

2014 Annual Report

On the bluffs, on the trails and on the water, Onalaska is the perfect place for visitors to explore, have fun and relax – any season of the year. The city is the trailhead for the Great River State Trail connecting to 101 miles of non-stop hiking, biking and snowmobiling adventure. Combine that with the Mississippi Flyway, the Great River Road, beautiful bluffs, prairies, and wetlands, along with the largest shopping district in nine counties and you have a premier Wisconsin destination.

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*The 2014 Onalaska
Occupancy Rate is
up 4.52% over
2013!*

*Onalaska monthly
Occupancy Rates
have surpassed the
year prior 18 of the
last 19 months.*

To Our Stakeholders

2014 was a very successful year for Onalaska Tourism! The 2014 occupancy rate was 69.96%, compared to 67.34% in 2013. 2014 had 370 less rooms available and 5,393 additional rooms occupied over 2013. The outlook for 2015 is also very promising.

The US unemployment rate has dropped to a 6.5 year low, as of December 2014. It is the lowest unemployment rate seen since June of 2008. *(Taborda, 2015)* The outlook for travel is good. Analysts are forecasting higher rates and larger occupancy for the lodging industry in 2015. PricewaterhouseCoopers stated hotel occupancy rates may hit a 30 year high. Lower-priced hotel chains are expected to see the most benefit as higher-end chains are expected to increase prices. *(Wood, 2014)*

2015 is expected to see most major markets surpassing pre-recession levels of RevPAR. A combination of economic prosperity, and a lower supply growth of new hotel rooms than demand growth in overnight stays, is expected to bring the highest national occupancy rate since STR, Inc. began reporting data in 1987. *(PKF Consulting, 2014)*

Mission Statement

The Onalaska Tourism Commission, in conjunction with Tourism staff, created a new mission statement in 2014 to better reflect the primary focus of the department.

Mission Statement (2004)

Continue to raise awareness of the importance and name recognition in our community. Assist in bringing businesses and residents to Onalaska to enhance tourism and the quality of life in our region.

Mission Statement (2014)

Onalaska Tourism works to promote Onalaska as a premier leisure destination, increasing visitors and growing the City's retail, restaurant, and lodging businesses.

Economic Impact

The travel and tourism industry made a contribution of over \$214 million to the La Crosse County economy in 2013 (the 2014 numbers will be out in May). Visitors increased spending in our county by \$8.44 million over the year before. Of the 72 Wisconsin counties, La Crosse County was number 12 in visitor spending and \$2 million behind its closest competitor, Racine County, which has larger cities and a population 80,000 more than La Crosse County. Racine rests on the shore of Lake Michigan and at the mouth of the Root River with beaches, Frank Lloyd Wright

architecture, a zoo, lighthouse, art museum and more. Yet there is a less than 1% difference in the economic impact of tourism between the two counties.

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism reports that each household in Wisconsin would need to be taxed an additional \$575 per year to replace the tourism taxes received by state and local governments. An updated look at the tax relief provided by Wisconsin tourism will be available in May.

Employment			Total Labor Income			State and Local Taxes		
Total		%	Millions		%	Millions		%
2012	2013	Change	2012	2013	Change	2012	2013	Change
3,930	3,997	1.71%	\$89.23	\$90.73	1.68%	\$27.07	\$27.89	3.05%

	Direct Visitor Spending			Total Business Sales		
	Millions		%	Millions		%
County	2012	2013	Change	2012	2013	Change
La Crosse County	\$205.99	\$214.43	4.10%	\$338.79	\$351.82	3.85%

(WI Dept. of Tourism)

Print Advertising

Onalaska was promoted in 18 print publications throughout 2014. Modes of promotion included traditional ad space, insert reply card and paid article. The total print advertising reach for 2014 equaled over 2.3 million. This number may be lower than true reach as some numbers received were solely circulation and not readership, which could be much higher.

New publications Onalaska Tourism advertised in in 2014 were the Harley Dealers Go Guide, Wisconsin Bike Trails and the Wisco Biker's Resource Guide. The Wisconsin Bike Trails publication was a very popular addition to the Visitor Center's publication racks and our supply was completely distributed by June.

The Wisco Biker's Resource Guide is an excellent example of publications stretching across multimedia platforms and giving advertisers further reach for their dollars. The Wisco Biker's Resource Guide has a fantastic app and strong, frequently updated website. Onalaska Tourism enjoyed exposure through their myriad of platforms. The Best of the River Valley, a Lee Enterprises Publication, also included a banner ad with a specific number of online impressions to their sales package.

