

# SLO Marketing Activities Report

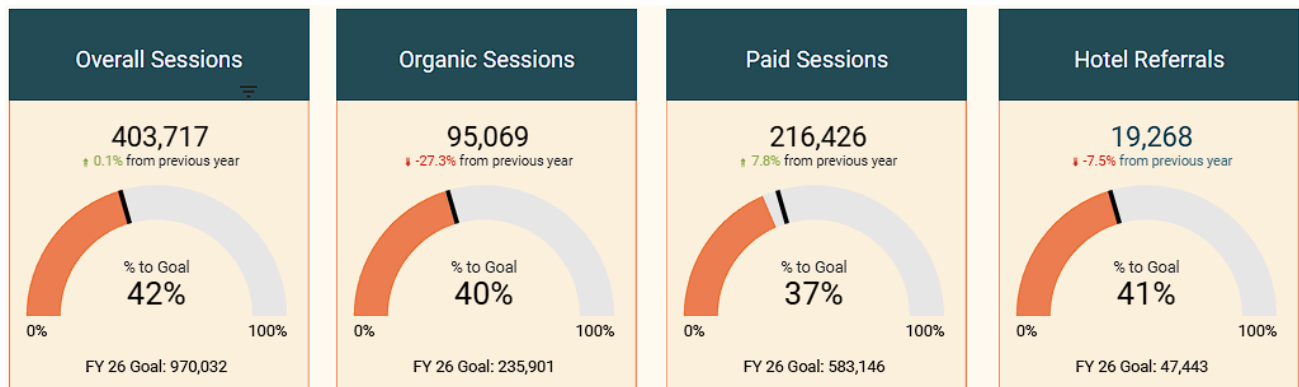
Key Performance Highlights  
December 2025



## At-a-Glance Highlights

- **Total Website Sessions\***: 33,877 (+31% YoY)
- **Top Traffic Source**: Organic 14,018 (-14% YoY)
- **Total Lodging Referrals**: 1,837 (+19% YoY)
- **Top Performing Ads**: Only Search ads ran in the month of December with a strategic pause of other paid media channels during the holiday season.
  - +14.5% YoY increase in click-through rate
  - +10% YoY increase in conversion rate
  - +36% in clicks
- **Earned Media (Public Relations)**: 67,008,066 Impressions/Circulation across 6 secured placements

## YTD KPI Performance



**Expected Pace through December: 41%**



## Overall Performance Summary

Despite industry-wide organic traffic declines of 20%–40%, VisitSLO.com achieved a **31% year-over-year increase in overall website traffic**. Strong performance from paid search campaigns helped offset a 14% decline in organic traffic. A top landing page for both direct and organic traffic this month was [Restaurant Month](#), which helped contribute to the overall lift in direct traffic over last year. Direct also saw an 82% increase YoY in people landing on the homepage, suggesting a continued lift in overall brand awareness.

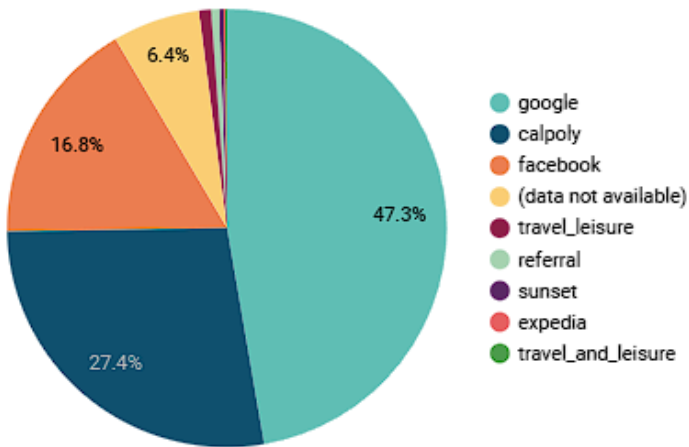
Paid search was the largest driver of lodging referrals during the month, while traffic from other channels dipped due to the holiday season and planned shifts in social and display spend. Even with these headwinds, **lodging partner referrals increased 19% year over year, and total partner referrals grew 3.5% YoY**.

