

DISCOVER
Kalispell
MT



FY23 DMO
PLAN & BUDGET



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WHO WE ARE

Kalispell is an unfiltered mountain town that remains true to itself. Kalispell is a place that accepts you as you are and encourages intentional exploration, all while soaking up fresh mountain air, playing on our glacial-fed waters, tasting Montana's culinary offerings and rubbing elbows with the locals.

In Kalispell **VentureBOLDLY** is our mantra, it's a call that grounds us in and to this beautiful corner of the world we call home. To truly understand what venture boldly means in Kalispell, we invite you to learn more about its four-pronged definition:

Intention – Our roots and traditions run deep. We live with intention and make bold moves with a firm understanding of who we are, where we come from and how we'll grow.

Stewardship – As residents of Montana, we serve as stewards of this special place. Whether you're here for a minute or a month, we ask you to be mindful of the impact you have on this place, from public lands to local businesses.

Stronger Together – As with anything in life, we know we're better together. Kalispell is a place for dreamers, makers, doers, creators and intrepid spirits to live fully and boldly embrace adventures.

Recreate Responsibly – The outdoors are made for everyone and are an essential part of any Montana experience. These lands have been home to wildlife and humans for thousands of years and we want to keep them untouched, beautiful and wild for generations to come. But we need your help.

Discover Kalispell is a Destination Marketing and Destination Stewardship organization. We serve to build a purpose-built tourism economy which supports local businesses and to participate in a multi-stakeholder approach to maintain the cultural, environmental and economic integrity of Kalispell.



STRENGTHS

- **Downtown Kalispell:** The new Parkline Trail, a two-mile linear trail running through downtown completed spring 2022. This project has spurred redevelopment in the area adding to the goal of 18-hour vibrancy and walkability throughout the heart of the city.
- **Arts and Culture:** A burgeoning art scene including new street art and sculptures. Conrad Mansion Museum, Hockaday Museum of Art, Northwest Montana History Museum, Glacier Symphony and Chorale, KALICO Art Center.
- **Iconic Natural Landmarks:** 32 miles from the entrance to Glacier National Park, 10 miles to Flathead Lake, surrounded by 2 million acres of Flathead National Forest.
- **State Parks:** Kalispell is surrounded by eleven state parks providing trails, activities, interpretative visitor services, and water-based activities.
- **Air Service:** Kalispell's Glacier Park International Airport enplanements in 2021 surpassing 2019 by 16%. GPIA is undergoing a \$100 million expansion to handle increased traffic over the next 20 years. New carriers – Jet Blue, Frontier, Sun Country, and addition of flights to new cities were received in 2020. Glacier AERO, a non-profit represented by Flathead Valley business and tourism industry, works to increase winter and year-round flights through revenue guarantees and other partnerships with the airlines.
- **Healthcare:** Logan Health (formerly Kalispell Regional Healthcare) is a 577-bed health system that services 13 Montana counties. Includes the nation's first rural air ambulance service, more than 4,300 physicians, nurses, health care professionals and support staff. Includes Montana Children's Medical Center, the region's first pediatric hospital.
- **Education:** Flathead Valley Community College's recent addition includes the 58,000 sq ft Wachholz College Center which includes a 1,000 seat performing arts and lecture hall, gymnasium and fitness center and flexible event space. Scheduled to open fall of 2022.
- **Workforce:** A program led by the Discover Kalispell Chamber called Workforce Flathead works with students, job seekers, educators and employers to support the jobs of today and grow jobs for the future.
- **Infrastructure:** continued completion of the Kalispell bypass and the designation of the Hwy 93/Reserve to improve freight and passenger vehicle mobility. City of Kalispell Move 2040, the transportation plan for the Kalispell urban area was adopted in 2021.

