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### **SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM HONORS THE SPIRIT OF TRAVEL**

**Santa Monica, Calif.** (May 7, 2020) — While we all spend more time at home to do our part in fighting the pandemic, for this year’s National Travel and Tourism Week, Santa Monica Travel & Tourism (SMTT) is rallying with the U.S. Travel Association to honor the *Spirit of Travel* in recognition of the industry’s strength, selflessness and resiliency.

Tourism has long been a major economic driver in our local community. In 2019, visitor spending injected nearly \$2.2 billion into the local economy and overnight hotel visitors contributed \$58 million to the city’s general fund through the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT).

“The current global health crisis has been devastating in many ways, from the loss of lives of loved ones to the loss of jobs and economic stability for our local businesses,” said Misti Kerns, President/CEO of Santa Monica Travel & Tourism. “The uncertainty of this crisis has decimated travel demand both internationally and domestically, having a profoundly negative impact on our hotels, restaurants, attractions and all tourist-serving businesses. The lack of visitor spending in our destination has also led to a budget deficit for the City of Santa Monica, where our local leaders are being forced to make very difficult decisions.”

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, Tourism Economics projects California will lose \$72.1 billion in statewide travel-related spending in 2020, nearly half of what was generated last year. The study also showed the pandemic will wipe out 613,000 California jobs by the end of May, more than half the tourism industry’s workforce.

Statewide, 2019 marked a record 10 years of travel-related economic growth for the state, further signaling the steady influence tourism has had on California’s economy for the past decade.

Visitors to California spent \$144.9 billion in 2019, a 3.2 percent increase over 2018. The number of travel and tourism jobs increased to 1.2 million last year, an additional 13,000 jobs. Travel-generated tax revenue also grew for the 10th straight year, providing \$12.2 billion to state and local governments, a 3.4 percent increase over 2018.

“The data shows just how vital tourism is to the California economy and why it must be restored when we control and ultimately overcome this deadly outbreak,” said Caroline Beteta, president and CEO of Visit California, the state’s tourism marketing non-profit organization.

“When that time arrives, we’ll be calling on Californians to become the main drivers of recovery by traveling in the state, shopping locally and visiting local restaurants, wineries and attractions. California has led the nation in its response to the health crisis, and it will lead the economic comeback.”



To ensure the tourism industry rebounds in Santa Monica, SMTT is working with Visit California on initiatives to inspire community support and begin safe and responsible travel when the time is right.

When times are uncertain, the only certainty is that the spirit of our community and that of the travel industry will not be shattered. The spirit of travel is what brings joy and memorable experiences to us all. Although we can't meet in person, we can stay connected, unified and supportive of each other from afar, rallying around the Spirit Of Travel.

Communities benefit from the spirit of travel, which permeates through small businesses, unique landmarks and all those who welcome residents and visitors alike with a smile and gracious hospitality. Santa Monica is defined for many by the opportunity it presents to live and experience the quintessential Southern California lifestyle and a come as you are with such a welcoming, inclusive, free spirited vibe. From the gorgeous beach, public parks and beloved Santa Monica Pier to the world-class hotels, attractions, diverse shopping offerings and abundance of restaurants that draw from our weekly farmers markets, there's plenty to love about our special city.

To help all of us who love Santa Monica experience the destination from the safety of our homes, SMTT has launched a feature on SantaMonica.com dedicated to supporting local businesses that remain open as well as virtual experiences offered by many. To help support our struggling businesses resources on where to eat, shopping local and online family activities, arts & culture experiences and ways to experience the beach virtually can be found at [santamonica.com/smcares](https://santamonica.com/smcares).

The spirit of travel isn't only found in far-off places. When we as residents embrace the spirit of travel by supporting local businesses and helping neighbors, we play a critically key role in rebuilding our own community, California and America.

Our city has long shown great care and pride in welcoming visitors from around the world to our iconic shores. In these troubling times, it is inspiring to see the number of ways our community has come together – if from a social distance – to lend support where needed. From individual residents making masks for healthcare workers and delivering food to their elderly neighbors to the courage displayed by the healthcare professionals, police & fire departments and essential workers during this time, the comradery and care this community has shown is something to be very proud of.

When the time is right, the travel and tourism industry will be integral to our city and nation's recovery—for the economy and jobs. But it is the spirit of travel that will heal our country's morale. Until that time, join us by posting you favorite Santa Monica memory on social media using #SpiritofTravel.

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#### **About Santa Monica Travel & Tourism**

Santa Monica Travel & Tourism (SMTT) is a non-profit organization designed to increase visitor expenditures, tourism revenues and local employment opportunities through the promotion of Santa Monica as a travel destination. For more information visit [santamonica.com](https://santamonica.com), email [info@santamonica.com](mailto:info@santamonica.com), or follow SMTT on Instagram ([@SeeSantaMonica](https://www.instagram.com/SeeSantaMonica)), Twitter ([@GoSantaMonica](https://twitter.com/GoSantaMonica)) or Facebook ([@VisitSantaMonica](https://www.facebook.com/VisitSantaMonica)).