



# 2011 Annual Tourism Report



VISIT  
**VANCOUVER**  
USA  
*Discover the Original™*

## ABOUT US

The Vancouver USA Regional Tourism Office is a non-profit 501 (c) 6 destination management organization. Our objective is to increase the overall economic impact of tourism on the Vancouver/Clark County economy through sustained growth in tourism spending. Our activities result in significant increases in tourism-related earnings, tax collections and jobs.

Our board of directors is comprised of professionals from our local hotels, attractions, restaurants, facilities and funding sources. Their volunteer responsibilities include industry advocacy to build community-wide support for tourism by taking a leadership role to strengthen partnerships, increase productivity, maximize the return on investment, and determine the future course of the Tourism Office's mission.

## OUR MISSION

To increase convention and visitor business by promoting the Vancouver USA region.



## Executive Message

Tourism continues to play an important role in Clark County's economic recovery. Did you know that in 2009, visitors generated more than \$27 million in city, county and state taxes? With over 2,600 hotel rooms to fill and almost 4,000 employees dependent on this industry for their livelihood, the Vancouver USA Regional Tourism Office is driven to find different ways to increase convention and visitor business in our region.

Visitor spending in Clark County is vital to our community's economic health. While Washington State's visitor spending dipped in the past two years, Clark County has maintained a higher annual average — due in part to the Tourism Office team's aggressive marketing and convention sales strategies.

### NEW BRAND, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

In 2010, we launched a new destination brand and organization name. **The Visit Vancouver USA | Discover the Original** brand effectively positions us in the industry by clearly differentiating our city in Washington from its namesake in British Columbia. Similarly, "Discover the Original" establishes our historical significance in the Pacific Northwest. The star symbolizes our patriotic past, while the contemporary color highlights the exciting and dynamic new things happening in our region.

With the positioning of our Visit Vancouver USA brand and stronger identity at the core of our marketing activities, we expanded into new arenas and reached a larger audience. Since launching our new brand, Vancouver USA is now a more recognizable destination — garnering regional, national and even global attention! As we move forward, we will continue to concentrate on strengthening our brand through creative and traditional PR and marketing efforts.

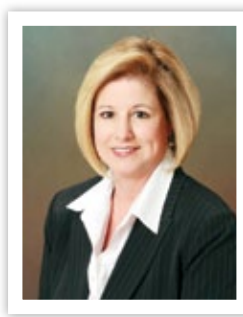
### VDF INITIATIVE

Also in 2010, the Tourism Office partnered with the City of Vancouver to develop a Visitor Development Fund (VDF). This initiative helps remove competitive barriers to booking conventions in Vancouver, resulting in increased hotel occupancy and bringing economic benefits for the whole community. Now, more than ever, secondary meeting costs such as parking, transportation between hotel and meeting facility as well as other ancillary fees are factors influencing budget-conscious meeting planners. With the VDF, the Tourism Office sales team has more value-added options to offer clients, allowing us to actively compete with other destinations in securing meeting and convention business.

We are optimistic that our industry will recover and we will keep taking steps to ensure we successfully accomplish our mission. Thank you for your support and confidence in the Tourism Office. We look forward to partnering with you further to tell our story in a way that invites and captivates visitors to *Discover the Original* Vancouver!

*Kim Bennett*

President & CEO



## Why Tourism?

### TOURISM IS BIG BUSINESS

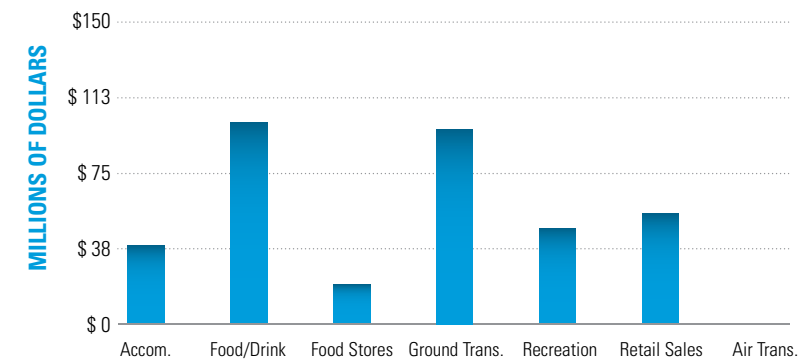
Visitors to Clark County spent **\$364.3 million** at local businesses in 2009.\*

Tourism provides solid economic benefits to our local economy. A healthy tourism industry has a positive economic impact that pays dividends for everyone in ways we don't always realize.