As online search behavior continues to evolve with the rise of AI-powered discovery, we are adapting our SEO strategy to prioritize rich media and support amplification of the new SLO Life Coach campaign.

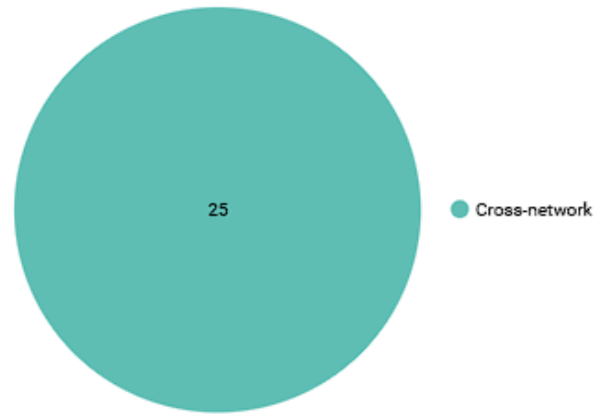
## Paid Media Snapshot

- **Paid Search**
  - Impressions: 29058 (+19% YoY)
  - Clicks: 3,275 (+36% YoY)
  - CTR: 11.27% (+15% YoY)
  - Sessions: 5,824 (+30% YoY)
  - Lodging Referrals: 1,117 (+38% YoY)
  - Cost: \$7,286 (-1% YoY)
- **Paid Social - No Spend**
- **Display, Demand Gen, & PMAX - No Spend**
- **Video - No Spend**

### Sessions by Source



### Lodging Referrals by Channel



### Paid Media YoY Performance

Sessions <b>686</b> ↑ 336.9%	All Partner Referrals <b>43</b> ↑ 1,333.3%	Lodging Referrals <b>25</b> No data
Things to Do <b>16</b> ↑ 700.0%	Hotel Referrals <b>18</b> No data	Homestay Referrals <b>7</b> No data
Food & Drink <b>2</b> No data	Newsletter Signups <b>No data</b> No data	Event Referrals <b>1</b> No data
Engagement rate <b>20.41%</b> ↑ 0.1%	Views per session <b>1.44</b> ↑ 16.9%	Avg. Engagement Time <b>11.5</b> ↑ 123.4%

**Key Insight:** Paid media was paused in December to account for seasonally low traffic, though Paid Search remained live. Hotel-focused Paid Search campaigns drove the most lodging referrals, maintaining a steady YoY engagement rate. During December, we optimized campaign configurations ahead of the January relaunch, allowing for more granular insights into how different audiences respond to specific messaging.

## Owned Media Snapshot

### Email Marketing

We sent one email in December that spotlighted holiday events, a social media giveaway (Ticket Tuesday) and encouraged readers to book a stay. Despite a slight YoY decrease in total sessions and partner referrals, readers of our newsletter showed increased interest in Holiday events and the social giveaway. This year, 35% of readers clicked on the content in the hero section (holiday events) compared to last year's hero content (restaurants and dining). Readers were also more interested in the social giveaway this year, resulting in a 36% YoY increase in clicks to the Instagram pages mentioned in the newsletter, helping to drive more followers and awareness of Visit SLO.

- **Emails Sent:** 1
- **Avg. Open Rate:** 41.9% (33.25% [Benchmark](#))
- **Avg. CTR:** 1.6% (2.56% [Benchmark](#))
- **Total Sessions:** 341 (-37% YoY)
- **Total Partner Referrals:** 44 (-42% YoY)
- **Total Lodging Referrals:** 27 (-1% YoY)
- **Engagement Rate:** 57% (-7% YoY)
- **Average Engagement Time Per Session:** 58s (+13% YoY)
- **Page Views Per Session:** 2.77 (-2% YoY)

### Website

- **Total Sessions:** 33,877 (+31% YoY)
- **Lodging Partner Referrals:** 1,837 (+19% YoY)
- **Avg. Pages/Session:** 1.95 (-16% YoY)
- **Average Session Duration:** 2m 29s (-15% YoY)
- **Top Lodging Referral Channels:** Paid Search (61% of total lodging referrals), Organic Search (21% of total lodging referrals), Direct (5% total lodging referrals)

