



*Visit Baton Rouge*®

2017 Marketing Plan





# MISSION



The Visit Baton Rouge mission is to increase visitation to and awareness of the Greater Baton Rouge Area thereby enhancing economic impact.





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**With a spirited arrival into 2016**, Visit Baton Rouge launched its multi-platform “Stick Around” and “You’ll Get the Picture” campaign, utilizing a unique photojournalistic approach to express an authentic, local perspective – embracing the mixture of flavors, flares, textures and sounds to paint a picture that’s undeniably Baton Rouge. The dual taglines of the campaign were used to communicate key messages to the two main audience segments. *You’ll Get the Picture* prompted curiosity from non-local consumers, while *Stick Around* spoke primarily to in-state consumers or those “just passing through,” with the goal of converting these day-trippers or drive-market weekend travelers into overnight guests.

As visitors and locals alike grew increasingly familiar and engaged with the Visit Baton Rouge brand, the area itself also experienced a number of successes. The 2016 *Louisiana Marathon* and *Baton Rouge Blues Festival* reached record attendance from all over the world, in addition to new permanent developments within the Capital City that will continue to support our position as a tourist destination, including the new Watermark Hotel and new Downtown, Mid-City and Garden District restaurants such as Magpie Cafe, Curbside Grill and Overpass Merchant.

While 2016 exhibited growth for our city and its industries, it also challenged our community with disheartening tragedy and tension. Two high-profile shootings that took place in Baton Rouge—in the midst of nationwide controversy and strain—and the catastrophic flooding that affected over 70,000 homes in East Baton Rouge Parish alone, propelled Baton Rouge into the national spotlight. However, when faced with insufferable loss and heartache, the people of Baton Rouge, and all those who supported her recovery efforts, continued to join together in stirring displays of humanity and compassion. *Louisiana Rising*, a benefit concert for flood relief, raised more than \$800,000 in donations and Visit Baton Rouge’s *Baton Rouge Strong* video, which embodied the unbreakable spirit of our community, garnered over 60,000 views on Facebook alone.

Looking ahead to 2017, which marks the official *Bicentennial of Louisiana’s Capital City*, Visit Baton Rouge is poised to bring in new waves of travelers and return visitors, in addition to fostering a rebirth of local passion and enthusiasm for our city. Our strategic efforts will focus on not only increasing, but effectively measuring, brand awareness as we implement marketing strategies and tactics, in addition to initiatives outlined in our 5 Year Strategic Plan, in order to ultimately position Baton Rouge as a nationally-recognized, premier destination providing an unmatched Louisiana experience to all visitors.



[FOR VISIT BATON ROUGE]

**Strengths:**

- “I am Baton Rouge” video and other earned media showcased a united Baton Rouge in the wake of the flooding and social issues the city faced in 2016
- Consistent paid media efforts have raised brand awareness and familiarity for the Visit Baton Rouge brand

**Opportunities:**

- Pre-travel and in-destination behavior is becoming more integrated into the digital landscape, making it easier to target and retarget consumers and track behaviors once here
- After recent events, Baton Rouge is looking to its leaders and forward-thinking organizations to unite the community and promote positive growth
- The City’s Bicentennial presents opportunities to continue instilling pride in locals and to promote Baton Rouge as a destination to tourists

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**Weaknesses:**

- Recent “losses” for Baton Rouge tourism and Visit Baton Rouge, such as the loss of Bayou Country Super Fest and the Hotel Occupancy Tax
- Lack of proactive, focused social voice and purpose

**Threats:**

- Lack of local understanding of both tourism’s impact and the variety of experiences Baton Rouge has to offer
- Some geographic areas in the Greater Baton Rouge Area feel as if Visit Baton Rouge does not represent their needs or interests
- Perception of social issues within the city could prove to be a marketing challenge in relaying other positive happenings throughout the area



[FOR THE CITY OF BATON ROUGE]

**Strengths:**

- Cleaner, more family-friendly perception than New Orleans, our top in-state competitor
- Authentic local culture hasn't been convoluted or overpowered by "kitschy" tourism pushes
- Role as Louisiana's Capital City inherently helps promote Baton Rouge's historical importance as well as our growing business sector
- Central proximity to our top consumer markets including Dallas, Houston, Pensacola, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas

**Opportunities:**

- Current travel trends focus more on "micro-moments" and experiencing authentic local culture
- Many visitors come to the area specifically to visit friends and family, who can then act as tour guides and advocates of the Greater Baton Rouge Area
- Increase in millennial travel, particularly weekend trips
- Proximity to major cities like Lafayette and New Orleans offers opportunities for cross-promotion

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**Weaknesses:**

- Proximity to New Orleans, our top in-state competitor
- City is sometimes late on adapting to new trends in comparison to other major destination cities

**Threats:**

- Apprehension regarding social strain and safety within the city due to recent events
- Decline in hotel occupancy as flood survivors and workers are able to return home
- Large percentage of Baton Rouge visitors come to the area to visit friends and family, therefore are less likely to stay in hotels
- Perception that Baton Rouge does not have a lot to offer in terms of activities, entertainment, cultural experiences, etc.
- Perception that Baton Rouge is a "college town"



# LEISURE TRAVELERS

## Primary

- In-State
  - Neighboring Louisiana Parishes
- 6-Hour Drive Markets
  - Dallas
  - Houston
  - Pensacola
  - Mississippi
  - Alabama

## Secondary

- Secondary Designated Market Areas (DMAs)
  - Chicago
  - Atlanta
  - Memphis
  - Nashville

## Tertiary

- Community Stakeholders (East Baton Rouge Parish Locals)

## Audience Demographics & Travel Behavior

### *In-the-Moment Millennial*

- Age: 25 - 34
- HHI: \$30K+
- Travel Behavior:
  - Look for lesser-known destinations with authentic cultures that can provide enriching experiences, i.e., unique hotel experiences, eating local foods, etc.
  - Look to peers and social media for travel inspiration
  - Share traveling experience on social media during and after trip
  - Embrace spontaneity and impromptu weekend trips

### *Gen X Couple*

- Age: 35 - 54
- HHI: \$50K+
- Travel Behavior:
  - Look for safe, family-friendly destinations and often make plans around school schedules (most popular travel seasons are spring and summer)
  - Majority of families check five different online resources before booking
  - Majority are married, full-time workers
  - Interested in fine dining, shopping, gaming, historical sightseeing and family-friendly activities

In a survey of millennials, experiencing a new culture (86%) and eating local foods (69%) were listed as determining factors in travel planning

76% of millennials said friends' recommendations were a main factor in decision-making



# SALES / MEETINGS TRAVELERS

## Primary

- Meeting & Convention Planners
- Third-Party Meeting Planners
- Group Travel Planners
  - Sporting Events
  - Associations
  - Religious

## Audience Travel Behavior

- Looking for:
  - Convenience and accessibility of location
  - Quality and capabilities of venue
  - Affordability
  - Participant and guest experience



# GOALS

## **Leisure Marketing**

- Increase overall visitation for new and returning visitors
- Increase brand awareness for Visit Baton Rouge
- Increase buy-in amongst community stakeholders and instill reinvigorated pride within Baton Rouge natives
- Increase hotel occupancy through leisure travel
- Strengthen lead generation funnel by maximizing use of digital platforms

## **Meetings/Conventions Marketing**

- Increase leads and bookings for new and returning meetings and conventions

## **Sales Department**

- Increase hotel occupancy through hotel stays garnered by meetings and conventions
- Increase group lead generation

## **Services Department**

- Increase overall experience for new visitors in order to incentivize return visits and positive word-of-mouth

## **Special Projects**

- Increase bookings for large-scale projects, signature events and films

In the following pages, we outline the strategies and tactics recommended to meet these goals. A comprehensive enactment of these strategies and tactics will yield the results necessary to reach the goals set forth in this marketing plan.

# LEISURE MARKETING



The Leisure Marketing team pursues new opportunities and communication channels to draw in-state and out-of-state visitors to Baton Rouge – enticing new visitors and converting day-trippers into overnight stays – in addition to implementing consistent initiatives that aim to raise awareness for the area and the Visit Baton Rouge organization.

