



# Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance

## 2019 Marketing Plan for Visitor Businesses

### **Background**

The Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance mission is to be a leader for destination marketing strategies through exemplary promotion of the Finger Lakes region as a world class tourism destination for travellers and potential visitors.

### **Key Strategic Priorities**

- Position the Finger Lakes as an attractive vacation destination for travelers.
- Drive increased visitation to the new, refreshed, and responsive [www.FingerLakes.org](http://www.FingerLakes.org) to raise awareness of the destination for visitors and increase partner value.
- Amplify focus on digital media to take full advantage of our optimized website.
- Offer a few well-targeted cooperative opportunities to help partners reach their own marketing goals, and apply any surplus to additional advertising.

### **Demographic Information**

Market research compiled by various organizations such as Randall Travel Market Study, Oxford Economics and Smith Travel Research have all come to similar conclusions about the demographic makeup of the Finger Lakes' average travel consumer:

- Age Range: 25-70
- Gender: Female, Decision Maker
- Average Household Income: \$100,000
- Education: College Graduate

### **Geographic Information**

Market research compiled by several groups such as the Randall Travel Market Study and Warren and Lynn Brown along with statistics from our own Travel Guide requests and website visitations have reinforced that a majority of the region's visitors come from a within a 5-hour driving radius:

- Intraregional Origins
- Western New York (Buffalo and Niagara Falls)
- Ontario, Canada (Toronto and Ottawa)
- Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Scranton, Wilkes Barre)
- New Jersey
- Greater Albany
- New England
- New York City

### **Psychographic Information to be Used for 2019 Marketing Themes**

Various marketing research sources including our own 2009 conversion study and input from the FLTA marketing committee made up of managers and key staff from Finger Lakes businesses indicate that Finger Lakes visitors usually travel to the region for the following reasons:

- Wine, Wineries, and Wine-Related Activities, as well as non-wine farm based beverages including beer, hard cider, and spirits
- Scenic Beauty/ Nature
- Lakes and Water Activities
- Camping
- State Parks
- Shopping
- Culinary / Agri-tourism
- Escapes to Reconnect with Family and Friends

- Business, Meetings, and Conventions
- Museums, arts and cultural and historically significant attractions
- Family based getaways
- Weddings

## Marketing Plan Components

### Digital Marketing

An increased focus on digital marketing will help FLTA stretch every valuable marketing dollar. It will also take full advantage of the redesigned and optimized FingerLakes.org, which has consistently proven to be our most valuable marketing tool.

#### 1. FingerLakes.org

**Goal:** Work with the current site to be the best web source for Finger Lakes information. Continue to work on SEO and content to ensure that FingerLakes.org continues to appear within the top results in major search engine searches.

**Measurement:** Monitoring of ranking and working with Corporate Communications for website benchmarking and Google analytics to ensure the visitation remains high and bounce rate low.

- Increase visitation to FingerLakes.org as a result of SEO and SEM efforts and organic searches conducted on major search engines.
- FingerLakes.org aims to be the regional authority and system leader for booking accommodation reservations in the Finger Lakes.
- Continue encouraging partners to review their listing on FingerLakes.org as well as BookDirect and utilize the partner login feature to update their own information when necessary.
- Promote FingerLakes.org in all advertising efforts.
- FLTA will work with partner businesses to expand upon reaching the individual traveller as well as group itinerary offerings to showcase the abundance of things to do in itinerary format and provide examples of how and where to traverse the region.
- Continue to offer partner-posting capability to empower partner businesses to add their content for promotion.
- Development of niche pages on FingerLakes.org to develop digital targeted pages and content. Partners would have the ability to purchase banner ads, tile ads, or have featured content on these pages that would be a reference source for individual travellers as well as the media, to gain more exposure.
  - Niche pages to be added include but are not limited to:
    - Finger Lakes Destination Weddings
    - Groups
    - LGBTQ
  - In order to drive traffic to these pages, public newsletters will highlight these themes to encourage visitation and review of this content.



#### 2. Email Marketing

**Goal:** Maintain open rates above 30% for the partner e-newsletter, grow open rates to be consistently 20% or higher for each segment of the consumer e-newsletter distribution lists.

