

SLO Marketing Activities Report

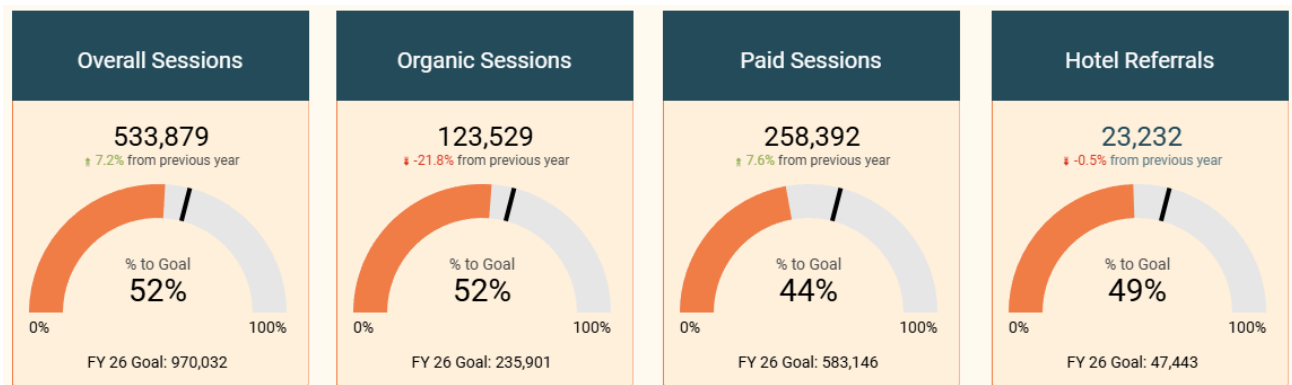
Key Performance Highlights January 2026



At-a-Glance Highlights

- **Total Website Sessions:** 97,495 (+4% YoY)
- **Top Traffic Source:** Organic 27,560 (-7% YoY)
- **Total Lodging Referrals:** 4,062 (+49% YoY)
- **Top Performing Ads:**
 - Display | Retargeting | MidWeekend Capital (3.72% CVR)
 - Display | Outdoor | MidWeekend Capital (3.33% CVR)
 - Display | 65+ | SLO Life Coach (2.34% CVR)
- **Earned Media (Public Relations):** 452,414,617 Impressions/Circulation across 7 secured placements

YTD KPI Performance



Expected Pace through January: 58%

Overall Performance Summary

Despite industry-wide organic traffic declines of 20%–40%, VisitSLO.com achieved a **4% year-over-year increase in overall website traffic**. Strong organic performance from the restaurants week page and homepage helped offset overall organic traffic losses, resulting in only a 7% decline in organic traffic, compared to the higher decreases we've been seeing in recent months.

Paid Search campaigns also saw strong performance, resulting in a 70% increase in lodging partner referrals year-over-year from Paid Search. This strong performance helped secure a 49% increase in total lodging referrals year-over-year across the site.

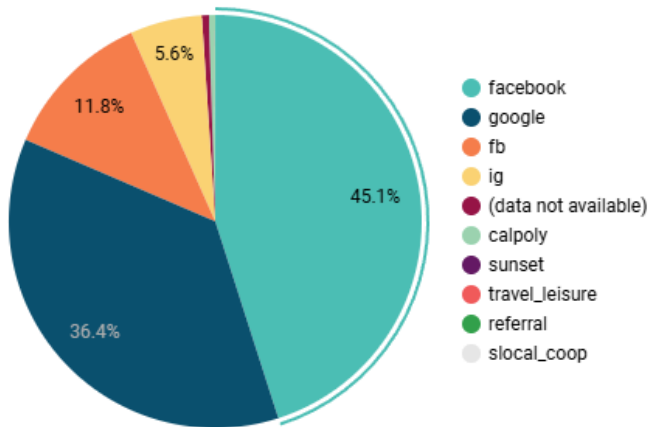
A top landing page for both direct and organic traffic this month was [Restaurant Month](#), which contributed to the overall lift in direct traffic over last year. Direct traffic also saw an 82% increase YoY in people landing on the homepage, suggesting a continued lift in overall brand awareness.