### SEO + Content

- **Organic Search Sessions:** 14,018 (-14% YoY)
- **Organic Search Partner Referrals:** 2,193 (-23% YoY)
- **Organic Search Impressions:** 1.48 Mil (-2% YoY)
- **Organic Search Clicks:** 10.8K (-21% YoY)
- **Organic Search CTR:** 0.73% (-20% YoY)
- **Page 1 Keywords:** 6.5K (+2)
- **Sessions from LLMs (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, etc):** 211 (+779% YoY)
- **Top Impression Gains:** San Luis Obispo Weather, Hearst Castle, SLO weather, SLO
- **Top Click Losses:** things to do in San Luis Obispo, what to do San Luis Obispo, sunset drive in, things to do in slo

**Key Takeaway:** The largest declines in organic clicks are coming from *things to do* queries. VisitSLO.com continues to rank in position 1, but the search engine results page (SERP) is now dominated by AI Overviews and new SERP features that surface activity ideas and third-party links, reducing traditional click-through opportunities.

Amid this rapidly shifting search landscape and broader changes in how users engage with search and AI, organic traffic declined 14% YoY in December, which aligns with trends across the Travel and Tourism industry.

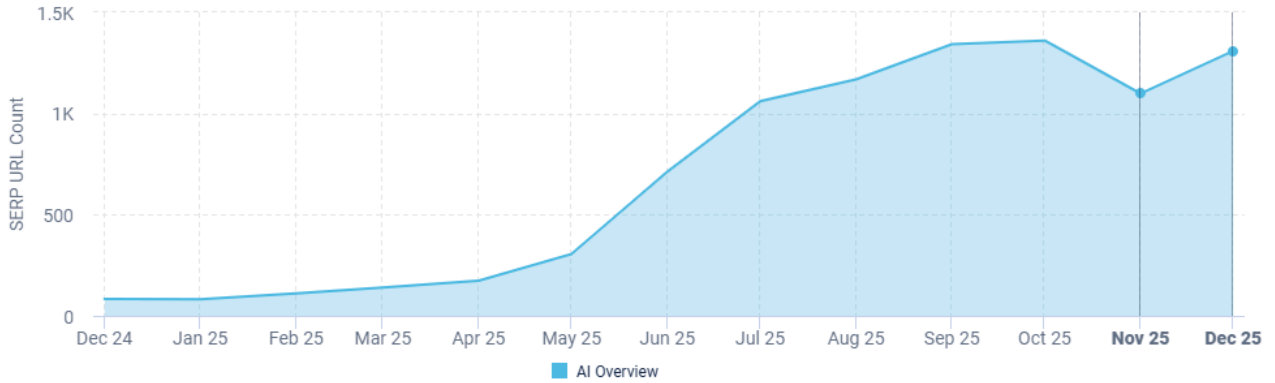
We are continuing to monitor Visit SLO's visibility within AI search results while pursuing tactics that help to increase Visit SLO's likelihood of being cited within AI results.

The screenshot shows a search engine results page for the query "things to do in san luis obispo". At the top, there is a search bar with the query and icons for clearing, voice search, and search. Below the search bar, an "AI Overview" section is visible, featuring a blue diamond icon and a paragraph of text. The text describes activities in San Luis Obispo, such as exploring the historic downtown, visiting the Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, walking through Bubblegum Alley, and shopping at unique boutiques. It also mentions attending the Thursday night Farmers' Market, hiking trails like Bishop's Peak, and visiting museums like the San Luis Obispo Museum of Art or the Children's Museum. A small image of a street scene in San Luis Obispo is included. Below the text, a section titled "Downtown and local attractions" lists several items:

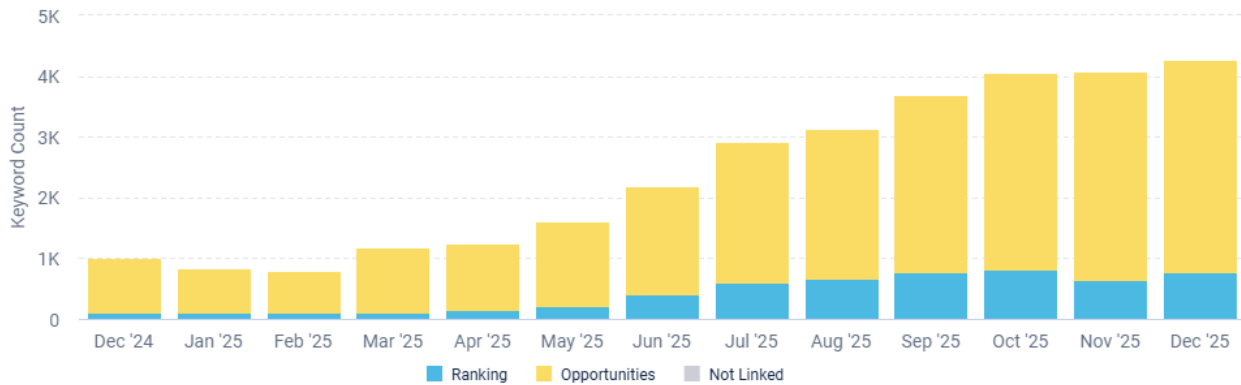
- **Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa:** Explore this historic Spanish mission founded in 1772, which is considered the city center.
- **Bubblegum Alley:** Walk down this famous alleyway where people have stuck their gum on the walls.
- **Thursday Night Farmers' Market:** A vibrant market on Higuera Street featuring fresh produce, food, live music, and crafts.
- **San Luis Obispo Museum of Art:** A local art museum located along San Luis Creek.
- **SLO Children's Museum:** A museum for kids located downtown.
- **Fremont Theatre:** Catch a show at this iconic and historic movie palace.

To the right of the AI Overview, there is a sidebar with several result cards. The first card is titled "Top Things to Do in San Luis Obispo County - Tripadvisor" and includes a sub-heading "Popular Cities in San Luis Obispo County \* Vineyard Rides Paso Robles Sidecar Wine...". The second card, which is highlighted with a red border, is titled "Downtown San Luis Obispo | Visit Downtown SLO" and includes the text "Countless Things to Do in Downtown SLO Visitors can explore the famous Thursday night...". Below this card is another card titled "12 Kid-Friendly Things to Do in San Luis Obispo County" with a sub-heading "Jul 9, 2019 -- For the record - Hearst Castle is nearby." and a sub-heading "Never Say Someday". At the bottom of the sidebar, there is a "Show all" button.

We are seeing Visit SLO used as a cited source in the AI Overviews with a highlighted link to the website on the sidebar.



We are seeing recovered growth in URLs referenced in AI Overviews on Google in December



Keyword opportunities and rankings for AI Overviews are continuing to grow in December.

## Creative & Web Maintenance

### Website Maintenance, Repair & Optimization (MRO)

- Plugins and Updates
  - ACF Pro
  - Gravity Forms
  - Permalink Manager Pro
  - Events Calendar
  - Events Calendar Pro
  - Tiny PNG
  - WP Mail SMTP
  - Yoast

## Website Services

- December Website Services Efforts:
  - 51.75h out of 120h were used for December 2025
    - Remaining hours: 37.25
  - Work Accomplished: Pulling Stakeholder Lists, Itinerary and Blog Audit, ADA Color Updates, Wellness Page ideation

## Creative Services

- December Creative Services Efforts:
  - 14.25h out of 150 hours were utilized for December 2025
    - Remaining hours: 108.25
  - Work Accomplished: Correction to Live the SLO Life Video, Survey Email Beautification

## Earned Media Activity

### Earned Media Highlights

Total Impressions/Circulation: 67,008,066

Placements: 6

### Press Coverage

- 12/1/25: **Travel + Leisure**: This 351-mile Train Route Is One of the Most Beautiful in the U.S.—With Small Towns, Historic Landmarks, and Ocean Views (Cu Fleshman) (Reach: 9,556,081)
  - Syndication: **AOL** (Reach: 23,631,422)
- 12/4/25: **USA Today 10Best**: 16 offbeat themed hotel rooms for fantasy vacations and getaways (Lesley Balla) (Reach: 217,562)
- 12/26/25: **Travel + Leisure**: 14 One-week Trips to Take Between Jobs, According to Travel Experts (Stacey Leasca) (Reach: 9,556,081)
  - Syndication: **AOL** (Reach: 23,631,422)
  - Syndication: **Yahoo News Malaysia** (Reach: 415,498)