**Measurement:** Mailchimp Marketing System Reports

- Mailchimp Marketing System's monthly fee is very reasonable with varying subscriber based monthly payment plans. Pricing above takes in to affect list growth in to 2019 for over 51,000 email subscribers with unlimited email frequency. This will be used for public newsletters, partner newsletters, and various other mass communications.
  - a) The partner e-newsletter will be sent out once a month. It will include upcoming cooperative opportunities, latest news, recent FLTA achievements, and industry education. Advertising spots or advertorials will be available in each edition for \$150 each, representing no increase.
  - b) The public (consumer) e-newsletter will continue to be sent out every other month or more frequently as needed. All articles should link back to FingerLakes.org to aid in site visitation numbers. Advertising spots or advertorials will be available in each edition for \$600 each, representing no increase.
  - c) FLTA will develop family friendly, senior, group, and international themes as well as the new page themes mentioned earlier in this report to incorporate in one way or another into each newsletter to focus on different business sectors of interests as well as highlight regional happenings based on the season and time of year to ensure seasonal and audience appropriate content.
  - d) Exclusive newsletters will be sent out on behalf of partners that invested in them. Content will be created by the partner and will be sent out by FLTA to a database of over 45,000 opted in email subscribers.

## **In House Social Media Efforts**

Social media is a constantly evolving virtual space where brands need to be present. The hurdle that FLTA faces is the time and resources it takes to watch and manage these multiple platforms. In an effort to assist with this resource crunch, FLTA will contribute as a team to each of these platforms to make sure the message is consistent and thematic while still having a unified voice. A social media calendar will be implemented to keep communication and themes across channels consistent and trackable for all staff to reference.

### 1. Facebook

**Goal:** Increase the Finger Lakes' fan base by at least 10,000 throughout the 2019 year with the implementation of Facebook ads, growing the number of page likes, and build interaction with fans to keep the Finger Lakes brand top of mind through engagement and promotion.

**Measurement:** Increase the number of likes of the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance fan page to 45,000+, and increase engagement. Use Facebook's analytics to measure and Facebook ad reports.

- With Facebook growing at an amazing pace and showing few sign of slowing, it is imperative that FLTA stay engaged with this medium and work to procure various items for giveaways.
- FLTA hopes to encourage partners to continue to provide promotional materials to use as giveaways in compliance with sweepstakes regulations and help encourage fans and friends of fans to like our page and posts.

### 2. Twitter

**Goal:** Keep the Finger Lakes brand top of mind for both consumer and area businesses by growing followers and engagement.

**Measurement:** Grow number of followers to 10,000+. Use HootSuite and quarterly marketing reports to help measure growth.

- Maintain our current presence on Twitter.
- Increase amount of followers through consistency, engagement, improved content, and partner provided promotional material giveaways.
- Interact with consumers, influential journalists and bloggers, travel agents/tour operators, and other key industry leaders to help position Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance as a top source for Finger Lakes information.

### 3. Instagram

**Goal:** To increase visual awareness of the Finger Lakes, gain brand ambassadors contributing content on FLTA's behalf, and collect images for FLTA promotional purposes.

**Measurement:** Track photos through tools such as Hootsuite as well as through the usage of a particular hashtag such as #TourFLX #FLTA and #2019FingerLakes

- Hashtags will be used to denote where the photos were taken a campaign will be started with the hashtags #TourFLX #FLTA and #2019flxTG (or some variation) to collect photos and increase Finger Lakes visual awareness.
- Marketing collateral and various promotional materials will work to include FLTA's Instagram name and promotional hashtags.
- Advertising and awareness of this increased presence on this platform will take place on other social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook and through word of mouth awareness through individuals on the marketing committee.

### 4. YouTube

**Goal:** Increase interest in the Finger Lakes and partner businesses through our YouTube channel by sharing video from area businesses as well as the Finger Lakes regional video.

**Measurement:** Increase channel views by 500 from year-end total and increase visitation to partner pages on FingerLakes.org

- Increase the Finger Lakes regional presence on YouTube through the addition of more scenic and niche videos.
- Encourage partners to share their business and promotional videos with FLTA on an ongoing basis for shared exposure through FLTA's various marketing channels and YouTube account.
- FLTA will begin adding short experiential videos of FLTA visits to partner business locations.

