

This tool kit offers suggestions for improving the promotion and marketing of the recreational experiences and opportunities the SLV offers. The best practices compiled here are intended to raise the visibility of recreational opportunities among the SLV's residents and to help entice more recreationalists to visit the SLV. Through more widespread outreach, marketing and enhanced recreation promotions, the SLVGO Coalition and its partners can help to foster a regional identity around recreation, natural wonders and healthy, active lifestyles.

## Best Practices For Promoting Recreation in the SLV

### Valley-wide Recreation Destination

**Branding.** The SLVGO Coalition, communities and tourism groups should work together to collectively promote the region's recreation resources. Where else in Colorado is there a multi-county region offering the San Luis Valley's broad collection of recreation opportunities? Tie the SLVGO brand with recreation resources that only exist in the SLV and/or that distinguish the SLV. Also develop messaging that links the SLVGO's brand to the concept of wellness and healthy living. Educating people about the importance of getting outdoors, recreating and engaging in healthy activities will help attract a broader support base including public health officials and agencies.

### Cultivate Recreation Tourism Partnerships and Cross-Promote Recreation Sites and Opportunities.

Reach out to and work with local tourism entities. Also take advantage of the Colorado Tourism Office's resources for Colorado communities. Work with existing recreation entities including Wolf Creek ski area, golf courses, guest ranches, community parks and recreation departments, sportsman groups, conservation organizations and other to inform visitors and residents about SLVGO and its resources.

### Develop a SLVGO Recreation Campaign.

Develop a marketing campaign that uses visuals (e.g., photographs, graphics, film) to promote the SLV as a recreation destination. In addition to the visuals, develop a concise set of talking points and campaign messaging that can be consistently used throughout the six-county region and adopted by community tourism organizations as well as local recreation-oriented businesses. While the campaign should focus on promoting the entire SLV, it will also provide a framework that individual

communities can build on and promote their own specific recreation resources. Overtime, SLVGO can create segmented messaging specific to different recreation user groups and demographics (e.g., no crowds and lots of snow to attract Front Range skiers and snowmobilers; sweet singletrack to draw mountain bikers; and affordability and campsites to appeal to families and younger recreationalists).

**Woo the Media.** Begin by building a media list and growing relationships with folks in the media who are interested in recreation, tourism, and the SLV's heritage. Develop a concise, but creative pitch that highlights the SLV's recreation opportunities and have a collection of recreation photographs ready to share with interest media.

- Reach out to editors at general travel, tourism and recreation magazines as well as journalists at daily newspapers.
- Work with local chambers of commerce, local athletes, tourism organizations, and the Colorado Tourism Office to get media contacts and build a media database.
- Identify key recreation media and blogging influencers in target markets.
- Consider organizing media trips to the SLV.

### Reach out to those who can help spread the word through public relations efforts.

The cost of securing media coverage through public relations is almost always much less than purchasing the same space as a paid ad, and such coverage is more credible with travelers as an unbiased opinion. A local public awareness campaign is a first step, to make residents more aware of the heritage area and encourage existing visitors to stay longer or plan return trips.

**Recruit Ambassadors.** Recruit others to help you spread the word about the SLV and its recreation opportunities. Influencer marketing and word-of-mouth marketing is a powerful way to get in front of potential visitors and local recreationalists in a new way. Word can spread quickly and far these days when powered by social media engines like Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest. These ambassadors can gain trust in a new audience and hopefully turn them into regular recreationalists and visitors.

**Map it!** Map the SLV's trails and recreation resources and develop and widely circulate a recreation map brochure. In addition to a Valley-wide map brochure, individual communities could consider developing rack cards that promote

their local recreation resources. While the SLVGO website map will be an excellent resource for navigating the SLV, a physical map doubles as a promotional piece in addition to a navigational tool. Potential map promotions could include:

A tear off, placemat map would be used to highlight some of the Valley's recreational features.

