EXPLORE GEORGIA®

COVID-19 DASHBOARD

October/November 2020

COVID-19 DASHBOARD

This dashboard is intended to give an overview of the impact of COVID-19 on Georgia's tourism industry. In this dashboard, you will find the latest statistics for the state's tourism industry along with insights into visitor engagement with the Explore Georgia brand.

The Explore Georgia team is actively working to keep Georgia top of mind with visitors and prepare our state for a strong recovery.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

October/November 2020

- Employment, travel spending, and visitation all improved and stabilized in October and the first weeks of November.
- While Georgia is poised to achieve broad economic recovery faster than the rest of U.S., it will be uneven across industries. Avoiding the need for another lockdown and the passage of an additional round of fiscal stimulus will be critical factors.
- Travel spirits ebb and flow with the waves of the pandemic. At the time of this dashboard's publication, the U.S. and Georgia are both setting new records for COVID-19 infections and spread. This has naturally translated into increased anxieties across the board for travelers, and to depressed Holiday and early 2021 travel expectations.
- As traveler sentiment continues to rise and fall, we continue to break year-over-year records for website visitation, consistently outperforming competitive DMOs, and outperforming our own website traffic for the past five years.
- In both paid media and owned channels, we continue to see interest from travelers in Georgia and an appetite for content and and interest in planning trips.

ECONOMIC FORECASTS: 2020, 2021, AND BEYOND

- National travel spending in 2020 is now forecasted to be down 45% ($510 billion) compared to 2019.
  - International visitation will be down 76% YoY, and domestic travel will be down 31% YoY.
- Full industry recovery will take until at least 2024, with domestic leading international, leisure leading business, transient leading group, and occupancies (demand) leading revenues. Some segments will recover in full by as early as 2022.
- Recovery will likely accelerate in the 2nd half of 2021, once a COVID-19 vaccine is widely available, consumer confidence returns, and high-contact businesses (such as many of those in the Leisure & Hospitality sector) can fully engage.
  - August 2020 – Mid-2021: Choppy growth that is uneven across different industry sectors will likely continue until vaccines and/or cures are widely available.
    - In Q2 2021, as vaccine and coordinated public health programs will likely begin to have a meaningful impact, leisure travel will also likely pick up heading into summer.
  - Mid-2021 onward: Steady, sustainable, above-average economic growth will likely take hold.
    - In Q3, post-Labor day, corporate travel restrictions will ease; business and group travel will begin normalizing.
    - By Q4, if the US is perceived as "COVID safe," group and business travel will make strong returns.

Sources: Georgia Economic Outlook 2021: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia; U.S. Travel Association; Tourism Economics

ECONOMIC FORECASTS: 2020, 2021, AND BEYOND

- Georgia's economic recovery is slated to be faster than the National economic recovery.
  - Georgia's GDP is forecasted to be down 3.7% YoY, but to grow 4.0% in 2021, thereby exceeding 2019 levels. By contrast, national GDP is forecasted to be down 4.2% YoY, to grow 3.5% 2021, and thus remain below 2019 levels.
- However, recovery will be uneven across industry sectors, and many near-term challenges remain.
  - Each month has seen successively fewer jobs added back since April (mirroring the national trend), which will make the unemployment rate in Georgia stubborn. Georgia's unemployment rate is forecasted to settle at 6.0% in 2020, up 2.6 points YoY. In 2021, it is forecasted to decrease to 5.1%.
  - "The pattern of job growth across Georgia's industries will be different than it was before the pandemic. In 2021, several of the industries hit hardest by Covid-19— bars, restaurants, hospitality, tourism, movie theatres, live entertainment, air transportation—will post the fastest growth, but the high percentage gains reflect rebounds off very depressed levels rather than healthy recovery. Indeed, most of these same industries are the farthest from full economic recovery and some may never recover."

    -- *Georgia Economic Outlook 2021: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia*

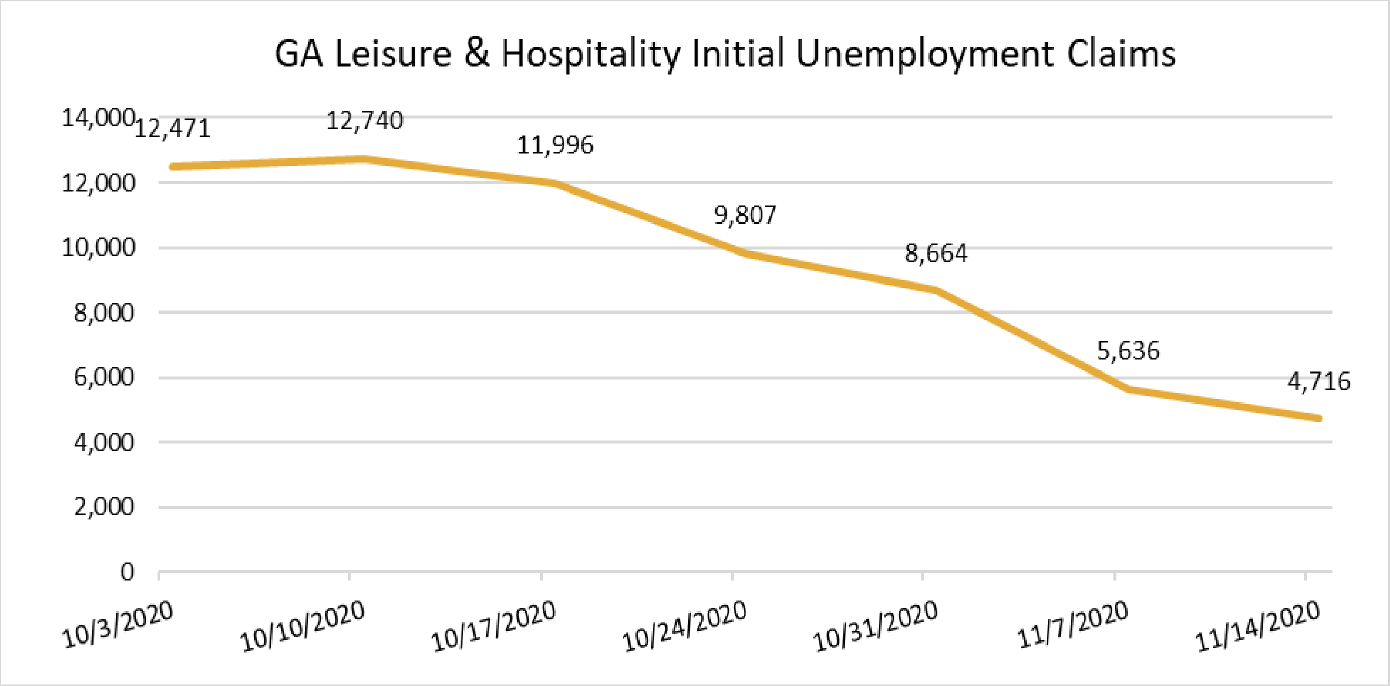
Sources: Georgia Economic Outlook 2021: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia; U.S. Travel Association; Tourism Economics