### GOAL 1:

Increase overall visitation for new and returning visitors

#### Strategies

- Position Baton Rouge as a unique travel destination with authentic local flare and an exciting variety of offerings
- Support the promotion of local events, venues and activities, particularly new and existing specialty events that are most likely to bring in travelers from our drive markets and top DMAs

#### Tactics

- **Leverage earned media** to optimize and increase the frequency of organic brand touchpoints (local/regional focus)
  - Identify and pursue recurring features with relevant publications
  - Engage press with regular interviews, pitches and interesting story angles that positively position Baton Rouge, e.g., Bicentennial events, venue renovations, up-and-coming local talent, etc.
  - Maintain media lists to create and distribute press releases
  - Invite social media influencers from top DMAs—travel bloggers, photographers, journalists, etc.—to experience Baton Rouge and document and share their stays
- **Develop a multi-platform campaign** that highlights designated communication themes—music, food, culture, nature, festivals—and targets most advantageous geographies, demographics, travel times and interest groups through paid media channels including the following:
  - **Print**
    - Include call-to-action that drives traffic to the Visit Baton Rouge website to download a free Welcome Guide or to the Baton Rouge 200 site (in select publications)
    - Optimize spend by focusing on select publications such as Southern Living, Oxford American, etc. (see consumer media flow chart for reference)
  - **Outdoor**
    - Utilize existing outdoor board owned by Visit Baton Rouge to leverage consistent messaging and overall brand awareness



- **Digital**
  - Use e-blasts, both those managed directly by Visit Baton Rouge as well as dedicated e-blasts through partners like Trip Advisor, to drive people to the website through engaging content and event information
    - Tie into content calendar outlined through social media strategy for more impactful and cohesive messaging
  - Convert awareness and engagement into purchase decisions by including hotel deals, event packages, etc. in e-mails and digital ad displays
- **Video**
  - Use video to share full-sensory stories, highlight local establishments and show viewers what it's like to experience Baton Rouge food, music, etc.
    - Use full webisodes on YouTube, social media and e-marketing, as well as shorter edits to be placed as pre-roll
- Carry-out a **comprehensive social media strategy** aimed at driving web traffic, qualifying leads and ultimately bringing in overnight visitors while also creating a consistent brand for Visit Baton Rouge
  - Use event-centric ads and posts to raise awareness and pinpoint interested viewers based on their engagement. Content-centric posts will then be retargeted to guide them further down the decision-making process, i.e., once a user has clicked a Mardi Gras ad, he will later be served a "Go-To Guide for Mardi Gras in Baton Rouge" content piece to rekindle interest
  - Use geo-targeting to serve similar content to visitors once they've arrived to encourage further exploration of the city and ensure the best possible experience
- Create a hashtag (#ExploreBatonRouge) and utilize other hashtags with equity to further brand consistency and better track relevant conversations
- Integrate **content marketing strategy** across multiple platforms—social media, e-marketing, paid media—in order to maximize native communication and ultimately draw travelers into the travel consideration process
  - Align content categories with activity seasonality and event calendar to ensure information is relevant to viewers
  - Examples of content include:
    - New Year, 7 New Places to Try in Baton Rouge
    - Baton Rouge Healthy Hot Spots
    - Baton Rouge's April Festival Guide
    - Top 5 Places to Eat Crawfish in Baton Rouge

Emails that include video show a 200-300% increase in click-through rates, and social video posts show 135% greater organic reach than still images

85% of leisure travelers decide on their itinerary only after having arrived at the destination



- Pursue **experiential advertising** opportunities in order to raise awareness and generate buzz about Baton Rouge, particularly within our top DMAs
  - Examples include a “flash-performance” or a scavenger hunt in the Houston Galleria
- **Distribute Baton Rouge-branded promotional items** at large events as well as at individual venues during peak travel times, i.e., low-cost take-away mementos such as coasters, stickers, match boxes, t-shirts, etc., to strengthen and prolong positive sentiment toward Baton Rouge
  - Disperse Baton Rouge coasters at local bars that have live music during Blues Festival
  - Provide hotels with Baton Rouge branded promo items during large conventions like the USBC Women’s Championships

## GOAL 2:

### Increase and measure brand awareness for Visit Baton Rouge

#### Strategies

- Position Visit Baton Rouge as as a key driver of tourism and economic development in the region, as well as a valuable resource for locals and visitors alike (local/regional focus)

