

# Walla Walla

## Surprise, surprise.

2012 Marketing Plan

and

Operating Budget

October 2011

# Marketing Plan for Tourism Walla Walla

## Mission Statement

*The mission of Tourism Walla Walla is to market and develop the Walla Walla Valley as a year round visitor destination for the economic benefit of the community.*

## Vision Statement

*Tourism has created value for our customers and our community. The experience of our visitors and those who serve them is positive. Our community benefits from the creation of jobs, economic vitality and the broader perspective provided by our visitors. We deliver a high quality guest experience as we share our unique culture and heritage. Tourism has preserved and enhanced the quality of life for our community.*

## Marketing Challenges

To date, the local tourism industry has seen great growth rivaling 2008 as a record year of recovery for Walla Walla's tourism industry.

The global recession that began in the fall of 2008 and continued throughout 2009 and though no longer technically in a recession, the economy grew only slightly in 2010. Sluggish job growth, tight fiscal policies and frugal consumerism all combined to put a drag on the growth of the tourism industry.

Yet in spite of these factors, in 2010 tourism in the Valley saw growth in all our key indicators

	2010	2009	% increase
Occupancy	49.8%	47.1%	5.7%
Rooms sold	159,183	150,602	5.7%
Room revenue	\$14,563,684	\$13,393,976	8.7%
Average Daily Rate	\$91.49	\$88.94	2.9%
RevPar	\$45.57	\$41.89	8.8%

In 2011 our continued commitment to our comprehensive marketing program resulted in a recovery far beyond our projections. For the first nine months of 2011 the numbers are:

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>% increase</u>
Occupancy	58.7%	52.2%	12.5%
Rooms sold	140,272	124,751	12.4%
Room Revenue	\$ 13,592,639	\$ 11,548,086	17.7%
Average Daily Rate	\$ 96.90	\$ 92.57	4.7%
RevPar	\$ 56.90	\$48.30	17.8%

Walla Walla is above the state averages and in fact leads the state in increase in all key indicators

	<u>Walla Walla</u>	<u>State of Washington</u>
Occupancy	14%	3.3%
Rooms sold	13.9%	4.3%
Room Revenue	19.8%	7.6%
Average Daily Rate	5.3%	3.2%
RevPar	20%	6.6%

In 2011, Tourism Walla Walla incorporated a number of marketing strategies with integrated disciplines to extend brand awareness of the Walla Walla product to potential visitors. Identified as crucial to the future success of Tourism Walla Walla's marketing initiative were the development of a stronger online presence and the expansion of our existing interactive strategy.

Consumer travel surveys conducted by *Ypartnership* indicate the following trends of leisure travelers for 2011:

- More than three-quarters of US consumers (77%) agree that they have become a much smarter shopper thanks to today's economic situation."
- Among leisure travelers who have used the Internet to obtain travel information or to make a reservation, more than eight in ten say the most desirable features in a travel-service supplier website are the ability to check the lowest fare (84%) and the lowest price/rate guarantee (82%).
- Fully one in ten (30%) leisure travelers took a "staycation" – an overnight trip within 50 mile drive radius of their home – as an alternative to a vacation requiring greater travel distance within the past 12 months, a significant increase from 26% taking such a trip in 2010.
- Nearly two in three (64%) say they are willing to pay full price if they are guaranteed the quality and service they believe they deserve.
- The percentage of travelers who have downloaded a Smartphone travel app jumped from 10 % last year to 28 % in 2011.
- Social media are gaining credibility as a trusted information source among those who have visited an online community, travel forum or blog to seek and/or review information about a destination or service provider. Three out of five leisure travelers (61%) visited TripAdvisor prior to booking a hotel reservation, while one in five (18%) visited YouTube in the past 12 months for the same purpose.
- One-third of travelers (33 %) have visited an online community, travel forum or blog to seek and/or review information about a destination or travel-service supplier in the past 12 months.

For the most part, however, leisure travelers will make frugal choices in lodging, restaurants out and other discretionary expenditures. Price and value will be the most important drivers in their decision-making process.

2011 also saw the closure of Washington State's tourism department which will be replaced by the Washington Tourism Alliance, a private sector not-for-profit trade association. We should expect little direct marketing by the WTA in 2012 as they strive to build support for their organization.

## Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of Tourism Walla Walla's marketing and sales efforts will be to maximize Walla Walla's return on its investment by positioning Walla Walla as the premier wine destination in the Pacific Northwest with much more to offer than just wine.

