

PLUMAS
County Visitors Bureau

**PLUMAS COUNTY VISITORS BUREAU
2010
YEAR-END INQUIRY REPORT**

The Plumas County Visitors Bureau (PCVB), a division of Plumas Corporation, is the county's official destination marketing organization. Its primary mission is to position Plumas County as a premiere visitor destination and to increase travel spending.

PCVB's external marketing program operates in consort with numerous partners and tourism businesses within the county, region and state. The Bureau works to coordinate these partnerships, and serve as an information link between them. PCVB further strives to unify the marketing message and avoid duplication of effort among the partnerships.

The Visitors Bureau also operates a Visitors Center that provides countywide information, literature fulfillment, and direct referrals to visitors via an 800-line, the Internet, by mail and in person.

The following written report and accompanying charts and graphs are an assessment of the inquiries received by phone, mail and computer at PCVB during the past calendar year. The Bureau tracks each inquiry received in order to evaluate the results of specific marketing strategies, and to build a database of prospective visitors. Each year, the results are analyzed to make changes or improvements to marketing efforts. The inquiry reports and database also provide valuable data about visitors and prospective visitors to Plumas County over time.

The 2010 Year-End Inquiry Report does not attempt to evaluate or include all of the various marketing tools and program activities undertaken by PCVB or its partnerships throughout the year. Details on PCVB's workplan and projects are provided annually at the end of each fiscal year. For more information, contact Suzi Brakken, Plumas County Visitors Bureau Director, at 530-283-6345 or info@plumascounty.org

MOST VISITORS PLAN TRAVEL ONLINE

Most people who contact the Visitors Bureau have first visited the bureau's Web site (or a referring site), and far more are making their travel plans solely using the information they find online.

Increasing use of the Web site has made it more challenging to assess the results of specific marketing strategies, although a small percentage of web users do fill out "contact forms" on the site which ask how the user discovered the site. Web tracking software also has enabled PCVB to learn more about its Web audience and marketing results.

The numbers are substantial: Web site visits, combined with direct contacts, represent 99 percent of the total requests for information to PCVB. For every person that directly contacts the Visitors Bureau, 77 others are going straight to PCVB's Web site to plan their trips without making direct contact.

WEB SITE VISITS ON THE RISE AGAIN

There were 243,422 visits* to the Plumas County Visitors Bureau's Web site during 2010 (an average of 665 per day) as compared to 207,511 visits (568 a day) tracked in 2009. This reflects a **17 percent increase in site visits** overall.

This upward trend follows a 5 percent drop in site visits last year that was partially attributed to a poor economy, cuts in tourism marketing and a subsequent decline in travel. The increase is a positive sign that the county's tourism economy may be on the rebound.

The site visits were actually down during the first part of the year (January, February and March) but showed increases every month after that, as compared to 2009. The largest increase occurred in August, likely in part due to a VIA Magazine article which came out late that month promoting Quincy, fall colors and the Feather River Canyon. There also were large increases in July and during September and October, during the highly successful fall foliage campaign and run of the "Awesome Autumn" blog.

During 2010, the number of people who directly contacted PCVB after first viewing Web sites dropped slightly, from 1,308 in 2009 to 1,255 (4 percent). Of those, 1,112 obtained PCVB's contact information off the PCVB Web site, 134 came from Visitors Guide order forms posted on local chamber of commerce websites (which were sometimes inoperable during site revamps), and 9 reported they had found PCVB contact information on another Web site. Overall, 40 percent of people contacting PCVB directly found us through the Internet.

Internet marketing efforts included a continued social media strategy (with frequent posts on Facebook and Twitter sites), search engine optimization efforts along with quarterly e-mail newsletters, and presence/publicity on blogs.

"Visits" refers to the number of times a user accesses the Web site, as opposed to "hits," which records each time a user clicks a certain page or image. These visits are not included in the analysis of "direct contacts" to PCVB.

TRACKING DOWN DATA ON WEB SITE VISITORS

Web tracking software was used to produce a separate analysis** of PCVB's Web site, *www.plumascounty.org*, for 2010 (enclosed.) It shows that users made an average of two requests per visit. Most visits were made on Mon & Tues.