#### Tactics

- Utilize **earned media** to publish information about what Visit Baton Rouge is doing for the city by identifying opportunities for positive coverage, announcing new accomplishments, pitching interesting story angles, etc.
  - Develop mutually beneficial relationships and a process for content creation with organizations, establishments and events to ease the burden currently placed on Visit Baton Rouge to raise awareness and promote local activities and events
  - Designate a number of articles and content pieces to highlight lesser-known areas of Baton Rouge that may feel underrepresented to help foster stronger, more beneficial relationships
  - Update boiler plate statement to include Visit Baton Rouge’s impact and significance in relation to all regions in each article/story to better represent all people in Baton Rouge
- Utilize **traditional and digital media** on the local level to continue seeding the Visit Baton Rouge brand within the city and state to encourage local buy-in. This includes advertising from the consumer media flow chart as well as placement managed directly by Visit Baton Rouge
- Continue the use of **consistent branding** across all marketing, media and public relations efforts
- Highlight involvement in Baton Rouge 200 events through earned, paid and social media to continue seeding Visit Baton Rouge as an authority among local organizations

Google’s news carousel now shows on the first page when users search for a destination. Keeping Visit Baton Rouge’s website and articles up-to-date and compliant with Google’s webmaster guidelines will help establish Visit Baton Rouge as a validated resource and ensure positive messaging is being presented as often as possible.



### GOAL 3:

Increase buy-in amongst community stakeholders and instill reinvigorated pride in Baton Rouge natives

#### Strategies

- Increase awareness of events, venues, activities and offerings to ensure representation for the Baton Rouge Area
- Leverage opportunities to show a united community and encourage community-wide participation at local events and initiatives

#### Tactics

- Explore opportunities for **experiential advertising** within the city to generate buzz about Visit Baton Rouge and communicate the positive impact the bureau has on the community
  - Partner with the Arts Council to create city-wide series of public art
  - Place stickers with batonrouge200.com URL throughout the city to generate a grass-roots movement
- Continue to **enhance and leverage relationships with local organizations** to increase current and prospective resident buy-in and cross-promote the area as a whole
  - Schedule quarterly emails or meetings with local organizations and chambers to stay updated on upcoming events and initiatives in different areas – ensuring fair representation for all and placing more accountability on individual areas to stay involved
  - Open some meetings/partnerships to ALL local organizations – give them a chance to “apply,” e.g., BRAC, Forum 35, LED, LOT, Arts Council
- Leverage a team of **brand ambassadors** for Visit Baton Rouge
  - Identify a number of influential individuals within the community, as well as leaders within Visit Baton Rouge, to act as advocates for the city and all that it has to offer
  - Select ambassadors that can speak to a variety of thematic and connect to a diverse age range through their presence in the community, on social media, etc.
    - Alt-BR podcast host Jacob Jolibois
    - Celebrity chef Jay Ducote
    - Photographer and entrepreneur Michael Tucker
- Promote **Bicentennial messaging** as a way to build hype for 2017 activities and events
  - Infuse Bicentennial messaging into promotions for pre-existing events as a way to reinvigorate public participation
  - Increase number of “Bicentennial celebrations” with a designed e-blast prompting event submittals
  - Use some paid and earned media platforms to drive traffic to the batonrouge200.com site as opposed to only focusing CTAs on visitbatonrouge.com



## GOAL 4:

Increase hotel occupancy through leisure travel

### Strategies

- Explore new ways to bring bring in 6-hour drive market and national travelers by pursuing new specialty events, honing targeting efforts, etc.
- Leverage and amplify existing events to increase traffic to Baton Rouge and overnight stays
- Position Baton Rouge as a tourism destination for overnight stays
- Seize all opportunities to promote the up-and-coming hotel scene in media messaging – showcasing the uniqueness of Baton Rouge hotels and how they can enhance visitors’ Baton Rouge experience

### Tactics

- **Focus messaging**, both paid and earned, on upcoming events, travel packages, etc. to convert visits into weekend stays
  - E.g., new hotels, retailers and restaurants, upgraded amenities and venues, etc.
- **Encourage hotel involvement** through partnerships, sponsorships and promotional packages
  - Partner with hosts/organizers of local events and hotel, restaurant and retail managers to create packaged stays that incentivize extended leisure travel, e.g., Weekend Shopping Getaway that includes discounts on overnight stays in hotels, deals at Perkins Rowe retailers and promotions at nearby restaurants
  - Encourage hotels to sponsor as many signature events as possible—from concerts to festivals—through discounted rooms, complimentary benefits, etc.
- **Identify and highlight new hotels**, like the Watermark and the Marriott (while also featuring existing hotels), in both paid and earned media to incentivize and convert trips into overnight stays
- **Participate in relevant Association Meetings**, like Lodging and Restaurant Associations, to observe trends, share insights and strengthen partnerships

