

St. Marys Convention and Visitors Bureau Authority

Annual Report FY2020 (July 2019 – June 2020)

& FY2021 (July 2020 – June 2021)

Prepared by: Angela Wigger, Executive Director & Darlene Landreth, Chairperson

CVB Mission: To promote St. Marys, Cumberland Island, and the Camden County area as a desirable tourist destination, increase the overall economic impact and overnight stays of visitors to the area, and foster a quality visitor experience to benefit the city.

CVB Board: Darlene Landreth, Chairperson; Mardja Gray, Vice Chairperson; Valerie Fautz, Secretary; Judy Thurner, Mary Neff, Sugar Yadav, Jerry Lee, Melissa Braun, and Councilmember Jim Goodman

What is our Primary funding source?

6% local and 3% county Hotel Occupancy Tax

FY12 - \$109,377	FY17 - \$157,570
FY13 - \$102,253	FY18 - \$139,172 *
FY14 - \$118,906	FY19 - \$140,215
FY15 - \$138,298	FY20 - \$128,652
FY16 - \$145,979	FY21 - \$163,184

*FY18 – 1st year of 1/3 Camden County Tax revenue allowance. IRMA alone caused a 64-day closure of the island.

*FY19 – MICHAEL, Severe Spring weather, and a January 2019 government shutdown caused over 38 days of island closures.

*FY20 – In March of 2020 COVID-19 began to cause business disruptions. Cumberland Island NPS closed 3/18 – 6/26.

Other Sources: Gift Sales, Golf Cart History Tours, Scholarships/Grants, Donations, Community Market, Event Fees, Sponsors, and City of St. Marys.

CVB Authority Board Continued Project Goals:

Key Target Groups/Markets – Key markets continue to be cycling & outdoor enthusiasts (Ecotourism), leisure travelers and small business/social meetings, and reunions. Key Geographical Markets: Drive markets are Atlanta, Middle/Northwest Florida, Georgia Coast (events), South Carolina, North Carolina. (Cities: Atlanta, Savannah, Augusta, Orlando and Tampa, Charlotte, Charleston, and Greenville).

Promotions to Key Target Groups to Increase Economic Impact – Biking and other nature-based ecotourism groups (support of cycling efforts, including the Three Rivers Ride and Bicycle Ride Across Georgia Winter Ride). Focus on birdwatching, fishing and water activities promoting outdoor adventure. Robust use of digital advertising and social media marketing.



Initiatives & Accomplishments

- Music in the Park events from May – September planned each year, on hold May – September 2020 and actualized May – October 2021. COVID-19 friendly events (the Great American Take-out, Takeout Tuesdays, Teddy bear hunts, History scavenger hunts, Chalk Your Walk event, Digital coloring activities, etc.).
- Continued marketing efforts at the Georgia Visitor Center at Exit 1 to capitalize on the strength of the I-95 corridor. Including floor to ceiling coverage, interior banner, and signs. A billboard and window perfs covering the front entrance that feature photos of St. Marys, a NPS poly/fiberglass sailboat sculpture with “Visit St. Marys Waterfront” prominently displayed on the popular photo opportunity, plus a Visit St. Marys photo frame photo op, and a Welcome to St. Marys sign upon entering the building, all provide a much remarked upon first impression of St. Marys. The CVB fosters business relationships with the Georgia Visitor Information Center staff at I-95 Exit 1 and at I-95 Port Wentworth/Savannah. We utilize available opportunities to their maximum potential.
- Pivot in marketing to facilitate and promote outdoor activities and pick-up dining with changes as appropriate due to COVID-19. Joined US Travel Assn campaigns, “Let’s Make Plans,” “Let’s Go There Together,” “We’re Ready When You Are,” “Plan For Vacation,” marketing campaigns.
- Certified Georgia Regional Visitor Information Center with reports sent to GDEcD, Tourism Division monthly. Attendance at mandatory quarterly state RVIC meetings, staff training, and participation Georgia On My Mind Days.
- Director attended the Ga. Regional Visitor Information Center Workshop and Governor’s Tourism Conference to keep abreast of latest trends & networking.
- Director serves as Georgia Coast Travel Assn. board member & Submarine Museum B.O.D.
- Continued CVB sponsorship of the Three Rivers Ride and of Rustapalooza.
- Support /assistance with accommodations, information, dining arrangements, tours, and/or hosted events for groups such as, BRAG, Three Rivers Ride, Signature Festival Vendors, etc.
- Facilitated the placement of and highlighted in editorial/ad features in media outlets including Brunswick News, Georgia Magazine, Atlanta Magazine, Georgia Public Broadcasting, Southern Living, USA Today, Travel & Leisure Magazine, Conde Nast, etc. Facebook growth - Page Likes of 15,071 by June 2021. (300 in 2011; 3,000+ in 2014, 6,480 in 2015; 8,200 in 2016; 9,315 in 2017; 10,683 in 2018; 11,600 in 2019; 13,361 in 2020)



Guide to Camden County/ St. Marys Magazine



Atlanta Magazine

Other General Responsibilities

- Marketing/Promotions through social media, newsletters, web updates, and fam tours.
- Media buys in appropriate marketing mediums, as decided by authority board, to sustain and increase economic growth in tourism; Works with partners on developing deals and promoting existing product (special rates and coupons); Promotion/PR of local and regional events; Management, updating, and/or creation of media, brochures, video, handouts, advertising placement, and web content; Management of St. Marys Welcome Center and Community Market
- Required monthly and annual reports and financial responsibilities to city, county and or state officials.
- Implemented marketing/promotion plan actions.