**Website.** Most trip planning occurs online today. Develop a simple website that highlights the SLV's recreation resources. Develop concise, easy to digest lists of what there is to do and see in the SLV. These lists can be tailored to different recreation users groups (e.g. birding spots, hot springs, off the beaten path scenic hikes). Members of SLVGO could adopt different lists and keep them updated. SLVGO has the advantage of being a "niche site" and, therefore, can build a following among local recreationalists as well as recreation-oriented tourists. The website should also have a map and navigational function, so it can help visitors and locals find recreation destinations.

**Keep Current, Embrace Technology and Stay Connected.** The availability of information today, makes tourism extremely competitive. Moving forward, it will be important for the SLVGO Coalition and SLV communities to keep current on new technologies and continue to use social media. These digital communication outlets, like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and tools like digital newsletters and blogs will allow communities to reach a younger generation and, thereby, build its tourism and outdoor recreation participant base.

- Organizations and communities could consider bringing on a social media intern to take responsibility for regular postings. This could be a local high school or college student and the internship could be compensated through class credits.
- The SLVGO Coalition's Facebook, Instagram and e-newsletter should be employed to keep building the SLVGO brand, recruiting supporters, and increasing exposure of the SLV's recreation resources, natural wonders and heritage sites.

**Share the Local Beta.** All well traveled tourists know that local knowledge is the prize. Use the website, articles, interviews, advertisements, social media or other outreach mechanisms to share the skinny on recreation experiences from SLV locals.

**Package Recreation Experiences.** Use lists and/or brief descriptions to concisely package and

promote potential SLV recreation experiences. Pick up any tourism or recreation magazine and you'll find lists (e.g. best views, top trails). Lists are a great tool for providing a snap shot of what there is to do and see in the SLV. Consider developing a handful of packaged recreation experiences that feature outdoor recreation opportunities in the SLV or nearby a community. The lists can be developed to appeal to both local residents and visitors. These "SLVGO Experiences" could be featured on the SLVGO website (and linked to from community websites). Example recreation packages could include: "SLV By Singletrack," "36hrs of recreation in the SLV", "Family Fun", "What to Do in the Winter", "Hiking & History".

### **Snap High Quality Photographs of Your Trails and Recreation Experiences.**

Commission a professional to photograph and/or film the SLV's trails and recreations area and to develop an image database for media pitching and other promotions. Investment in high quality images has a good return since the images will help build the SLV's reputation as a recreation destination and playground for recreation enthusiasts. These images can then be printed, shared with media, and circulated via social media and in order to increase the visibility of the SLV as a recreation destination and to share more broadly what the SLV has to offer and how fun it is.

- Image-centric social media platforms like Instagram and Pinterest will continue to rise in popularity so incorporating striking SLV images into social marketing will complement any written content.
- Consider using a Pinterest as a giant visual bulletin board of recreation activities, events, sites and opportunities in the SLV and/or individual communities.

**#SLVGO Photo Contest.** A photo contest is another great tool for raising the visibility of a community's recreation resources and outdoors. Contest can be open ended or themed (e.g., best photos of someone recreating or biggest smile on a trail) and run for a defined period of time. The easiest way to run a photo contest is to utilize social media such as Instagram and Facebook.

- When using these sites, be sure to assign a hashtag such as #SLVGO to the contest and photo entries so that they can be easily filtered, reviewed and shared.
- Organizations can organize contest on their own

or use applications like Wildfire ([www.wildfireapp.com](http://www.wildfireapp.com)) and Short Stack ([www.shortstack.com](http://www.shortstack.com)) which are online services that support the building and running of contests and other social media campaigns.

- An additional benefit is that photos contests can generate a collection of photos for use in future promotional materials (just make sure you inform participants that with their submittal they are granting permission for future use of their photos in recreation promotions).

**Recreation Programming & Activities.**

Offer welcoming, fun and inclusive recreation opportunities available to all SLV residents (and visitors) such as weekend outing clubs, guide hikes, or clinics. Programming can provide exposure to new forms of recreation, help build skills, foster community, and encourage people to get out-n-about. The SLVGO Coalition and/or its partners could host activities a few times a year or assist local sporting good stores, communities, recreation clubs and others by promoting their programming.