GEORGIA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY: CURRENT STATUS

GEORGIA UNEMPLOYMENT: OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

The unemployment rate in Georgia fell from 6.3% in September to 4.5% in October. In October, total Non-Farm Employment grew by 25,000 jobs, 8,500 (34%) of which were Leisure & Hospitality jobs. This leaves the sector 63,800 jobs short of February employment levels, representing 40% of persistent Non-Farm employment losses.

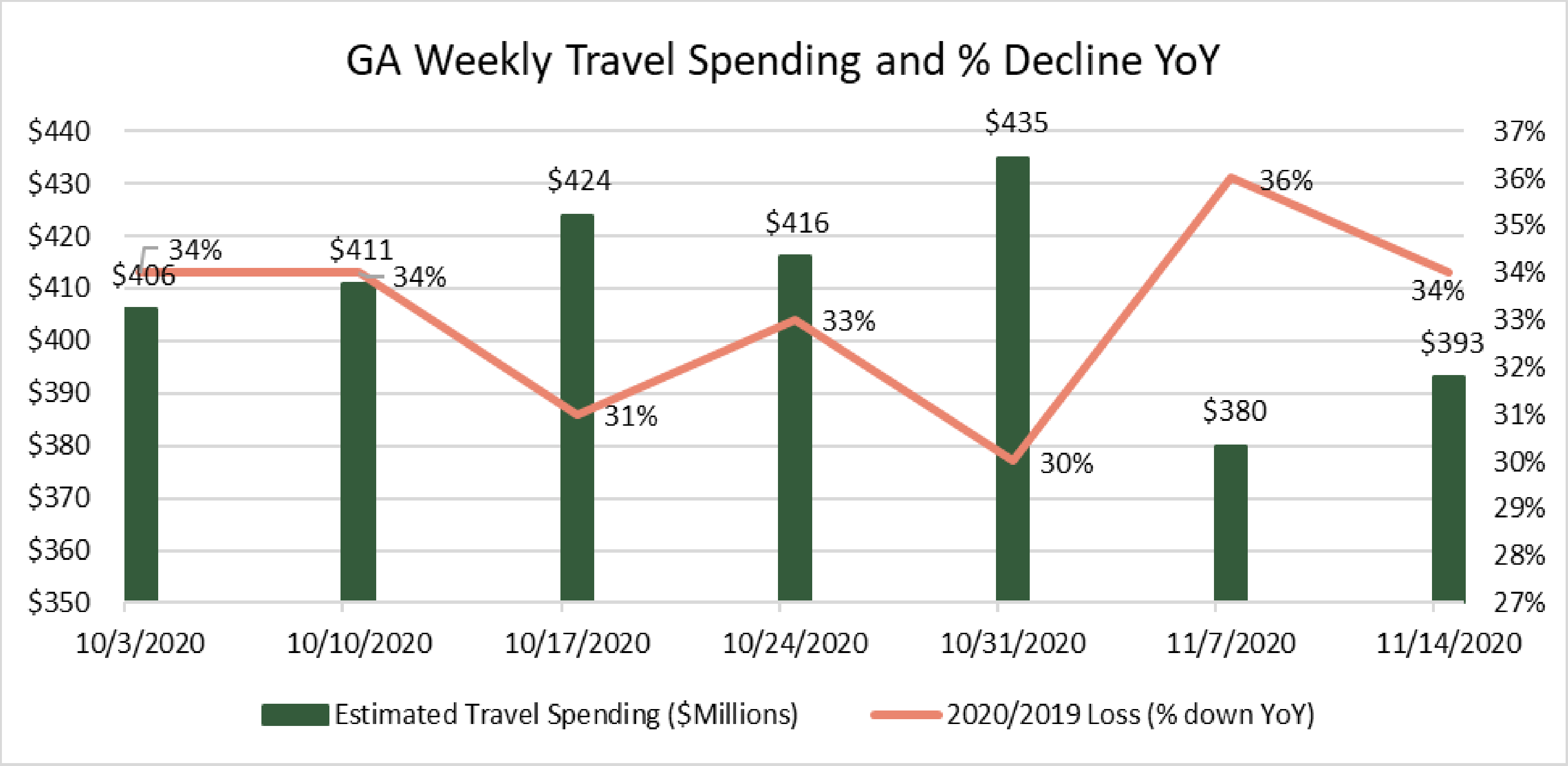
Weekly Leisure & Hospitality Initial Unemployment Claim filings maintained WoW declines throughout October and the first two weeks of November (though they continued to represent between 22% and 28% of all weekly IUC filings).