Site users accessed virtually all of the site, but the **most requested pages** besides the home page were Camping, Fishing Report, Camping-Lake Almanor, Map, Awesome Autumn/fall color, Places to Stay/Cabins/Resorts and Events. These pages were the same ones garnering most requests during the previous year, although fall colors appeared higher on the list in 2010 due to a highly successful fall foliage campaign.

The Occupancy Report, which enables site visitors to check for vacancies at participating accommodations, was a useful tool, and had 8,062 click-thrus to provider sites. It also was a page that visitors stayed on, for a longer time than other pages.

The **top five cities** from which site users came were Sacramento, Reno, Chico, San Francisco and San Jose. The **top key words** used to find the site on search engines were "lake," "Plumas," "Ca," "California," "Almanor," "county," and "camping."

The highest daily usage was on Monday, June 29, which was likely due to planning for July 4 activities including High Sierra Music Festival. The second-highest day was Tuesday, June 29, probably for similar reasons.

While most people find PCVB's site by typing in the address themselves or using a search engine, others were referred to PCVB's site via **links from other Web sites**. During 2010, the most click-throughs overall were from the *County of Plumas* site, which has a prominent link to PCVB. The second highest click-through rate came from *High Sierra Music Fest* site. Other top referring sites included *Pet Friendly Travel*, *Facebook*, *Chester-Lake Almanor chamber*, *SFGate.com* (the San Francisco Chronicle site) which carried a fall foliage article on Plumas, *Chiff.com* (which has a fall foliage link), and *wikipedia.org*.

DIRECT CONTACTS UP 13 PERCENT

The number of **direct contacts (email or phone) to PCVB from all tracking categories were up by 10 percent in 2010 as compared to the previous year**. There were 3,134 inquiries in 2010 versus 2,859 inquiries in 2009. The 2009 total includes 75 "reader service" requests (coming from mailed-in response forms from old advertising); whereas 2010 had no reader service mailouts. Exempting these indirect fulfillments, **direct inquiries were up 13 percent**.

**For more detailed information, see the "2010 PCVB Website Report" located at the back of this document.

WALK-INS UP, WITH RECORD NUMBER IN OCTOBER

The number of walk-ins to the Visitor Center was up 4 percent overall, from 2,617 in 2009 to 2,722 in 2009. The heaviest month was in October, when a record-setting 753 walk-in visitors were tracked (averaging 29 per day.) In total there were 1,127 leaf-peepers making in-person requests – making up 43 percent of the annual total. Interestingly, with the exception of October and November, walk-in visitation in 2010 was down every month as compared to 2009, for unknown reasons.

Source of PCVB phone, mail, or email inquiries by percentage

SOURCE	2010	2009
WEBPAGE/INTERNET	40	45
EVENT PUBLICITY	18	13
PUBLIC RELATIONS	18	5
DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE	9	11
VISITORS GUIDE/MAP/BROCHURES	7	8
OTHER REFERRALS	3	7
PREVIOUS VISITOR	3	4
PAID ADVERTISING	2	3
READER SERVICE	0	3
UNKNOWN	< 1	1

WEB SITE/CUSTOMER SERVICE STAFF ESSENTIAL FOR VISITORS

The largest share -- 40 percent of direct contacts to PCVB -- came from 1,255 people who visited a Web site first, but were still seeking personalized customer service offered by Visitors Bureau staff. This was a slight 2 percent decrease from last year.

A combined total of 22 percent of PCVB inquiries (707) came from people who found PCVB through directory assistance, had referrals from friends/family or other businesses, had an old Plumas County Visitors Guide, or who had visited Plumas County previously. This group represents people who rely on recognized visitor information systems such as PCVB for personal interaction, customer service and up-to-date information (including lodging availability.) These factors are key to “closing the sale” on new business and for getting repeat business.

Visitors inquiring about Plumas County events represented 18 percent of direct contacts to PCVB. A total of 550 contacts were tracked to 42 different events, as compared to 376 contacts from 30 events in 2009. (Part of the discrepancy could be due to reporting error in 2009 that was corrected in 2010.) Top events that produced the most inquiries to PCVB include: Fall colors/Awesome Autumn (239), High Sierra Music Fest (111), Longboard Ski Races (57), Tree Permits (35) and Graeagle’s 4th of July (18).

RECORD-BREAKING RESULTS FROM VIA MAGAZINE, SF CHRONICLE

Public relations (or PR) made up 18 percent of total direct contacts to PCVB.