**SLV Videos.** Video consumption is on the rise and the appetite seems insatiable. Video content consistently outperforms blogs and other text-based content. One study shows the retention rate for visual information can reach 65% versus 10% for text-based information. This memorable

type of media is valuable for promoting a location and its recreation and tourism opportunities. A short (under 2 minutes) professional video that features recreation in the SLV could be featured on SLVGO’s website, posted on YouTube, and shared with partners. The video could also be edited into shorter clips that can be easily shared on Vimeo, Instagram, Vine, SnapChat, and Facebook.

**Sell some SLVGO “Swag”.** Design some promotional products that sport the SLVGO logo and advertise the region’s recreation opportunities. Have these products for sale or use them as give-aways at events. There are many promotional products to choose from (e.g., t-shirt, water bottles, stickers). While these products may generate a nominal revenue, they’ll also serve as pervasive advertisements.

**SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS**

Social media allows small organizations like the SLVGO Coalition and SLV communities to leverage technology to even the playing field with bigger brands and higher profile tourism destinations. Social media should be used to boost visibility and inspire viral sharing - if you’re doing a good job your audience will produce a significant amount of the content.

The following list of recommendations apply to any social media platform (e.g. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook), and it is noted where the tip is specific to a certain platform.

- **Post consistently.** Start with 2 posts per week and try to build to 1 post/day. Post more if you’re getting great engagement. If possible work up to daily posts.
- **Change it up.** Alternate photos, video links and text-only updates campaign posts (images are the most shared piece of content on Facebook).
- **Keep posts short.** Twitter has a 140-character limit, but shoot for fewer than 100 characters for both Twitter and FB posts. The quicker it is to read, the more likely people will read it and share it.
- Use the hashtag: **#SLVGO** in posts.

## SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS (CONTINUED)

- ❑ **Incorporate lists, how-to guides and tips** related to recreation, healthy living, and/or specific outdoor pursuits.
- ❑ **Schedule ahead.** Devote a portion of a meeting to brainstorming a bunch of content and then assign someone to schedule it months in advance.
- ❑ **Use your friends.** Post any important announcement and/or event links on your partners' social media accounts and ask them to share.
- ❑ Ensure Facebook, Instagram and other social media **“buttons” are visible** on websites, e-newsletter, advertisements and print media.
- ❑ Host an occasional social media **photo contest and/or give away.** Contests get more fans, engage, and tend to be highly shareable. Post winning photos on the SLVGO website.
- ❑ Target and recruit the support of **digitally influential people.** Tag influencers in your best photos and to try to get some reposts and get a follower boost.
- ❑ Occasionally include a **call to action** – ask folks to share, like or comment.
- ❑ **Be seasonal** – tailor content to the season or and upcoming holiday
- ❑ For events, create **Facebook events** and email out the link and announcements and to partners and ask them to share it through their social media and newsletters. Since these event have a RSVP function, they are also helpful in predicting participation.
- ❑ Tuesday typically ranks as the **most effective day** for sending out email blasts. Marketers considered Sunday a day of rest and the least effective day for spreading news.
- ❑ **Integrate your Instagram and Facebook accounts** for your local area to bring the fans together.
- ❑ **@ tag others** in the community when it makes sense, like if they're pictured or if you want to notify them, especially partner businesses or influencers
- ❑ **Share/regram others' photos** and credit them and comment on their original pic to thank them and let them know that you reposted.
- ❑ **Leave funny photo captions** when possible. A little personality goes a long way.

Check out the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) media kit for a great example of recreation-oriented marketing and promotions:

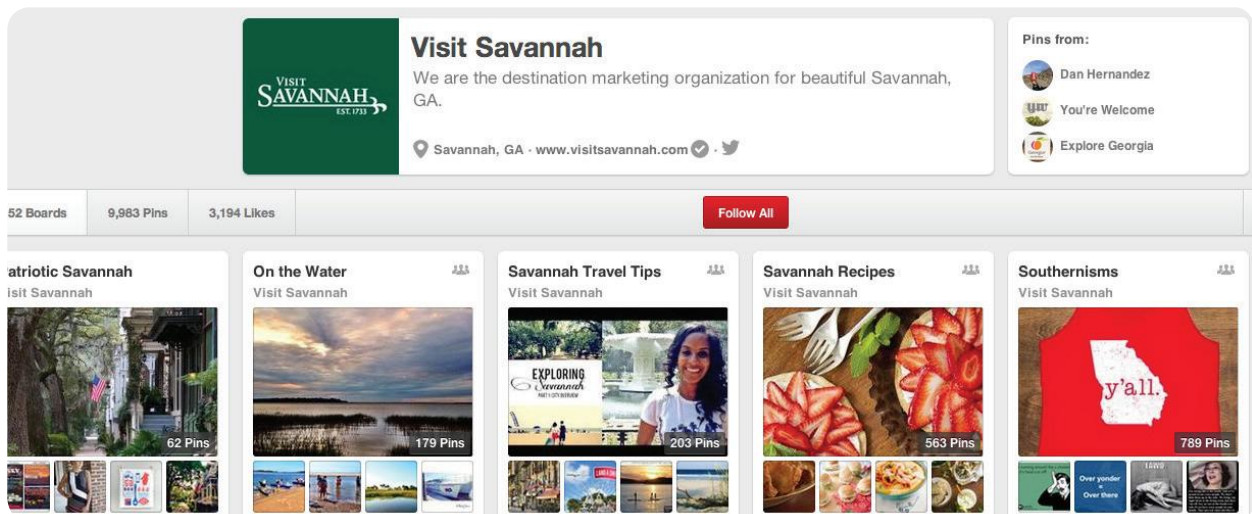
<http://www.nrpa.org/july/Park-and-Recreation-Month/ToolKit/#media>

In particular, check out their downloadable **Media Outreach Kit** which includes sample press releases, social media posts, and editorials that SLVGO and its partners could use during July (NRPA's Park and Recreation Month) and/or modify for communications throughout the year.

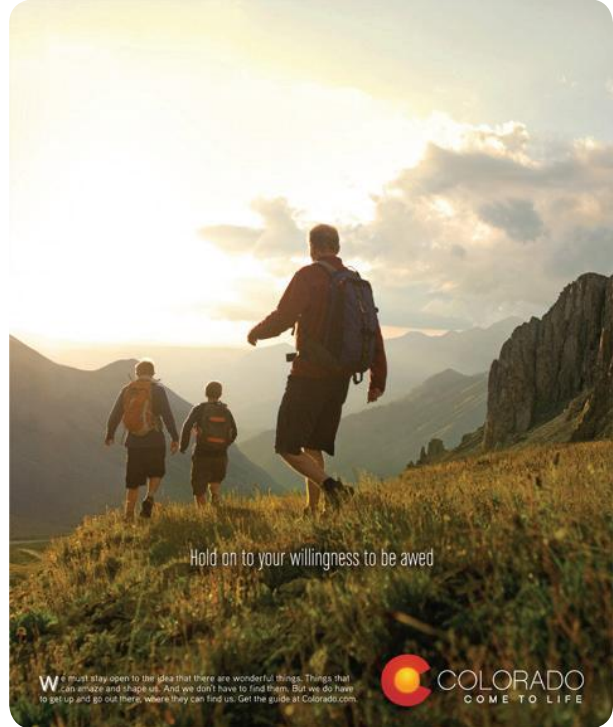
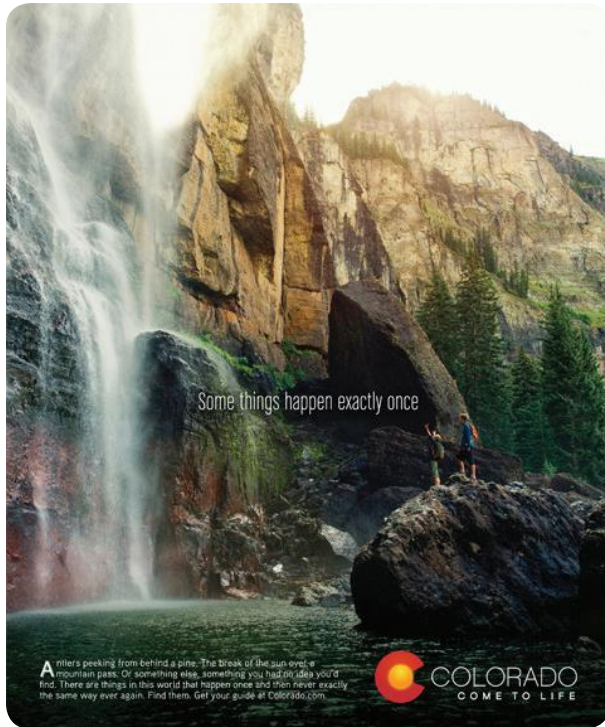
## CASE STUDIES: Recreation Marketing and Promotions