CHALLENGES

- As this plan is being written gas prices are over \$4 per gallon and the projection for warm season travel gas prices is unknown. Montana as a state, and also for the Kalispell area, is served heavily by the drive traveler. Higher fuel costs also impact air travel and rental car usage so there are strong concerns about the impact on visitations during the second half of 2022.
- Glacier National Park is continuing with the vehicle reservation system for the Going-to-the-Sun Road and new this year, the Polebridge entrance station vehicle reservation. Reservation systems begins May 27 through September 11, 2022. In addition, the park is undergoing a road utility project on the west side creating road closures 10pm to 6am each day beginning June 1, 2022. Beginning October 1, 2022, the entire west side will be closed 24 hours per day until May 2023.
- Kalispell has been identified as the fastest growing micropolitan area in America by the U.S. Census Bureau on March 24, 2022. From July 1, 2020 to July 1, 2021 Kalispell added 3,681 new residents, 3.5% growth. This level of growth adds to already existing issues of workforce housing, traffic, and real estate prices. Resident sentiments towards tourism are impacted by the increase in number of residents. Although increase in area amenities and services can be attributed to a healthy tourism economy, resident sentiment is clear that a tourism-driven economy doesn't give license for unlimited or unmanaged growth.
- Sized between a larger Montana city and a resort town, Kalispell is neither. It's a burgeoning, thriving community that is best viewed and described as a small city with mountain-town amenities and culture. This distinction is an integral part of what sets Kalispell apart and vital to understand the competitive dynamics when setting expectations for seasonality of visitation, occupancy and room rates.
- Short term rentals (STR) such as AirBNB and VRBO influence traditional lodging occupancy and average daily rate. As of February 2022, over 257 STR's were active in Kalispell city limits, a 54.8% increase over 2021. During 2021, each month saw an average of 41% increase in supply over the previous year. Kalispell STR activity during the peak summer months shows the average occupancy rate of 86% and average daily rate of \$337. (Source: AirDNA) • Canadian border crossing continues to pose challenges for travelers even though the border is now open. Stringent and expensive testing requirements are identified as the reasons why we have yet to begin seeing traditional visitation patterns from Canada.
- Weather conditions are deviating from historical patterns which poses a challenge when promoting outdoor recreation and outdoor events. The impact of national media headlines around wildfires in GNP, as well as the wildfire smoke from surrounding states impacts visitations to our area.
- Aquatic Invasive Species post a threat to the Flathead basin waterways. Introduction of non-native species disrupts the balance of native ecosystems posing a threat to the recreation viability in our area. The impact to Montana from zebra mussels alone is estimated at \$234M in mitigation costs and lost revenue. (Source: Flathead Lake Biological Station)



OPPORTUNITIES

- Partnership with Kalispell Chamber: Discover Kalispell and the Kalispell Chamber function as one organization, Discover Kalispell. Each organization serves to benefit the local economy, each with a different focus. The launch of the overarching aspirational community brand in 2021 helps to align the opportunities for growth with the needs of the community.
- Business Resiliency and Recovery: Discover Kalispell Chamber delivers programming and convenes stakeholders to address key issues for business and residents such as childcare, housing, and transportation.
- Steward for community values and natural resources: Discover Kalispell's commitment to be an advocate for sustainability of natural resources is integrated in our communication and promotional strategies directed to travelers as well as our alliances and partnerships with area non-profits and businesses.
- Equity, Inclusion and Diversity: Discover Kalispell's marketing and stewardship initiatives will focus on fostering a welcoming environment to all, both to the community and the outdoor recreation landscape. This includes the development of content and programming for accessible travel.
- Sports and Event Facility: The increased number of sports and event facilities being developed within our competitive destinations highlight the need for Kalispell to prioritize the creation of an indoor sports venue. Discover Kalispell, through the TBID, is meeting with community-based sports groups and developers that have indicated interest in indoor sports facilities and will initiate a study to identify gaps and potentials to increase sports tourism and serve local needs.

HOW WE ALIGN WITH THE MONTANA BRAND

Kalispell fits perfectly with the Montana Brand enabling Discover Kalispell to work cooperatively with Brand MT and Montana region and CVB DMO partners.



SPECTACULAR UNSPOILED NATURE

Kalispell is surrounded by 10 mountain ranges, a national park, two national forests, one wilderness area, and the largest freshwater lake in the west.