Public relations refers mostly to inquiries that are tracked to unpaid editorial placements in a variety of media, including newspapers, magazines, radio/TV, guidebooks, e-mail newsletters and blogs. Much of this “free” publicity stems from efforts by PCVB to assist and attract writers and photographers. PCVB is the recognized county liaison to travel media, and prepares and distributes press releases, photographs, media kits, guidebook updates, sources, interviews and provides other assistance to media.

2010 saw a huge increase (nearly 300 percent!) in inquiries tracked to publicity thanks primarily to fall foliage stories generated by PCVB in *Via Magazine* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which set a record for generating the most direct response (since the onset of the Internet.)

There were 551 inquiries tracked to PR in 2010, up 411 from 140 in 2009. During 2010, There were 25 PR venues tracked in 2010. Of those, 10 are traditional media and 6 are guidebooks, and the remainder are Internet-based. Fourteen of those venues were either the direct result of PCVB’s efforts or received our assistance.

The *VIA Magazine* Weekender article on Quincy, fall foliage and the Feather River Canyon produced a phenomenal 363 direct responses and resulted in a large increase in fall visitors, most of whom were first-timers. Two fall foliage articles in the *San Francisco Chronicle* also netted 47 responses.

Another PR vehicle was the spring E-newsletter, which prompted 74 visitors to contact PCVB to order a new Visitors Guide or inquire about spring wildflowers.

There also were inquiries tracked from listings in the *California Official State Visitors Guide*, a map feature on Quincy in *Sunset Magazine*, two *Stockton Record* stories and numerous online venues including *Examiner.com*, *Leaf-peepers.com*, *Huffington Post.com*, and *Our Amazing Planet.com*.

Other publicity included two articles (including one in the *San Francisco Chronicle*) resulting from the **Outdoor Writers of California Fall Conference** (held in Lake Almanor in September 2009) and a number of golf articles resulting from PCVB’s sponsorship in the annual **Golf the High Sierra Media Tour**. These included *Southland Golf Magazine*, *CBSSports.com*, *WorldGolf.com*, and *WheretoNowMag.com*.

SLIGHT RESPONSE STILL FROM PRIOR YEAR ADVERTISING

During 2010, there was once again no paid advertising program due to budget restraints. Nevertheless, some direct response was tracked to advertising in VIA and Sunset from previous years, netting a total of 53 inquiries tracked to advertising in 2010 -- versus 158 in 2009 and a remarkable 1,019 in 2008.

With no advertising for the second year in a row, and no reader service form requests in 2010, the response from advertising dropped 66 percent from 2009, and dropped 95 percent from two years ago, accounting for just 2 percent of the direct inquiries to PCVB.

E-MAIL NEWSLETTERS PRODUCE GOOD RESULTS, MORE SUBSCRIBERS

PCVB produced and distributed four e-mail newsletters (Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter) sent to PCVB's e-mail database of approximately **4,090 active addresses**, as compared to 3,436 addresses last year (a 19 percent increase.) Overall, the E-newsletters netted a combined 32 percent open rate -- meaning an **average of 1,073 people opened the e-newsletter each time** -- and a 26 percent click-thru rate. Those figures are slightly down from a 35 percent open rate and a 28 percent click-thru rate in 2009. Still, the rates were way above average click-throughs compared to other travel-related e-newsletters sent through Constant Contact.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

The Visitors Bureau's **Facebook** page and **Twitter** account saw significant increases in activity during 2010. The Facebook fan **base grew from 264 in January 2010 to 776** by the end of 2010. There were a total of 782 wall posts, and 17,133 visits (averaging 1,500 a month) to the site during 2010. 2010 was the first year that social media results have been tracked from Facebook, and Facebook made changes to its metrics mid-year; so other year-to-year comparisons not yet available will be added to this report next year.