## **Tiping Point Media Proposal and Fulfillment**

### 1. Investment of NYS Line Item Funds awarded in 2018.

a. To be executed in the Washington DC, northern Virginia, northern Maryland market area.

- Digital Media Advertising
  - Digital advertising to appear on major news sites, travel and tourism sites, and appropriate content platforms with interactive advertising which FLTA could track through consumer requests for a free travel guide.

- Promotions and Advertising (Possibly Radio)
  - Depending on budget and tactics, Tipping Point Media will look to evaluate if radio is an appropriate platform given the budget.
  - FLTA staff or various partners could be interviewed to discuss various off season activities in the Finger Lakes region to drive website visitation and awareness.
- Online / Social Media Advertising
  - Pre-roll video, paid search of key Finger Lakes search terms appropriate for the region as well as the communal partner base and mobile advertising and will drive potential visitors to a Finger Lakes campaign landing page on FingerLakes.org.
- Digital Billboard Advertising
  - Finger Lakes campaigns along major, highly trafficked routes, will drive visitation to FingerLakes.org for partner exposure.
- The addition of dollars from partner investment will only increase media weight within the determined market.
- Fulfilment of travel guide requests.

## Collateral Materials

FLTA continues to show a strong return on collateral materials investments including the very popular regional travel guide. While these collateral materials often mean large investments in printing, shipping, postage and labor to develop, they also have proven themselves as a major asset to both the region and our partners. Therefore, costs have historically been offset by advertising revenues and other returns on the initial investment. Here is a list of collateral materials for 2019 being recommended for FLTA:

### 1. Travel Guide

**Goal:** Distribution of the travel guide will be at the 125,000 quantity level as we evaluate distribution numbers by mid-year. FLTA and partners recognize what an invaluable piece of regional information this is encompassing a wide variety of business offerings and valuable Finger Lakes information.

Distribute all 125,000 guides by the end of the 2019 year.

**Measurement:** Maintain distribution records.

- FLTA will produce 125,000 copies of its comprehensive Finger Lakes Travel Guide.
- Layout and specific content will be determined by the Marketing Committee.
- Continued offering of advertising opportunities, coupon pages, and enhanced listings will be included within the pages of the travel guide highlighting unique experiences or offers of area businesses and advertising opportunities will remain at 2018 rates with no rate increase requested.
- Continue to make use of the free flip-book version of the guide on Issuu.com as the trend for online viewership is increasing.

### 2. Mini-Guide and Map

**Goal:** Distribute 75,000 guides before year end to have an accurate Finger Lakes road map that is representative of the diversity of businesses in the region as visitors are on the road.

**Measurement:** Maintain distribution records.

- Produce 75,000 and distribute through website orders and at all consumer shows. The Mini-Guide and Map is also our standard fulfilment piece for various Tipping Point Media campaigns and similar lead fulfilment programs.
- Offset printing and distribution costs with partner advertising enhanced listing plus which denotes a colored box around business name, address, web address and phone number alongside a logo placement and enhanced listings. No price increase is recommended.
- As a result of updates to design of 2018 Map and Mini Guide on the partner content page, FLTA would like to recommend an additional advertising opportunity by offering illustration sponsorships at the cost of \$800 per illustration. This sponsorship will allow having businesses represented in a larger pictorial fashion inclusive of their business name on the text side of the map while still being business appropriate and representative. Images would be pre-selected for choosing such as a wine glass, car image, etc or provided by the partner with designer providing input and both partner and designer signing off on this content for placement on the map prior to final printing.

### 3. 2019 Group Travel Planner Insert

**Goal:** Distribute 1,000 inserts highlighting new partners that weren't included in the full edition of the Group Travel Planner, that are group friendly businesses to promote group travel and provide an additional benefit of partnership.

**Measurement:** Maintain distribution records.

- Produce 1,000 and distribute through insertion in the Group Travel Planner and send out via website orders, group travel or tour operator/leader requested and at all trade shows or follow up after the show.
- Offset printing and distribution costs with partner display ad advertising opportunities.