Source: Georgia Department of Labor

GEORGIA TRAVEL SPENDING: OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

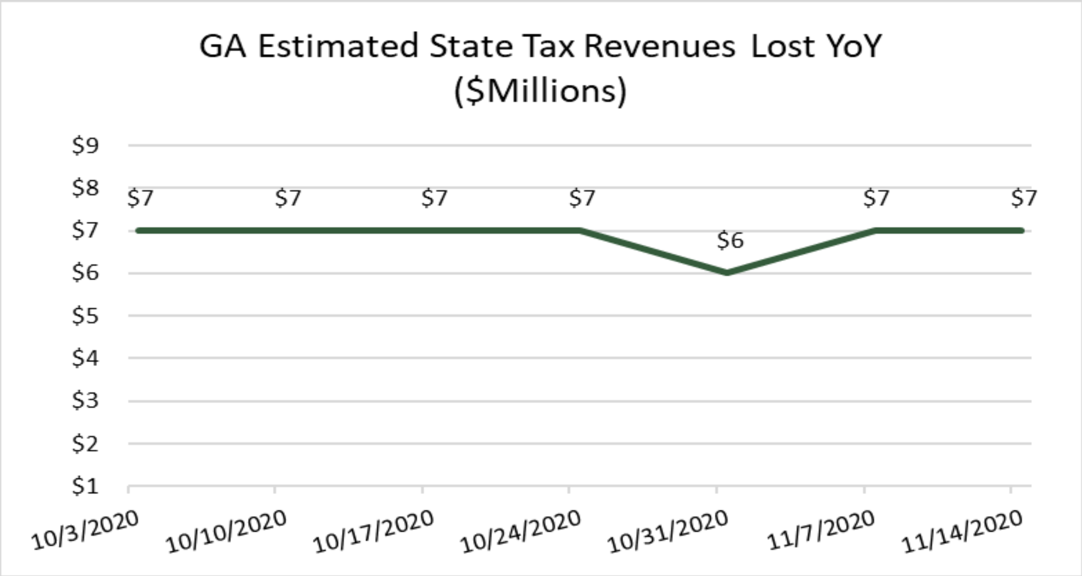
From the week-ending October 3 through the week-ending November 14, total estimated travel spending in Georgia was down $1.4 billion in 2020, compared to 2019, bringing total YoY losses to $11.1 billion. As the Fall travel season took hold, travel spending in October was more stable than in September. With COVID-19 cases climbing, early November saw more depressed demand in the lead up to Thanksgiving. Weekly spending remained 63%-74% higher than the national average.

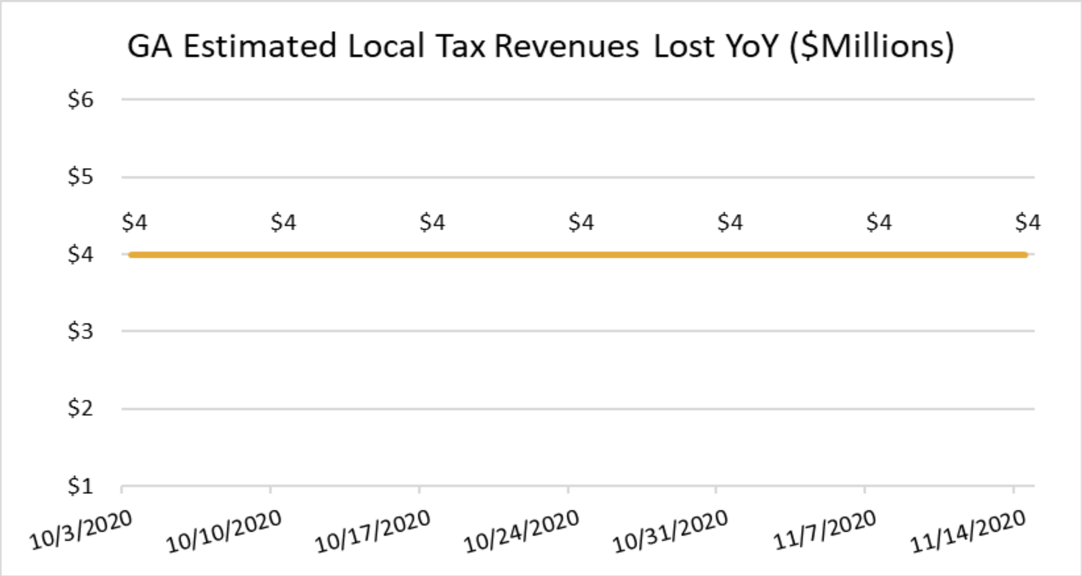


Source: Tourism Economics

GEORGIA TAX REVENUES: OCTOBER & NOVEMBER

From the week-ending October 3 through the week-ending November 14, total estimated travel-generated state and local tax revenues in Georgia were down $76 million in 2020, compared to 2019, bringing total YoY losses to $588 million. As weekly travel expenditures became more stabilized, so too did weekly tax revenue losses.

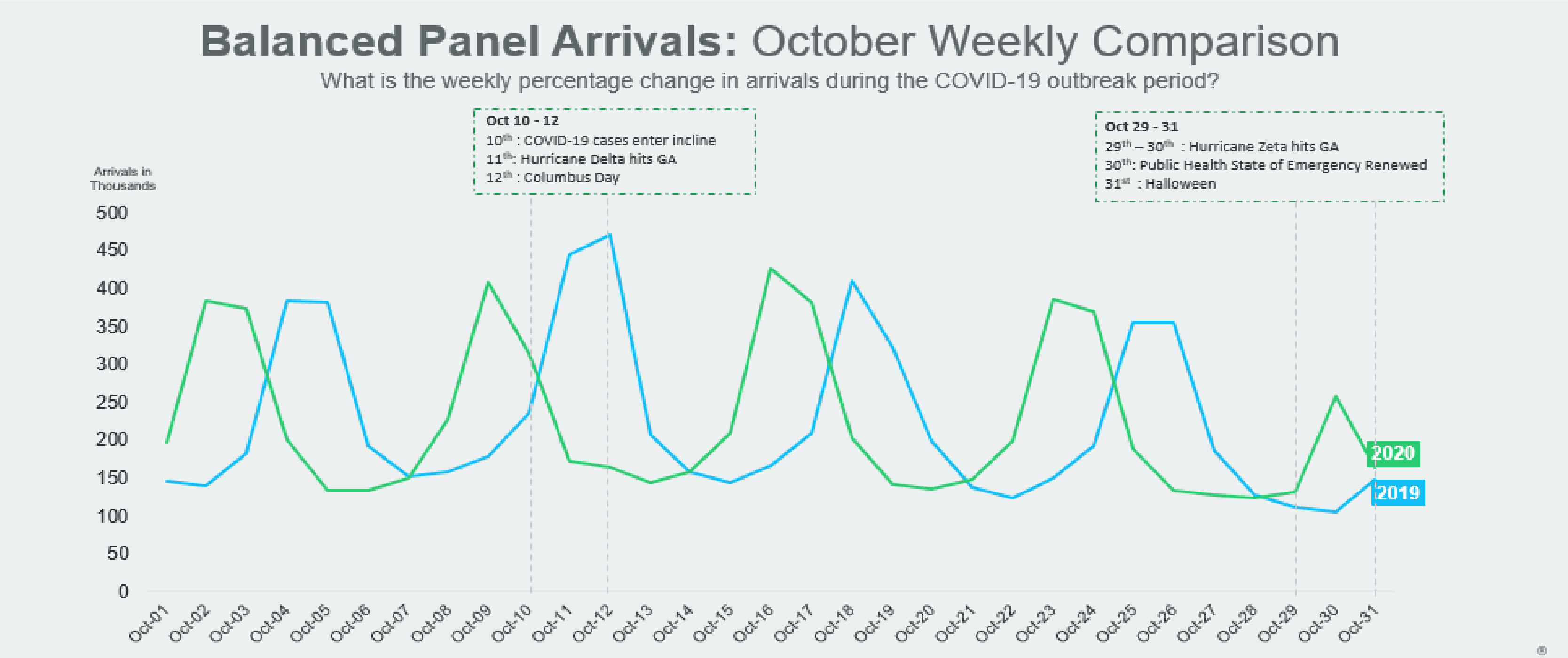




Source: Tourism Economics

GEORGIA DOMESTIC VISITATION: OCTOBER 2019 & 2020

In 2019, 10.9% of trips* to/within Georgia occurred in October. In 2020, total daily arrivals were up 0.2% YoY, despite COVID-19 cases beginning to climb once more and two hurricanes making landfall.



