



Good Practice Story Title: Park City. For the Mountainkind.

Destination: Visit Park City

Country: Utah, USA

Submitting Organization: Park City Chamber & Visitors Bureau

Category:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

Destination description:

Park City lies at nearly 7,000 feet in the state of Utah’s Wasatch Mountain Range. As a traditional hunting ground for the Ute and Shoshone tribes and founded as a silver mining town in 1869, Park City maintains much of its historic character today, especially along its centrally-located Main Street. With two world-class skiing venues – Deer Valley Resort and Park City Mountain Resort – as well as Utah Olympic Park, host site of the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, Park City is best known as a winter sports destination. But with ample summer activities, over 450 miles of hiking trails, and the internationally-renowned Sundance Film Festival, this town of 8,400 residents has thrived as a year-round destination, attracting more than 600,000 visitors annually.

Summary of Good Practice Story:

Amid its growing popularity as an outdoor and luxury travel destination, Park City was under pressure to manage the impact of its visitor economy. In response, Visit Park City went beyond the familiar scope for a branding/marketing communications campaign; to engage with sustainability experts, stakeholders and residents to develop a sustainable tourism roadmap for the next decade, as well as a reimagined brand message that inspires awe, teaches sustainability, and celebrates the values of mountain lovers – in a single word: *mountainkind*.



Issues faced:

The story of Park City's tourism economy is one of accelerating expansion.

Park City began to attract skiing enthusiasts in 1960 when a group of mining executives decided to establish a stream of revenue “above” that of the silver mine that now lies abandoned beneath Park City Mountain Resort. In the decades that followed the town experienced a series of watershed events, each vastly raising its profile with travelers.

1978 saw the establishment of the Sundance Film Festival, which quickly put Park City on the map for Hollywood elites. Next came the global attention of the Winter Olympics, which the city helped to host in 2002. The decades that followed saw large infrastructure improvements, particularly to Salt Lake City's International Airport, making Park City far more accessible to visitors from around the world. In 2014, Park City Mountain Resort was acquired by Vail Resorts, Inc, which invested over \$50 million in upgrades and expansions. Since then, both Park City Mountain and Deer Valley Resorts have taken steps to reach large international audiences.

How much is too much?

By 2019, the Park City Chamber & Visitors Bureau was welcoming more than 600,000 visitors each year – and noting increasingly vocal calls for action on traffic and visitors' behavior from local business owners and the town's 8,400 residents.

On top of tourism concerns, the COVID-19 years presented a new challenge in the form of a historic real estate bonanza and influx of new residents as affluent citizens fleeing neighboring coastal states for the mountains. By the time Park City's visitor economy recovered, locals were feeling outnumbered and disconnected from one another – amid concerns about the town's character and sustainability of its resort culture. Anti-tourism sentiment was beginning to swell.

Solution:

For officials at Visit Park City it was clear the town needed a new message. Cosmetic changes to its brand identity and marketing communications wouldn't cut it. The solution needed to be meaningful, and needed to resonate with locals and visitors alike.

Based on an initial sustainability assessment in partnership with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), as well as an extensive survey of local residents and other stakeholders, Visit Park City began the process of reimagining its brand campaign according to the values shared by all stakeholders, locals and visitors alike:

Mountainkind.

For us, *mountainkind* is simply a new name for a culture that has always existed in Park City – a collective name for the members of our extended community, and a fitting description for their lifestyle.



Mountainkind describes values that revolve around preserving nature, local culture, and the city’s historical legacy. It represents the essence of Park City – and it doesn’t look too bad silkscreened onto a reusable water bottle, either.

Using this reimagined brand identity as its north star, Visit Park City began to move forward with its solution, evolving both paid and earned media campaigns to focus on sustainable visitation and responsible travel. Each execution upon this new brand platform would communicate a relevant sustainability-focused message, further encouraging responsible use of Park City’s resources.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied: *Example provided in the instructions pack*

1. Outline New Principles

Visit Park City’s collaboration with the GSTC resulted in sustainability recommendations across 40 areas of concern. The assessment leading to those recommendations was performed concurrently with extensive community efforts by the Corragio Group, which gathered 2,600+ resident surveys, held town hall meetings and analyzed local data to outline key themes to inform the planning process. This work, along with the establishment of a Destination Stewardship Council, resulted in renewed stewardship principles for sustainable travel and tourism in Park City:

- Value and respect for the health of our local environment and natural resources
- Foster our local spirit, values, sense of place and the wellbeing of our community
- Ensure the benefits of the visitor economy are shared equitably all members of our community
- Lead by example, championing tourism’s benefits and mitigating its impacts
- Be bold, creative and action-focused, supporting transparency and measurable outcomes

These principles are the foundation for a comprehensive 10-year Sustainable Tourism Plan, as well as for the development and execution of the mountainkind campaign. From the outset, the goal has been to activate community spirit and guide/educate potential Visit Park City visitors in equal measure.