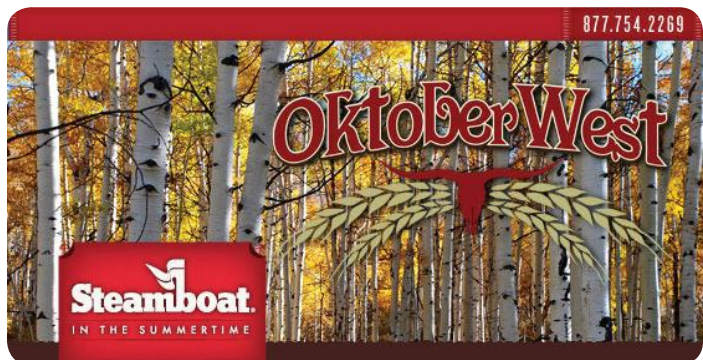
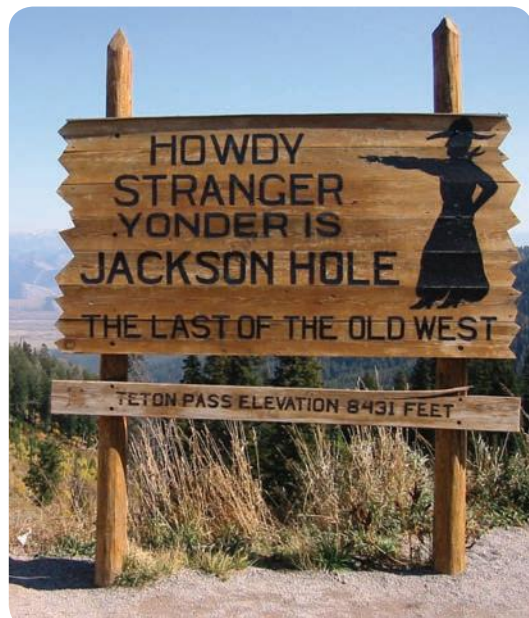
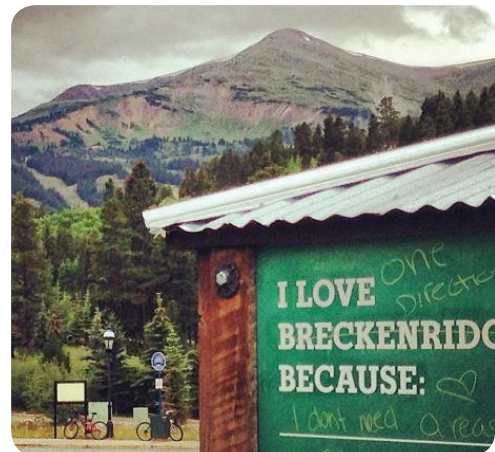
The New York Times' weekly 36 Hours column, Sunset Magazine's featured "day trips" and travel magazines provide inspiration for ways to entice travelers and advertise destinations.