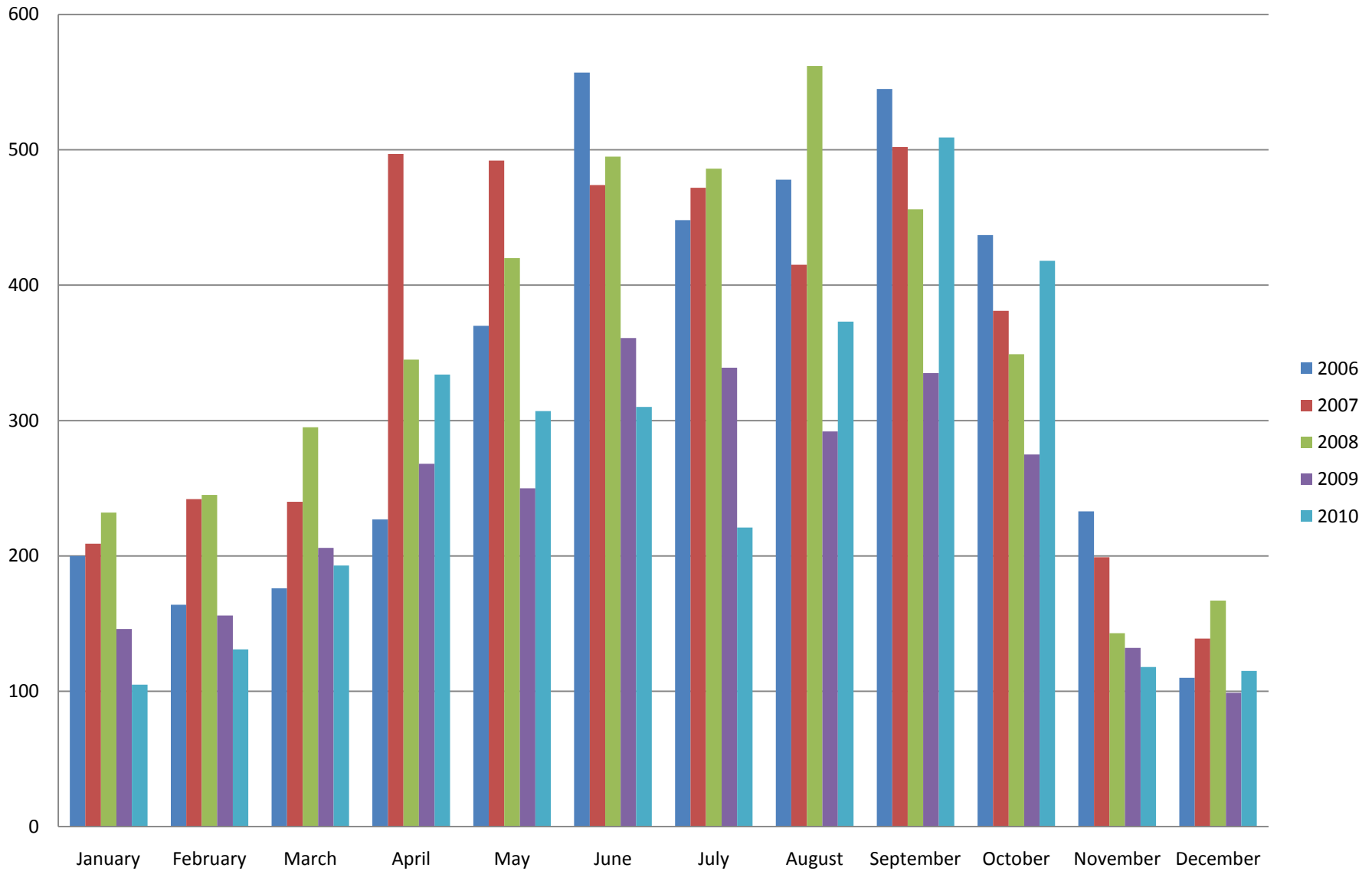
Twitter account **grew from 495 followers in 2009 to 625 followers** in 2010. The account is linked to Facebook so posts made to Facebook also go to Twitter. Posts are made every few days to include events, news, vacancies, links to PCVB and other sites, photos, and video.

The Facebook site also appeared in the top referring sites (ranking #4) to www.plumascounty.org, making it a useful tool for generating traffic to the PCVB Web site.

The **most notable accomplishment in social media** marketing came from amateur and professional photographers who posted fall foliage pictures of Plumas County to numerous blogs, photography sites and professional websites. At least **ten photo blogs** were discovered during the fall foliage campaign through Google alerts. Other photo blogs appeared during the wildflower season. That's not counting the unknown number of visitors who may have shared their Plumas County photos on Facebook.