2. Gather Allies

Launching the mountainkind campaign required more than the simple roll-out of a media campaign. Creating enthusiasm among local audiences was perhaps the most critical factor for the campaign’s success...

Park City’s residents and business community *are* “the Mountainkind,” after all.

A formal launch event for local officials and Chamber partners, as well as a picnic-style event for the full community was timed to coincide with a mountainkind-themed remodel of Park City’s Visitor Information Center.





Additionally, paid placements in local media were executed specifically with messages for locals in mind. All Park City Chamber partners received “Mountainkind Business” retail window clings, which serve not only as brand placements but as indicators that each business adheres to the Sustainable Tourism Council’s stewardship principles.

4. Walk the Walk

Throughout the history of Park City’s destination marketing campaigns, the city has leveraged one traditional core equity – its ability to inspire awe in the hearts of mountain lovers. With mountainkind, its aim is to say something new and profound: In out-of-market media campaigns as well as local advertising units reaching visitors after they arrive, mountainkind speaks not just to the awesome experience of mountain views and outdoor adventures, but also to a responsibility to preserve them for generations to come.

Visibility for visitor-educational elements of the campaign was paramount. In out-of-home media and even on hotel room TVs, Park City offers a basic primer on sustainable tourism and provides while directing guests to learn more at [VisitParkCity.com/stewardship](https://www.visitparkcity.com/stewardship). Using traditional and digital placements, the mountainkind campaign provides contextually-relevant sustainability and community messages in the following areas:

- Encouraging the use of bikeshare and free public transit
- Making every effort to reduce waste
- Shopping small and supporting local business
- Embracing local culture and history
- Preserving trails and wilderness areas
- Protecting wildlife

Achievements and Results:

Creating a more sustainable destination is, by definition, an ongoing process measured in incremental steps. We hope that the mountainkind brand and messaging moves the needle on key Sustainable Tourism Plan indicators that have been developed as part of the Sustainable Tourism Plan.

These indicators will be tracked using Annual Resident Surveys, Zartico Data, relevant program participation, data published by federal, state & local government agencies as well as PCCVB’s own internal data according to the following objectives stated in the Council’s Sustainable Tourism Plan:

- *Cultivate local pride*
- *Implement sustainable infrastructure*
- *Protect and manage our environment to enable sustainable recreation*
- *Equalize economic benefits and mitigate impacts of the visitor economy*
- *Leverage messaging and programming to accelerate sustainable tourism*
- *Foster the development and management of art and culture tourism assets*



While the objectives above will be measured year-over-year against a 2022 baseline, local reaction to the launch of the *mountainkind* brand is already showing indications of a positive impact on local pride.

"Everybody was so on board with the concept. They own it, and it's just a core value system that we all share. We are mountainkind." – Bonnie Park, resident since the 1970s

"This is an incredible change. It gave me goosebumps to see this mountainkind...made me appreciate living in Park City all over again." – Terry Whitney, resident since the 1970s

"This is aspiration. I love that this looks at who we are today, but also forward and says, these are the types of people who will be drawn here" – Kevin Hartsville, resident since the 2000s

Lessons Learned and Advice:

Sustainability is about preservation for future generations, but it's also about quality-of-life today. Destinations should never view stakeholders or their local community as mere audiences for communications; rather, their voices and participation should be seen as essential to any program's success. Below are a few more key lessons from our experience:

- Formalize community input
Working with an independent research/consulting firm to gather surveys and manage town hall gatherings proved to be an invaluable resource.
- Maintain a clear-eyed view toward challenges
For DMOs, it can be difficult to acknowledge problems or negative impacts related to visitation. Be transparent with stakeholders – but focus on moving forward, rather than dwelling on causes.
- Take the long view
"Mountainkind" is just the first of what we hope will be many great results from the creation of Park City's 10-year Sustainable Tourism Plan. Great change can be accomplished in small increments.
- Focus on what's real
For Visit Park City, the majesty of Utah's Wasatch Mountain Range will always be what makes our destination special. For any green destination, our best advice is to discover and build your program upon true passion for what makes your destination unique.

Recognitions and Additional References

Visit Park City is a candidate for Mountain IDEAL Certification.
<https://www.visitparkcity.com/mountainkind/>