DIGITAL- Website with Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and a mobile responsive program, Facebook Advertising of website and boosts of various events and posts; Constant Contact monthly newsletter, TripAdvisor ad campaign reached over 6,079,000 impressions, Social Media; AAA Living South digital banner

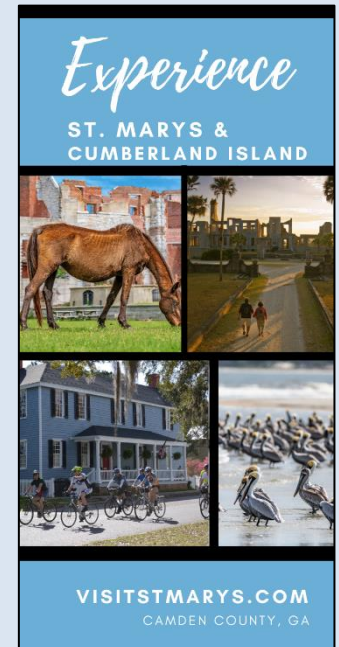
PRINT or PRINT/DIGITAL MIX - Highlights: Southern Living, Good Housekeeping, Women's Day, Atlanta Magazine, MAPTech Boating/Cruising Guide, Guy Harvey, Birdwatcher's Digest, Georgia Outdoor Guide, Georgia State Parks Guide, St. Marys Magazine, AAA Living Magazine, Georgia Coast Travel Association brochure and website, Chamber Relocation Guide, Southern Living.

TELEVISION/RADIO – Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) delivers quality television and radio with robust content and images. We leveraged a GCTA co-op marketing opportunity directly with GPB through a matching grant program and secured in 2019 for 33, 15 second TV and 25 radio ads plus a GPB Grant in 2020 for (90) ninety, 15 second TV and 120 radio ads, which resulted in over 2,060,000 impressions in Georgia.

OTHER – Jacksonville Int'l Airport kiosks, I-95 Exit 26 Billboard, Georgia Visitor Center Billboard. Free newsletter ad to over 250,000 through ExploreGeorgia Opt-ins and Southern Living upgrade.

ACCOLADES/AWARDS

- Tourism Director received the **Georgia Certified Professional Travel Counselor** designation from the U.S. Travel Association National Council of State Tourism Directors (NCSTD)
- "Make a Splash at the 10 Best Beaches in Georgia" – Fodor's Travel, Nov. 2019
- "2019 Bucket List. The Best Park in Every State" - Outdoor Magazine, Sept. 2019
- "Explore Georgia's Unspoiled Coast From These 7 Campgrounds" - The Dyr, Oct. 2018
- "18 of the Best Places to Visit in Georgia" - Trips To Discover - September 2018
- "Reel Time: On the road to St. Marys and Cumberland Island, Ga. - September 2018
- "The Prettiest Town in Every U.S. State" - Architectural Digest, July 2018.
- "The Most Beautiful Vacation Spots in Each State" - TheInsider.com, July 2018.



Georgia Travel Guide



Southern Living Magazine

Economic Impact of Tourism to Camden County – The Coast Region

(Tourism figures from U.S. Travel Association, Study for GDEcD, Tourism Division – 2019 Data released 2020)

- Supported 910 jobs
- Generated \$115.09 million in direct tourist spending
- **On an average day, \$315,068 is spent on tourism related expenses in Camden County**
- Created \$5.07 million in state tax revenues
- Created \$3.25 million in local tax revenues
- **Each Camden County household would need to be taxed an additional \$431 per year to replace taxes generated by tourism economic activity.**

Attraction Updates (Provided by Each Venue):

Welcome Center Statistics – MANAGED BY THE ST. MARYS CVB

FY2017	9,548		FY2020 (closed Mar.18 – May 20)	10,071
FY2018	7,744		FY2021	5,611
FY2019	7,631			

St. Marys Express Train Rides

2017	14,500		2020	Est. 10,000
2018	14,500		2021 (Ownership Change)	Ongoing
2019	14,500			

St. Marys Submarine Museum

2017	9,500		2020 (closed Mar.-Dec.)	Approx. 1,200
2018	9,000		2021 (closed Jan.-May)	Ongoing
2019	+10,000			

Cumberland Island National Seashore (Island & Museum)

2016	61,897		2019	53,900
2017	51,900		2020 (closed Mar. 18-June26)	37,300
2018	55,600			

*An estimated 2.3 million dollars spent by visitors in Camden, Charlton, Glynn, and Nassau Counties. Figures from NPS.

Crooked River State Park Visitation:

FY2018	197,534		FY2020	261,592
Fy2019	201,534		FY2021	275,328

*Figures provided by CRSP Staff – “CRSP Transition and Trend Report”

Georgia Public Broadcasting – TV & Radio Commercial

