

Meeting Minutes
Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism of Island County
May 5, 2022
Camp Casey Conference Center, Coupeville

Quorum: x=members present

Mayor Scott Chaplin X	Com. Melanie Bacon X	Jackie Henderson
Alannah Johansen X	Gregg Lanza X	OH Lodging- Vacant
Dianne Binder X	Max Lindsay-Thorsen	Tom Felvey X
Janae Cameron/Christina Swan	Jessica McCready	Chet Ross X
Vicki Graham X	Inge Morascini X	Sharon Sappington, EDC X
Lynda Eccles X	Robyn Myers X	Jim Woessner

In addition to the above members, guests also in attendance were:

Payton Aparicio, Camp Casey Conference Center
 Sherrye Wyatt, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism PR & Marketing Manager, Film Liaison
 Jack Penland Whidbey and Camano Islands digital projects
 Scott Rosenkranz, Whidbey and Camano Island Tourism design projects
 Sarah Richards, Lavender Wind
 Laura Hilton, Whidbey and Camano Islands special projects
 Marie Shimada, Reserve Manager, Ebey's Reserve
 Andrew Ziel, Ebey's Reserve Trust Board Representative
 Brian Bjorndal, PNW Naval Air Museum
 Scott Price, Price Sculpture Park
 Margaret Bailey, Anchorage Inn
 Jason Joiner, Peoples Bank
 Elka Burnett, Peoples Bank
 Rainy Simpson, Coupeville Historical Waterfront Association
 Molly Hughes, Mayor of Coupeville
 Marcia Marks, Coupeville Chamber of Commerce
 David Blanford, Executive Director at State of Washington Tourism

Meeting called to order at 11:10 am by Vice Chair, Chet Ross.

1. **Adoption of Agenda** – Vicki motioned, and Greg seconded to accept the agenda. Approved with no objections.
2. **Approval of April 2022 Minutes** -Inge motioned, Vicki seconded to approve the minutes. Approved with no objections.
3. **Treasurer's Report and Invoice review** – Dianne presented the latest revenue numbers and budget spend through April. She confirmed Langley financials are reconciled. All invoices were approved at the management committee meeting. There were no objections to the invoices presented. No other treasurer's reports were presented.
4. **Old Business:**

- a. **Trails Guide Update** – Scott Rosenkranz it will be in at the printer later this month should be ready by Memorial Day Weekend. Jack Penland showcased one example of the “Two Minute Trailers” videos that will be previewing on the website. There is also a trail directory included.
5. **New Business:**
- a. **Management Committee Report-** everything discussed is on the agenda.
 - b. **PR Media Report:** Below is the team’s monthly report.

SHERRYE WYATT PR & WRITING

MEET STATE OF WASHINGTON TOURISM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Celebrate National Travel and Tourism Week by joining Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism on May 5 at its monthly meeting at Camp Casey. Special guest is State of Washington Tourism Executive Director David Blandford, who will offer his thoughts on statewide tourism in 2022 and beyond. A brief business meeting will follow his presentation.



Please share this information and link with anyone interested in tourism. Pre-registration is needed for an accurate lunch head count and room set up. Lunch is \$15 per person. Camp Casey also requires a signed waiver. The meeting begins at 11 a.m. and ends at 1 p.m. Attendees are asked to arrive by 10:45 a.m. To sign up visit <https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/whidbey-and-camano-islands-tourism/>

David Blandford, APR has served for two years as the Executive Director of the newly-branded State of Washington Tourism (SWT) where he leads Washington's official destination marketing organization (DMO) to drive economic impact and expedite recovery throughout the travel and tourism industry. SWT was formally known as the Washington Tourism Alliance. Prior to this, Blandford served for 18 years with Visit Seattle, Washington state's largest DMO and one of the most prominent in the country, where he rose through the ranks to Senior Vice President of Public Affairs. Among many other things, he also was an adjunct professor at Seattle University where he taught communications to art leaders in the graduate program, as well as earned the highly-competitive and prestigious accreditation as a public relations professional known by the acronym APR. He's a graduate of the University of Washington.

