores.

NEW!

Click on the link below to see images of what the improvements to the Sunken Garden will look like once construction is completed. Improvements include additional lighting, sidewalks, walkways, benches and a working fountain.

[Sunken Garden Enhancement Project Images](#)

Click on the link below to view the architect's slide presentation of the damage to City Hall, resulting from the San Simeon Earthquake on December 22, 2003. Images include interior and exterior damage, as well as historical photos and structural drawings.

[City Hall Presentation](#)

Click on the link below to see the Downtown Revitalization Plan Vision.

[Downtown Revitalization Plan Vision](#)

September is National Preparedness Month. Are You Prepared? Click the link below to see a slide presentation on being prepared.

[National Preparedness Month](#)

Morro Bay CALIFORNIA

Home
Visitor Information
Contact Us
About Morro Bay
Lodging
Dining Guide
Things To Do
Chamber of Commerce

Morro Bay, California

We Care: Help the victims of Hurricane Katrina
[click here](#)

It's undoubtedly the best time to visit the Central Coast of California!

Pastel Sunset photo by Janice Peters

Crisp, sunny blue skies overhead with crystalline views of the harbor; the great rock and the sun glinting diamond facets on the open ocean - its the beautiful central coast of California!

Calendar of Events
September 2005
Su M T W Th F S
1 2 3
4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30
[View Full Calendar](#)

[Send an e-Postcard](#)

Special Fall Packages
[Learn more >](#)

Join Now!
Sign up for our [eTravel Newsletter >](#)

Fine Dining - Golf
Wine Tasting
Lodging - Camping
Art Galleries
Shopping - Antiques
Surfing - Kayaking
Whale Watching
Day at the Beach
Bird Watching

Note

The internet is where it's happening.

A few numbers to get us started:

- There are 320 million websites (today.)
- A new website is coming online every 3.5 seconds.
- There are 140 million website users in the U.S. alone.
- Website visitors will wait 8 seconds for a page to load.
- 70% of website users never go past the first page of search results.
- 82% of website users never go past the second page of search

The most important element in marketing a town is the website. It must be good enough to close the sale. Here are some key points to keep in mind when developing a tourism website:

- 1) Create a “splash page” that pulls visitors into the site. Just like a novel or magazine article, the first line or paragraph is critical to grabbing the reader. Your splash page should sell the community in pictures and introductory text. Think of the splash page as the front door to your community.
- 2) Spread the splash page around. The city, chamber and other local organizations should use the same style or “look” on their front doors as well. This continuity helps build the brand: who you are.
- 3) Once through the front door, there can be more options. The visitor can pick which direction to go: to the city portion, or to the visitor portion.
- 4) Purchase keywords. If vineyards and wineries are a big draw to your community, searching those words on Google (the most popular search engine), will yield 16,060,000 results. Since 70% of all web users don't go past the first page of search results, they won't find your site if it's on page 994.

Both Google and Yahoo! sell keyword listings, even though they have free search services. You bid for the keywords, with the highest bidder taking top honors on the first page of results, under “sponsor matches.” Keyword bidding is referred to as “pay per click” – a powerful and cost effective way to market whatever you're selling.

- 5) Tourism is the front door to your community. The fastest growing industry in all 50 states, nothing promotes a community more than tourism. It's the quality of life: culture, history, activities, attractions, amenities, etc. Tourism is a primary attractor for non-tourism economic development efforts. The first few pages of your website should promote the community using lots of professional photography.

- 6) Check the competition. Make sure you stack up. Compare the appeal of San Luis Obispo's website, Santa Barbara's, Monterey's, Napa Valley's, etc.

- 7) Keep it simple. Once through the splash page, have no more than seven links on your home page. Too many choices confuse the visitor. Make it easy to navigate and informative.

- 8) Build the brand. Branding is the art of differentiation – what sets you apart. Be consistent in your identity, slogan, the look and feel of your marketing materials.

- 9) Convenience is everything. Be sure your marketing materials are available, on-line in PDF format, for immediate download. Most people do their travel planning during the evening hours when the local chamber is closed. Make it convenient.

- 10) Invest wisely. Many communities spend \$20,000 or more on a brochure, but maybe only \$5,000 on a website. 94% of all potential visitors will use the internet, while less than 5% will actually call or stop by a visitor center.

11) Put together several two-, three-day, or week-long itineraries of activities visitors can do while staying in Atascadero. Be specific, with routes to drive, names of the wineries, shops to visit, restaurants, etc. Give the reader a real feel for being there and doing that. Post these on the website under the heading: Itineraries.

A note about marketing the area

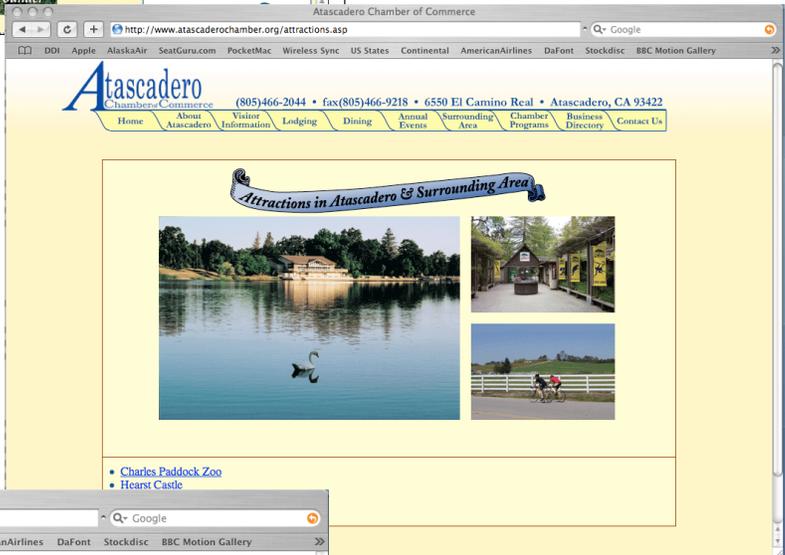
The Central Coast area of California has a tremendous variety of attractions to offer visitors: the coast and coastal towns, plus the inland towns, vineyards, and wineries. With close to one hundred wineries within a one hour drive of Atascadero, the town becomes the perfect “hub” for the Central Coast wine touring experience. Granted, Paso Robles is closer to the majority of the wineries, but it doesn't have The Carlton. There is a real lack of lodging facilities in the region, and there is very little high-end lodging at all. The Carlton and local B & B's can fill that niche for those who want to have more elegant accommodations.