## Cooperative Marketing

With more and more potential travellers turning to the Internet to do their research, FLTA will be focusing on that medium more than traditional print advertising. Print advertising is harder to track and higher priced when compared to other media. However, we will be advertising in the following very targeted outlets due to the success of offering this program to our FLTA partners. Cooperative programs have associated expenses with them for associated costs that will be offset by partner investment which has proven a challenge in year's prior to collect the necessary participation from partners to execute new programs.

### 1. Be Local Now – Google Aerial Shots

**Goal:** Designed to work in parallel with Google interior business images, FLTA is in conversation with Mark Goho of Be Local now to offer street view and interior image shoots as well as aerial imagery to allow partners photographic access of their entire business location, inside and out.

**Measurement:** Track visitation to FingerLakes.org partner pages that have this capability as well as gain feedback from participating partners to gauge ROI and additional business generated.

- Partners can contact FLTA to make shoot scheduling arrangements with Mark Goho for photographs to be taken.
- FLTA is coordinating a deal with Mark that the investment will be a benefit of FLTA partnership.

## Other Marketing Efforts

As FLTA recognizes the need for other marketing functions that may not fall under the aforementioned categories, the following programs are proposed:

### Social Media Ad Buys for Partner Businesses

**Goal:** Assist and execute social advertising campaigns (Facebook and Instagram specifically) for partners that would like this service, may be unfamiliar with how to do so, and allow FLTA to facilitate.

**Measurement:** Ad analytics and tracking in ads manager.

- Assist partners with Facebook advertising campaigns by developing creative from partner supplied images and text, linking to a partner website URL.
- Tracking effectiveness of ad for partner businesses and making appropriate adjustments/tweaks as necessary.
- Partners investment in this opportunity for one month and includes creative development, proof adjustments with partner, ad placement and execution and monitoring of ad by FLTA on an ongoing basis to ensure effective results.
- Partners will receive and have ownership of creative content after the ad run is completed.

### Group Travel Trade Show Attendance

**Goal:** Develop new relationships with group and international travel leaders.

**Measurement:** Track correspondence of all group and international travel leaders met at these shows throughout the year.

FLTA will make every attempt to be represented at the following shows to continue relationships with key planners and have a presence in the group travel market:

- American Bus Association – Louisville, KY, January 25-29<sup>th</sup>
- International Pow Wow – Anaheim, CA, June 1-5<sup>th</sup> (cost is included through Wine Water Wonders)
- Heartland Travel Showcase -- Detroit, MI, February 22-24<sup>th</sup>
- Pennsylvania Bus Association Annual Meeting – Location TBD – Dates TBD

### Promotional Items

**Goal:** Have enough promotional material for use in a gift basket, social media offers, or vacation giveaways at consumer shows.

**Measurement:** Maintain a spreadsheet of promotional items donated.

- In order for FLTA and the Finger Lakes region to compete for the attention of potential visitors at shows and other high-traffic events, branded promotional items must be offered. However, instead of FLTA simply purchasing all these items directly, it is recommended that costs be reduced by offering partners the opportunity to send their own branded items with FLTA to their various shows and media events.
- Furthermore, it is suggested that FLTA also encourage partners to donate items to gift baskets and promotional giveaways as an additional, inexpensive means of promoting their specific businesses. While additional promotional items will most likely still need to be purchased to round out gift baskets and other giveaways, this arrangement will still be the most beneficial to both FLTA and its partners.

## AAA/CAA Program

Dan Belliveau has done a tremendous job of building relationships with AAA/CAA agents around the Northeast and Canada for the past 15+ years. After building this foundation Dan has decided to pass the torch back to FLTA to restructure the program and allow him to proceed into the next phase of his career/personal life.



As a way to continue this valuable program and foster continued relationships with AAA offices and agents, FLTA is proposing updates and amendments to the program to provide even more value to AAA offices and FLTA partner businesses.