YOY △ (Week 2020 vs Week 2019)	8.1% (10.1-10.7 vs 10.3-10.9)	-14.2% (10.8-10.14 vs 10.10-10.16)	-18.1% (10.15-10.21 vs 10.17-10.23)	1.7% (10.22-10.28 vs 10.24-10.30)
WOW △ (2020 Week over week)	-	-19.9%	-3.5%	7.3%

Date Ranges: 10.1 – 10.31 | Data Compiled: 11.23.2020 | Balanced Panel | Destination: Primary

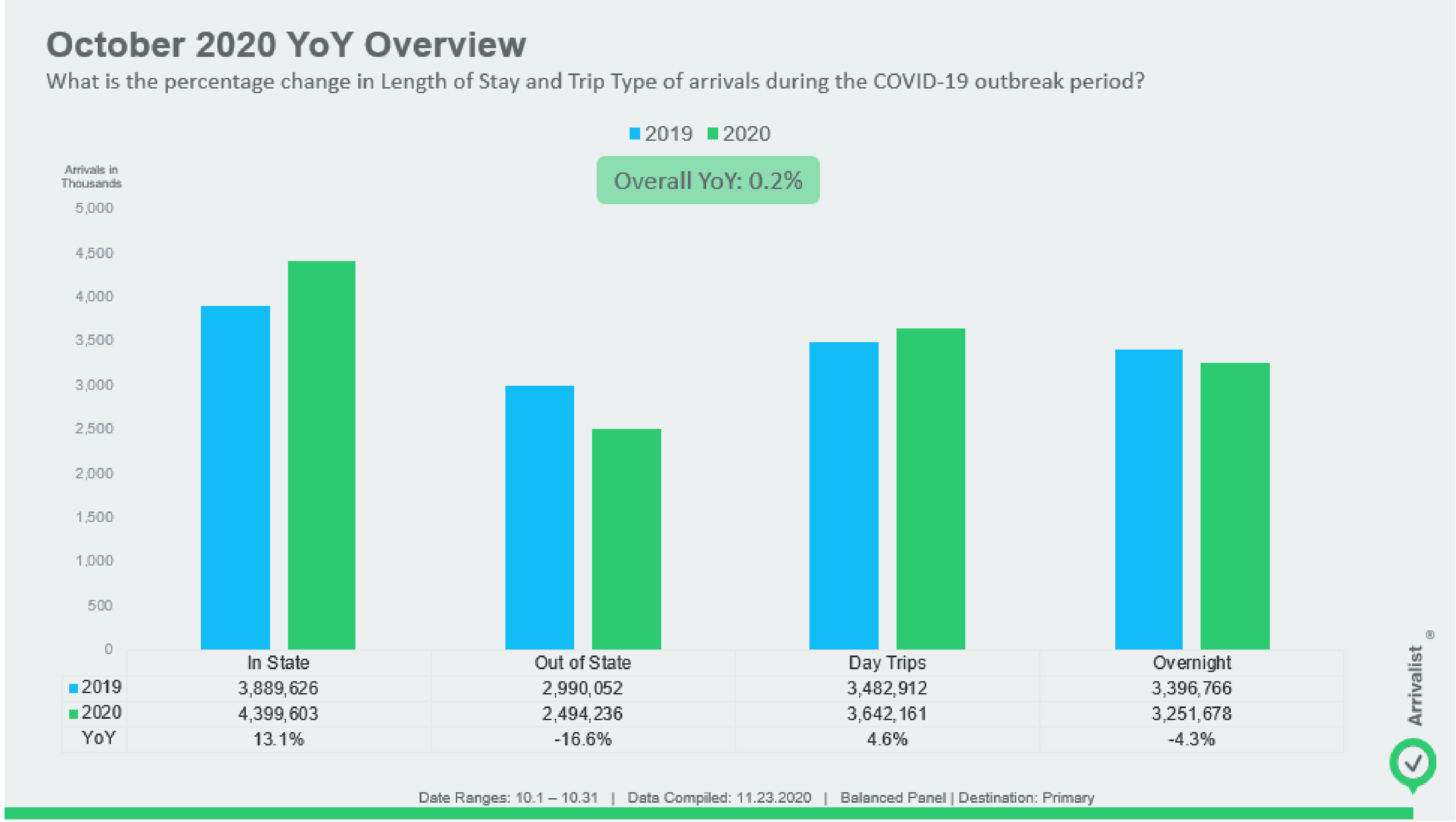
Arrivalist ®

Source: Arrivalist

**Arrivalist tracks a representative panel of American travelers using GPS data from their mobile devices. They define a trip as someone (not a commuter) venturing >50 miles from home , and spending ≥ 2 hours and the majority of their trip in the arrival zone.*

GEORGIA DOMESTIC VISITATION: OCTOBER YOY

As a result of strong travel demand for in-state trips and day trips, total trips* in October were up just slightly YoY. The out-of-state and overnight trip segments remained depressed compared to 2019, however.



Source: Arrivalist

**Arrivalist tracks a representative panel of American travelers using GPS data from their mobile devices. They define a trip as someone (not a commuter) venturing >50 miles from home , and spending ≥ 2 hours and the majority of their trip in the arrival zone.*

GEORGIA INDUSTRY METRICS: LODGING AND FLIGHTS

In October, Georgia Hotel Rooms Sold and RevPAR were down 20% and 38%, respectively, compared to 2019 (a minor dip from September YoY stats, but still positively affecting the YTD losses). Georgia continues to outperform the national average in terms of YoY impacts on Occupancy, Rooms Sold, Revenue, ADR, RevPAR, and Room Supply.