Highlighting unique hotel atmospheres and features, e.g., beautiful views, elaborate architecture, luxury accommodations, etc. will position overnight hotel stays as an integral part of the Baton Rouge experience



## GOAL 5:

Strengthen lead generation funnel by maximizing usage of digital platforms

### Strategies

- Develop a more established method of data collection, measurement and retargeting across platforms

### Tactics

- **Integrate social and digital platforms** through implementation of Facebook Pixel on the Visit Baton Rouge website
- **Hold quarterly reviews** of digital ads, email click-through rates, Facebook Pixel analytics, etc. to more accurately assess performance and address areas of improvement
- **Strategically use CTAs** to connect with consumers on multiple platforms and drive progression through the lead generation funnel
- See evaluation section for further recommendations

# MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS MARKETING



## MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS MARKETING

The Meetings and Conventions Marketing team works to competitively market the city of Baton Rouge as a host city for meetings and conventions within a variety of industries. These types of business events bring in overnight guests, many of which rely on hotels to accommodate their lodging and/or the events themselves, in addition to supporting other local industries as attendees explore the city in their free time.

### GOAL 1:

Increase leads and bookings for new and returning meetings and conventions

#### Strategies

- Position Baton Rouge as a vibrant, emerging city with new and exciting offerings for a variety of groups and industries
- Maintain Visit Baton Rouge's role as the official tourism-marketing arm of Baton Rouge and position it as the most supportive and authoritative resource for planning and booking meetings and events

#### Tactics

- **Leverage earned media** to promote Baton Rouge's meetings, conventions and sporting events offerings by distributing press releases for the following:
  - Venue or facility improvements
  - Any new venue or facility sponsorships
  - Things to do while in town for a meeting or event
- **Develop a multi-platform campaign** designed to sell the city to meeting planners and **utilize paid media** to put ads in front of our target audiences (see media flow chart for specific placement information)
- **Equip the sales and marketing team** with the necessary items to persuasively promote the city as an ideal meeting and conference destination
  - Develop and design a data-driven video as well as additional one-sheets and sales collateral to utilize at conferences and trade shows
- Create a more clutter-busting presence at **relevant conferences and trade shows**
  - Enrich Visit Baton Rouge's presence at trade shows by updating booth and visual presentations to be more attention-grabbing and cutting-edge, providing a full-sensory sneak peak into Baton Rouge, e.g., sales video (mentioned above) playing on iPads, VR headsets or Google Glass used to engage attendees and show-off Baton Rouge, etc.
- **Help facilitate familiarization (FAM) trips** with the sales team to familiarize meeting planners with the Visit Baton Rouge staff and Baton Rouge experience
- Continue **cooperative marketing opportunities** with LOT, LTPA, Brand USA, Creative Capital of the South and Southeast Louisiana Gumbo

# DESTINATION SALES



The Destination Sales team works closely with meeting planners and association heads to plan and coordinate events, meetings and conferences in Baton Rouge. Through the team’s effective sales of the city and its various unique offerings, Destination Sales increases tourism and hotel occupancy.

### GOAL 1:

Increase hotel occupancy through hotel stays garnered by meetings and conventions

#### Strategies

- Focus on key decision-making factors in order to position Baton Rouge as an ideal business destination
- Increase awareness of Baton Rouge as a business-oriented destination through partnerships, memberships and associations

For event organizers, the environment where the conference takes place is just as important as the content

#### Tactics

- Participate in a number of the following *industry trade shows* to reach targeted meeting professionals for *Meetings and Conventions*
  - **Religious**
    - Religious Conference Managers Association (RCMA) Annual Tradeshow
    - Rejuvenate Marketplace
  - **Association**
    - Louisiana Society of Association Executives (LSAE)
    - Professional Conference Managers Association (PCMA)
    - American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)
    - Council of Engineering and Science Society Executives (CESSE)
    - Destination Marketing Association International – Destination Showcase
  - **Reunion**
    - Reunion Network Shows
  - **Specialty Markets**
    - Connect Marketplace
    - National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners
    - Multi-cultural Network
    - Professional Fraternity Executives Association (University-based)
    - African American Travel Conference
  - **Sporting Events**
    - National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC)



