



EXPLORE GEORGIA®

Sweetwater Creek State Park, Lithia Springs
Photo by @justonanadventure

EXPLORE GEORGIA 2021 ESTO ENTRY – Virtual Programming (Explore Georgia from Home)



PROGRAM

SOLUTION

TACTICS

RESULTS

CHALLENGE

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic was unlike any we've seen in our lifetime so it had no playbook. Travel had come to a stand-still but we wanted to continue to inspire visitors for future planning. With that came new (but limited) ways to reach out to our audience, but also brought the risk of loss in Explore Georgia's market share and brand affinity. So, we were working on an unknown timeline, no set budget, yet still needed to efficiently deliver relevant content for travel inspiration.

Time was of the essence, so our efforts shifted from investment in paid media spend to listening to traveler sentiment. Our goal was to meet travelers' needs through messaging and technology, all while evolving our approach to one of appropriate and impactful messaging as the pandemic continued.



Cumberland Island
Photo by @henerysharpphoto



PROGRAM

SOLUTION

TACTICS

RESULTS

SOLUTION

Through our learnings from gathering and processing COVID-19 travel impact, sentiment, travel patterns, and increasing cases of the virus, we identified a strategy to give prior and future travelers a way to “get away” in the safety of their homes. From this was borne Explore Georgia From Home, a first-of-its-kind custom data dashboard aggregating site performance, social listening, and traveler sentiment. We had created a new, data-driven platform to meet our goal of aligning our plan to meet travelers needs, allowing us on-going flexibility. These learnings informed our messaging, which reflected inspirational content, not travel planning, until data indicated that as travelers’ latest need. We provided content for all travelers which included something for every age and every location, gaining a new way for people to “visit” Georgia and remind local residents of places that may have been forgotten.



Driftwood Beach on Jekyll Island
Photo by @joshsummer



PROGRAM

SOLUTION

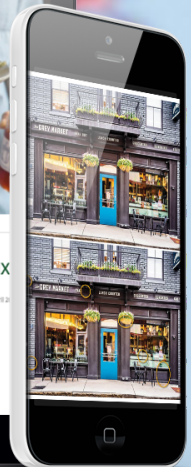
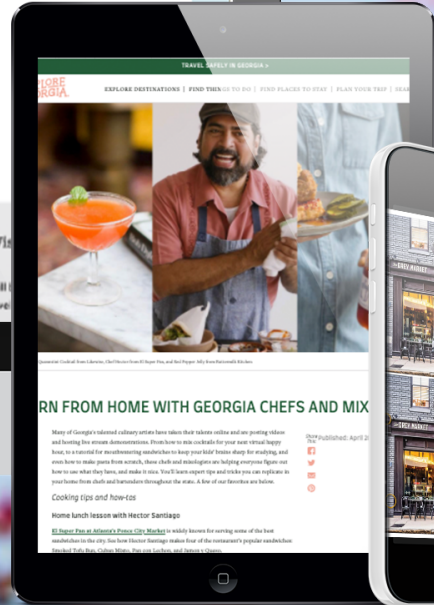
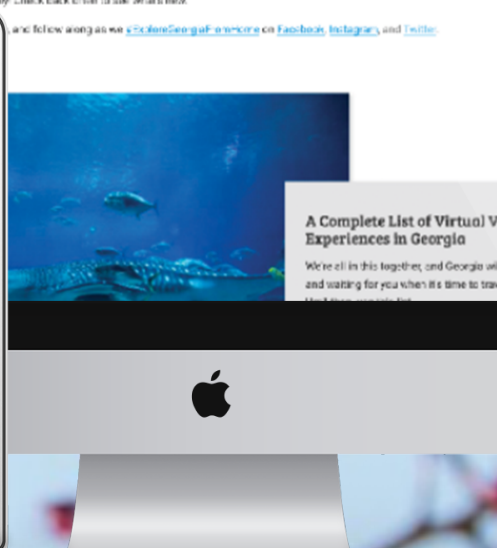
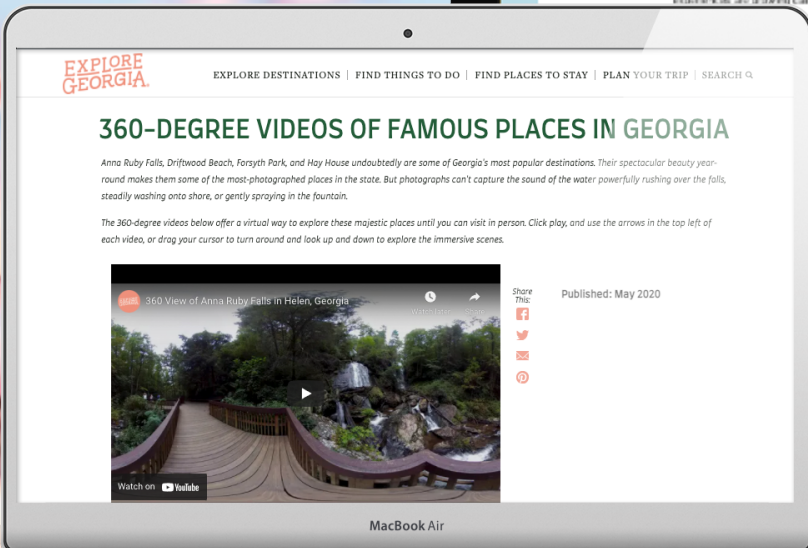
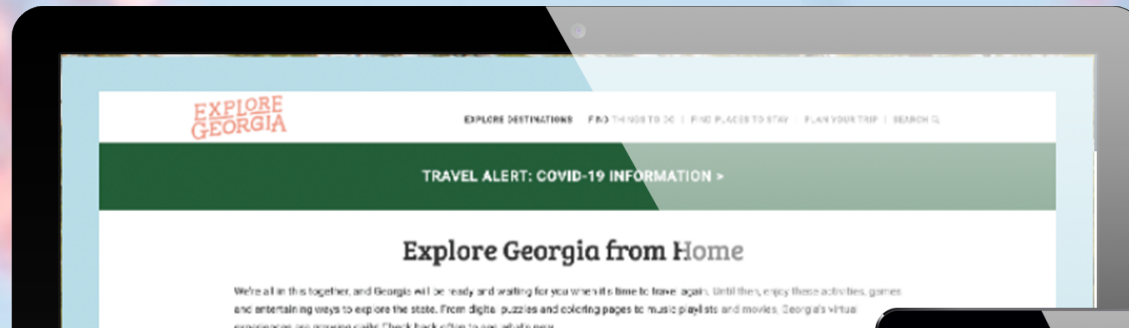
TACTICS