National Travel and Tourism Week is an annual tradition for the U.S. travel community. It's a time when travel and tourism professionals across the country unite to celebrate the value travel holds for the economy, businesses, communities and personal well-being. For more in information visit <https://www.ustravel.org/events/national-travel-and-tourism-week>

NEW DATA: Dean Runyon Coming Soon

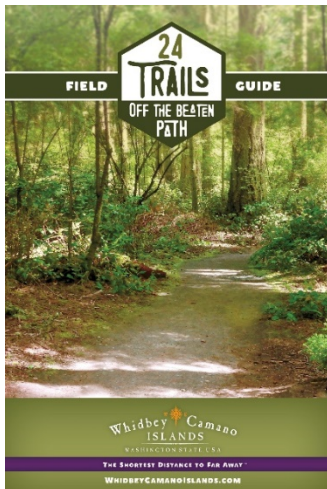
2022 is the third year of a three-year contract to provide data for Island County with islands and towns broken out. The data should be ready in May.

SCENIC BYWAYS: Ramping Up Statewide and Nationally

Sherrye and Jack are sharing participation representing Whidbey Scenic Isle Way in the statewide Scenic Byways working group created by State of Washington Tourism, representing They are also working closely with the Cascade Loop to explore funding opportunities.

ADVERTISING: Updates

Upcoming advertising include with the Camano Island Studio Tour, Plein Aire Open, Northwest Wedding Guide, the Islander, Whidbey Life Magazine and Whidbey Art Trail Map.



Trails Guide and TREAD Map App

At the April meeting the tourism committee approved partnering with Washington State of Tourism on the new TREAD Map App. It is to launch around the same time as the new trails guide “24 Trails off the Beaten Path” is DONE and should be back from the printer in time for Memorial Day Weekend.

SAVE THE DATE: October 11, 12 and 13, 2022 in Seattle (exact times and locations TBD) There will be three back-to-back jam filled in-person days of presentations for tourism leaders to attend. Day 1: Working with the cruise ship industry; Day 2: Statewide Tourism Summit; and Day 3: Outdoor Recreation Summit. Whidbey and Camano Islands

Tourism will be represented.

TRANSFORMATIVE DESTINATION WORK: In person workshop/retreat May 2-3, guests here May 1-4. Marina Laurent (France), Jillian Dickens (Spain) and Jake Haupert (USA) are facilitating the in -person retreat for leaders and regenerators. Larger community-based stakeholder input will be sought in the future. If you have any questions about the process please reach out to info@whidbeycamanoislands.com and visit [Transformational Travel - Whidbey and Camano Islands \(whidbeycamanoislands.com\)](https://www.whidbeycamanoislands.com). Also Sherrye is doing another international radio broadcast on Big Blend Radio about Regenerative Travel. She also is writing a story for the Islander, wrote a recent story published in the Whidbey News-Times, and a tourism

website blog post [Transformational Travel? We've Got You Covered - Whidbey and Camano Islands \(whidbeycamanoislands.com\)](https://whidbeycamanoislands.com)

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Monthly Overview

Spring brings a strong interest in island travel, we worked to help vet, secure and shape media itineraries and angles. This month, we hosted a writer with the *Washington Post* in partnership with Washington State Tourism, prepared for the launch of the new trail guide and joined Transformational Travel meetings. Heavy planning for three upcoming media visits in May will yield positive coverage for the new trail guide, Camano Studio Tour Weekend and themes that align with the transformational travel plan in development.

Project Management

- Coordinated four itineraries for upcoming media visits (listed below).
- Participated in trail guide proofing, prepared draft press release with May 25 date anticipated.
- Joined in Transformational Travel meetings.
- Supported story development and interviews for secured and pending press, including Sunset Magazine's [roundup that features Captain Whidbey](#) as well as an upcoming piece in National Geographic (see pending press below)

Instagram Engagement

- Reposted influencer and local business content, and managed the community with likes, comments and interaction on the @GoWhidbeyCamano Instagram page. Maintained goal of 2-3 posts per week, with stories posting on an ongoing basis.
- Follower count grew from 2,225 on March 31 to 2,259 on April 27; a growth rate of 1.52%.