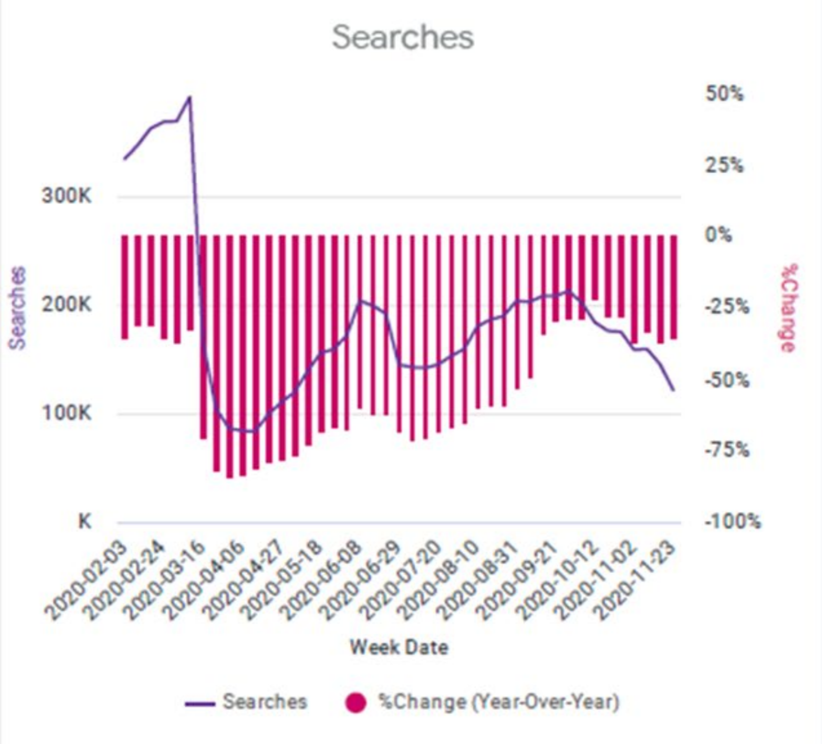
Also in October, passenger traffic was down 62% at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, compared to 2019, a gain of nearly 33 points since the traffic low-point in April. As a result, YTD losses continue to slow.

	October 2020	Jan-Oct 2020 YTD
Hotel RevPAR YoY	-38.4%	-42.3%
Hotel Rooms Sold YoY	-20.3%	-27.8%
Domestic Passenger Traffic YoY	-59.9%	-59.7%
International Passenger Traffic YoY	-83.1%	-74.2%
Total Passenger Traffic YoY	-62.3%	-61.4%

Sources: STR, Inc.; Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport

GEORGIA INDUSTRY METRICS: LODGING AND FLIGHTS

At the start of October, aggregate Search activity and aggregate Booking activity for Georgia flights and hotels (from both domestic and international markets) was down roughly 30% YoY and 55% YoY, respectively. Search performance dipped over the course of the next several weeks, landing at approximately 35% down YoY in November. Meanwhile, Booking declines remained largely stable throughout November.



Source: ADARA

GEORGIA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY: CURRENT INDICATORS

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CHECKING THE PULSE: TRAVELER SENTIMENT

- As the pandemic continues to worsen throughout the US, people are less comfortable going out even within their own communities (a metric which has been on the decline for three weeks) and feel things are going to continue to get worse this month before they get better.
- People's confidence that they can travel safely has been damaged. In October, 32% felt sure they could, now just 24% do.
- The "magic" of the vaccine announcements is also wearing off, now that the realities about production, distribution, and eligibility are setting in.
  - Just before Thanksgiving, 53% of travelers said the news made them more or much more optimistic about being able to travel safely in the next six months. Now just 46% feel the same way.
  - That said, the availability of an effective vaccine will have the greatest impact on the domestic travel and leisure travel by personal car segments in the near-term.
- However, after declining for over a month, openness to travel messaging has bounced back to where it was in late October. And the proportion who consider themselves to be in a travel-ready-state-of-mind remains strong at 53%.

Sources: Destination Analysts; Longwoods International & Miles Partnership; MMGY Global; Skift Research

CHECKING THE PULSE: TRAVELER BEHAVIOR

- 38% of Americans traveled in October, up one point over September.
  - 31% of trips taken in October were vacations, down four points from September, while 38% of trips were VFR (a pandemic-period high). The most visited destinations remained Small & Rural Towns, followed by Urban Centers.
- "For the first time since the start of the pandemic in March, hotel stays went up significantly. Of all the personal travel taken in October, 56% had hotel stays, a considerable increase from 48% in September." --*Skift Research*
- More than 60% of American travelers are planning to stay home altogether during the rest of the Holiday travel season.
  - 24% plan to travel by car; 8% plan to travel by plane.
- In 2021, American travelers plan to take three leisure trips on average. "Schoolcations" and "workcations" will be opportunities for around 1/3 of travelers, particularly until the true "new normal" takes hold in the second half of 2021.
  - 2/3 expect to take their next leisure trip within the next six months.
  - Top destinations will be cities/metro areas, small towns, and beaches, followed by state and national parks and mountains.
  - Hotels will be the most common lodging type, followed by friend/family homes, vacation rentals, and campgrounds.

Sources: Destination Analysts; Longwoods International & Miles Partnership; MMGY Global; Skift Research

WEBSITE

For the months of October and November, we continued to see record-breaking traffic on the site. Sessions were up 66% YoY, and Partner Referrals were up more than 87% YoY.