## DESTINATION SALES

- Participate in a number of the following **industry trade shows** to reach targeted meeting professionals for **Group and International Travel**
  - American Bus Association
  - International Pow Wow (IPW)
  - ITB Berlin
  - Receptive Tour Operator Summit East (RTO)
  - World Travel Market (WTM)
  - National Tour Association (NTA)
  - Travel South Domestic and International
  - Travel Alliance Partnership (TAP)
  - Student Youth Travel Association (SYTA)
- **Utilize data-driven sales video** provided by marketing staff to better sell Baton Rouge and obtain engagement while at various conferences and tradeshow
  - In addition to hard-facts, feature relevant content such as amenities, accommodations, meeting spaces, surrounding venues, testimonials, etc.....
- **Develop case studies** on past events, conferences, meetings, etc. as a more engaging and genuine way to sell the Baton Rouge experience to prospective targets
- **Participate in sales missions** – both domestic and international
  - France/LOT
  - Germany/LOT
  - UK/LOT
  - Canada/LOT
  - INDY
- Continue to **pursue unique partnership opportunities** with industry, state and DMO partners to better promote the city for incoming events, meetings and conferences
  - Partner with hotels and restaurants to provide packaged incentives for meeting planners/meeting attendees
  - Work with other Louisiana DMO's to provide packaged vacation opportunities to extend meeting attendees' stays
- **Host familiarization (FAM) tours** for meeting planners and relevant clients to incentivize them to bring their events to Baton Rouge

Packaging case studies digitally will allow for modifications as new renovations and updates are made to venues and include a variety of content such as testimonials, images, videos, interactive content, social media screen captures, etc.



## GOAL 2:

Increase group lead generation

### Strategies

- Identify and prequalify appropriate target groups for the Greater Baton Rouge Area
- Build relationships with meetings professionals and tourism partners

### Tactics

- Develop/improve a systemized *process for meetings and conventions lead generation*, rather than traditional business card exchange, while at various conferences and events
  - Use iPads with interactive video or photo content to prompt email and contact submissions
  - Develop unique incentives to submit forms/information such as trip packages, discounted group tours, etc.
- *Qualify leads* and develop a tiered system that categorizes leads for following up
- *Design/create branded email follow-ups* for meeting planners once initial contact has been made – customize for each planner/organization
- Utilize a unique *landing page for sales and meetings* to utilize on all meetings/conventions-centric collateral

# DESTINATION SERVICES



The Services Department ensures that all Baton Rouge area travelers and convention delegates have a positive and enriched visitor experience. These efforts are crucial to spreading positive word-of-mouth, generating influential social media conversations and converting first-time visitors into advocates of Baton Rouge.

### GOAL 1:

Increase overall experience for new visitors in order to incentivize return visits and positive word-of-mouth

#### Strategies

- Leverage visitor touch points to highlight key Baton Rouge offerings, enhance visitors' experiences and convey Baton Rouge's hospitable environment in organic and unexpected ways
- Collaborate with industry partners to maximize their value to both leisure travelers and meetings/conventions delegates
- Position the visitor center and registration staff as experts on all that Baton Rouge has to offer and empower them with the resources and training to best inform visitors

#### Tactics

- Ensure that all services **staff members are briefed** on any and every new and up-and-coming features/businesses/events in the city
  - Develop a systemized process for briefing staff on these items, e.g., monthly meetings, e-mail updates, etc.
- Continue to participate in **professional conferences** that foster learning and growth and allow for key takeaways that enlighten the team and offer new ideas on how to better sell the city for return visits
- Identify **points of entry into the Baton Rouge area**, like the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport or popular travel-stops from our top DMAs, to enhance travelers' first and last experiences with the city
- **Create/design collateral for the visitor center** that better speaks to what the city has to offer, e.g., updated informational brochures, maps, Baton Rouge Must-See push cards, etc.
- Distribute promotional **Baton Rouge branded materials/swag** to visitors, e.g., t-shirts, tumblers, stickers, etc., to fortify positive sentiment that lasts beyond the duration of their stay
- Continue to optimize the experience for **Riverboat visitors** docking in Baton Rouge by offering **Infeaux on the Geaux**, Visit Baton Rouge's mobile welcome center, to encourage them to explore the city while in town and incentivize them to want to come back
  - Update relevant collateral for Infeaux on the Geaux to be timely and in line with current branding efforts for Visit Baton Rouge and the city