RESULTS

EXPLORE GEORGIA FROM HOME HUB

We developed a single destination - a “content hub” - for users to explore all of the timely content. Each piece touched on all senses and moods, ranging from recipes, zoom backgrounds, virtual tours, playlists, coloring pages, spot-the-difference image games, puzzles, and more. Facebook and Instagram links were added to the content as a way to help gain followers, inspire prospective visitors, and keep locals informed.

Click here to view the **EXPLORE GEORGIA FROM HOME** hub



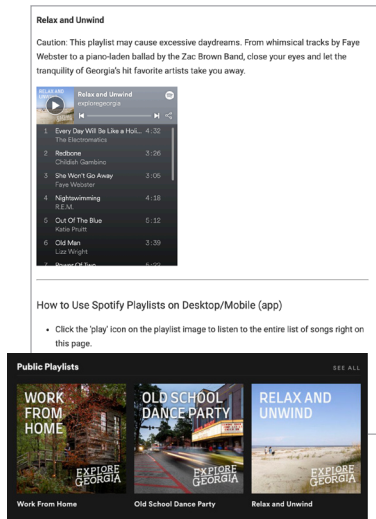
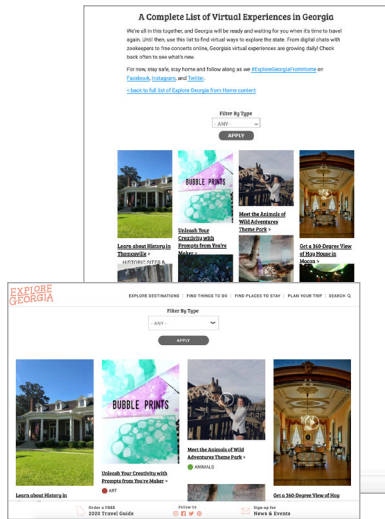


PROGRAM

SOLUTION

TACTICS

RESULTS



Virtual Experiences Grid

Knowing Georgia tourism partners and local businesses had much to offer, but that travelers were being flooded with similar content on social media, we developed the Virtual Experiences Grid offering “one-stop-shopping” for virtual content. We implemented a new, social-media-style scrolling layout familiar to our target audience.

Sound

As a way to keep the spirit of Georgia IN our audiences’ homes, we created multiple Spotify playlists tied to mood and sentiment. Each playlist showcased an array of Georgia artists and focused on moods such as Work From Home, Relax & Unwind, and Old School Dance Party. These playlists were created free, allowing users to play directly on our webpage.

Brain Candy

To bring Georgia experiences to travelers’ homes, we designed nine puzzles, each representing a different landscape or activity. We engaged a third-party puzzle tool for quicker turn-around and offered an easy user interface for our site visitors. The tool allowed us to embed the puzzles on-site, providing us the ability to give users more information, track engagement more closely, and encourage further on-site exploration.

Touch

As an additional ‘at home’ content piece, we created coloring pages. These coloring pages showcased locations across Georgia. Each page was available for download and included User Generated Content images, showcasing actual visitors’ travel experiences, travelers of happy memories, giving visitors a moment of calm, and inspiration for future travel.



PROGRAM

SOLUTION

TACTICS

RESULTS

OUTCOME

Explore Georgia was able to rebound quickly, recovering faster than other state tourism boards.

Our 28 competitor DMO set saw a 25% drop in site traffic from March through early May 2020; however, Explore Georgia only experienced a 13% drop with a 6% increased time on site, an 8% decrease in bounce rate, and an exceptional average of 10 minutes on the Virtual Experiences Grid.

During this time, we also witnessed net positive YoY numbers much earlier than other DMO sites, beginning an upward climb on March 28, 2020.

By May 2020, we were seeing **organic sessions up 110%**, compared to 2019. We drove significant traffic and engagement with our website, social media, and tourism partners across the state. Best of all? For \$0 in paid media, we delivered over 9.5MM earned media impressions!

WEB & SOCIAL RESULTS:

- Media Spend: \$0
- Website Sessions: 46,429
- Average Time on Site: 00:02:40
- New Social Followers: 13,050
- Average Engagement Per Post: 94.5



George L. Smith - State Park
Photo by @benjamingalland