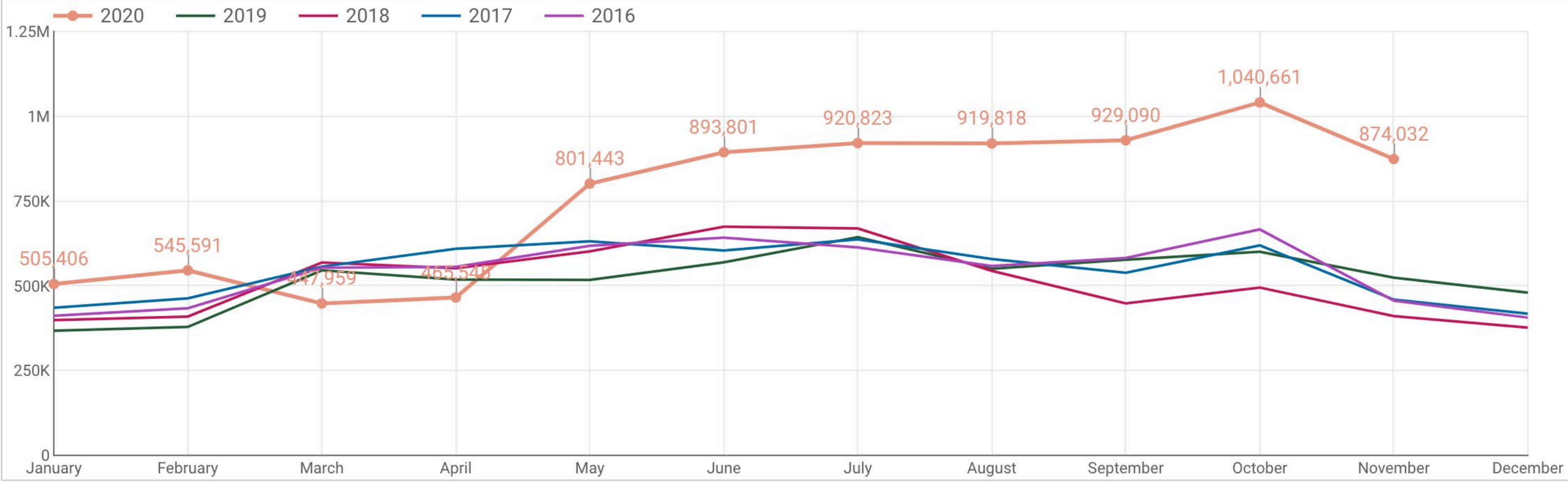
Visits were primarily driven by organic traffic, paid search, and organic referrals from our social media channels.

Traffic, Engagement and Conversions

	Sessions	Users	Pageviews	Avg. Session Duration	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session
	874,032	713,009	1,657,203	00:02:13	43.9%	1.9
YoY % Change	↑ 66.8%	↑ 61.7%	↑ 69.0%	↑ 17.0%	↓ -5.0%	↑ 1.3%
MoM % Change	↓ -16.0%	↓ -12.8%	↓ -22.1%	↓ -9.8%	↑ 0.8%	↓ -7.3%

	Official Travel Guide Order	Official Travel Guide View	eNewsletter Form Submit	Guide Orders, Views and Downloads	Partner Referrals
	3,983	3,609	1,510	8,598	173,790
YoY % Change	↑ 79.3%	↑ 152.7%	↑ 459.3%	↑ 89.6%	↑ 87.3%
MoM % Change	↓ -50.1%	↓ -46.9%	↑ 287.2%	↓ -45.0%	↓ -33.9%

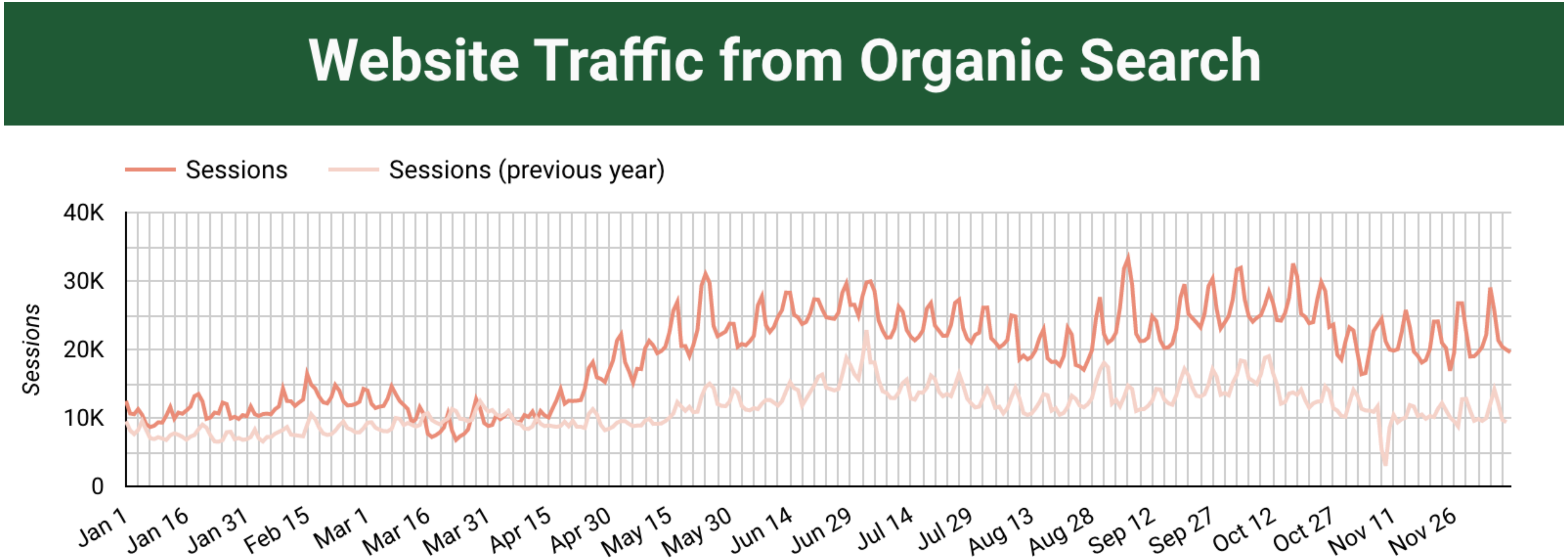
Sessions over Time



Source: Google Analytics

WEBSITE

In a study of 28 DMOs, we found that organic traffic was down 9% year-to-date. In contrast, Explore Georgia is up 67% in sessions during the same time period. Traffic volume experienced decreases in November, likely as a result of both the election (increased interest in politics) and the resurgence of COVID-19 cases.