INQUIRY REPORT

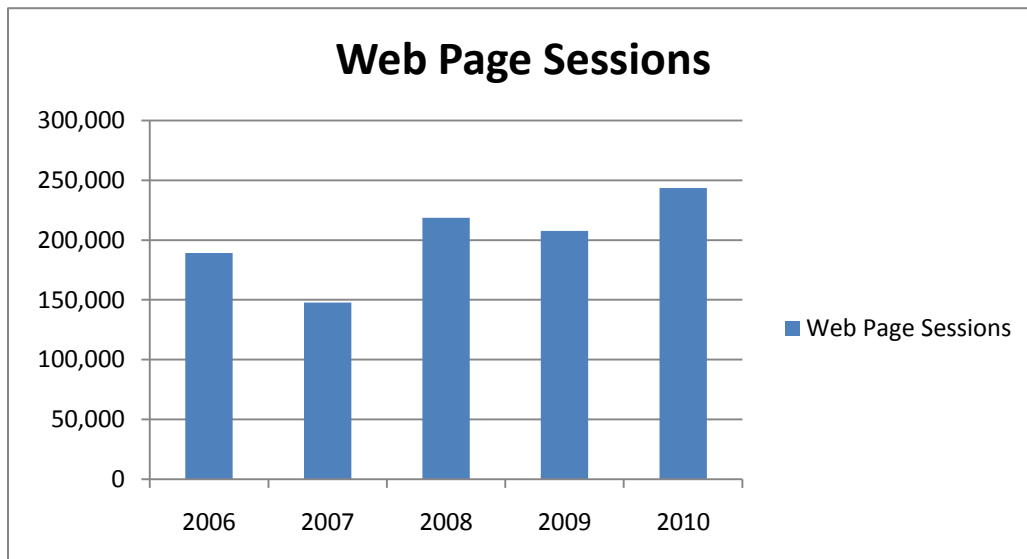
Comparison by Year 2006-2010



COMPARISON OF WEB PAGE SESSIONS

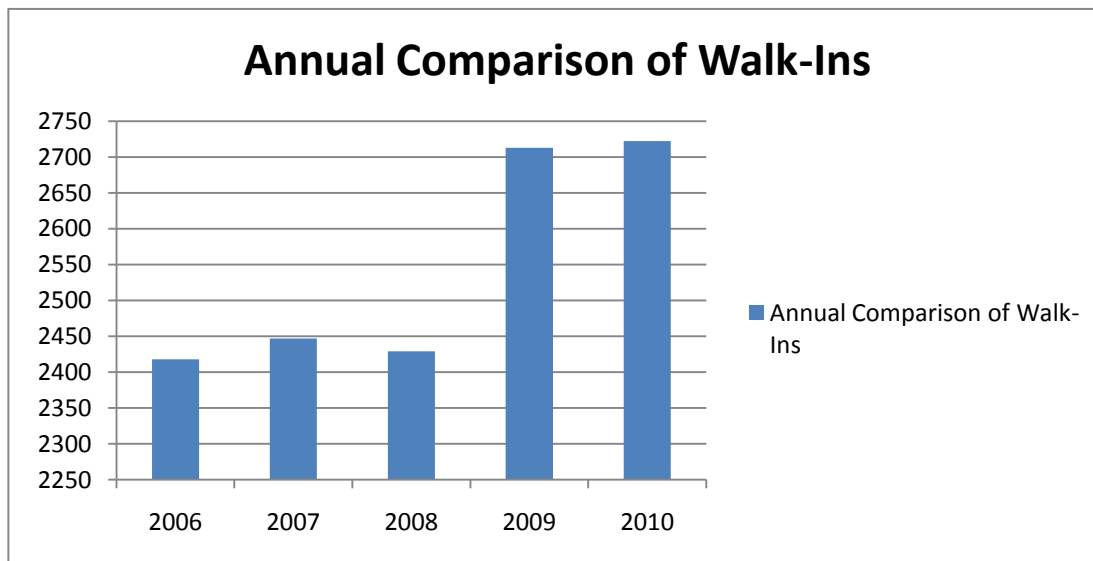
Number of Visits

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
January	9374	11700	10536	11523	9825
February	9438	11383	10910	10651	9507
March	11421	3470	12931	14554	12929
April	12874	95	14655	14456	15390
May	17762	2609	19108	21372	21465
June	23585	17229	22528	26062	30474
July	24616	20608	27215	28129	35651
August	21789	18209	26757	20720	29969
September	18608	21888	23566	18169	25996
October	19823	20659	25062	20062	26794
November	11107	10748	14539	11924	14955
December	8784	9159	10914	9889	10467
	189,181	147,757	218,721	207,511	243,422

