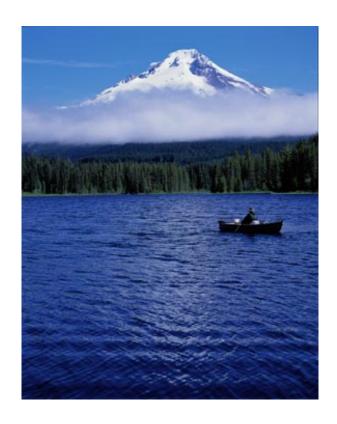
# Visitor Destination Audit Clackamas County Oregon

# **Executive Summary**



Clackamas County Tourism Development Council (CCTDC)

This summary provides an overview of the methodology employed, and the key findings and conclusions pertinent to Clackamas County's tourism product, marketing and organization assessment. The comprehensive assessment included an inventory and qualitative appraisal of the destination's core product mix (i.e., attractions, events, facilities, support services and related visitor infrastructure), and a review of the Tourism Development Council (TDC) and visitor industry marketing and organization efforts, all of which were undertaken from August 2001 to November 2002 by Destination Consultancy Group LLC. In addition, recommendations based on the destination assessment conclusions and in comparison to successful destination management activities elsewhere are included for implementation consideration by the Clackamas County Tourism Development Council and its community/visitor industry colleagues.

## **Destination Assessment Methodology**

A total of 65 person days of fieldwork were spent by the consultants in Clackamas County collecting secondary research, conducting personal interviews, undertaking group presentations and discussions, assessing the TDC entity and evaluating destination product in the six main visitor areas of the county (Milwaukie/Clackamas/Gladstone, Sandy/Estacada/Mt. Hood Corridor, Lake Oswego/West Linn, Oregon City, Wilsonville and Canby/Molalla). Two hundred-five (205) 'mystery shopper' inspections and related evaluations were performed county-wide and in the region (55 lodging, 63 retail, 49 food & beverage, and 38 attraction, of which 47 were in Milwaukie/Clackamas/ Gladstone, 44 in Sandy/ Estacada/Mt. Hood Corridor, 36 in Lake Oswego/West Linn, 23 each in Oregon City, Wilsonville and Canby/Molalla, and 9 in the Portland Airport area) from August to December 2001. The product facilities and services assessed were rated on different attributes depending on the product sector (lodging, 88 characteristics; attractions, 78; food & beverage, 47; and retail, 30) and a 0 to 3 point quality scale was used (0 for being non-existent, 1 for 'below standard,' 2 for 'meets standard,' and 3 for 'exceeds standard'). In addition, a total of 400 random personal interviews with visitors on their Clackamas County experience were undertaken at the community level (Milwaukie/Clackamas/ Gladstone 105, Sandy/Estacada/Mt. Hood Corridor 85, Wilsonville 65, Lake Oswego/West Linn 60, Oregon City 45 and Canby/Molalla 40) from November 2001 to July 2002. Also, over 25 personal interviews were conducted with key visitor industry owner/operators and association managers, TDC board members and county/community officials to seek their opinions and views on the current visitor industry situation and future potentials. The main findings and conclusions were derived from secondary and primary research analyzed by Clackamas County generally, and specifically by visitor sector and community regarding the destination product mix audit. The visitor development and marketing recommendations provided relate to the Clackamas County TDC and the area visitor industry and focus on various TDC/industry organization issues, product and marketing development, partnership formation and community relations.