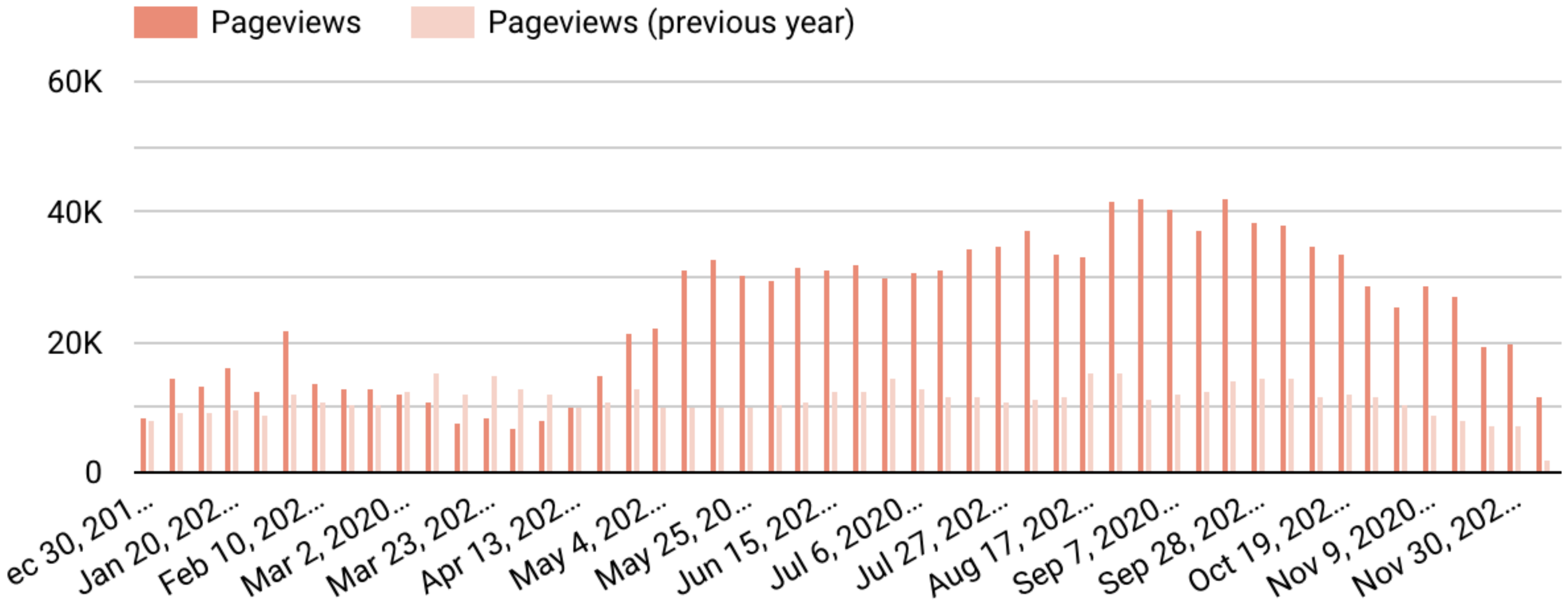


Source: Google Analytics

WEBSITE: TRAFFIC

In October and November, we continued to experience WoW decreases in traffic to the accommodations listings, travel guide, and partner referrals; however, traffic to this content continues to remain significantly higher, YoY. This is a strong indicator that travel planning continues to be relevant and important to our visitors.

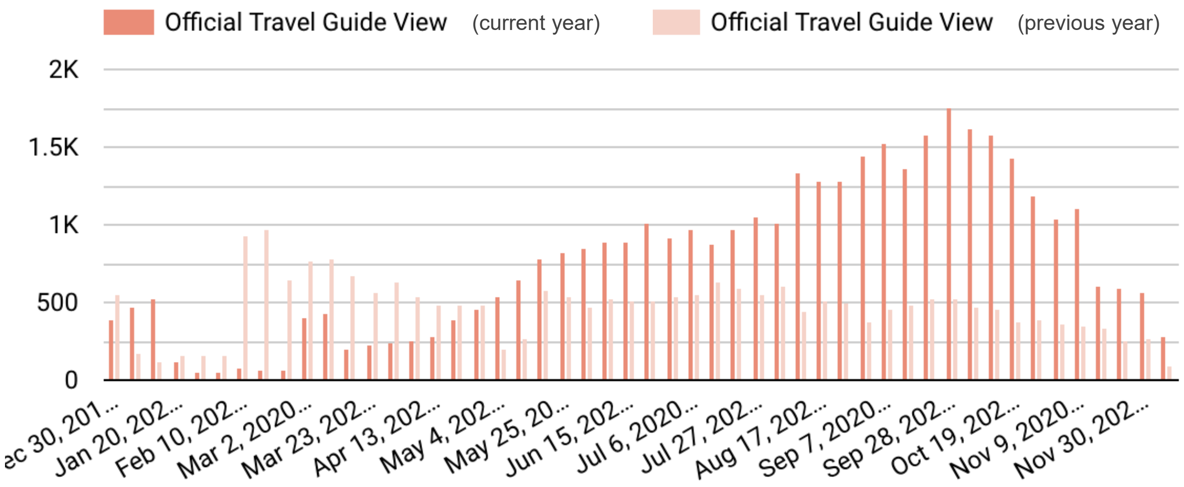
ExploreGeorgia.org: Accommodations Pageviews