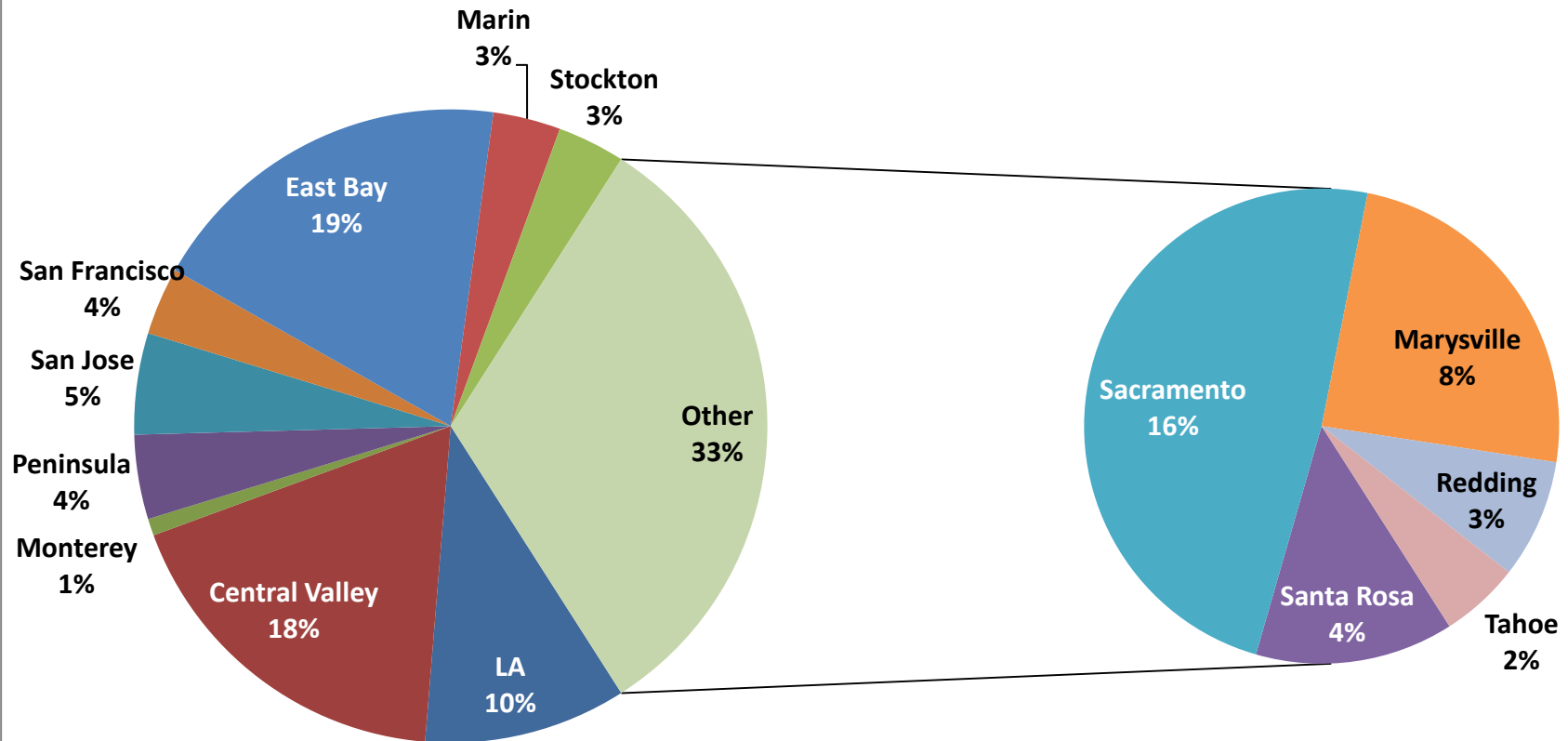


ANNUAL COMPARISON OF WALK-INS

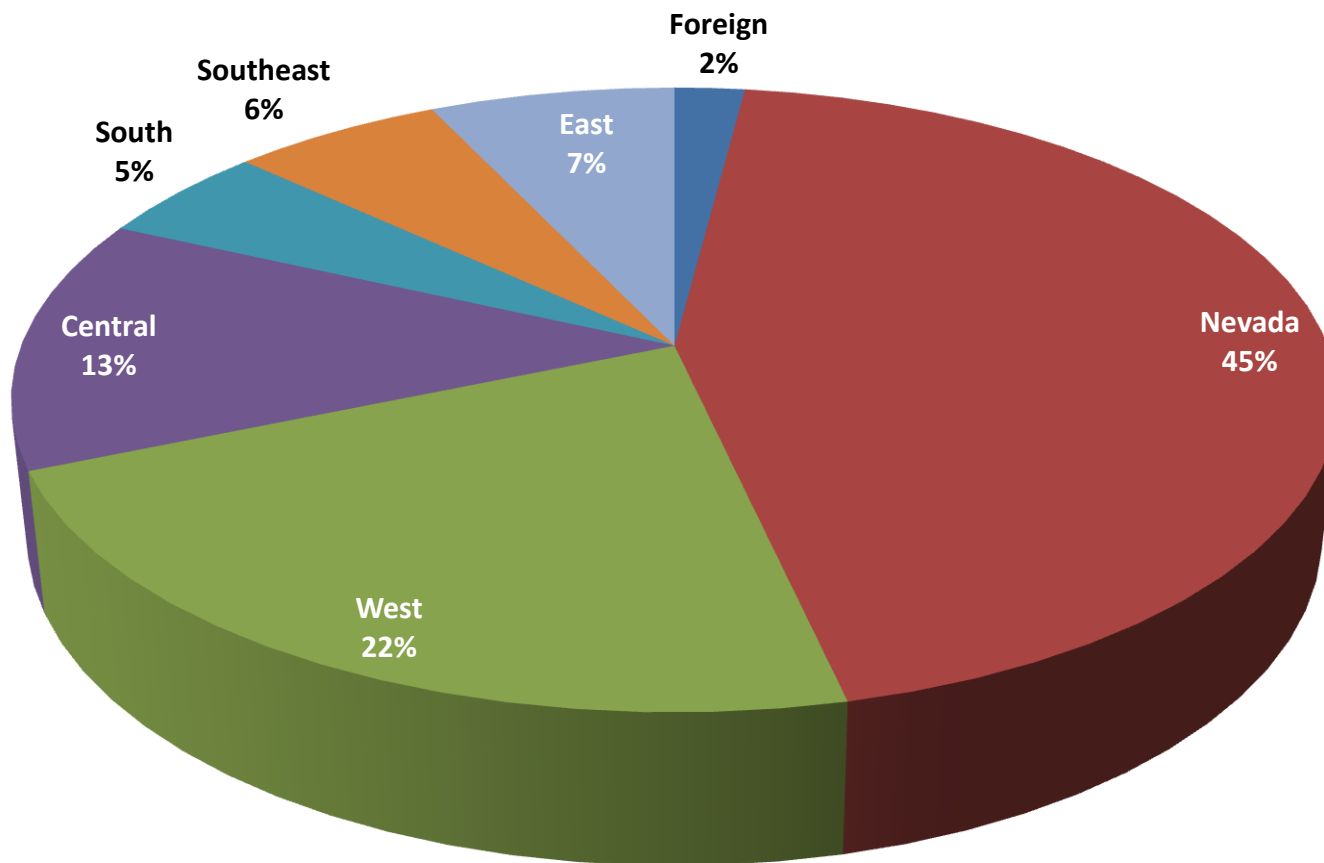
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
January	45	82	54	106	61
February	87	74	58	95	58
March	63	146	122	117	84
April	118	141	124	163	119
May	200	209	239	253	187
June	315	379	250	324	302
July	434	371	355	432	357
August	316	286	357	359	308
September	281	208	249	284	260
October	389	352	419	402	753
November	111	139	130	82	192
December	59	60	72	96	41
	2418	2447	2429	2713	2722



2010 Inquiries from CA by Area



2010 Inquiries from Regions other than CA



2010 PCVB Website Report

Summary Statistics

	2010	2009
Number of Visits*	243,422	207,511
Average daily site visits	665	569
Average visits per month	20,285	17,293
Average requests* per vis	2	2
Total requests for year	629,308	659,623

Largest day of requests was Mondays. There were marked increases in requests following e-mail newsletters and publ

The highest day for the year was **Monday, June 28**, with 1,650 requests likely related to High Sierra music Festival an activities. The second highest day for the year was **Tuesday, June 29** (1,472) for similar reasons.