### **Destination Assessment Results**

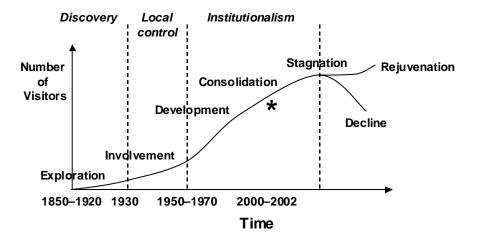
- From a visitor experiential perspective, Clackamas County has ten distinct but complementary
  community visitor areas at various levels of visitor development and potential. These areas are
  Milwaukie, Clackamas, Sandy, Estacada, Villages of Mt. Hood, Lake Oswego, Oregon City,
  Wilsonville, Canby and Molalla. This situation is considered positive from a visitors' viewpoint
  allowing them to extend their stay and/or return to enjoy other different community experiences
  available in the county.
- 2. Generally the destination product assessed varies among the ten community areas and its key visitor industry sectors (i.e., lodging, attractions, food & beverage and retail services), and on an overall destination experience basis (i.e., combination of goods, services, price and atmosphere that make the visitor want to return) was evaluated a 'fair to good' quality at a 1.85 mean rating based on a 'mystery shopper' scale out of 3.0. Visitor destinations will typically score around 2.0 unless, they are exceptional, since all establishments inspected would have had to receive individually a 'meets standard' score on each applicable attribute. Clackamas County 'overall experience' rating is at the lower end of the acceptable range between 1.85 and 2.00, and is considered less than competitive based on other visitor destination audits conducted in the United States. The 'value for money' proposition (i.e., price paid to the overall quality of goods, services and ambience provided to a visitor) rated better at 1.97. There is a strong need to give further attention to improving and adding to the county's visitor experiential offerings.
- 3. As to product sector on a Clackamas County basis, the lowest ratings occurred in the lodging sector, while food & beverage services rated the highest on the two key attributes of 'overall experience' and 'value for money.' The 'overall experience' of 1.73 and 1.82 in the lodging and attractions sectors, respectively, were below the county or combined visitor industry mean of 1.85, while the lodging 'value for money' at 1.81 was also the only sector mean below the visitor industry average of 1.97. Generally, from a countywide and visitor industry sectoral basis, more emphasis on new, expanded and/or upgraded product development is required primarily in the lodging and attractions sectors. Significant improvements are needed in hospitality support services such as selected upgrades in lodging meeting and guest room/bathroom areas and attraction exhibits; better public area accessibility (ADA requirements) across all sectors; adoption of and compliance to a staff uniform code along with improved visitor/guest reception, particularly for attraction, retail and food & beverage sectors; enhanced quality website presentations in the attractions and retail sectors; higher standard of cleanliness and state of repair in foodservice operations; and improved exterior signage, both awareness and directional, applicable to all sectors.

4. As to the 'mystery shopper' product ratings by visitor community area, the top rated 'overall experience' areas were Sandy/Estacada/Mt. Hood Corridor (1.93), Lake Oswego/West Linn (1.89) and Milwaukie/Clackamas/Gladstone (1.87), of which all were above the county average of 1.85. By community, the 'value for money' criterion rated highest for visitor offerings located in Milwaukie/Clackamas/Gladstone (2.02), Wilsonville (2.00), and Lake Oswego/West Linn (1.97). Lowest ratings on both attributes are applicable to Oregon City and the Canby/Molalla area. The Portland Airport area, which consisted only of lodging property assessments, showed strong 'value for money' and 'overall experience' related to this specific sector. These indicators, in conjunction with the sectoral analyses, underscore the need that more attraction and lodging development is required in Clackamas County, with primary emphasis on upgrading and modernization in the urban centers and new visitor product development in adjacent rural areas. However, there is potential for new development opportunities in some city downtown areas. Specifically, it can be concluded that extensive lodging redevelopment is required in the four communities of Milwaukie/Clackamas, Estacada/Mt. Hood Corridor, Oregon City and Canby/Molalla. Likewise, attraction upgrading, expansion and integration in the three communities of Lake Oswego, Wilsonville and Canby, along with retail/services theme development particularly for Oregon City and Sandy have been identified. In addition, the price-value proposition for lodging in the Mt. Hood Corridor should be considered for review and possible correction. Recognizing other competitive resort areas, such as Lake Tahoe, Bend, Whistler and Banff/Lake Louise, it would seem that more value-added services are warranted in the Mt. Hood lodging properties to be favorably compared.