Media Visits

- **Michael Fagin, April 28-May 1.** freelance travel writer for Foodista, will research a story about the trails, dining, kayaking, and standup paddleboarding around Whidbey and Camano Islands.
- **Megan Hill, May 15-16;** contributing writer for Eater Seattle and Food + Travel Magazine, is planning to visit Captain Whidbey Inn for future consideration in her outlets and to attend the Salish Sea Garden workshop at Fort Ebey with the North Cascades Institute.
- **Suzanne Stavert;** May 14-15; visiting Camano Island for studio tour weekend; plans to share on her social channels (@SuzanneStavert and @AdventuresofEmptyNesters) while creating content for her podcast, Travel Connections and blog www.adventuresofemptynesters.com
- **Sara Franklin, October 2022 (dates pending), freelance writer with *Travel + Leisure*** to cover the food and drinks, culinary culture of Whidbey Island.

Pending Press

- **National Geographic**, writer Kristen Pope is including Whidbey Island, along with content from an interview with Chef Vincent Nattress on a story about foraging seaweed and ways to prepare it at home. She is also interviewing the teacher of Salish Seaweed Garden class taking place on Whidbey on May 15.
- **Seattle Refined/KOMO**, a story was secured due to our pitch on the “bakery boom” throughout the islands; slideshow and story covering bakeries on Whidbey Island is anticipated in May.
- **Washington Post**, covering Washington’s islands in an upcoming travel story

Press Highlights include 10 pieces of coverage with an estimated 76.3 million impressions. To view the coverage in [full go here](#).

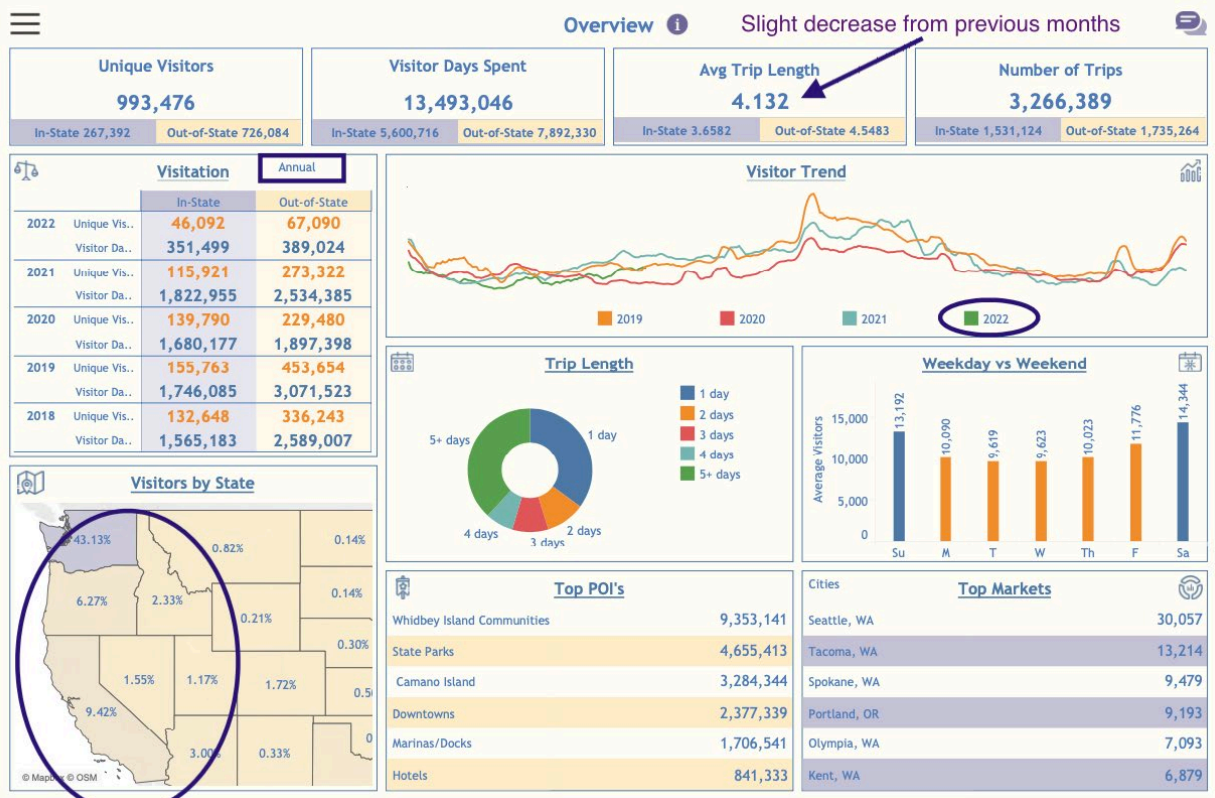
COMPUTERPIX

Executive Summary

- Visitation to Island County is down using a year-over-year comparison. Spending is up with most of the money being spent by those of us who live within Island County. Included in the report is a Quarter 1 summary from Book Direct.
- Old events are being removed from the calendar but being done in a way as to not break links and cause search engines to downgrade us. The latest newsletter went out April 27 and 33% of the recipients opened it.