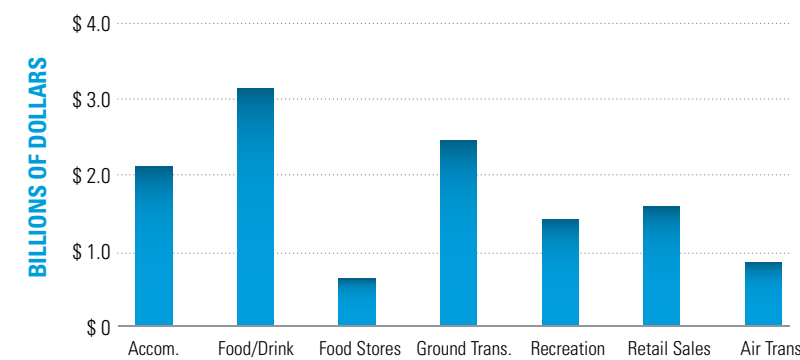
Tourism also helps to create a vibrant economy by providing jobs and tax revenue:

Job Earnings	<b>\$99.3 million</b>
Local Taxes	<b>\$5.3 million</b>
State Taxes	<b>\$22.1 million</b>

### Clark County 2009 Travel Spending



### Washington State 2009 Travel Spending



Source: Dean Runyan Associates, Inc. on behalf of the Washington State Department of Commerce, Olympia.  
\*All figures are for 2009, the most recent at the time of printing.

## 2011 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Jan Bader\*  
Program & Policy Development Manager, City of Vancouver
- Kimberly Bennett\*  
President & CEO, Vancouver USA Regional Tourism Office
- Cindee Carson  
General Manager, Phoenix Inn Suites
- Alison Hite\*  
General Manager, SpringHill Suites
- Kari Jonassen  
General Manager, Homewood Suites by Hilton
- Justin Kobluk  
Executive Director, Clark County Event Center
- Brian McClary\*  
Director of Operations, The Heathman Lodge
- Patrick Quinlan  
General Manager, Red Lion Hotel at the Quay
- Carla Rise\*  
General Manager, Residence Inn by Marriott
- Kelly Sills\*  
Economic Development Manager, Clark County
- Elson Strahan  
President & CEO, Fort Vancouver National Trust
- Eric Walters  
General Manager, Hilton Vancouver Washington
- Jayson Zimmer  
General Manager, Staybridge Suites

\*Denotes Executive Committee Member



## HERE'S WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAD TO SAY...

“Vancouver USA has been very conducive to the NWPMA’s conference. Most of our attendees come from Oregon and Washington. The area has lots of amenities and other hotels to accommodate our members. I personally come from east of the mountains and it is always a great pleasure to enjoy the beauty of the Vancouver area.”

~ Howard Hamby,  
NW Pavement Management Association

“For our conference, we wanted someplace in Washington that was easy to get to with a lot of amenities — yet not as distracting as Seattle. We couldn’t be happier with our choice! Access to I-5, the airport and shops/restaurants was perfect. Vancouver is a big city with a small town feel. The fall weather was perfect and the people were so friendly and helpful. We’d choose Vancouver again in a heartbeat!”

~ Susie Akeson, Northwest Shuttle Conference 2010

## VISITOR SPENDING

According to the Dean Runyan report, overall visitor spending was down in Washington State for 2009. However, Clark County fared well enough to have the third-highest average annual percentage growth (4.8%) of all counties from 1991–2009. Out of all 39 counties, Clark County also remained sixth in having the highest visitor spending in 2009 — reinforcing the important role tourism plays in Clark County’s economic recovery. Despite the lower numbers, visitor spending still generated over \$364 million for Clark County’s economy in 2009.

## Funding

The Tourism Office is funded by a Tourism Promotion Area (TPA). This special assessment charges all hotel guests with a flat \$2 per night charge and applies only to room night charges at hotels with 40 or more rooms. Total TPA collections in 2010 were \$905,656. Unlike the majority of destination marketing organizations that use the TPA to augment base funding provided by transient lodging tax, the Tourism Office receives the bulk of its funding from the TPA. In-kind contributions and co-op dollars from the local hospitality industry also contribute to help with our marketing efforts.