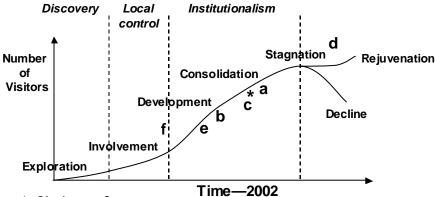
As to the 'visitor opinion' product experience ratings by community area, they reinforced the top rankings of Lake Oswego/West Linn, Sandy/Estacada/Mt. Hood Corridor, Wilsonville and Milwaukie/Clackamas/Gladstone. In addition, about one-third of visitors feel Clackamas County needs to add more attractions, facilities and/or services to improve their experience, especially family-oriented activities, extended shopping hours, more evening entertainment and overall, a better transportation system including signage, parking and adequate road capacity.

5. Applying the destination life cycle concept (i.e., six stage visitor destination evolution model) to Clackamas County, it has been concluded that the county is at the middle consolidation stage of the cycle as indicated in the graph. This means that the county has seen a slower growth in visitor numbers over the past few years, with current promotion aimed to attract new markets and correct seasonality. The placement reinforces the need for improved, expanded and new visitor product development. The placement of the ten visitor community areas on the destination life cycle was also determined since they varied from involvement to rejuvenation stages.

Clackamas County Destination Life Cycle



Clackamas County Community Tourism Areas
Destination Life Cycle



- \* Clackamas County
- a. Milwaukie/Clackamas/Gladstone
- b. Sandy/Estacada/Mt. Hood Corridor
- c. Lake Oswego/West Linn
- d. Oregon City
- e. Wilsonville
- f. Canby/Molalla

6. From the destination product assessments and analyses performed, a proposed product development strategy was formulated to show the types and priority direction of future development. By visitor community area, the product opportunity direction is as follows:

#### Milwaukie/Clackamas/Gladstone

A suggested redevelopment direction with focus on:

- Motor hotel and motel upgrading in public and meeting areas, and guest rooms/bathrooms
- Selective opportunities for expanded/upgraded retail shopping in Clackamas Town Center and downtown Milwaukie areas, along with waterfront development in the latter city

#### Sandy/Estacada/Mt. Hood Corridor

A suggested new development direction with focus on:

- Resort/lodge and motel upgrading to meeting areas and guest rooms/bathrooms
- Selective opportunities for new retail shopping, lodging and recreational/adventure travel services development in Sandy and Estacada
- Better 'sense of place' community integration in Mt. Hood Corridor area from Welches to Government Camp

#### Lake Oswego/West Linn

A suggested redevelopment direction with focus on:

- Attraction upgrading in public and exhibit areas along with infill retail development
- Selective opportunities for visitor product integration between I-5 lodging properties and downtown Lake Oswego, and new waterfront development

#### Oregon City

A suggested expansion and redevelopment direction with focus on:

- Significant upgrading/refurbishment warranted in lodging and retail establishments
- Selective opportunities for existing heritage attraction integration, city riverfront redevelopment, downtown retail/service theming and new lodging facilities

#### Wilsonville

A suggested new development direction with focus on:

- Attraction upgrading in public and visitor reception areas
- Selective opportunities as a regional visitor servicing area, including heritage and marine visitor activities, and new conference facility

#### Canby/Molalla

A suggested new development direction with focus on:

- Significant upgrading/refurbishment required in existing lodging properties
- Selective opportunities for new and better integrated agritourist attractions, rural accommodations and adventure travel services.

7. A SWOT analysis of the Clackamas County visitor experience, as shown below, reinforces the above directions and highlights the various product offering and destination marketing competencies and best opportunities to strengthen them. Similarly, major weaknesses and areas for improvement have been identified along with potential threats to successful visitor development. Generally, the county has an excellent supply of core visitor generators but several deficiencies are noted that could impede its future success. These destination liabilities need to be specifically appraised and rectified in order for Clackamas County to enjoy long-term success.