Visitation Overview

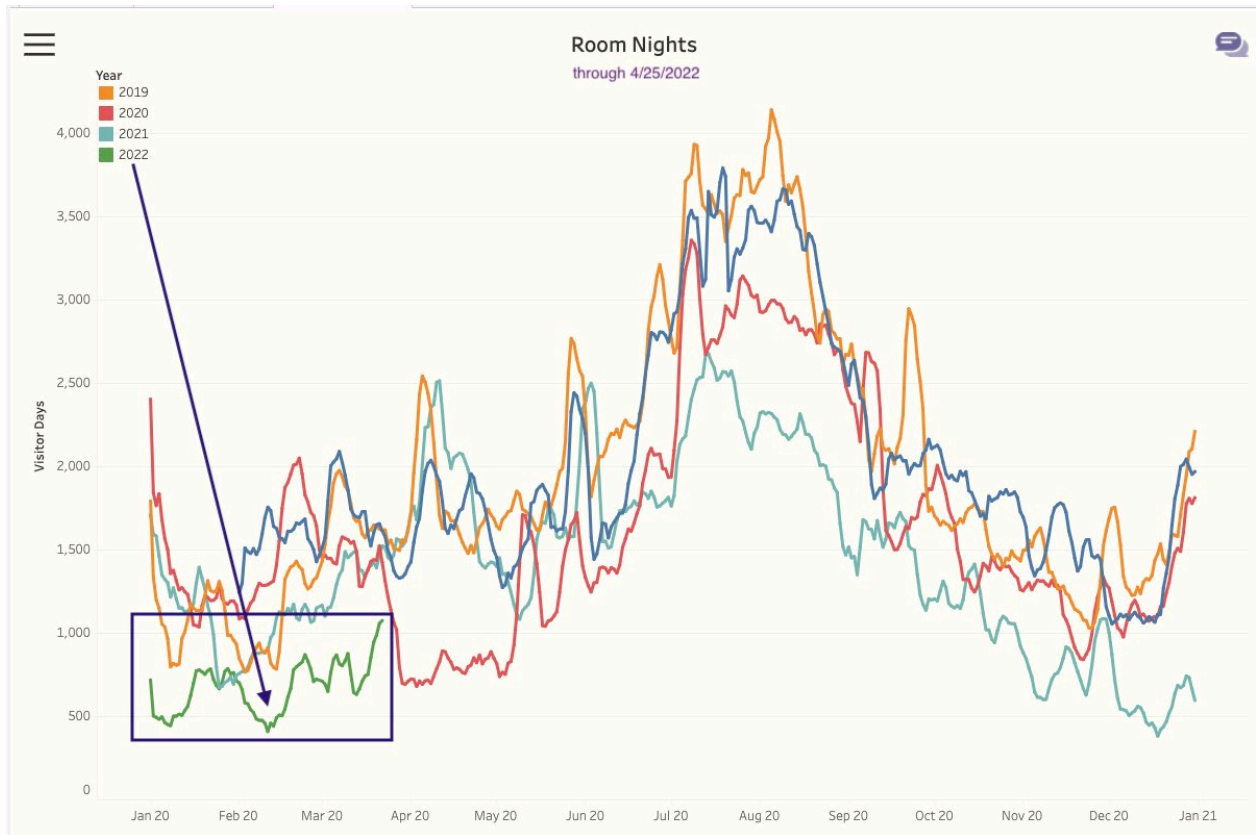
Data are taken from several sources, starting with those from Datafy. The overview chart from Datafy shows, among other things, that year-to-date visitation for all of Island County is behind all prior measured years, but the visitor trend line shows that March/April visitation is slowly creeping up (green line on Visitor Trend graph) and is following the lines of prior years. Interestingly, Washingtonians’ visitor rate is down to 43.13% for this data collection period from 70.16% in the March Digital Report. The reason for this decrease might be that the report covers the first 25 days of April as opposed to the entire month. The top markets are listed by city with Seattle bringing in the most visitors followed by Tacoma and Spokane. This is a change from Mount Vernon, and Everett bringing in the second and third most visitors respectively from the March Digital Report.