TOURISM ASSESSMENT & SUGGESTIONS



Suggestion #31

Promote the experience, not the history. Include maps, mileage, specific itineraries.



results.

- 94% of travelers with internet access use it as their primary travel planning resource.
- 70% of people planning trips have difficulty finding what they are looking for.
- 88% of all Americans say the internet plays a major role in their lives.
- 75% of all Americans use the internet regularly.
- New internet users are growing by 10% per month.
- Nearly 88% of all destination marketing organizations spend more on printed materials than the web!



Suggestion #32

You must promote specific shops that make you worth a special trip. What do you have that I can't get closer to home? Promote it. Don't let the politics of memberships kill your tourism efforts.

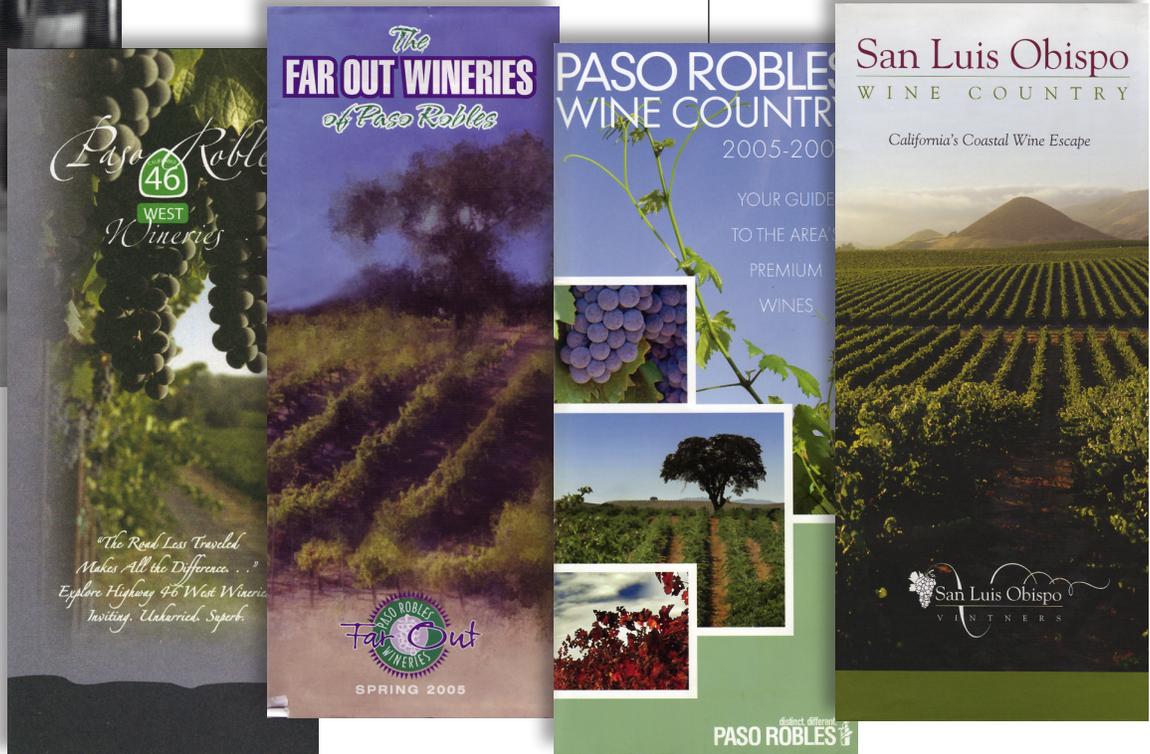




Suggestion #33

1. Keep working on product development. You're making good progress. It never happens as quick as you'd like.
2. Create a destination retail/entertainment district and create gateways to the district. Develop the "mall mentality" among merchants and property owners in the district.
3. Develop a branding theme. Consider equestrian. Something that makes you unique over other area communities.
4. Develop and implement a "Gateway, Wayfinding & Signage Program."
5. Become a hub for the Central Coast Wine Experience. Put together detailed day trip itineraries. Keep them within a 45 minute drive.

Partnerships need to be created to develop a single wine experience. There are far too many brochures promoting wineries. All of these could be combined into a single Central Coast Wine Experience, with different itineraries based on location.



Travel trends

1. Baby boomers account for 80% of all travel spending in the U.S. There are 350,000 people turning 50 every month and this will continue for another nine years. The oldest boomers are approaching 60 and are in the peak of their earning years.
2. The baby boom generation controls 70% of the nation's wealth. They LOVE wineries and refined places to eat and stay. Quality is paramount to attracting these heavy spenders.
3. This generation stands to inherit \$10.4 trillion from their parents. Where they will spend the money: second homes and travel. A perfect opportunity for "me oriented" spending.

This visitor assessment was prepared by the team at:



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