



For years, the primary challenge facing Utah's Tourism Industry was the need to generate awareness of the remarkable travel opportunities in Utah. Thanks to strong collaboration, hard work and powerful, differentiating marketing, awareness of Utah has changed dramatically as exemplified by Fodor's naming Utah the No. 1 destination to visit in 2016.

As we look to the next decade of growth and opportunity in Utah tourism, we see a different challenge, focused on elevating the customer experience and affording greater protection to resident and visitor experience. Utah has become wildly popular with domestic and international visitors, creating demand constraints at key destinations throughout the state. To address this challenge, the Utah Office of Tourism has launched the Red Emerald Initiative, a long-term sustainable tourism growth strategy that focuses on quality visitation over quantity.

Why Red Emerald? This unusual gem (also known as red beryl) is mined in the west desert of Utah. Red emeralds of the quality and size necessary to refine into gems are not found anywhere else in the world. These attributes are the inspiration for the Red Emerald Initiative: distinctive, local, native, authentic and exclusively Utah.

The Red Emerald Initiative seeks to maximize tax revenues generated by tourists while creating a superior experience for visitors and communities alike by prioritizing six facets of our work. Each of these core principles is underscored by a commitment to maintaining the high quality of life for Utahns, which includes pride in our state and a passion to share an authentic experience with receptive visitors, enhanced access to outdoor recreation assets, and a voice in the decision-making process.

---

## CONTINUE POWERFUL BRANDING

We've embraced our role as destination curators and illustrative storytellers, and visitors have responded. Much of our recent success has been driven by capturing the rare and authentic essence of Utah travel opportunities and by engaging visitors through powerful imagery, emotionally resonant stories, niche itineraries and marketing.

These efforts are the core of The Mighty Five® and The Greatest Snow On Earth®, important focal points that will continue to be foundational elements of Utah's brand and iconic draws for travelers. Because these campaigns encompass the anchor experiences and destinations in Utah, we will continue to capitalize on the equity in these brands to further our success in all elements of the Red Emerald Initiative.

## PRIORITIZE QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY OF VISITORS

We aim to attract and support visitors who travel slowly and thoughtfully, engage with local communities and invest time and money in the places they visit in order to create more memorable experiences. This equates to visitors staying longer and spending more.

Society places a tremendous emphasis on packing more into our already busy lives — more emails, social updates, meetings, personal commitments — and this can lead to many short, superficial interactions throughout our lives. Travel to Utah can be a powerful antidote to stress and busyness by encouraging people to slow down, unplug and appreciate grand spaces, subtle details and focused time with the people they love.

For travel to Utah to have the greatest impact on our visitors, our marketing materials, recommended itineraries and customer service interactions should guide visitors toward a slower pace of travel, staying longer and having a deeper connection with the places they visit. In addition to improving the quality of the visitor experience, this will increase traveler's economic impact through longer stays and additional services, including guides, classes and add-on experiences.

## **DISTRIBUTE VISITATION STATEWIDE**

Several places in Utah are experiencing crowded conditions during specific time periods or events (e.g. powder days and holiday weekends at national parks). If current growth rates continue in these areas, it will negatively impact the visitor experience, the quality of life for residents and create a negative perception for Utah tourism as a whole. These are all significant risks to the future of Utah's tourism industry.

The Road to Mighty® campaign was created as a first step toward dispersing visitation among top destinations and experiences around The Mighty 5, but we can do more. Beyond the marquee parks and monuments, there are parts of the state that are home to the profound, hyperlocal experiences that are the backbone of the Red Emerald Initiative — in other words, the hidden gems.

At the same time, many of these other parts of the state are only beginning to build their tourism economies and welcome new visitors with ample capacity. While these alternative destinations do not yet have the visitor amenities to be a direct replacement for our busiest destinations, there are niche travelers these destinations can welcome thanks to remarkable birding, fly-fishing, biking, arts, paleontology, stargazing, ATV riding and other experiences. By matching the right visitor with the right information and the right mindset to the right place, we can significantly broaden the range of destinations and experiences we promote to distribute travelers to all parts of Utah.

## **REFINE CUSTOMER SERVICE**

The geographical size of Utah and abundance of opportunity can make planning a trip to Utah daunting for our visitors. And, with scant time off, every traveler wants to make the most of their vacation.

Customer service encompasses everything from the resources provided on our websites, which are the informational gateway to many Utah vacations, to the front-line of hospitality at our travel destinations.

In addition to resources and information, we believe customer service is an opportunity to make the trip planning process easier and more rewarding to travelers, while also introducing them to new destinations off the beaten path. This effort can provide better data for our marketing efforts and simultaneously improve customer loyalty. As we strive to introduce the right visitor to the right destination, we'll work together to ensure that visitor feels informed and welcome.

## **EMBRACE COMMUNITY-LED VISION**

We recognize the potential for tourism to have a negative impact on the environment and social fabric of tourist regions. This is an outcome we will work vigorously to avoid. We see our marketing work being implemented in collaboration with a community, not to it.

We invite communities to take the lead role in defining how they would like their community promoted, identifying whom they would like to attract and determining how much tourism is right for their economic development plans and community character. Increasingly, the high-quality travelers we are focusing on attracting are seeking out authentic local traditions, places and cultures, and want to visit communities that its residents deeply value and openly celebrate.

In this way, we see tourism contributing to community character and quality of life, supplementing a community's diversified economic development plans and helping to celebrate local traditions, craftspeople and artists.

## **CHAMPION INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT**

We will continue to champion infrastructure investment to improve quality of life and visitor experience. Investments may include trails and recreational facilities, roadways and bikeways, wayfinding signage and proper funding for our national parks and public lands. And we won't do it alone. Ultimately, a collaborative approach to identifying opportunities for infrastructure improvements can both formalize community desire lines and sustainably develop new access and recreation pathways.