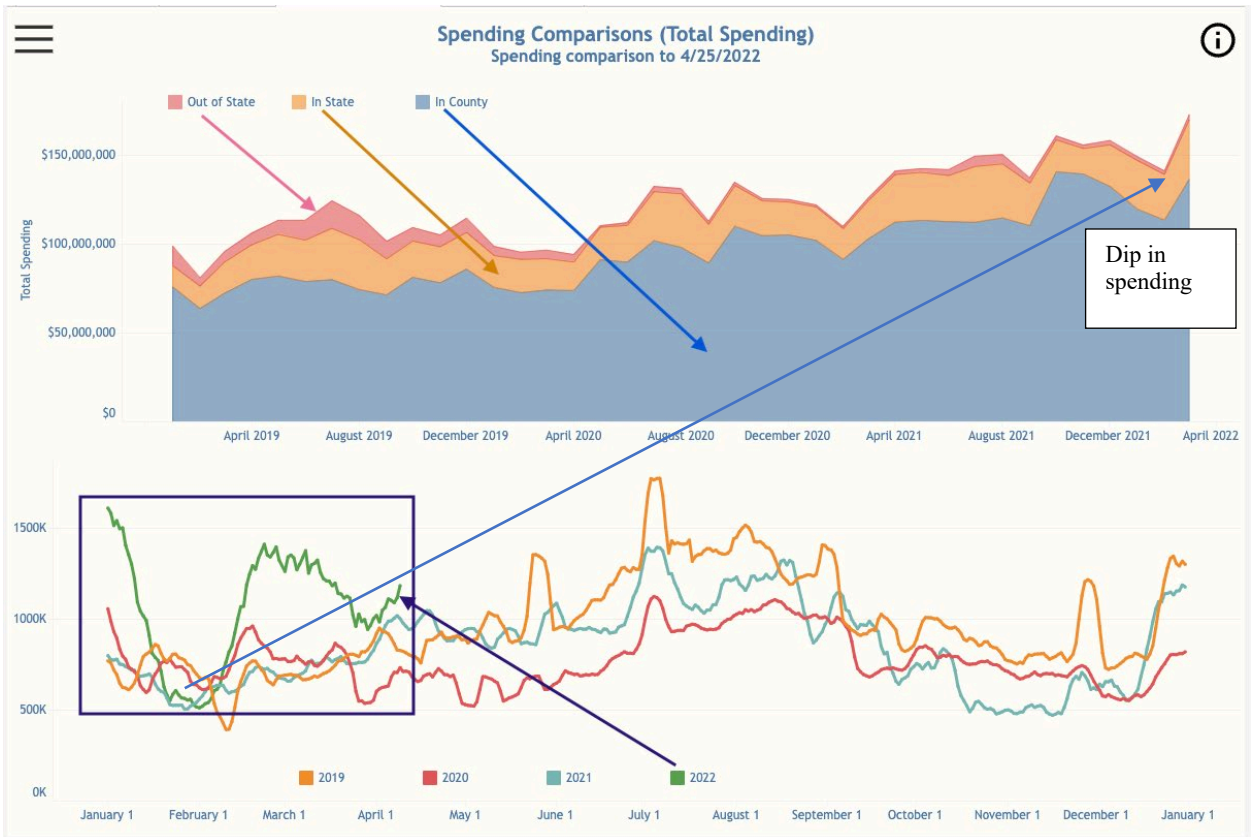
Notice the percentages of visitors from our neighboring states - this is a significant increase

Hotels is in the Top POIs. Restaurants are no longer in the Top POIs.

The next chart, also from Datafy, compares the number of room nights booked each day. It shows a poor start for 2022. While there is an increase in March and April, it is not showing the gains we would expect for this time of year for Island County. This chart covers the major lodgings only. There will be additional information about rentals in a few pages.