VIBRANT AND CHARMING SMALL TOWN

Kalispell's vibrant downtown offers Montana-inspired dining, spirits and brews. Situated perfectly between Glacier National Park and Flathead Lake, blending four-season adventure and soul-stirring beauty for an unforgettable experience.

BREATHTAKING EXPERIENCES BY DAY, RELAXING HOSPITALITY AT NIGHT

Making waves on Flathead Lake, rafting the Middle Fork, cycling the Going-to-the-Sun Road, exploring 'The Bob', or viewing fall's dramatic transformation in the Flathead National Forest. However you choose to spend the daylight hours, your evenings will be full of hearty food and homey accommodations in Kalispell.

DISCOVER KALISPELL'S STRATEGIC ROLE FOR FY23

Discover Kalispell serves as a destination marketing, stewardship and management organization, and a community partner for the economic vitality of Kalispell.

Historically Discover Kalispell, a convention & visitor bureau, focused on destination marketing, promoting Kalispell to attract visitors in the shoulder and winter seasons. In addition to marketing, Discover Kalispell's programs include tourism sales promoting Kalispell for meeting and group travel and as a sports and event destination.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, vacations in wide-open spaces became very popular. People were looking for places to travel safely, to spend time in the outdoors with friends and family. Our mountain community fit the needs of the America Traveler which caused increased visitations versus the anticipated decline. 2020 also brought travelers that were not as familiar with recreating in wild spaces such as Montana. Travelers wanted the Instagram-able experience they envisioned despite the crowds, rules, closures, and decreased services at businesses that they may have encountered. The sentiment that some visitors don't align with our community values, along with the increased number of visitors overlapping with the surge in new residents, has created increased discontent towards tourism from residents of Kalispell and the Flathead Valley.

The pandemic also heightened awareness of how the tourism industry needs to pivot from its traditional roles. To become more sensitive to community sentiment around tourism, to find ways to expand opportunities of the visitor economy without overwhelming residents. Consequently, Discover Kalispell's work has evolved to be even more strategic in how and to whom we market to, and to further integrate community development and engagement initiatives - to talk more with locals, enlisting residents to shape how we can balance tourism with what makes our community such a great place to live.

Glacier National Park has seen a substantial increase in visitations since 2017 causing the park to increase visitor education messaging and to implement measures to manage traffic and protect the natural resources. Discover Kalispell has been an active partner with the park and other land managers on cooperative programs which lay out expectations for visitors before they arrive and educate on travel logistics while they are here.



FY23 - A Strategy of Economic Vitality, Sustainability and Collaboration

While destination marketing is the traditional role of a convention and visitor bureau and will continue to be important to support the economic vitality of tourism businesses, Discover Kalispell recognizes the concerns around the growth our community is experiencing. By integrating destination stewardship, management and development initiatives Discover Kalispell will be part of the solution playing an important role in helping our mountain community and tourism driven economy thrive.

Destination Marketing – 60% of organization’s operations

Destination marketing is defined as promoting a town or city to increase the number of visitors to support the local lodging and visitor economy. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach. No longer can DMO’s put out advertising hoping that someone sees it. Promotions must be highly strategic and targeted to attract high value travelers that can play a role to support our community. Marketing includes designing campaigns that focus on visitor distribution - distributing demand not only by season but also by traveler types and weekend/mid-week demand. To uncover visitor demand not solely based on geographical markets but by passions, niche activities and interests.

Tactics:

- Destination promotion – paid media, website marketing, owned media (social media, newsletters, brand content), digital asset acquisition.
- Cohesive strategy between earned, owned and paid media, each an important investment in a well-rounded communication and marketing strategy.
- Earned media – hosted influencer and press trips, media outreach, destination reputation monitoring, FAM trips.
- Tourism sales - meetings, conventions, domestic and international tour groups, and group incentives, sales calls.
- Travel & Trade shows



Destination Stewardship/Management – 30% of organization’s operations

A destination stewardship and management approach balances the needs of the community while supporting the visitor economy. It’s a coalition of many organizations and interests working together to preserve community culture while stimulating economic viability outside of the peak season. To find solutions for peak-period tourism impacts including educating visitors, pointing them to guided adventures, local businesses, unique experiences and most importantly how to travel and recreate responsibly.