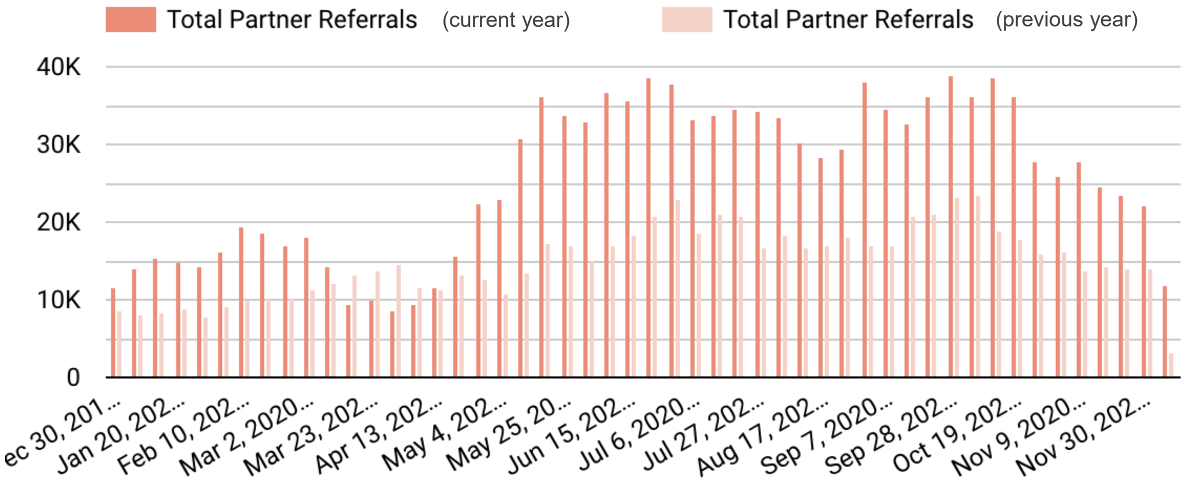
Source: Google Analytics

WEBSITE: TRAFFIC

ExploreGeorgia.org: Travel Guide Views



ExploreGeorgia.org: Partner Referrals



Source: Google Analytics

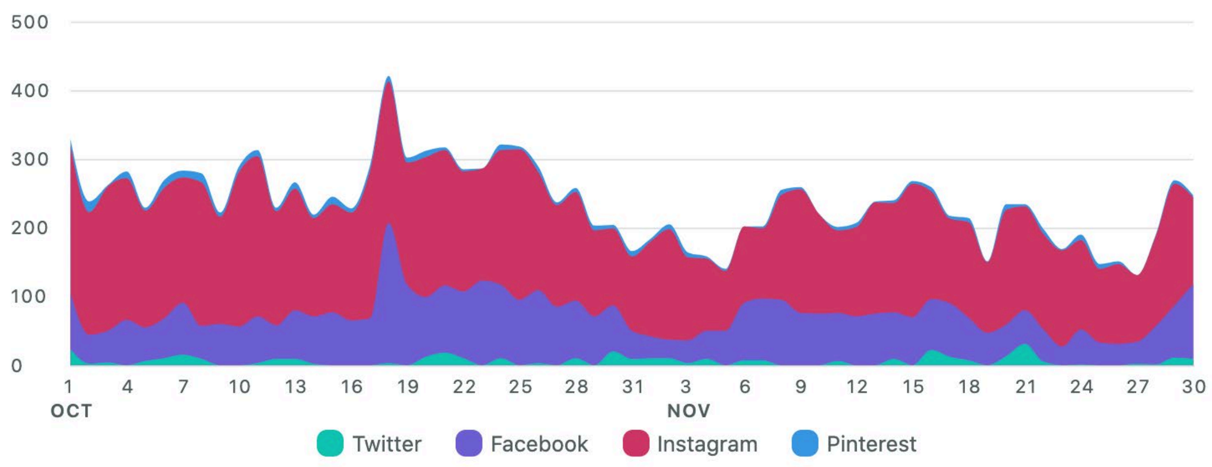
SOCIAL MEDIA

During October and November, Explore Georgia social media channels continued to experience a significant increase in followers, with the majority of the volume during these two months coming from Facebook and the largest percentage gains coming from Pinterest.

Engagement rates continued to outperform benchmarks. Top-performing posts for October and November, across all channels, were holiday-focused posts with 8 Small Towns that Do Christmas Right and 10 Drive-thru Holiday Lights far outperforming all content for those two months.

Holiday content outperformed the majority of content, across channels, especially holiday activities that included safety information.

Explore Georgia Social Media Audience Growth (YoY)



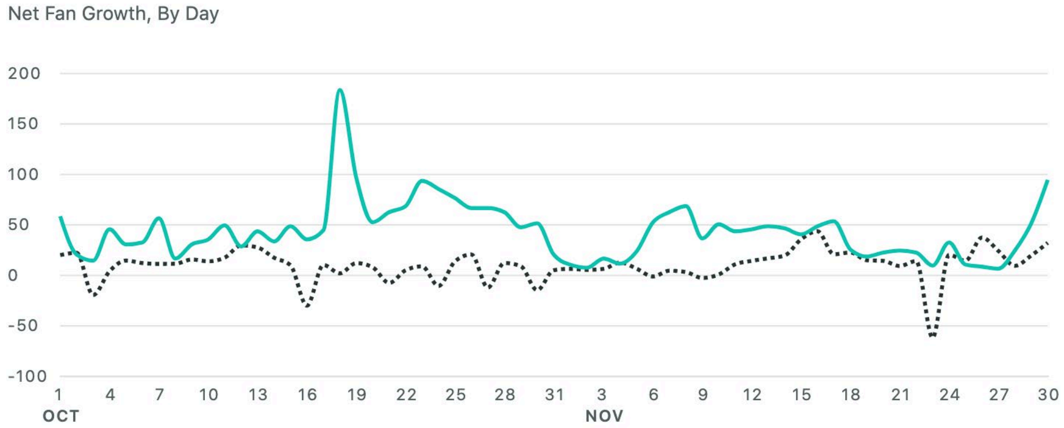
Audience Metrics	Totals	% Change
Audience Gained	14,535	↗36.3%

Source: Sprout Social

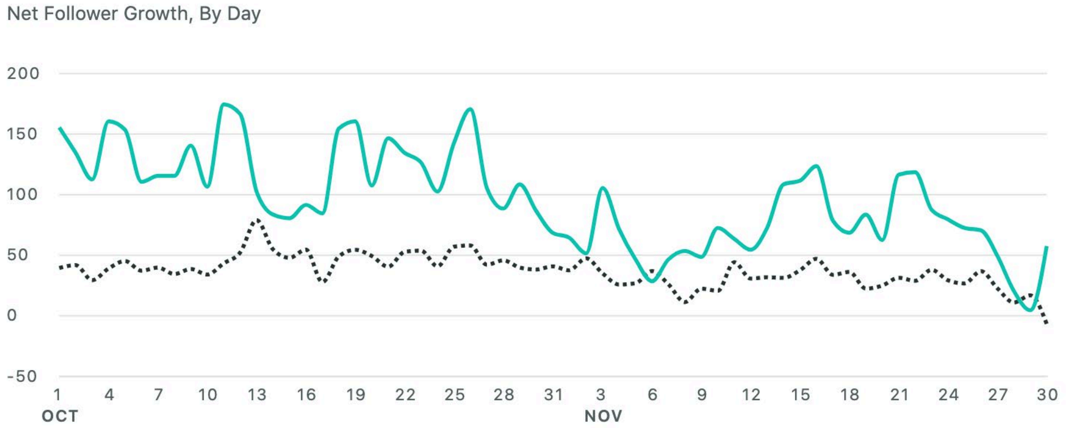
SOCIAL MEDIA

Looking at our competitive set of state DMOs in the Southeast, Explore Georgia continues to lead the pack in terms of gaining new followers and driving engagement during this crisis. On Instagram, Explore Georgia maintains its status as the second most followed state DMO in the Southeast (behind Florida), and number seven in the nation. On Facebook, Florida has twice the followers, but Explore Georgia experiences nearly twice the post engagement.

Facebook



Instagram



Explore Georgia

Competitor Average

Source: Sprout Social

QUESTIONS?

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