#### **Clackamas County Tourism SWOT Analysis**

#### Strengths

- Regional/national awareness of Mt. Hood and surrounding recreational lands
- Major ski and golf destination
- Numerous cultural/heritage attractions
- Clackamas Town Center
- Solid funding for destination marketing efforts
- Part of the Portland metropolitan area with excellent access to Portland (I-5 and I-205 highways)

#### **Opportunities**

- Better integration of key attractions
- Strong adventure travel and agritourism potentials
- New inter-sector partnerships
- Initiation of several downtown community redevelopment plans
- Further visitor packaging development
- Regional marketing with Portland, adjacent counties and associated attractions

#### Weaknesses

- Outdated and limited lodging inventory in selective communities
- Poor image of some cities and towns
- Absence of visitor-friendly awareness/directional signage
- Lack of recognized themed touring routes among communities
- Minimal public transportation options for visitors
- Diversity in evening entertainment choices

#### **Threats**

- Agreed upon roles between TDC and community chambers of commerce
- Sufficient community support for tourism development
- State tourism funding reduction
- Loss of community 'sense of place'
- Weather dependent attractions
- Urban sprawl impacting rural landscape
- 8. A cursory review of Clackamas County TDC past Programs of Work shows strong evidence and rationale supporting the main investment directions in the destination marketing and development of the county. However, the existing key programs and related budget allocations need to be further enhanced as a fully integrated destination marketing and development plan. A destination vision, new marketing partnerships and improved product offerings are required to focus Clackamas County's efforts. It should be noted that by mid-2002 the Clackamas County TDC had revised its mission and developed a 2012 vision for the organization and the county visitor destination along with four long-range goals to achieve it. Through an evaluation of current marketing practices utilized by the Clackamas County TDC and the visitor industry, it was concluded that more emphasis is needed in the preparation of a research-based and industry-driven strategic destination plan; formation of stronger integrated marketing partnerships; agreement on priority target markets with best returns; closer relationship with county communities interested in developing and promoting their visitor attractions and services; identification of an agreed-to destination brand; enhancement of database marketing infrastructure and direct visitor communications; and development of special interest packaging and industry value-added programming.

9. From the review of past research studies, visitor industry leader advice and other related market analyses undertaken, a proposed market development strategy has been formulated to show the segments and priority direction of future development at the destination community level.

The market opportunity direction at the destination community level is as follows:

#### Milwaukie/Clackamas/Gladstone

A market focus on:

- Urban waterfront recreation
- ◆ Cultural arts/entertainment
- Shopping and retail services
- Corporate travel
- Meeting/convention

#### Sandy/Estacada/Mt. Hood Corridor

A market focus on:

- Outdoor recreation (skiing/golf)
- ♦ Adventure travel/services
- Festivals and events
- Arts and heritage
- Meeting/retreat

#### Lake Oswego/West Linn

A market focus on:

- ♦ Arts and culture
- Urban waterfront recreation
- Shopping and gastronomy
- Festivals and events

#### Oregon City

A market focus on:

- ◆ Cultural heritage
- Urban waterfront recreation
- Sports

#### Wilsonville

A market focus on:

- Corporate travel
- Meeting/conference
- Shopping
- Heritage and arts

#### Canby/Molalla

A market focus on:

- Agritourism
- Outdoor recreation/sports
- Heritage.

The challenge for the community visitor destination will be to successfully integrate their experiences and capitalize further on their extended product/service opportunities.