Diversity, equity and inclusion should be part of every organization’s culture. Discover Kalispell integrates DEI into promotion and stewardship programs. For FY23 those initiatives include accessible travel resources and education along with introducing responsible outdoor recreation to a wider audience.

Tactics:

- VIC funding and visitor services
- Communications – crisis communications, recreate responsibly, visitor education
- Community partnership projects
- Tourism and hospitality training
- Partner in and develop community advocacy initiatives that promote equity, diversity and inclusion.

Destination Development – 10% of organization’s operations

Destination development strategies serve to enhance the visitor experience by enriching recreation amenities, visitor assets, and supporting non-profit tourism attractions. Development projects also are enjoyed by residents and support the reasons why they choose to live in a destination.

Tactics:

- Event and community visitor asset development – projects, grants and sponsorships
- Wayfinding and other signage – direct visitors to low-impact experiences
- Destination events

DEFINE OUR AUDIENCE

Several data sources provide valuable information on the Kalispell visitor:

- Average group size - 2.3; Average age – 47
- Average length of stay – 7.3 nights
- Top U.S. geographic markets of origin: WA, CA, UT, TX, MN, NY, OR, CO, FL, AZ
- 73% here for vacation, recreation, pleasure
- Top attractions/activities: Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake State Parks; hiking, scenic driving, downtown, fishing, rafting, shopping, events.

(Source: ITRR, Kalispell visitor information center, Discover Kalispell website)

To attract travelers that will be of value to our destination, Discover Kalispell invests in geolocation data to determine who is here, when they visit, if they disperse to lesser-known activities and amenities, how much do they spend and where. That type of data enables us to target a high value visitor with specific messaging and to retarget for return visits. We know that 69% of visitors to Kalispell plan to return within 2 years (ITRR). But where will they go and what will they do? We have the ability to influence those decisions based on what would deliver the greatest positive impact to our destination.

Who We Wish To Attract

- Visitors that will stay more than one night in Kalispell
- Visitors who are interested in fall, winter and spring travel
- Visitors who are respectful of natural resources
- Visitors who will spend money at locally owned businesses
- Visitors who seek adventures outside of the heavily trafficked activities and recreation areas.
- Visitors who are seeking:
 - Accessible travel resources
 - Sporting events
 - Destination events
- Business travelers
- Group travelers – meeting planners, domestic and international tour trade, other group travel such as reunions, incentive travel, niche interest groups.



WHAT RESEARCH SUPPORTS THE DMO STRATEGY

Destination Think - Why Do Destination Marketers Need Passionography, Katie Shriner, February 2021.

Passionography - the study of people who share an interest in a particular pursuit, experience, lifestyle, or activity.

By determining the destination's assets, what activities would bring people here, a DMO can tap into like-minded consumers. This helps to target niche segments that fit within the destination's visitor distribution goals - defining where they like to go and why and how they make decisions of where to travel. This can also help to improve the travel experience and generate more visits.

Harvard Business Review, 10 Truths About Marketing After The Pandemic, March 2021

1. *Know your marketing segment* – create a connection with potential travelers through messages that are personally relevant and aligned to that traveler segment's values.
2. *Courting customers is just like online dating* – connecting with a traveler that matches a destination is less about chance and more about data and algorithms. Build reach to generate leads through better integration of paid, earned, and owned media, and targeting past visitors to return in a less busy season.
3. *Agility is a modern marketing approach* – includes continuous listening to consumers and the community as well as faster decision cycles - more flexibility with creative, budgeting and media.
4. *Brands should stand behind values* – The EY Future Consumer Index showed that while quality, convenience and price still matter to consumer choice, factors like sustainability, trust, ethical sourcing, and social responsibility are increasingly important to how consumers select products and services.
(https://www.ey.com/en_us/future-consumer-index)

ITRR – Montana Resident Attitudes Towards Tourism 2021

- 71% of Montana residents that participated in the study agreed that the benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts. When analyzed by region, 61% of Glacier Country respondents felt the benefits outweighed the negative.
- 83% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed on the economic benefits provided to their community as result of the state’s promotion of tourism.
- For the first time since ITRR began asking this question in 1992, a majority of residents (56%) agreed that the state is becoming overcrowded because of more tourists.
- 38% of residents felt that the quality of life for Montanan’s would improve if tourism were to increase in the state – lowest level since 1992 and a 22% decrease in agreement since 2020. Within Glacier Country, only 27% felt the resident’s quality of life would improve as a result more tourism.