Several print ads were cooperative efforts. The full page back cover of Hidden Valleys was an ad for Driftless Destinations that included the logo for Onalaska. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (with a readership of over 700,000 and our second largest print reach) was a co-op with the



Wisconsin Department of Tourism promoting back roads, rides and views. The Midwest Living and Best of the Midwest publications were co-op ads through our marketing group Pilch & Barnet. Other cities and counties throughout Wisconsin were included, bringing down the cost of participation in our largest reach print medium to an obtainable level.

Please see Page 1 "Print Advertising" of the attached 2014 Promotional Calendar for details..

Printed Publications

Nine printing projects were completed in 2014 including maps, postcards, brochure inserts and guides. The publications were given out through a variety of avenues: Visitor Centers throughout the state of Wisconsin (including Onalaska's), placement in convention bags, placement in lodging facilities, direct mail leads, expos and events, and visitor requests through online, phone and mail.

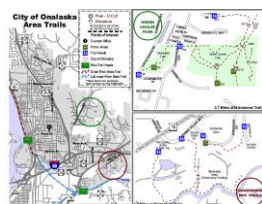
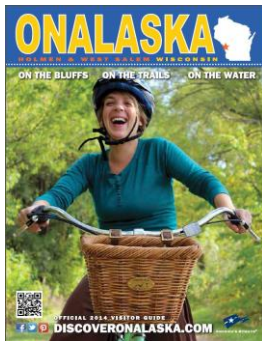
The 2014 Discover Deals coupon book included 35 local businesses and the 5,000 books printed were completely distributed by August.

23,000 of the Onalaska Visitor Guides were printed and distributed; an increase of 1,000 over 2013. 44 local businesses participated. The Guide's advertising was sold in-house which allowed for a cost savings from what would have been the sales rep's commission. This savings allowed Tourism to increase the size of the Onalaska Guide from 32 to 36 pages. The additional space was utilized to further work in cooperation with our neighboring communities of West Salem and Holmen, who both in turn committed to larger partnerships in the Guide than they had in the past. The Visitor Guides were shared at nearly 70 visitor centers and tourist attractions throughout the state of Wisconsin.

Tourism noted a lack of a quality available Onalaska street maps when a local company stopped printing them. Tourism filled the gap by working with another City department to create an easy to read street map. 250 of the maps were printed. City staff was also indispensable in aiding Tourism in creating Onalaska Hiking Maps which show Green Coulee and the MVC trails. This map has been very helpful to outdoor enthusiasts who stop at the visitor center; 200 were printed.

4,500 reminder postcards were printed as an additional touch to send to leads acquired through giveaways and information requests. This is the second year of the postcard program.

Please see Page 1 "Printed Publications" of the attached 2014 Promotional Calendar for details.



Location: From exit 3 or 3B on I-90, head north on Hwy 35 N 3.5 miles, then right onto Riders Club Rd.

Meeting Facilities: Over 53,000 square feet of dividable space with full meeting, conference and convention services. See reverse side for room layout.

Description: Onalaska's OmniCenter derives its name from the Latin word "Omni," meaning "universal or of many things." The facility truly fits its name by hosting a huge variety of gatherings and events. Business meetings, family reunions, picnics, receptions, seminars, conferences, and trade shows all find a home at the OmniCenter. Located in the center of Van Riper Park, the OmniCenter consists of a 50,000 square foot arena space. This versatile space can be divided to support a number of smaller events. In addition, the facility includes 3,700 square feet of conference room space full kitchen facilities, and a large outdoor picnic shelter. The OmniCenter is handicapped accessible and has convenient parking located directly adjacent to the building.

A full-service box office is available, as well as support staff and complete kitchen facilities. The OmniCenter has three convenient loading areas, as well as a sports facility with an indoor ice rink, along with changing rooms and shower facilities. Softball, volleyball, children's playground equipment and a large covered picnic area offer additional possibilities for your group's event.

For a schedule of events and rental information:

608-781-9566

www.omnicenter.net



Onalaska Tourism's most popular post in 2014 had a reach of over 7,300 people.

There was a growth of 56% in the number of people who joined our social media pages in 2014.