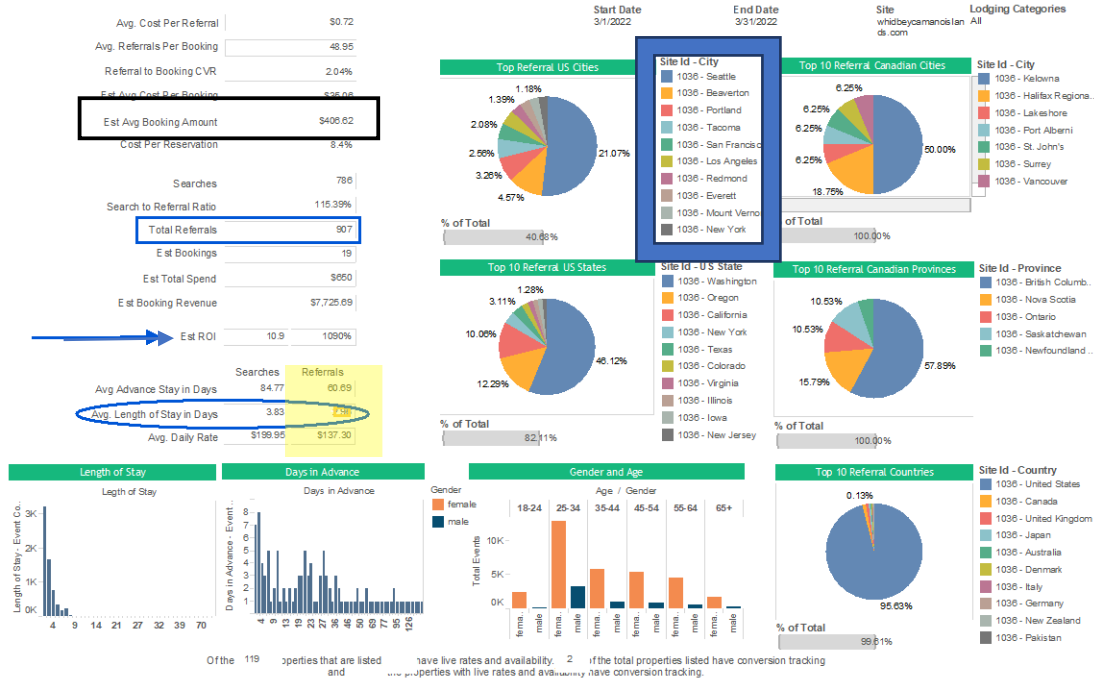
Finally, Datafy has created a spending algorithm for Island County. It shows spending within Island County by year and month. There are a few items to examine. First, 2020 was a difficult year for Island County from a spending point of view. 2021 was slightly better. Second, the first part of 2022 is in line to be the best year ever for bringing in money to businesses on Island County. For some reason, February shows a significant decrease in spending as does the end of March to early April. Finally, it should be noted that a significant amount of the total is spent by those of us who reside within Island County. This is in alignment with the data showing who spends time on the island (first, in county, then in state, followed by out of state visitors).



The last two pages are the March report and the Q1 report from Book Direct. The first of those pages shows 907 March referrals up from 836 February referrals and up from 658 referrals in January from WhidbeyCamanoIslands.com to Island County lodgings. The average booking amount has increased from \$370 for the January and February to \$406 in March. The average length of stay hovers at just under 3 days.

Performance Summary

A breakdown of search, referral and conversion data for the given timeframe.