FLTA looks to continue the AAA Program through implementation of the following tactics:

- 2019 Finger Lakes Regional Travel Guide Distribution
  - Over the years, FLTA has compiled a list of AAA offices and in particular regional branch hubs that are hotspots and main hubs for regional clubs. Communicating with managers at these hubs to receive a fresh stock of 2019 Finger Lakes Regional Travel Guides will keep the Finger Lakes top of mind at these major decision influencing locations.
- PowerPoint Presentation
  - The AAA PowerPoint presentation will continue to be implemented with an eye catching image that will represent each partner enrolled in the program.
  - Partner will be able to provide a short text description of 1 or 2 updates of notable items taking place at their business in the coming year for FLTA to include in the notes of the PowerPoint to allow agents to train additional new hires throughout the year.
  - The PowerPoint will be emailed out to AAA clubs, managers and branches via FLTA once the content is compiled.
- Rack Card / Brochures
  - As travel does rely heavily on print materials and visitors like having rack cards/business brochures with them as they travel, FLTA will continue to mail out a packet of program participant brochures to each major clubs and offices that will include a reorder form for each participant's brochure.
  - Fulfilment requests for partner materials will continue as in previous years where reorder forms are received by the FLTA office and FLTA staff will reach out to partner businesses to send the requested amount of the given office.
- Webinars
  - As Dan Belliveau conducted in the past, FLTA will be looking to connect with major branch hubs to conduct office trainings and webinars to educate AAA counsellors and travel agents about the Finger Lakes area.
  - Appropriate webcam materials will be purchased to allow webinar opportunities and even afford partners the opportunity to participate in webinar opportunities without having to incur travel expenses.

Funds will be used to purchase a webcam and necessary webinar software to be able to take part in advantageous technological opportunities with AAA clubs. The funds will also be used to support mailing of promotional materials and AAA packets. In 2019, FLTA will once again need to offset the costs by offering partners the opportunity to pay to be included in the presentations and packets mailed to each office.

As a way to continue reach, be more inclusive and hit the digital market that more and more individuals are trending towards, FLTA will also conduct AAA office specific emails sent out of a quarterly basis. These newsletters will provide information on seasonal updates, new developments in the region and more.

FLTA will provide inclusion in this program at the following levels. A \$50 credit on all the levels below will be received for renewing AAA program partners:

- *Platinum Participant*
  - Maximum participation, one partner per quarter for a platinum highlight of a total of 3 months of a 12 month quarter period.
  - Advantages: Platinum sponsors will receive first notification to participate in webinar opportunities as they arise as only two partner businesses per webinar will be able to sit in and participate.
  - Businesses will receive inclusion on the FingerLakes.org AAA page with 150 word write up on business with an accompanying image.
  - Inclusion of company rack card/brochure included in folder for AAA office reorder.
  - Platinum sponsors will be afforded at no additional charge a display ad or advertorial in one of the 4 seasonal AAA e-newsletters and Platinum sponsor content will appear first, above all other content.
- ❖ Options available to add another newsletter feature in another quarter for an additional investment.



- *Premier AAA Partner*
  - Maximum participation, 4 partners per quarter for a premium highlight of a total of 3 months of a 12 month quarter period.
  - Advantages: Business name mention and photo included at top, but below Platinum participant content, with a link to FLTA partner page for more information.
  - Business will receive inclusion on the FingerLakes.org AAA page with 150 word write up on business and an accompanying image.
  - Inclusion of company rack card/brochure included in folder for AAA office reorder.
- *AAA Program Partner Participant*
  - 12 month coverage and exposure in PowerPoint presentation.
  - Advantages: Business name mention with a link to FLTA partner page for more information.
  - Business will receive inclusion on the FingerLakes.org AAA page with 150 word write up on business and an accompanying image.

## International Marketing

**Goal:** Match metrics assigned to Wine Water and Wonders founding partners.

**Measurement:** We will be tracking global media coverage, visitor information centers, the Wine Water and Wonders website, and results from an ongoing research project.

- As FLTA's mission statement clearly points out, the international marketplace is of ever-increasing importance to tourism in the Finger Lakes region. Therefore, it is recommended that FLTA continue its participation in the Wine Water & Wonders program designed to bring international travellers to the Finger Lakes area through an itinerary that includes New York City and Niagara Falls.
- FLTA's participation in this program is also helpful from an internal standpoint, as it helps strengthen the relationship with other key tourism entities.
- While the exact marketing plan for the Wine Water & Wonders program has not been finalized for 2019, it is FLTA's expectation that it will include promotion at international trade shows such as Pow Wow and NAJ East, one on one sales blitzes at key international travel agencies, familiarization tours, and print/web advertisements.