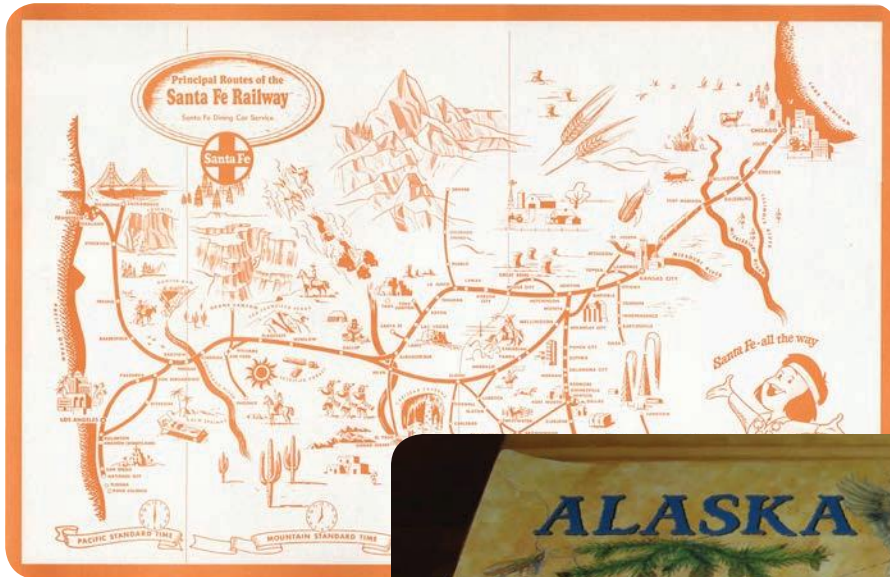
Visit Savannah has used Pinterest to promote its tourism attractions, heritage, local food, family adventures and much more. The site provides a visual library of Savannah and is a great resource for trip planning.



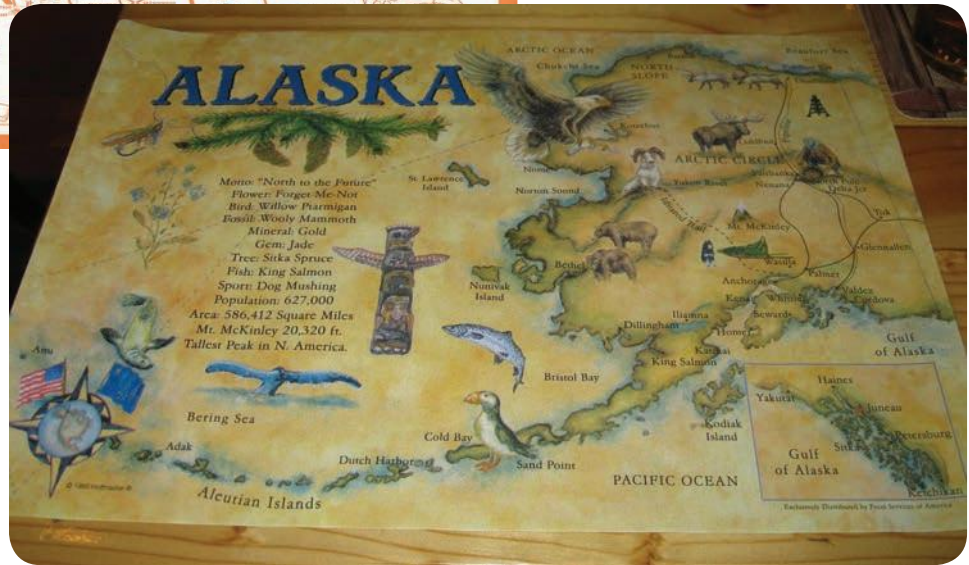
The Colorado Tourism Office's "Come to Life" campaign promotes the potential for exploration, discovery and delight in Colorado's varied landscapes. Breckenridge's #BreckBecause campaign involved asking and sharing what locals and visitors love best about the town. Visitors are always keen on hearing the local "beta" on places to go and where to recreate.



Many towns incorporate the flavor of their heritage into signs and promotions in an attempt to distinguish themselves.



Tear off, placemat maps are a low cost way to highlight an area's history, natural wonders and/or recreation opportunities.



Temporary tatoos are a fun, promotional item (<http://cyclofemme.com/>)



Gunnison Middle School students made trivia pursuit cards and distributed them to business around town. SLV school kids could develop similar cards that promote the SLV's recreational opportunities, natural resources, historic sites, as well as, the benefits of outdoor recreation.