Highest months of activity were June and July. Largest increases from previous year were in August and Sept. likely d publicity in VIA magazine (fall color article on Quincy).

* See Page 5 for a definition of terms

2010 PCVB Website Report

Top 10 Requests
(other than home page)

2010

2009

of Requests

of Requests

1	Camping	29,395			Camping	23,388
2	Fishing Report-RSS	24,645			Camping-Lake Almanor	19,183
3	Camping-Lake Almanor	23,811			Map	17,887
4	Map	22,830			Fishing Report	17,581
5	Fall colors	17,746			Events	16,759
6	Awesome Autumn	16,542			Places to Stay	11,696
7	Places to Stay/Cabins /Resorts	16,500			Places to Stay/Cabins /Resorts	11,344
8	Events	15,429			Awesome Autumn	10,437
9	Fishing Report	13,858			Fall Colors	9,732
10	Places to Stay	13,701			Feather River	8,997

Camping (especially **Lake Almanor camping**), the **fishing report** and **county map** continue to be the most requested

Fall colors and **leaf-peeper reports** were requested more in 2010 due to increased publicity and postings.

2010 PCVB Website Report

Places to stay (especially cabins) and **events** also are popular requests. Also making the top 20 in 2010 are Feather | camping in La Porte and Bucks Lake, Lake Almanor lodging, the vacancy report and Plumas Buzz blog.

Also in top 10: **wildflower viewing** (April-May) and **Xmas tree permits** (Nov-Dec), during those seasonal promotions.

Top Visitor Cities

2010

Sacramento
Reno
Chico
San Francisco
San Jose

2009

Sacramento
Chico
San Francisco
Reno
Huntington B.

Top Key Words

lake
Plumas
ca
California
Almanor
county
camping

lake
Plumas
ca
California
county
Almanor
camping

Top Search Engines

Google
Yahoo
Bing
AOL
CountyofPlumas.com/index

Google
Yahoo
Bing
AOL
MSN

2010 PCVB Website Report

About 65 percent of the site visits are coming through search engines, and 48 percent of that is via Google.

Top Referrals from other Websites (Links) (other than search engines)

2010

2009

Total Click-Thrus

Total Click-Thrus

County of Plumas	3,916
High Sierra Music Fest	702
Pet Friendly Travel	613
Facebook	611
Chester-Almanor Chamber	611
SFGate (Chronicle)	603
Chiff.com	586
Wikipedia	562

Plumas News	3,339
County of Plumas	2,628
Wikipedia	689
Chester-LA Chamber	657
KOLO TV	600
Chiff.com	492
2chambers.com	480
Pet Friendly Travel	433

Most visitors to PCVB's site come via search engines or directly thru the URL. Only a small percentage **(about 4 percent) come thru links from other websites.**

2010 PCVB Website Report

Other referring sites appearing in top 10 during certain months were: VIA.com, Leafpeepers.com, USFS, NaturalHistoryWanderings.com, image.sosocom, dwgt.net, Clío's River's Edge RV Park and stumbleupon.com

Definition of terms

Number of Visits (sometimes called client sessions) by visitors in the period. During a visit a user requests one or more files from the web server. If there is no file requests from a visitor in 30 minutes, any new file requests from the visitor are seen as a new session.

Number of Requests refers to the number of pages successfully viewed by all visitors.

Top Requests refers to the 10-15 most popular pages viewed that month.

Largest days of requests refers to the days of the year where the most individual pages were viewed.
Used to track special advertising, e-newsletters, events, etc.

Top 5 Cities refers to the top cities visitors came from.

Top links refers to other Internet sites (not search engines) with links that viewers have used to find the Visitors Bureau

Top Keywords refers to most common key phrases or words that were keyed in by visitors using search engines to find the Visitors Bureau site.