## DESTINATION SERVICES

- Use docking as an opportunity to distribute Baton Rouge “swag” to provide touchpoints that incentivize Riverboat visitors to come back to Baton Rouge on their own time
- Develop system of tracking Riverboat visitors’ habits (e.g., what restaurants they are visiting and where they are shopping in the city) to better determine the economic impact of Riverboats on the community and better tailor city-wide recommendations for them

# SPECIAL PROJECTS AND EVENTS



## SPECIAL PROJECTS AND EVENTS

The Special Projects and Events Team pursues and confirms new opportunities for special projects and large scale events that ultimately increase hotel occupancy throughout the year. These types of large-scale events are often the reason first-time visitors come to Baton Rouge and can act as a great gateway to promoting further exploration of the city.

### GOAL 1:

Increase bookings for large-scale projects and signature events

#### Strategies

- Develop a more impactful, ROI-centric approach to better communicate the benefits of choosing Baton Rouge as a host city
- Leverage the significance of Baton Rouge's Bicentennial to create a sense of timeliness and relevancy
- Continue to pursue and strengthen partnerships with local organizations particularly apt to host, sponsor or promote events

#### Tactics

- **Create event case studies** that utilize a consistent method of measuring and communicating success, in order to validate Baton Rouge's position as a premier host city
  - Select events that fall within most promising categories, e.g., highlights from the Bowling Championships can be used to pursue other sport-related events, highlights of the River Center's success can be used to pursue other musical events, etc.
  - Compile in a shareable, digital format that can be easily-tailored for specific events and used at tradeshow, networking events or in direct sales communications
  - In addition to "bottom-line" results and statistics, the case studies should prioritize:
    - The convenience and accessibility of our location
    - Our ability to draw in and satisfy a particular audience demographic
    - The quality, affordability and capabilities of our venues
    - Visit Baton Rouge's commitment to the event's success (show how Visit Baton Rouge will help promote the event, e.g., social posts, signage throughout the city, etc.)
- **Leverage paid and earned media to** help build hype, curate conversations and promote user-generated content before, during and after events
  - Inclusion in The Advocate and Business Report Welcome Guides
  - Social posts promoting large events or festivals
  - Pursue relationship with Lamar that could yield in-kind placement on digital billboards for select events



## SPECIAL PROJECTS AND EVENTS

- ***Develop and steward relationships with event production companies***, like Festival Productions, Inc. and Louisiana Marathon, to reach top-of-mind awareness when they consider locations for new events
  - Send event case studies that include exciting updates on accommodations, renovations and amenities using engaging media, e.g., photo, video, interactive tours of venues, etc.
- ***Attend appropriate conferences and trade shows*** to form new relationships and increase visibility for Baton Rouge
- ***Refine corporate sponsorship and promotion incentives*** to increase involvement and support from local businesses and organizations, further showing Baton Rouge's commitment to successfully hosting and stewarding events
  - Create tiered system/program for various sponsor levels and what they entail

# RECOMMENDED EVALUATION



# EVALUATION

### Leisure

- Measure lead generation and provide year-over-year comparison to observe upward or downward trends. Consider the following:
  - Website leads
  - E-newsletter subscriptions
  - RSS feed subscriptions
- Analyze social insights through year-over-year comparison. Consider the following:
  - Overall page audience
  - Mobile usage
  - Shares by users
  - Engagement
  - Click-thru rates
  - Web traffic to the Visit Baton Rouge website
- Measure social conversions and efficiency and compare year-over-year. Consider the following:
  - Cost-per-click
  - Cost-per-engagement
  - Cost-per-like
  - Cost-per-lead
  - Cost-per-thousand
- Measure user conversions from Facebook to other social/digital platforms. Consider the following:
  - Facebook > Blog
  - Facebook > Email
  - Facebook > Website
- Track social hashtags (#ExploreBatonRouge, #GoBR, #VisitBatonRouge, #BatonRouge, etc.) for qualitative analysis of conversations surrounding Visit Baton Rouge and/or Baton Rouge in the social sphere.