10. As to destination marketing organization matters, a pre-accreditation assessment of the Clackamas County TDC was performed. It received an overall 'excellent' standing on its preliminary organization evaluation, with some further planning and best practices required to be in place. This respectable standing shows that the TDC is a well-focused, accountable and professional destination management organization. Areas identified for organization improvement include full development of a TDC board/council manual, preparation of a TDC business plan including more detailed marketing, human resources and destination product development strategies, and updated county visitor economic impact and visitor profile analyses. Through discussions with TDC members and professional staff, visitor industry and government leaders, a number of major issues were identified to be resolved in the future, including agreement on a Clackamas County destination brand; an enhanced TDC profile in the community; more industry marketing partnership development; fulfillment of TDC staffing requirements; and input to Clackamas County transportation problems and future plans.

## **Destination Assessment Recommendations**

Twelve priority recommendations with accompanying brief rationale, and actions to be implemented have been prepared based on the Clackamas County destination audit, and on directions and successful activities undertaken in tourism destination management elsewhere. The recommendations show eight under the lead responsibility of the Clackamas County TDC, and the other four as cooperative efforts with various Clackamas County tourism/hospitality trade associations, communities, and/or tourism industry proponents at large. The recommendations are as follows.

#### **Clackamas County Tourism Development Council**

#### 1. Preparation of a strategic destination plan for Clackamas County

- Application of an integrated destination management approach (marketing and product development)
- Three year time line with budget/organization parameters and accountable program measures in place
- Formulated with communities and industry advice, and in conjunction with updated visitor profile

Rationale: community/industry endorsed long-term plan with partnership 'buy-in' opportunities

**Action:** TDC to prepare appropriate strategic destination and annual business plans, including performance measures and staffing requirements, over the period of 2003–2006

#### 2. Focus and support to community-based visitor planning and development opportunities

- Identification of local community visitor proponents (Sandy/Mt. Hood Corridor, Estacada, Lake Oswego, Canby, Molalla, Milwaukie/Clackamas, Oregon City and Wilsonville)
- Detailed inventory of visitor attractions, facilities and services at the community level
- Preparation of allied community visitor destination visions, positioning statements and related action plans as part of county strategic destination plan
- Provision of technical advice on tourism marketing and development matters

**Rationale:** increased value-added visitor experiences by providing new complementary products/services

**Action:** TDC to describe and implement a Clackamas community planning process with interested county cities/towns over 2003

# 3. Agreement on a well-focused and adaptable county destination positioning/image approach for brand development and recognition

- Full understanding of market positioning and branding as it relates to visitor destinations
- Development of a proposed county destination brand given primary target segment appeals
- Potential opportunity for customized sub-themes at the community level given required product/service deliverables

Rationale: higher visitor awareness and interest through partnership brand equity investment

**Action:** TDC to undertake additional research and testing of brand alternatives with approval on new identity by mid-2003

#### 4. Enhancement of TDC visitor database communications to primary target markets

- Consideration to the implementation of an integrated marketing strategy by visitor activity and community
- Continue to target market to Pacific Northwest/California visitors with prime activities related to outdoor recreation/adventure travel, shopping, cultural/heritage attractions and agritourism potentials
- New direct marketing to key metropolitan markets, including special interest packages and related visitor industry programming
- More attention to friends/relatives influence marketing
- Enrichment of Clackamas County tourism website to include more detailed information, better marketing and promotion of the site, especially through State government sites, and upgrading of electronic marketing capability

**Rationale:** increased focus on repeat visitors leading to better target marketing and servicing, and subsequent higher returns

**Action:** TDC to prepare a 2003–2004 destination marketing plan with the inclusion of a communications technology system audit

## 5. More influential and supporting advocate in the development of effective, visitor-friendly infrastructure

- Review of land use planning, zoning and regulations pertinent to visitor industry investments to ensure historical preservation and sustainable community identity
- Increasing demand for highway expansion and upgrading, better directional signage and more public parking
- Need for an intermodal public transit system
- Excellent potential for the upgrading and development of key visitor attractions and unique lodging alternatives at the local community level

**Rationale:** traffic congestion in the county leading to reduced visitor satisfaction and ensure visitor input to future transportation needs and strategies