Social Media

Annual Social Media Report

Onalaska Tourism

2014 YEAR END

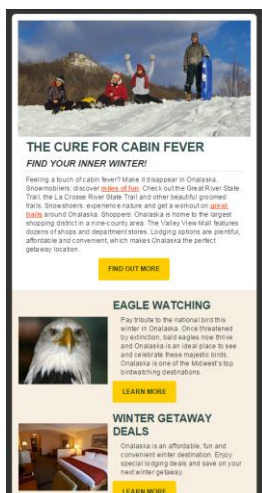


2014/2013 COMPARISON

METRIC	End of Year (2014)	End of Year (2013)	% CHANGE	Quarterly Trend 2014
FACEBOOK	12338	7949	↑ 55%	
TWITTER	743	437	↑ 70%	
PINTEREST	203	146	↑ 39%	
GOOGLE +	87	44	↑ 98%	
YOUTUBE	9	6	↑ 50%	
INSTAGRAM	46	0		

2014 - End of Quarter

METRIC NAME	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
FACEBOOK	8528	9869	11093	12338
TWITTER	495	576	673	743
PINTEREST	159	172	190	203
GOOGLE +	65	72	84	87
YOUTUBE	7	8	9	9
INSTAGRAM	0	0	25	46



Online Advertising

E-Newsletters

This year Onalaska Tourism combined the Vacation Deals email list with the Pilch & Barnet email list to create one vacation e-newsletter subscription list. This list also underwent a cleaning process to give those who had not engaged in the e-newsletters the ability to decide if they would like to remain on the list or be removed from it. This cleaning created an even stronger base of leads for Onalaska vacation e-newsletters.

Onalaska was promoted through seasonal and promotional emails. As part of our contract with Pilch & Barnet, Onalaska was also promoted in articles sent out through the WI Travels Best Bets email list. Pilch & Barnet also included Onalaska in a Pioneer Press e-blast.

The email lists were also utilized to promote Onalaska sweepstakes. Sweepstakes were further promoted through Travel Wisconsin's Travel Deals e-newsletters in the spring and winter of 2014.

Onalaska Tourism maintains the Bike4Trails email list and seasonal e-newsletters went out promoting the bike trails, lodging and area activities. Chambers along the state trails were given opportunities to contribute to the e-newsletters, as were friends' groups and the DNR.

Please see pages 1 & 2 "E-Newsletter" of the attached 2014 Promotional Calendar for details.

Online Impressions

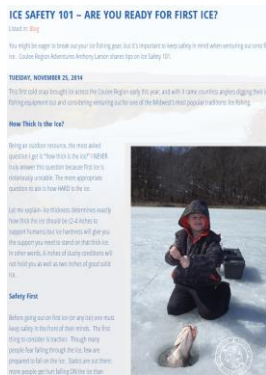
Nearly 4 million online ad impressions were displayed on laptops, tablets and mobile phones in 2014. The largest number of impressions came from banner ads run on the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and Pioneer Press outreach networks. This program, headed by Pilch & Barnet, allowed for targeting women, ages 25-54, who participate in outdoor activities and sports or enjoy bicycling, through the thousands of websites that make up the vendor sites.

Please see page 2 "Online Impressions" of the attached 2014 Promotional Calendar for details.

Website

DiscoverOnalaska.com went through a major overhaul and in January, 2014 the brand new website made its debut. The new website offers visitors more information with a much more user and mobile friendly interface. Hotel managers were given backend access to their lodging's web page and sent easy step-by-step training sheets to walk them through how to make updates to their information and add photos, promotions, etc.

The new website has an expansive events calendar and more information of interest to travelers, as well as more photos, videos and a blog. This summer an SEO plug-in was included to



the administrative abilities of the webpage and Tourism staff worked to add alternate text to all photos and more content, photos and links as well as focus keywords, titles and meta descriptions to each page and post. Sleeping Giant, Tourism's website designer, believes we will be seeing the full benefit of the SEO work on page visits by early spring.

To better serve Onalaska lodging the new website not only allows for the lodging members to add their own content, but a new tracking code was added to measure click throughs to hotel websites. In 2014 there were 560 click throughs. This will act as a baseline for future comparative measure.

Twenty-one blogs were written by fourteen different authors; including Tourism staff, USF&W naturalists, canoe guides, club & society members, local business people and outdoor enthusiasts.

Please see page 2 "Website" of the attached 2014 Promotional Calendar for details.

Television

For the first time Onalaska was promoted in television ads in the northern Chicago market. The inclusion of Chicago has had an immediate effect. More social media users from Chicago have shown engagement on the Onalaska Facebook than any other city. Chicago users are the 2nd most common user on discoveronalaska.com, behind La Crosse.