## Thruway Information Centers

**Goal:** Increase interest in Finger Lakes travel and what business offerings are available here in the region.

**Measurement:** Increase distribution of Finger Lakes collateral by 5% year over year.

This activity is all dependants pending contract approval and should FLTA be awarded the contract to operate in these spaces for the 2019 year.

FLTA operates Thruway Information Centers at the Pembroke and Warners Thruway stops. To keep these centers open, FLTA will be offering the following partner advertising opportunities in 2018:

1. I-90 Westbound Staffed Information Center at Pembroke
2. I-90 Eastbound Staffed Information Center at Warners
3. I-86 East Brochure Distribution at the Chautauqua Information Centers

## Pennsylvania on Display

**Goal:** FLTA will provide bin placement along key routes throughout Pennsylvania in locations including but not limited to Valley Forge, King of Prussia, Lehigh, Chester, and Carbon with many more options available.

**Measurement:** Maintain distribution records from PA on Display for partner materials as well as Finger Lakes Regional Travel Guides.

- Partners can only participate in this program if they purchase 3 New York Centers. Additional bins can be purchased if interest is expressed.
- Dependant on timing and partner interest this opportunity can run for 6 months to an entire year.
- To make this opportunity work and ensure partner exposure at all locations, FLTA will offer this display area in conjunction with the three New York Centers.

## Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

**Goal:** FLTA will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrating the organization's past, present and future and connecting with partner businesses celebrating the Finger Lakes regional community.

**Measurement:** Track advertising impressions and insights from marketing campaigns and keep attendance information to track effectiveness of marketing.

- NYS Line Item funds will be used to support the marketing, implementation, and execution of this celebration.
- All FLTA marketing tactics will support marketing this event and creating an in region and out of region buzz about the celebration.

## Other Information

### Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance Partner Packages

Packages will be available to partners as available in 2019 including the Gold, Silver and Bronze Level partnership packages as well as the Concierge Package. Elements are slightly revised within partnership packages as follows, below.

#### Gold Partnership Package

- Includes basic partnership for 2019 partnership year with all the benefits of FLTA partnership inclusive including event calendar posting, press release posting, updating of partner page, and business photo.
- One Featured Partner of the Month\* (one in season) and one banner ad placement (shoulder season month) on a page of FingerLakes.org that includes a 30-50 word write up, link to business website, and a photo under the Featured Business heading above the fold on the page. Banner ad dimensions are 960 pixels wide by 480 pixels height.
- 1/6 page color community page ad in the Communities section of the 2019 Finger Lakes regional travel guide.
- Cost to partners for this package will be at the \$1,265 level providing a 40% savings over standard rates.

#### Silver Partnership Package

- Includes basic partnership for 2019 partnership year with all the benefits of FLTA partnership inclusive including event calendar posting, press release posting, updating of partner page, and business photo.
- Featured Partner of the Month\* (during a shoulder season month)
- Enhanced listing with a business photo next to the business listing in the Communities section of the 2019 Finger Lakes regional travel guide.
- Cost to partners for this package will be at the \$596 level providing a 35% savings over standard rates.

#### Bronze Partnership Package

- Includes basic partnership for 2019 partnership year with all the benefits of FLTA partnership inclusive including event calendar posting, press release posting, updating of partner page, and business photo.
- 3 additional photos for a total of four photos on a partner's unique partner page listing.
- Tile ad for one month placement on one page of FingerLakes.org (off season, October-March) on a page of partner's choosing, dependant on availability.
- Cost to partners for this package will be at the \$485 level providing a 20% savings over standard rates.

**\*Featured Partner of the Month:** Is a featured placement being offered by FLTA that includes 30-50 words of text, a business photo, and a link to a landing page of the business' choosing for promotion on a page, above the fold, on FingerLakes.org for increased visibility while offering substantial rate savings.