

Visitors by the numbers

2014 Visitors: 3,890,000

(Source: Visitor Profile Study, Kantar TNS, July 2015)

2016 Visitors: 4,374,000

(Source: Visitor Profile Study, Kantar TNS, July 2017)

Marketing Efforts

Visit Baton Rouge launched a new responsive website in February 2016. In 2017, we budgeted for paid/sponsored posts. All print and digital ads also direct viewers to visit the website. Here are the results of how those initiatives are working.

- Sessions have increased by 95% YoY
- Users have increased by 99% YoY
- Organic traffic has increased by 64% YoY

Organic Traffic to the following website pages include substantial growth:

- Events page increased by 62% YoY
- Bars & Nightlife page increased by 1,076% YoY
- State Capitol page increased by 209% YoY
- Things to Do page increased by 44% YoY

Hospitality Jobs Supported in East Baton Rouge Parish

2014 Total Jobs Supported: 7,000

(Source: Economic Impact in Louisiana Parishes Report, Research Department of the U.S. Travel Association, September 2015)

2016 Total Jobs Supported: 12,690

(Source: Economic Impact in Louisiana Parishes Report, UNO Hospitality Research Center, May 2017)

Visit Baton Rouge estimates the annual income generated will be 2.6 million. This dedicated generated revenue will be a 50/50 split between Visit Baton Rouge and the Raising Cane's River Center.

Visit Baton Rouge's Plan for Estimated \$1.3 Million Annually Include:

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- Increase our fund for required incentives and bid fees for hosting future meetings and conventions that would allow us to compete for additional meetings and conventions.
Cities understand that meetings and conventions are producing an economic impact that goes beyond what the leisure visitors bring in. Due to the increase those bidding for the business, this has become more competitive.
- A fund for required incentives and bid fees for sporting events.
This is no different than what is required to host the Super Bowl, NCAA Sporting Events, etc. Sporting Events are also becoming a large economic impact and in order to bid you have to have the funds to compete.
- Increase our Leisure Tourism marketing budget
This includes both domestic and international tourism efforts. In 2016, hotel and attraction partners noted a significant increase in international visitors. With Louisiana and Baton Rouge's cultural connection, international visitors are drawn to this area. Additional marketing efforts are needed.
- Invest in existing festivals and events to promote them outside of the area to make them more of visitor-driven events.
Work with festival and event organizers to see how we can partner with them to attract visitors to their festivals.
- Invest in large scale events that are visitor-driven and include PR efforts to promote the Baton Rouge area.
Bayou Country Superfest was an economic driver for our area during a weekend were we other destinations seeing visitors. Businesses across the area reaped the benefits of this event. Visit Baton Rouge will continue to seek opportunities to bring events such as this to the Baton Rouge area.
- Invest more money in research to better define and target our marketing efforts and messaging visitors are looking for before making their travel plans.
Data and research is plentiful when it comes to really understanding the intentions of future visitors or meeting planners. Visit Baton Rouge has invested money to drive the marketing and media placement decisions that we make. Additional work and resources are needed to better target the visitors that area looking at cities such a Baton Rouge.
- Launch an annual community outreach campaign to encourage residents to invite family and friends to visit.
We are working with Rolfe McCollister on a project that was done years ago, to include providing residents with postcards to send out, inviting family and friends to visit. During Baton Rouge's Bicentennial Year, we were able to bring back this campaign. With additional funds, efforts such as this could be included annually.

- Better Brand and market Baton Rouge as a visitor destination and enhance the visitor experience.
Marketing and messaging has changed for the visitors. Younger visitors are more interested in the experience they will have in a destination. Destination Marketing Organizations, such as Visit Baton Rouge now need to market to four generations. Each generation has a preferred type of messaging and how and when it's delivered. Visit Baton Rouge needs to invest more in marketing efforts to market to each generation to ensure that the messaging and where it can be seen is relevant to the potential visitors.
- Work toward fulfilling goals and objectives in Visit Baton Rouge's 5-Year Strategic Plan.
Visit Baton Rouge's strategic plan includes much of what was listed above. The strategic plan also included looking for additional sources of revenue to make sure that we're on par with other cities. The tourism industry is rapidly changing as are other industries. Cities now understand the economic impact that visitors bring to a city and with that economic impact mean more jobs to locals and stronger revenues for businesses.

Hotel Occupancy Tax Rates & Comparisons

Here's a list of comparable cities with their corresponding tax rates. Keep in mind that while every city is a little different, the tax percentages below include their state sales tax, local sales tax and hotel occupancy tax. Visit Baton Rouge's current tax is 14.00%. The 2.00% increase would bring us to 16.00%. The breakdown is as follows:

- State Sales Tax: 5.00%
- Local Sales Tax: 5.00%
- Hotel Occupancy Tax: 4.00% (3.00% for Visit Baton Rouge; 1.00% for Raising Cane's River Center)
- *2.00% Hotel Occupancy Tax Increase: 6.00% (4.00% for Visit Baton Rouge; 2.00% for Raising Cane's River Center)

STATES RANKED BY TOTAL AD VALOREM TAX RATES ON LODGING ACCOMMODATIONS 2016

- Overland Park, KS: 17.50%
- Omaha, NE: 17.50%
- Birmingham, AL: 17.50%
- Knoxville, TN: 17.25%
- Mobile, AL: 17.00%
- Columbus, GA: 16.00%
- Wichita, KS: 15.90%

(Source: HVS 2017 LODGING TAX REPORT – USA)