Paid Media Snapshot

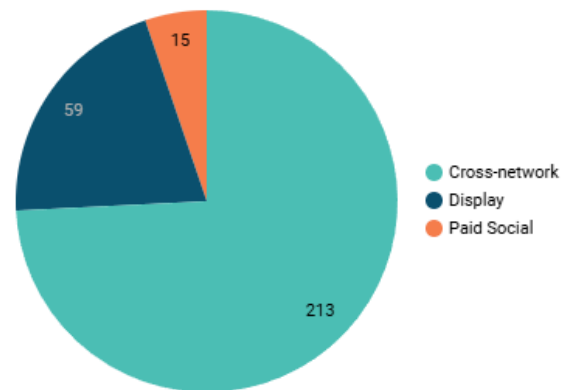
- **Paid Search**
 - Sessions: 6,664 (+77% YoY)
 - Impressions: 56,003 (+51% YoY)
 - Clicks: 6,563 (+69% YoY)
 - CTR: 11.72% (+12% YoY)
 - Lodging Referrals: 2,528 (+70% YoY)
 - Cost: \$17,567 (+1% YoY)
- **Paid Social**
 - Sessions: 13,604 (-26% YoY)
 - Impressions: 2,260,193 (+17% YoY)
 - Clicks: 51,081 (+46% YoY)
 - CTR: 2.26% (+25% YoY)
 - Total Referrals: 36 (-56% YoY)
 - Engagement Rate: 18.8% (+32% YoY)
 - Cost: \$16,911 (+2% YoY)
 - *While engagement and CTR show strong growth, we are currently working with our Meta representatives to reconcile a tracking discrepancy. We are also exploring campaign optimizations to further enhance campaign performance and will provide a detailed update as soon as it is available.*
- **Display, Demand Gen, & PMAx**
 - Sessions: 8,389 (+46% YoY)
 - Impressions: 1,223,604 (-26% YoY)
 - Clicks: 8,484 (-32% YoY)

- CTR: 0.69% (-8% YoY)
- Lodging Referrals: 211 (+50% YoY)
- Cost: \$5,817 (-2% YoY)
- **Video**
 - Sessions: 2,359 (+7% YoY)
 - Impressions: 176,192 (-41% YoY)
 - Clicks: 3,085 (-13% YoY)
 - CTR: 1.75% (+48% YoY)
 - Lodging Referrals: 13 (+550% YoY)
 - Cost: \$2,231 (+12% YoY)

Sessions by Source



Lodging Referrals by Channel



Paid Media YoY Performance

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Sessions 29,762 ‡ 12.5% | All Partner Referrals 1,462 ‡ 33.9% | Lodging Referrals 287 ‡ 47.9% |
| Things to Do 625 ‡ 13.6% | Hotel Referrals 263 ‡ 50.3% | Homestay Referrals 24 ‡ 26.3% |
| Food & Drink 521 ‡ 66.5% | Newsletter Signups 98 ‡ 1,860.0% | Event Referrals 32 ‡ 146.2% |
| Engagement rate 34.65% ‡ 42.3% | Views per session 1.42 ‡ 10.9% | Avg. Engagement Time 21.11 ‡ 75.0% |

Key Insight: Overall, paid media generated a 48% year-over-year increase in lodging referrals. Hotel-focused Paid Search campaigns continued to drive the most lodging referrals while maintaining 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 January that spotlighted winter activities in SLO and the benefits of off-season travel. Despite a slight YoY decrease in total sessions, we saw a 17% increase in total partner referrals and a 4% increase in engagement rate. We saw a larger percentage of clicks to the restaurants page compared to 23% of readers clicking on the hero content about winter in SLO. There seems to be a strong attention to restaurants among our newsletter subscribers, and could be worth highlighting new restaurants or featuring restaurant deals more prominently in future emails. LA remained the top traffic-driving city in our monthly email, showing strong engagement metrics and driving 15% of total restaurant partner referrals.