### Objective

*Influence consumer travel-making decisions in key feeder markets of Seattle, Portland and Boise and secondary markets of Tri-cities, Spokane and Yakima by implementing aggressive and cost-effective integrated marketing strategies and programs.*

### Situation:

In 2011, Tourism Walla Walla strengthened Walla Walla's online presence employing a number of social media tools including FaceBook, YouTube, Twitter and e-newsletter combined with an aggressive online marketing strategy in conjunction with traditional radio and print marketing initiatives.

In 2012, Tourism Walla Walla's consumer marketing focus will continue to drive visitation to our website and generate awareness of Walla Walla as a leisure travel destination and influence consumer decisions within our key and secondary feeder markets.

### Strategy:           Advertising

Generate top-of-mind awareness of Walla Walla as a vacation destination to travel consumers in key and secondary markets through image-building and response driven advertising.

### Advertising objectives:

- Increase traffic to Walla Walla website.
- Raise the profile of Walla Walla as a tourism destination by developing new creative and compelling messages that resonate with leisure travel consumers.

- Increase consumer inquiries (request for travel guides) for travel information on Walla Walla.

### **Advertising strategies:**

- Primary: influence consumers within key and secondary markets to choose Walla Walla as a leisure destination, thereby generating direct overnight tourism-related expenditures.
- Secondary: motivate potential visitors to request collateral material (travel guide / wine, bike maps).

### **Media Objectives:**

- Incorporate an integrated media strategy that reaches the largest number of potential visitors to WallaWalla in key and secondary markets.
- Drive traffic to Tourism Walla Walla website, [www.wallawalla.org](http://www.wallawalla.org).
- Compel potential visitors to request travel information.

### **Media strategies:**

- Place print advertising messages in key and secondary feeder markets.
- Place radio advertising messages in key and secondary feeder markets
- Participate in cost-effective cooperative print and radio advertising programs developed as a result of Tourism Walla Walla's Matching Funds program.
- Continue cost-effective pay-per-response interactive advertising programs.

### **Strategy: Trade / Consumer Shows**

One of the most effective means of stimulating meaningful dialogue with consumers is personal selling. Trade / consumer shows provide the opportunity to use personal selling to increase awareness of Walla Walla as a leisure and business destination.

- Attend leisure / consumer shows in key markets.
- Partner with Walla Walla TPA to attend trade shows that have the potential to bring meeting and conventions to Walla Walla.

## **Strategy: Public Relations**

Expand media coverage of Walla Walla as a destination for leisure travelers through local, regional and national channels using, a more interactive approach to public and press relations through new website technology and direct communications. In addition, Tourism Walla Walla will take advantage of the tools afforded by the web, blogs and social media to more directly communicate our message.

### **Tactic (Consumer Engagement)**

- Continue to use local bloggers to share their Walla Walla stories.
- Increase effort to recruit newsletter subscribers through direct FaceBook and twitter appeals.
- Using analytic tools to produce monthly report of website and FaceBook activity.

## **Strategy: Internet Marketing**

### **Situation**

According to Alexa.com ([www.Alexa.com](http://www.Alexa.com)) the Tourism Walla Walla website ([www.wallawalla.org](http://www.wallawalla.org)) is the among the highest ranked tourism website in the State of Washington well ahead of the tourism sites for Tri-Cities, Spokane and Yakima. In 2011 we want to continue to have an aggressive internet marketing plan based on new and emerging technologies.

**Tactic (website redesign)** new website design should incorporate features that make the site more user friendly and engaging. The look and feel of site should extend our brand message.

**Tactic (e-mail marketing)** e-mail marketing messages will be optimized and tracked for open, click throughs, and forwarded rates.

**Tactics (Search Engine Marketing) initiate** a pay-per-click campaign to enhance the performance of natural search engine optimization; Geo target campaign to match Tourism Walla Walla's marketing plan.

**Tactic (Tracking and reporting)** Create monthly tracking report charts to measure performance.

**Strategy:                   Product Development**

**Situation:**

Tourism Walla Walla has moved beyond the traditional role of destination marketing and finds itself spending a greater amount of its efforts on destination management. Examples of this include the growing role of our visitor center, SuperHost customer service training program, Walla Walla Valley regional signage initiative and new event development. Tourism Walla Walla's destination management efforts are designed to add richness to the Walla Walla Valley visitors' experience.

**Tactics (Regional Signage)** continue to seek / support / funding to move project through phase three.

**Tactics (Event development)** continue to support new and existing events that drive overnight stays.

**Tactic (Centralized ticket program)** contract with provider to develop a one-stop comprehensive online ticketing system and website presence to allow visitors to purchase tickets to local events.

**Strategy:                   Collateral Development**

Support advertising strategies and Destination Walla Walla information center by producing Walla Walla Travel Guide in partnership with the Union Bulletin. Augment this by printing walking, wine and bike maps. These materials are productive marketing pieces that encourage travel to Walla Walla.