Glacier Country Tourism, Destination Stewardship Resident Survey, 2022

Glacier Country Tourism survey indicated that residents of the Glacier Country region prefer a Montana visitor versus out of state visitors, feeling that they are more respectful of the Montana lifestyle.

- Of all Glacier Country residents surveyed, 82.3% would strongly welcome visitors from Montana to their community compared to 66.3% to welcome Canadians, 62% to welcome international visitors outside of Canada, and 59% to welcome out-of-state U.S. travelers.
- Of Flathead County residents surveyed:
 - Tourism and Outdoor Recreation ranked highest of importance to western Montana’s economy.
 - Tourism to my county: 1) creates traffic congestion, 2) makes housing prices higher, 3) creates revenue for businesses, 4) creates opportunity for new businesses, 5) supports amenities and attractions that local residents can also enjoy.
 - 64% strongly agreed that Glacier Country should focus on attracting visitors who are respectful of the people who live here.



Outdoor Industry Association 2021 Special Report, The New Outdoor Participant

- Lack of information about where to go, how to participate, and whom to participate with can be a barrier to trying new outdoor activities.
- How to improve retention of new outdoor participants and encourage others to try: a) create easily accessible and navigable opportunities to explore the outdoors, b) develop programs with the specific goal of diversifying the participant base, c) position outdoor recreation as a way to get out from computer, office and Zoom time and an antidote to the mental and physical health consequences of the pandemic and stresses of everyday life.
- In 2020 those participating in outdoor activities shifted from 2019: higher percentage are female; average age is younger (45 vs 54); increase in African American and Asian participants while a decrease in Hispanic/Latino participants.

Destinations International – 6 Myths About Disabled Travelers and Accessible Travel Market

- For people with disabilities, any reluctance to travel is caused by the perceived or actual challenges they will face at a destination versus their disability.
- People with disabilities is a larger sub-set of the traveling public than able-bodied people may assume. According to the U.S. Census and the Centers for Disease Control, 20-26% of Americans have a disability.
- Helping a person with a disability feel welcome in your destination is about inclusion, not just compliance to a mandate such as the ADA. Deliver targeted messaging conveying they are welcome and demonstrating the ways they can enjoy a visit.





Visa Destination Insights - Kalispell

Credit card spending by non-resident visitors was \$212 Million in 2021, 33% increase over 2020 and 48% increase over 2019.

Top CBSA markets by spending (2021):

Missoula	Los Angeles	Phoenix-Mesa
Seattle	Portland	Bozeman
Salt Lake City	Great Falls	Spokane

Q1 - Missoula, Salt Lake City, Seattle, Los Angeles, Great Falls

Q2 - Missoula, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Portland

Q4 - Missoula, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, Portland

Top market segments by spending (2021):

Restaurants & dining	75.4% increase YOY
Hotels & lodging	56.3% increase YOY
Retail	31.3% increase YOY

OUR EMERGING MARKETS

Marketing - Travelers new to recreating outdoors in large landscapes and those seeking accessible travel resources.

Stewardship - community outreach program and tourism and hospitality training.

Tourism sales - Return of group business including large conferences and international tours.