- **Emails Sent:** 1
- **Avg. Open Rate:** 13.3% (15.70% [Benchmark](#))
- **Avg. CTR:** 1.6% (1.6% [Benchmark](#))
- **Total Sessions:** 587 (-28% YoY)
- **Total Partner Referrals:** 117 (+17% YoY)
- **Total Lodging Referrals:** 40 (-9% YoY)
- **Engagement Rate:** 65% (+4% YoY)
- **Average Engagement Time Per Session:** 1m 6s (-7% YoY)
- **Page Views Per Session:** 2.42 (+10% YoY)

Website

- **Total Sessions:** 97495 (+4% YoY)
- **Lodging Partner Referrals:** 4,062 (+49% YoY)
- **Avg. Pages/Session:** 1.92 (+5% YoY)
- **Average Session Duration:** 2m 34s (-0.31% YoY)
- **Top Lodging Referral Channels:** Paid Search (62% of total lodging referrals), Organic Search (21% of total lodging referrals), Cross-Network (5% total lodging referrals)

SEO + Content

- **Organic Search Sessions:** 27,560 (-7% YoY)
- **Organic Search Partner Referrals:** 4,314 (-4% YoY)
- **Organic Search Impressions:** 1.74 Mil (+8% YoY)
- **Organic Search Clicks:** 19.6K (-10% YoY)
- **Organic Search CTR:** 1.1% (-21% YoY)
- **Page 1 Keywords:** 4.7K (+1% YoY)
- **Sessions from LLMs (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, etc):** 264 (+725% YoY)
- **Partner Referrals from LLMs (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, etc):** 70 (+3,400% YoY)
- **Top Impression Gains:** San Luis Obispo Weather, Hearst Castle, SLO weather, SLO
- **Top Click Losses:** things to do in San Luis Obispo, things to do in SLO, sunset drive in

Key Takeaway: January saw a large increase (+43% YoY) to the /restaurantmonth page, making it the most visited organic landing page on the site. The homepage also saw a large increase in organic traffic (+45% YoY), helping to significantly reduce some of the impacts we've been seeing from the changing search landscape. The largest declines in organic clicks are coming from *things to do* queries. VisitSLO.com continues to rank in position 1 for "things to do in San Luis Obispo", 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, resulting in a 54% decrease in clicks from that query.

Amid this rapidly shifting search landscape and broader changes in how users engage with search and AI, organic traffic declined 7% YoY in January, which was significantly lower than we've been seeing the last several months and lower than trends we've seen 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 interface with the query "things to do in san luis obispo". The results are organized into an "AI Overview" section and a sidebar. The "AI Overview" section contains a paragraph of text with several links highlighted in blue. Below this text is a section titled "Downtown and local attractions" with a bulleted list of five items, each with a link icon. The sidebar on the right contains three cards: "Top Things to Do in San Luis Obispo County - Tripadvisor", "Downtown San Luis Obispo | Visit Downtown SLO" (highlighted with a red border), and "12 Kid-Friendly Things to Do in San Luis Obispo County". A "Show all" button is located at the bottom of the sidebar.

things to do in san luis obispo

AI Overview

In San Luis Obispo, you can [explore the historic downtown by visiting the Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa](#), [walking through Bubblegum Alley](#), and [shopping at unique boutiques](#). Other popular activities include 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. For a unique experience, you can also stay at the iconic Madonna Inn or explore nearby attractions like Hearst Castle.

Downtown and local attractions

- **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.