The commercials shot throughout 2013 made their debut this year in the Chicago, Madison and Twin Cities markets. The ads were placed so as to target women aged 25-54.

Please see page 2 "Television" of the attached 2014 Promotional Calendar for details.

Promotions

Sweepstakes



The Shop Til You Drop sweepstakes promoted the shopping region and gave away a \$500 gift certificate to Valley View Mall and a donated overnight stay at Holiday Inn Express. The winter promotion was the Escape to Onalaska sweepstakes which gave away over \$400 worth of gift certificates including an overnight stay, meals, and more; donated by Lumber Baron Inn, Sue Kolve's Salon & Day Spa, UnWine'd and Season's by the Lake restaurant. The sweepstakes combined had over 2,700 entries and aided in the growth of Onalaska social media and website visits.

Please see page 3 "Promotions" of the attached 2014 Promotional Calendar for details.

Plan Ahead & Save

Book online at least 21 days in advance for a great discount!

Microtel Inn & Suites by Wyndham
3240 N Kinney Coulee Rd., Onalaska
608-783-0833

[VIEW MORE INFO](#)

Lodging Deals

A lodging deals page was added to the new website and has proven to be very popular. The majority of click throughs to Onalaska lodging websites come from this page. It was also the 5th most visited page on the website with nearly 2,000 page views in 2014.

The lodging deals are updated quarterly as well as the hotels spotlighted through the uber menu drop down. These lodging deals are cross promoted through e-newsletters and on social media.

Cruising Great River Country in a Toyota Avalon Hybrid

They made a great car even better
Special Promotion, October

**Earned Media**

The most popular piece of earned media in 2014 came about through a press release sent out by Pilch and Barnet, Biking in Wisconsin: 4 Rides Worth the Drive. The press release was picked up and published by 15 media outlets including Appleton, Fon du Lac, and Green Bay.

Onalaska appeared in several blogs belonging to travel writers, including a birder and a traveler of the Great River Road. Onalaska's bike trails and wildlife were a common theme seen throughout the articles in which it appeared.

Onalaska saw a residual effect to the 2013 travel writers with several articles being printed in 2014 from the writers that were hosted.

Earned media articles reached a total circulation of nearly 3,000,000.

Please see page 3 & 4 "Earned Media" of the attached 2014 Promotional Calendar for details.

Leads**Expos**

Onalaska Tourism attended four expos in 2014. Leads were gathered through a giveaway of an overnight stay at Stoney Creek Hotel and two state bike trail passes. The prizes were drawn in April and August. Leads were separated by bicycling or vacationing crowds and information was gathered for either the Bike4Trails or Vacation email lists. Leads received e-newsletters.

1. Brazen Dropouts – Madison – 53 leads
2. Milwaukee Sport Show – 265 leads
3. Wheel & Sprocket – Milwaukee – 420 leads
4. WI State Fair – Milwaukee – 590 leads





Events

Onalaska Tourism participated in Wisconsin 2 Go, a mobile visitor center that attended five events and gathered a total of 2,197. Holiday Inn Express provided the overnight stay for the giveaway. Leads received Vacation e-newsletters, a direct mail visitor guide and a follow-up postcard.

Tourism aided to bring in Open Air Convertibles for the second year in a row. Providing local information and staffing a table at the convention check in, around 400 people attended.

Other Medium

Further leads were gathered by Pilch & Barnet through their e-newsletters, direct mail, and Midwest Living advertising. These leads received Vacation e-newsletters, direct mail visitor guide, and a follow-up postcard. Requests generated from discoveronalaska.com were another way leads were gathered.

Please see page 4 "Lead Count Collection" of the attached 2014 Promotional Calendar for details.

Meeting Planners

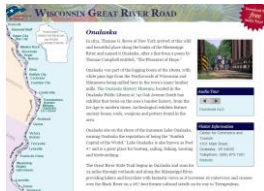
Wisconsin associations were researched and 55 were considered to be strong leads (small enough to fit Onalaska, large enough to potentially move). The associations were sent two constant contact emails, called and the strongest leads, which had opened emails or requested further information via phone, were sent Onalaska meeting planner packets. A meeting planner page was built on the website and a form was created to aid in giving out "grant money" to interested planners to aid in bringing their events to Onalaska. The page had 279 unique views in 2014, there were 28 unique views of the form, and unfortunately no one submitted the form. The leads will be further followed up with in 2015.