## Marketing

2010 was an exceptional year for the Tourism Office. With the **Visit Vancouver USA | Discover the Original** brand, there were exciting new opportunities for us to market our organization in a refreshing and engaging way. The rebrand had a domino effect on all our marketing materials and channels. Updating our website, collateral, advertising, signage and promotional items was a great undertaking that took months to fully launch. It was work and time well-spent to ensure our rebrand launched successfully and consistently.

For our 2011 Visitors Guide, the design and content also reflected our new tourism brand, with different attractions and activities spotlighted in this and future issues. Choosing editorial content in a manner that better captures the leisure audience enables us to share with visitors the variety of things our region has to offer. Our community partners supported this goal by advertising in the Visitors Guide. In so doing, they also ensured that their own businesses and organizations were uniquely represented.

Social media was another arena we charged ahead in this past year. Through our Facebook and Twitter accounts we share news, special events and popular activities or sites in our area with the travel community and general public. As the number of our fans and followers continue to grow, we will look into other creative ways we can market and strengthen our brand using social media.



## Communications

The Tourism Office has always known that we have much to offer visitors. Our region undoubtedly has an abundance of events, recreational activities and scenic beauty. The new Visit Vancouver USA brand broke down the confusion of our exact location and allowed us to better communicate our assets.

Using the momentum of our rebrand and the 2010 Winter Olympics, we worked with a prominent, professional PR agency to supplement our traditional advertising and marketing efforts. Raising our destination’s profile and increasing top-of-mind awareness among target audiences both regionally and nationally was our primary focus.

Our active PR efforts to showcase the Vancouver USA region as an ideal destination for leisure visitors, meetings and group tours paid off. By the end of 2010, our destination was specifically covered 66 times in almost 50 media outlets throughout the Pacific Northwest, North America and the world! Such media coverage equates to thousands of dollars worth of advertising. With such success, we will continue to find innovative ways to partner with media in telling our original story.

## HERE ARE SOME NOTABLE PUBLICATIONS AND BROADCAST MEDIA THAT FEATURED VANCOUVER USA IN 2010

- Association News
- Courier
- Group Tour
- Meetings West
- Northwest Meeting + Events
- Northwest Palate
- Northwest Travel
- National Post
- Outdoors NW
- PDX Magazine
- Seattle Times
- Smart Meetings
- The Oregonian
- The Province
- The Tacoma News Tribune
- The Vancouver Sun
- Sydney Australia News
- Tokyo Broadcasting System



# Convention & Group Sales

It has been a remarkable year for the Vancouver USA Regional Tourism Office sales team. In 2010, we booked 95 meetings that will generate nearly 25,000 hotel room nights and an economic impact of over \$15 million. As the economy continued to struggle in 2010, our sales team readily took on the challenge of raising visitor numbers and maintaining our market share.

By aggressively soliciting and booking convention and group tour business, the Tourism Office helps to generate millions annually in tax revenues for Clark County. Additionally, meeting delegates and visitors from these successful bookings fuel visitor spending, create jobs and spur economic growth in our region. As the tourism industry recovers, we will continue to seek out qualified pieces of business and build client relationships to achieve our sales objective of bringing more meeting and group tour business to the Vancouver USA hospitality community.



## OUR MARKETS

The Tourism Office sales team regularly attends tradeshows and conventions around the country to solicit business from the following markets:

- ★ Association
  - ★ Environmental
  - ★ Government
  - ★ Corporate
  - ★ Group Tour
  - ★ Sports
- ★ **SMERFE:** Social
  - Military
  - Educational
  - Religious
  - Fraternal
  - Ethnic

## BUILDING & MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Good relationships are at the core of a successful sales strategy. In 2010, we kicked off new client connections and strengthened existing relationships by participating in industry tradeshows, including those hosted by ASAE, TEAMS and National Tour Association.

The 2010 ASAE Annual Meeting and Expo in Los Angeles was a great opportunity to meet with association leaders from all over the world — all of whom influence where their members meet and have conventions. The Tourism Office partnered with other Washington destinations to form a state delegation and met with over 200 clients during the expo.