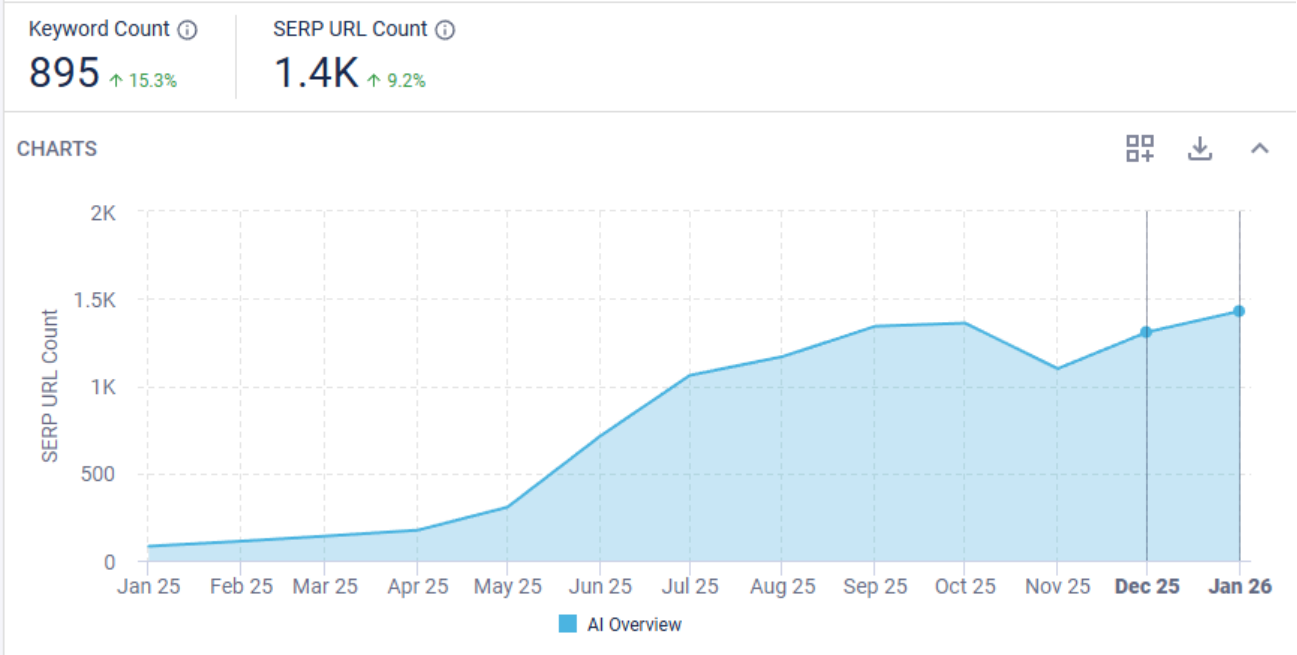
Top Things to Do in San Luis Obispo County - Tripadvisor
Popular Cities in San Luis Obispo County *
Vineyard Rides Paso Robles Sidecar Wine...
Tripadvisor

Downtown San Luis Obispo | Visit Downtown SLO
Countless Things to Do in Downtown SLO
Visitors can explore the famous Thursday night...
Visit San Luis Obispo

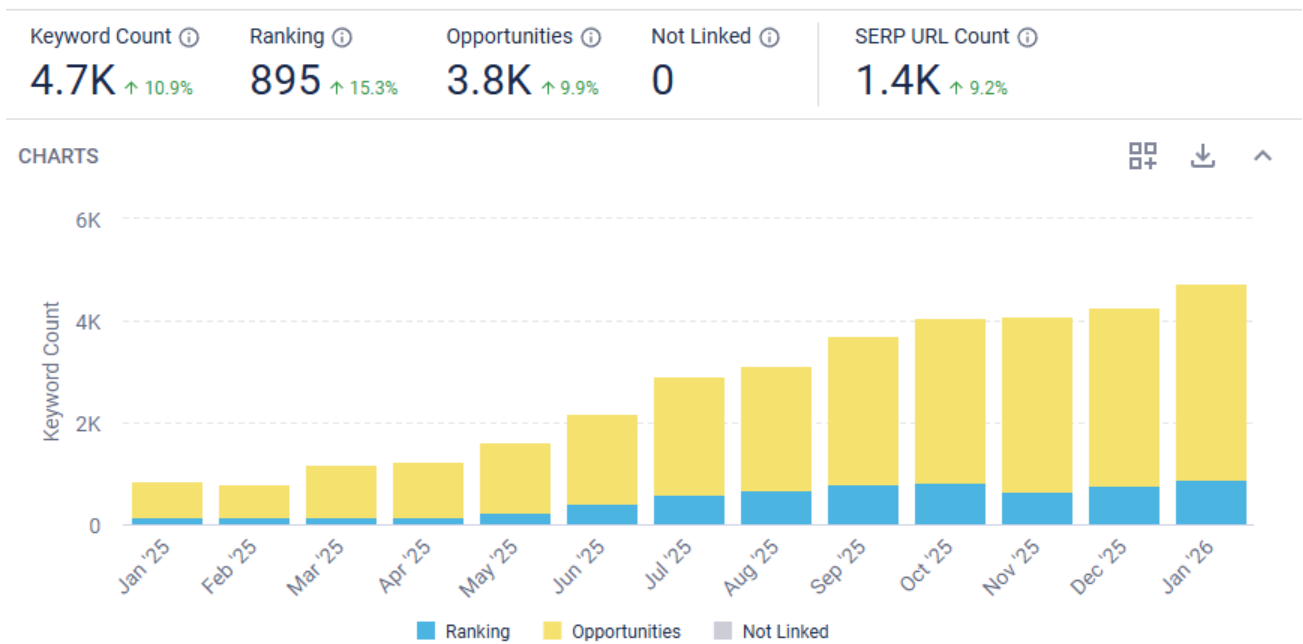
12 Kid-Friendly Things to Do in San Luis Obispo County
Jul 9, 2019 -- For the record -- Hearst Castle is nearby.
Never Say Someday