A destination page for Onalaska was built on Cvent at the end of 2013 and went live in January of 2014. Onalaska purchased a diamond listing and the Tourism Department appeared high in searches for venues in southwest Wisconsin. Several RFP's came through Cvent this year, unfortunately none were able to be served in Onalaska due to prior scheduled events.



Photography

In order to freshen the photography library used for promotion, all photos held by Pilch & Barnet and Onalaska Tourism were reviewed and areas with weak or old collections were singled out. In response, eighteen photo shoots were completed by Tourism in 2014; these photos have been used for publications, print advertising, social media pages and the website. Tourism staff engaged friends, family, neighbors and City Hall staff members to work as models in the shoots.



A photography contest, Fun in Onalaska, was run in the summer of 2014. Entrants were asked to submit to two categories 'All 4 Seasons' and 'Vacation in Your Own Backyard'. 94 photos were submitted and four local businesses donated the prizes. The grand prize winner also had their prize winning photograph included in a Duke University project to send a photo time capsule to Mars.

Promotion through Partnership

Onalaska is promoted through its partnerships with other communities and organizations. Onalaska Tourism monitors and updates the information contained on partner sites.

Bike4Trails: The Bike4Trails website has a direct link to the Great River State Trail information on discoveronalaska.com. The Onalaska Tourism Center is highlighted in an inset of the map. Onalaska is given the opportunity to add information to the Bike4Trails map when reprinting..

Driftless Destinations: Onalaska restaurants, hotels, events, and attractions are listed within driftlessdestinations.com. The Driftless Destinations brochure includes a two page spread highlighting Onalaska along Route 4.

Hidden Valleys: hiddenvalleys.com includes a prominent link to Onalaska on the home page.

WI Department of Tourism: The department has three websites through which Onalaska enjoys promotion; travelwisconsin.com, meetinwisconsin.com and sportswisconsin.com. The Department's articles also promote our area and Onalaska has participated in coop advertising in with the department.

- Meetinwisconsin.com: In 2014 Tourism created an Onalaska destination page as well as an Omni Center page.
- Sportsinwisconsin.com: In 2014 Tourism created an Onalaska destination page as well as both an Omni Center page and an Onalaska Park and Rec page.
 - The Omni Center and Park and Rec were given access to their pages.

Wisconsin Great River Road: A page promoting Onalaska can be found on wigrr.com, along with a page on the bike trails. Onalaska restaurants, hotels, and events are listed. The WI Great River Road Facebook page promotes Onalaska events.

Wisconsin Travel Best Bets: Promoted on the website and social media pages through our affiliation with Pilch and Barnet. This website focuses on activities and where to enjoy them.



OABA

Onalaska Tourism helped organize 11 monthly luncheons for the Onalaska Area Business Association, as well as their annual banquet. The banquet raised \$2,178 from the silent auction for scholarships. The banquet invites, auction item requests, and collection of gifts were all organized through the Tourism office.

Tourism aided OABA in organizing multiple ribbon cutting ceremonies for new businesses including Culvers, Holtan House Adult Family Home, Bremer Bank and more. Tourism also keeps the membership database for OABA and creates a monthly e-newsletter for the group. The OABA social media pages and the website were updated frequently by Tourism staff.

Miscellaneous

Billboards

The eyes on impressions (EOI) of billboards in 2014 dropped by almost one million views, from 2013, as part of an initiative to redirect marketing dollars. Three billboards were refaced in 2014 including Nodine Hill, the Robinson property sign and I-90 near the New Lisbon exit.

Please see page 3 “Billboards” of the 2014 Tourism Promotional Calendar for details.

Education

Tourism Department staff expanded their training through the Governor’s Conference on Tourism, classes including Intro to InDesign CS6 and Interpersonal Communications, and a sales funnel training webinar. The classes totaled over 40 hours in training.

Relocation

Onalaska Tourism strives to meet the needs of people relocating to Onalaska. To that end, over 40 relocation packets were sent out in 2014. 350 unique users viewed the relocation page on the discoveronalaska.com website, with a total of nearly 700 unique page views to all relocation related pages (housing, healthcare, schools, etc.)

Move

The Onalaska Tourism Department moved to a new location inside the Omni Center on December 17, 2014. Over 700 postcards went out to local businesses and partners informing them of our new location. Work continues to make the public and visitors aware of our new location.

Contact Information

For more information please contact the Onalaska Tourism Department staff.

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