**Action:** TDC to agree on appropriate role and strategy in visitor product development with initial intelligence gathering on relevant organizations and work processes over 2003–2004

#### 6. Development of themed visitor routes, visitor entertainment districts and related package offerings among Clackamas County communities

- Investigation of special interest touring routes; e.g., Oregon Trail, mountain to sea, agritourist, etc.
- Requirement for appropriate icon signage and related tour map/attraction package collateral
- Support to community/visitor entertainment districts (downtown cores, alpine villages, attraction venues)

**Rationale:** half and/or full day tours providing reasons to stay over or return, and thereby enhancing the visitor experience

Action: TDC to develop appropriate group tour itineraries and visitor packages with discussion of such at Clackamas community tourism planning sessions in 2003

#### 7. Preparation of a Clackamas County TDC community relations plan

- Identification of key audiences and priority activities
- Preparation of advocacy messages to raise the profile of the visitor industry and the TDC efforts
- New partnership opportunities likely to be forthcoming

Rationale: higher recognition of visitor industry and capitalizing on new partnerships

Action: TDC to convene industry and community-based workshops, as required, on Clackamas visitor community relations with development of such plan over 2003–2004

#### 8. Co-investment in Clackamas County visitor awareness and servicing excellence

- Hospitality/visitor awareness to county residents, and visitor servicing training to all industry sectors
- Monitoring of visitor satisfaction levels
- Accountable partnership agreements with visitor information centers

Rationale: low scoring on 'visitor interview' and 'mystery shopper' assessments

Action: TDC to benchmark efforts with the introduction of the statewide Q program at the Clackamas community/industry levels over 2003–2004

#### **Clackamas County Community/Visitor Industry Partnership**

- 1. Co-formation of expanded or new Clackamas County community visitor industry advisory groups
  - Local visitor industry groups formed in key communities to participate fully in the strategic destination planning process
  - Standing group to liaise with TDC and develop marketing/visitor servicing partnerships
  - Proposed coordinating group to assist in attraction/event development and related visitor requirements

**Rationale:** local community involvement in visitor development, marketing and servicing, and assisting as required in attraction/event opportunities

**Action:** Clackamas County city visitor groups to be finalized in order to be prepared for destination planning discussions with TDC from mid-2003 and onwards

#### 2. Co-initiation of suggested Clackamas County product development strategy at community level

- Product/service gaps identified with proposed remedial actions
- More emphasis on upgrading and modernization in urban centers and new visitor product development in adjacent rural areas, especially in lodging and attractions sectors
- New product opportunities in accommodation/meeting facilities (resort lodges/inns), cultural/heritage attractions, community themeing and festival/event integration

Rationale: increased visitor satisfaction and stronger destination competitiveness

**Action:** Clackamas community visitor planning activities in 2003 to include discussion on visitor product development potential and strategy

#### 3. Co-initiation of suggested Clackamas County market development strategy at community level

- Identification of existing and new market segments; e.g., 'special interest' visitors (adventure travel and agritourism), cultural/heritage group tours, day visitor converts, etc.
- Clackamas County communities and visitor industry to fully participate and align to countywide destination brand identity
- Proposed marketing strategies by community in relation to suggested visitor product development
- Potential marketing partnerships with TDC

**Rationale:** reinforced investment in primary target market communications with attendant higher returns

**Action:** Clackamas community visitor planning activities in 2003 to include discussions on visitor market development potential and strategy

#### 4. Co-partnership in Clackamas County visitor industry professional development

- Hospitality/visitor awareness and customer service training to all sectors, particularly retail services, attractions and lodging
- On-going review of 'value for money' proposition and visitor satisfaction levels
- Renewed partnership agreements with TDC on destination information delivery

**Rationale:** improved visitor/guest servicing and higher visitor satisfaction

**Action:** TDC to evaluate community and visitor industry technical advice and training needs over 2003 and partnership assistance provided, as required, over the following years