

California Welcome Center Program

Ongoing

Program Description

The 14 California Welcome CentersSM (CWCs) serve to promote their immediate regions as well as the entire state of California, giving travelers a reason to stay longer in a selected locality. All CWCs perform a concierge service for travelers while in California by providing destinations, attractions, performing arts and accommodations brochures from throughout the state. CWCs also provide reservation services, Internet access, regional and California merchandise, attraction ticket sales and plasma screen advertising.

Target Audience

Visitors to California, particularly drivers.

Objectives & Reach

In nearly all of the state's regions, there are CWCs providing travelers with information, resources and collateral materials encouraging them to extend their stay in the Golden State. CWC staff serve as personal concierges for all aspects of California travel. CWC objectives include acting as a source for statewide visitor information, encouraging an extended length of stay in California and ensuring there are CWCs to provide service to travelers across the state.

Results & Accomplishments

- **2009 California Welcome Center Visitor Survey.** The Office of Tourism and the California Welcome Centers worked with California State University (CSU) students to survey over 2,000 consumers visiting 10 of the CWCs during March 2009 through May 2009. On a scale of 1-5, the average for each service was at least a 4. Listed below are few of the items rated on the survey:
 - 66% learned something new about California from their CWC visit.
 - 51% had visitors from out-of-state, and 23% included international visitors.

- 86% stopped by the CWC to pick up maps, brochures or publications.
- 55% stopped to receive help from CWC staff.
- **CWC Training Workshop/April 2009.** During the CWC Managers' Meeting, CTTC and the Office of Tourism brought in Berkeley Young of Young Strategies, one of the industry's finest motivational speakers to conduct a training workshop. Young's travel industry experience covers a range of management positions at destination marketing organizations, tourism destinations and research and planning firms. Young delivered a phenomenal message of encouragement to the CWC managers, and also discussed innovative ways to generate revenue and become more self-sustaining, even in these challenging times.
- **California State Parks Map/CWC Web Site URL.** The CWCs' Web site link is featured on the new California State Parks Maps, which were distributed in June 2009. This is another opportunity to market the CWCs and provide visibility to travelers/visitors.
- **New CWCs.** In June 2009, the Welcome Center Program officially established two new members to the CWC family. The new Welcome Centers are located in Truckee and Tulare. Both CWCs offer another avenue to assist travelers/visitors from all over the world.
- **CWC RFP.** The State California/Office of Tourism released a California Welcome Center Request for Proposal (RFP) on July 1, 2009. The RFP has a preference for the Los Angeles, Orange County and High Sierra areas, though proposals for a CWC in other regions will be considered as well.
- **CWC Web Site Upgrade.** The launch for the new CWC Web site took place in September 2009. Enhancements have been added to the Web site to better serve travelers with planning their vacation trips.
- CWCs continue to use the strategic plan developed by CTTC to help guide the program's efforts throughout the year.
- Monthly conference calls with CWC managers are conducted to keep everyone informed and engaged.
- CTTC's *Insights Online* industry newsletter features a monthly column with information on individual CWCs' regional news.

- The Online Toolbox, available via Sharepoint, serves as a vital tool for providing updates, such as calendar events and announcements, and team discussions. It also promotes opportunities for managers and other staff to provide feedback on a particular project and/or issue. The Online Toolbox is a key and essential resource to ensure that the lines of communication are always open among CWC managers and other staff.

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During the April 2009 CWC managers' training workshop, Berkeley Young (left) shared keys to being successful during challenging times, while CWC managers (right) listen to the valuable information.

The new Truckee CWC, the first High Sierra Welcome Center, is situated in a beautiful mountain setting. Set in the train depot in the heart of downtown Truckee, the building serves as a focal point for Truckee's local railroad heritage and an important resource for travelers and the community. The Truckee location has easy access off various highways and is in close proximity to accommodations and attractions, making this a perfect location for visitors to the area.



The Tulare CWC, in the Central Valley region, is located in the Heritage Complex at the International Agri-Center. Uniquely situated, the center is visible from Highway 99 and on the way to the Sequoia/ Kings Canyon National Park, Giant Sequoia National Monument and, for northbound travelers, Yosemite National Park. The center offers a unique experience by sharing a location with the Farm Equipment Museum and AgVentures, an interactive learning center.