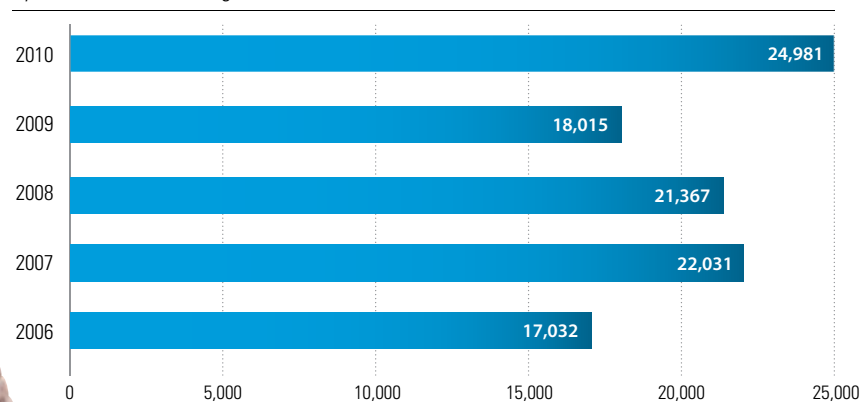
We also focused on the sport market this past year. During the TEAMS Tradeshow in Charlotte, NC, we promoted our region's tournament and outdoor venues to the North American sports event community. With our diverse sporting facilities as well as dozens of lakes, trails and fields, our sales team presented the many possibilities in Vancouver USA to event planners. From cross country events to rowing competitions, the Tourism Office will continue to look for athletic events and competitions that establish our region as an up-and-coming sports destination.

To round off the year, we attended the 2010 National Tour Association's Annual Conference in Montreal, Canada. This significant conference brought together over 650 tour buyers from North America and around the globe. It was an excellent opportunity to sell Vancouver USA as part of a Pacific Northwest tour for the motorcoach market.

All these efforts garnered numerous opportunities for future business benefitting our local hotels, restaurants, tour guides, attractions and transportation companies.

## Convention Room Nights Booked

by the Vancouver USA Regional Tourism Office



## Convention Sales Conversion Report

	2009	2010	% CHANGE
Leads Generated	142	192	+35%
Definite Bookings	65	95	+46%
Definite Room Nights	18,015	24,981	+39%

Below are just a few of the groups booked by the Tourism Office in 2010. We have influenced these groups to meet here, rather than another city.

NAME OF GROUP	TOTAL ROOM NIGHTS	ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT
Kumoricon Anime Conventions 2011 & 2012	1,986	\$2,799,462
NAIA Cross Country Championships 2011	1,491	\$733,701
American Contract Bridge League Tournament	1,020	\$1,008,420
WA State Labor Council 2013 Convention	960	\$355,260
American Public Works — WA Chapter	857	\$334,027
2013 & 2014 WA State Council of Firefighters: 2012 Annual Convention	630	\$327,368
2012 IAFF Joint Education Seminar	513	\$200,043
WA Credit Union League 2012 Convention	630	\$233,730
First Annual Washington State Horse Expo	590	\$874,690
AP Summer Institute 2011	540	\$288,900
NW Regional Shuttle Conference	430	\$147,230
WA State Gear-up	365	\$167,515
WA State Board for Community and Technical Colleges	320	\$126,520
Sports Leisure Group Tours	141	\$21,675

## 2010 SALES HIGHLIGHTS

- Generated nearly 25,000 room nights in 2010. A 39% increase over 2009.
- Booked 17,079 future room nights that extend into 2015.
- Participated in national and regional tradeshows showcasing our destination.
- Partnered and hosted multiple hotel and venue site tours.
- Captured significant and historic conventions for our community!

## TRADE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS

In addition to attending tradeshows, the Tourism Office actively participates in a variety of membership associations from which we solicit new clients and sales opportunities.

- American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)
- Washington Society of Association Executives (WSAE)
- Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI)
- Meeting Professionals International (MPI — Washington & Oregon chapters)
- Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA)
- Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP)
- Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA)
- American Bus Association (ABA)
- National Tour Association (NTA)
- Oregon Tour and Travel Alliance (OTTA)
- Reunion Friendly Network (RFN)
- PNW Society of Government Meeting Professionals (PNWSGMP)