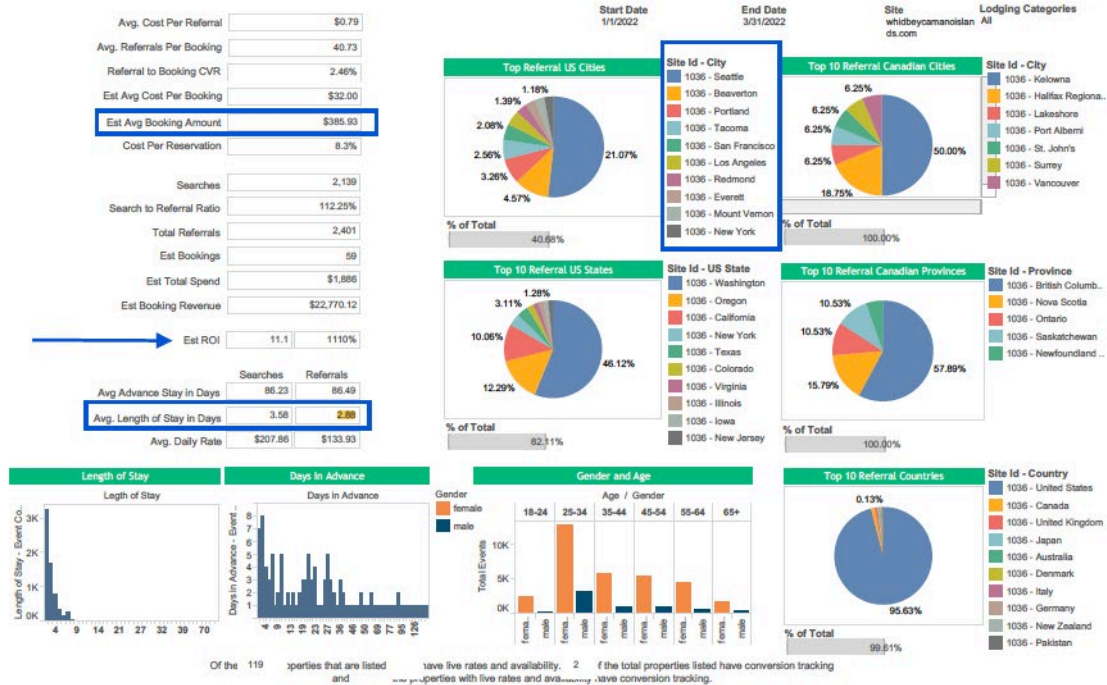


The first quarter report shows January through March 2022. It shows 2,401 referrals from WhidbeyCamanoIslands.com to Island County lodgings. The average booking amount of \$385.93 for the first quarter of 2022. The average length of stay hovers at just under 3 days at 2.88.

Performance Summary

A breakdown of search, referral and conversion data for the given timeframe.

INSIGHT DIRECT



Website Events

As 2022 events are being added we are eliminating those event listings from prior years. The links to those prior years are being redirected to this year's events. This year's events will become permanent and just new information and dates added each year. We're doing this because prior year's events were appearing on search engines like Google and confusing people. Simply eliminating those pages wasn't an option because search engines see those pages as content and just eliminating content is a way to signal to them that you're not all that reliable.

Email

The most recent email was sent out April 27. Those who didn't open the email received a second copy April 28.

<https://us12.campaign-archive.com/?u=11380ced8373e34392577e79b&id=d964229ed8>

As of this writing, 28% of recipients opened the first delivery, with an additional 5% opening the second.

6. Chamber Round Table:

- a. Clinton – No one from the chamber was present or a report given.
- b. Langley - Inge Morascini shared an update on the Transformational Travel Workshop and the great work being done this week and the upcoming months on shared vision for the future of travel in Island County. Mayor Scott the Habitat for Humanity Affordable Housing project will be breaking ground. They are interested in partnering with Whidbey Island Share a Home to assist with housing for seasonal workers.
- c. Freeland - Announced there will be no Celebrate America fireworks show this year in Freeland, due to several reasons including the large budget increase in the firework pricing and the difficulty obtaining a barge.
- d. Oak Harbor – Vicki Graham reported things are getting busy, including the increase in Canadian travelers. She shared a success with their past event, Holland Happening. They are looking for her replacement as she will be departing Oak Harbor in September.
- e. Coupeville – Mayor Molly Hughes shared lots of activity and new signage in downtown. Lynda Eccles echoed the positive comments regarding the Transformational Travel retreat. She also noted the staffing shortages continue to pose challenges, with much agreement throughout the committee. Memorial Day Parade Celebration is moving forward.
- f. Commissioner Bacon explained the County has begun process of purchase with the Port of Coupeville at the Eisenburg Airport off Monroe Landing Road.
- g. Sharon Sappington with EDC of Island County echoed how well the Transformational Travel retreat was. EDC is working on an entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- h. Camano – Alannah Johansen also noted to the committee that things are very busy and also they are experiencing a staffing shortage at State Parks.

7. Presentation

David Blandford followed with a presentation of new opportunities on the horizon for destinations like Whidbey and Camano Islands, with the launch of the State of Washington Tourism brand earlier this year.

8. Lunch

A no-host lunch was available. Following lunch, all guests and contractors left the premises.

9. Executive Session

The remaining committee members met for a brief executive session. No action was taken.

10. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:57 pm.

Next regular meeting is Thursday, June 2, location TBD.

Meeting minutes recorded by Robyn Myers and reviewed by Sherrye Wyatt.