GOALS, TACTICS AND OBJECTIVES



GOALS

1. Increase visitation to meet the needs of the Kalispell's visitor distribution goals – seasonality, niche markets, diverse audiences.
2. Develop sales plan to attract sports, events, group travel, tour trade, and meetings and convention segment bookings.
3. Public relations earned media strategy focused on media that match Kalispell's marketing goals, aligns with the DK brand and the high-value target audience.
4. Encourage residents and visitors to travel and recreate responsibly and respectfully. Align visitor education programs with community values.
5. Support guides and outfitters and land manager partners who provide services and education to visitors fostering safe and responsible recreation.
6. Cooperate with local stakeholders to develop and enhance community projects that serve to enhance the visitor and resident experience in Kalispell.
7. Develop programs for community outreach and tourism and hospitality training.
8. Be an active partner on initiatives for natural resource sustainability.

Goal	Tactic	Primary Objective
Increase visitation to meet the needs of the Kalispell's visitor distribution goals – seasonality, niche markets, diverse audiences.	Targeted advertising campaigns promoting fall, winter and spring travel, niche activity travel and inclusivity through paid media, website marketing, owned media (social, newsletters) and digital asset acquisition.	Develop 1 targeted advertising campaign that delivers a CTR of 0.75% or greater for each category: hotel incentive, niche travel, accessible travel.
Develop sales plan to attract sports, events, group travel, tour trade, and meetings & convention segment bookings.	Group sales manager for meetings, conventions and domestic and international tour groups. Sports tourism and destination event development and marketing.	Execute 20 in-market and out-of-market sales calls or client events. Produce 5 videos to use in group travel and tourism sales promotions.
Public relations earned media strategy focused on media that match Kalispell's marketing goals, aligns with the DK brand and high-value target audience.	Host travel media to achieve earned media in targeted publications and channels on topics such as winter travel, accessible travel, diversity and educating on responsible recreation.	Host 2 travel media whose audience aligns with DK's goals and definition of a high-value target audience.
Encourage residents and visitors to travel and recreate responsibly and respectfully. Align visitor education programs with community values.	Visitor education through owned and paid media and collaboration with community stakeholders and land managers.	Develop opportunities for newsletter signups and access to visitor information at community events and high traffic visitor areas.
Support guides and outfitters and land manager partners who provide services and education to visitors fostering safe and responsible recreation.	Promote on paid and owned media through campaigns highlighting guided and educational activities. Support programs led by local recreation/land manager groups.	Expand the Book Your Adventure web page directory and implement paid media campaign.
Cooperate with local stakeholders to develop and enhance community projects that serve to enhance the visitor and resident experience in Kalispell.	Event and visitor amenity grant programs which provide funding to new or expanding events and community projects that create a visitor amenity.	Promote grant program through community outreach initiatives and newsletters.
Develop programs for community outreach and tourism and hospitality training.	Customer service training for today's workforce addressing today's traveler. Dedicate staffing to community outreach to identify solutions for peak season tourism impacts. Participate in Workforce Flathead programs to support tourism and hospitality workforce priorities.	Develop community outreach program in cooperation with Chamber.
Be an active partner on initiatives for natural resource sustainability.	Partner with local organizations such as Flathead Lakers, Flathead River Alliance, Glacier Conservancy, FWP to support conservation projects related to visitor amenities and visitor impacts.	Champion 2 projects led by local natural resource groups through sponsorships, messaging, and volunteering.

DISCOVER KALISPELL

STRUCTURE & TEAM

Discover Kalispell, the Kalispell Convention & Visitor Bureau, is a division of the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce. The Kalispell Chamber has served as the official tourism agency for the City of Kalispell since 1987. Discover Kalispell is funded through two contracts with public agencies and generates private funds through registration fees and sponsorships. The Chamber has contracted with the State of Montana for Kalispell's share of the lodging facility use tax since 1987. In 2010, the Kalispell Chamber/CVB assumed administration of the Kalispell Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) under an agreement between the City of Kalispell, Kalispell hoteliers, and the Kalispell Chamber. The Kalispell TBID district renewed in 2020.

The Discover Kalispell Team

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The FY23 Discover Kalispell DMO plan serves to direct the initiatives and spending for Discover Kalispell and inform and educate the Kalispell Chamber and TBID board of directors, community stakeholders, Tourism Advisory Council, City of Kalispell and the state legislature. Kalispell's two funding sources, Bed Tax and TBID, work collaboratively to support this DMO plan.