## RECOMMENDED EVALUATION

### **Meetings, Sales, Services and Special Projects**

- Send qualitative surveys to meetings and events attendees (via meeting planners) to gauge these types of visitors' overall Baton Rouge and Visit Baton Rouge experience.
- Measure lead generation for meetings and special projects and provide year-over-year comparison to observe upward or downward trends. This includes analysis of the following:
  - Website RFP forms on the Visit Baton Rouge site
  - Leads captured at tradeshows/events
  - Direct inquiries

### **Overall**

- Quantify earned media impressions and compare year-over-year
- Review year-over-year hotel occupancy to analyze upward or downward trends\*

\*NOTE THAT BECAUSE 2016 WAS ABNORMAL DUE TO EXTERNAL FACTORS AND BECAUSE 2017 DOES NOT INCLUDE BAYOU COUNTRY SUPER FEST, MESH WILL WORK WITH VISIT BATON ROUGE TO DETERMINE HOW TO ANALYZE OCCUPANCY TRENDS BY LOOKING AT PREVIOUS YEARS.

# EVENT CALENDAR



# CALENDAR

\* Note: the following calendar is a rough idea of upcoming events. It is based on what/when events occurred in 2016, Visit Baton Rouge's 2017 event calendar and the River Center's 2017 event calendar.

### February

- Mardi Gras Parades
  - Spanish Town Parade
  - Krewe of Southdowns Parade
  - Krewe of Artemis Parade
  - Mystic Krewe of Mutts Mardi Gras Parade
  - Krewe of Orion
  - Krewe of Mystique
- Mardi Gras Mambo (run)
- Annual Camellia Society Show

### March

- Wearing of the Green (St. Patrick's Day) Parade / Red Hot Chili Pipers
- The Original Harlem Globetrotters at the River Center

### April

- Craw Fête
- Third Street Songwriters Festival
- Zapp's International Beer Festival
- Annual Kite Fest Louisiane
- BR Ballet Theatre Presents "Rapunzel"
- Baton Rouge Zoo's Zippity Zoo Fest
- USBC Women's Championships (April – July)
- Baton Rouge Blues Festival
- Arts Council Ebb and Flow
- Angola Prison Spring Rodeo

### May

- Hot Art, Cool Nights
- Jambalaya Festival (Gonzales)

### June

- All summer: Dixie Landin' Summer Concert Series / Blue Bayou
- All year: Southern Craft Brewing Co. and Tin Roof Brewery Tours
- Freedom Mile (race through Downtown BR)
- MPAC

### July

- Restaurant Week
- BR Orchid Society Annual Orchid Show and Sale
- Art Melt
- Baton Rouge Bridal Show
- July 4th at USS Kid
- The Italian Heritage Festa

### August

- Fête Rouge
- Taste of Tiger Tailgaiting
- Baton Rouge Irish Film Festival
- LSU Tiger Fan Day
- Fall Fashion Fest
- Star Wars Gleaux Run 5k



## EVENT CALENDAR

### September

- Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival (Gonzales)
- Lamar Dixon music festival (dates TBD)
- Baker Buffalo Festival
- Code Red Chili Cook-Off (Zachary)

### October

- Southern Football homecoming
- Art Crawl (Zachary)
- LSU Rural Life Museum fall events
- Sugar Fest
- Boo at the Zoo
- Greater Baton Rouge State Fair
- Angola Prison Rodeo
- Zombie Bash 5k
- Baton Rouge Halloween Parade
- The 13th Gate
- LSU vs. Auburn

### November

- Capital City Beer Fest
- White Light Night
- Turkey Trot March of Dimes 5k
- LSU games (Arkansas, Alabama, A&M)

### December

- LSU Museum of Rural Life (Christmas events)
- Downtown Christmas Parade (Kiwanis)
- Zachary Christmas Parade
- Central Christmas Parade
- Baker Christmas Parade
- Festival of Lights
- BR Zoo ZooLights
- 19th Century Christmas Decorations at Rosedown
- Annual Holiday Shop Hop
- Iberville Bonfire Christmas Festival at Nottoway Plantation
- Kiwanis' 5th Annual Santa Fun Run
- BREC's Creole Christmas & Holiday Fair (Magnolia Mound Plantation)
- Ice Skating (River Center)
- Red Stick Revelry

### Slow months

- Plantation homes
- BREC parks, outdoor activities, water parks and swamp tours

### Ongoing summer events

- BREC
  - Liberty Lagoon
  - Greenwood Park – canoeing, golf, fishing
  - Bluebonnet park swamp tours
  - Frenchtown Conservation Area
- Blue Bayou

### Seasonal ongoing music events

- Rock N Rowe
- Live After Five
- Sunday in the Park