**Tactic (Walla Walla Travel Guide)** the Walla Walla Travel Guide will serve as the primary response mechanism when responding to inquiries.

**Tactic (Niche Collateral)** produce and or support production of niche brochures such as walking tours, bike, wine, farm, art and dining maps that support Tourism Walla Walla's marketing initiatives.

**Strategy: Fulfillment**

Respond to visitor inquiries with information and collateral material in a timely fashion.

**Tactic (Fulfillment)** Irwin Mailing will serve as the primary source for mailing out information about Walla Walla from website and phoned-in inquiries.

**Tactic (Distribution)** Destination Walla Walla and the Walla Walla valley Chamber of Commerce will act as local distribution sites for visitors and stakeholders.

**Strategy: Destination Walla Walla**

Operate visitor information center located at 26 E Main Street.

**Tactic (Public Information)** the visitor center will be staffed to act as an outlet for interacting directly with the visitors' regarding information and directions to Walla Walla attractions.

**Tactic (Distribution)** Destination Walla Walla will serve as an outlet for stakeholders to distribute their individual rackable brochures.

**Tactic (Ticket Sales)** Destination Walla Walla will continue to serve as a ticket purchase location for various events in the Walla Walla Valley.

**Strategy: Stakeholder Engagement /Collaboration**

Build stakeholders awareness and support for the programs and activities of Tourism Walla Walla.

**Tactic (Website Promotions)** share with local tourism stakeholders various web-based marketing opportunities.

**Tactics (Tourism Walla Walla Tribune)** continue to produce monthly industry e-newsletter that highlights Tourism Walla Walla's activities and programs

**Tactics (Tourismwallawalla.com)** continue to provide most up-to-date information about the activities of the organization, including: board minutes,

tourism indicators, marketing plans, and research and current articles of general tourism interest

**Tactics (Cooperative Programs)** generate programs in partnership with local tourism stakeholders to extend the marketing reach of Tourism Walla Walla.

**Tactics (SuperHost) sponsor** a series of SuperHost customer service classes throughout the year.

**Tactic (Workshop(s))** sponsor, in partnership with other local trade associations workshop(s) that are of interest to local stakeholders.

**Strategy:                   Community Engagement**

Build community awareness and public relations programs that seek to generate broad community support as well as understanding the economic importance of the visitors industry to the community. With the key message being:

*Tourism Walla Walla promotes and develops the best of Walla Walla as a tourism destination while preserving our unique quality of life.*

**Tactic (Guest articles in local papers)** Produce a series of tourism-related stories that highlight the importance of the tourism industry to the Walla Walla Valley

**Tactic (Press Releases)** Produce a series of press releases that highlight the programs and activities undertaken by Tourism Walla Walla.

## 2012 Tourism Walla Walla Budget

### REVENUE

LODGING TAX REVENUE ALLOCATION	\$530,000
MATCHING FUNDS	15,000
WEB ADVERTISING	25,000
RESTRICTED FUNDS	7,500
DOWNTOWN FOUNDATION	4,800
COMMISSION SALES	4,000
MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	3,000
WEBERVATION	1,700
SUPERHOST	1,000
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$592,000</b>

### EXPENSES – MARKETING (62% of budget)

ADVERTISING & PR	\$210,500
VISITORS INFORMATION CENTER	32,000
MATCHING FUNDS	30,000
WEBSITE DESIGN	25,000
POSTAGE	15,000
PRINTED MATERIALS	13,000
TRADE SHOWS/ SALE MISSIONS	10,000
WEBSITE HOSTING / UP KEEP	6,000
ONLINE TICKETING	5,000
PROFESSIONAL FEES	5,000
SUPERHOST	5,000
WEBERVATION	1,700
DOWNTOWN PLANTING	1,500
<b>TOTAL MARKETING EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$359,700</b>

**STAFF EXPENSES (29 % OF BUDGET)**

SALARIES	\$125,000
PAYROLL TAXES	25,000
BENEFITS	17,450
<b>TOTAL STAFF EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$167,450</b>

**OFFICE EXPENSES (9% OF BUDGET)**

RENT	\$6,600
INSURANCE	6,750
TELEPHONE SERVICE	8,000
INTERNET ACCESS	1,500
OFFICE SUPPLIES	6,000
COPIER LEASE	5,000
BOARD EXPENSE	10,000
TRAVEL LOCAL	5,000
ACCOUNTING SERVICES	7,000

**TOTAL OFFICE EXPENSE** **\$55,850**

**TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES** **\$223,300**

**TOTAL OPERATING & MARKETING** **\$583,000**

**FUND BALANCE** **\$ 9,000**