Show all

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 January



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



Creative & Web Maintenance

Website Maintenance, Repair & Optimization (MRO)

- Plugin Updates
- Updated
- gravityforms: 2.9.24 → 2.9.26
- gravityformsmailchimp: 5.7.0 → 5.7.2
- pantheon-advanced-page-cache: 2.1.1 → 2.1.2
- permalink-manager-pro: 2.5.2.2 → 2.5.2.4
- redirection: 5.5.2 → 5.6.1
- the-events-calendar: 6.15.12.2 → 6.15.14
- tiny-compress-images: 3.6.5 → 3.6.7
- wp-croncontrol: 1.19.3 → 1.20.0
- wps-hide-login: 1.9.17.2 → 1.9.18
- wordpress-seo: 26.5 → 26.8
- Manually Updated
- the-events-calendar-community-events: 5.0.12 → 5.0.13
- events-calendar-pro: 7.7.11 → 7.7.12

Site Updates

- Removed cruft from repo
- Security | Remove WordPress version from generated meta tags
- Security | Disable access to semi-sensitive files in Pantheon configuration
- Bug | Slider breaks under certain conditions with Stakeholder Location block

Website Services

- January Website Services Efforts:
 - 28.5h out of 120h were used for January 2026
 - Remaining hours: 8.75
 - ADA Color Updates, Stakeholder Redirect option, homepage and film fest page updates, new visitor form page

Creative Services

- January Creative Services Efforts:
 - 2.75h out of 150 hours were utilized for January 2026
 - Remaining hours: 105.50
 - Removing Land of Photos from the site



Earned Media Activity

Earned Media Highlights

Total Impressions/Circulation: 452,414,617

Placements: 7

Press Coverage

- 1/2/26: **Arizona Foothills Magazine:** Living the SLO Life: San Luis Obispo is California's Central Coast Escape (Christina Silvestri) (Reach: 27,652)
- 1/6/26: **EIN Presswire:** SLO Restaurant Month Returns to the City of San Luis Obispo (Uniquely Driven) (Reach: 245,213)
- 1/7/26: **Travel and Tour World:** San Luis Obispo Dedicates January 2026 to Local Dining With Month-Long Restaurant Program (Wire pickup) (Reach: 5,213,383)
- 1/15/26: **Visit CA 2026 Visitor's Guide:** SLO Vinyl Trail (Chris Dong) (Circulation: 2,069,492)
 - 1/15/26: **Visit CA 2026 Visitor's Guide (online):** SLO Vinyl Trail (Chris Dong) (Reach: 780,486)
- 1/18/26: **BBC Travel:** 10 of the US's most sustainable small towns - and why they're worth the trip (Natalie Zimmerman) (Reach: 143,003,553)
 - 1/18/26: **BBC Travel UK:** 10 of the US's most sustainable small towns - and why they're worth the trip (Natalie Zimmerman) (Reach: 301,074,838)