

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARKWAY COMMISSION

3RD QUARTER MARKETING REPORT

July-September, 2016

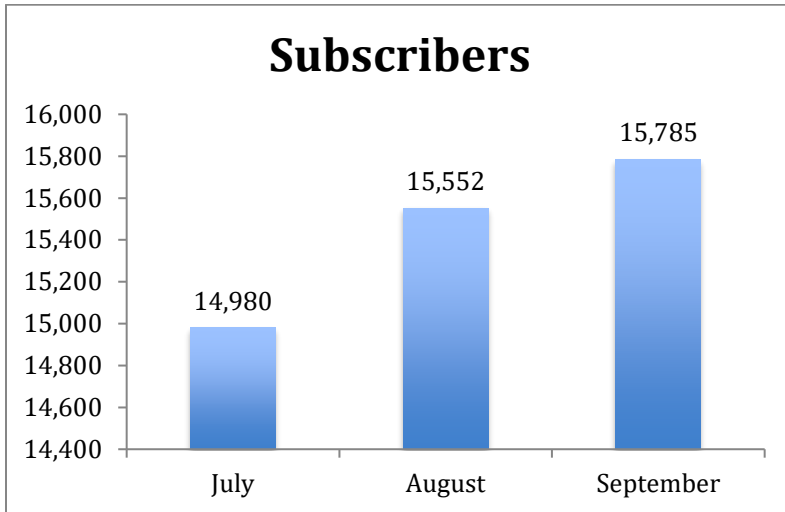


MEETINGS

Annual Meeting September 14-16

- Meeting prep and facilitation
 - Conducted multiple teleconferences and communications with MS-MRPC
 - Confirmed speakers, meals, transportation, room logistics, etc.
 - Traveled to Natchez to facilitate meeting (Wed - Sat)
 - Paid related meeting expenses
 - Facilitated awards committee teleconference and prepared awards accordingly
- Registration
 - Set pricing
 - Created registration form (hard copy and electronically)
 - Printed and mail form out to members
 - Emailed registration information
 - Collected payments
 - Sent invoices
- Enewsletters
 - Sent newsletters to remind members meeting registration, hotel reservations and other news (see newsletters section)
- Updated mrpcmembers.com
 - Created page for online registration
 - Post announcements on “Stay Updated”
 - 8/22 Drive the Great River Road Month materials now available
 - 9/13 Annual Meeting Agenda & Directions
 - 9/23 Regional Geotourism Roll-out schedule of events
 - Converted completed nomination forms to pdfs and uploaded for access
 - Updated member contact information
 - Uploaded materials under resources, meeting minutes and agendas

E-NEWSLETTERS



Subscribers – Tourism list

- Average subscriber rate: 50 per month
- Average open rate: 32% (industry average: 18%)
- Average click rate: 11% (industry average: 3%)

Drive the Great River Road Month Sweepstakes



Tourism e-newsletter 9/1

- Subject line: Win \$500 for your next Great River Road trip!
- Topics: Giveaway info
- Open rate: 32%
- Click rate: 12%

MRPC Member e-newsletters

- 7/27 – Annual Meeting reminder, nomination deadlines, Bike the Great River Road Giveaway and Drive the Great River Road Month.
- 8/22 – Annual Meeting, lodging reminder, nomination deadlines – final reminder, tool-kit for Drive the Great River Road Month

[View this email in your browser](#)

Early-bird registration deadlines are approaching!

The 2016 MRPC Annual Meeting will be held September 14-16 in beautiful Natchez, MS. Save on your registration fees when you sign up by **Thursday, September 1**. The early-bird registration rate is now \$175 – after September 1, registration increases to \$210. Click [here](#) to register.

We'll meet and stay at the Natchez Grand Hotel & Suites, a beautiful hotel overlooking the Mississippi River. A special guestroom rate of \$119/night is now available for a single/double deluxe city view room. **Call 1-866-488-0898** and ask for the **MRPC group rate**. To get this special rate, reserve your room by **Wednesday, August 24**.

Nomination deadlines

Annual nomination deadlines are approaching. Nominations for the Distinguished Service Award, Honorary Membership and Interpretive Centers are all due **September 1**. The nomination forms can be found on mrpcmembers.com/forms-resources. (scroll down to find the appropriate forms).

Bike the Great River Road Giveaway

The [Bike the Great River Road Giveaway](#), ends Friday July 29. The winner will receive a \$250 prepaid credit card and Great River Road merchandise to use on a biking getaway. The promotion has been a great way to inspire bikers to tour the Great River Road on two wheels.

Drive the Great River Road Month

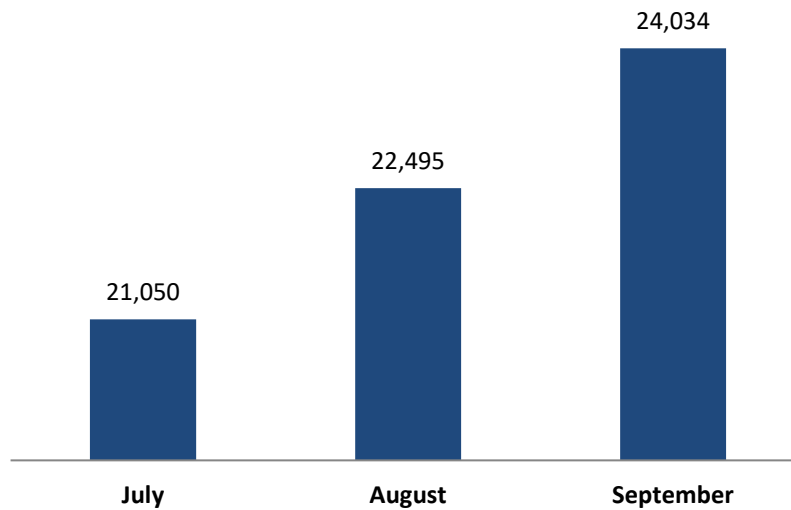
We will again celebrate Drive the Great River Road Month this September. It's a perfect time to encourage people to travel our beautiful route. We've had a lot of success promoting this month in past years. Watch for an email the week of August 8 that will include an updated toolkit to help promote states, counties and cities along the Great River Road.

Follow us: [f](#) [p](#) [v](#)

701 E. Washington Ave., Suite 202
 Madison, WI 53703
 Phone: 866-793-8310
 Fax: 608-242-8896

SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

Facebook Fan Growth



July

Facebook fans		New Facebook fans		Facebook updates	
21,050		2,010		12	
Pinterest followers	New Pinterest followers	Pinterest pins	Pinterest repins	Pinterest boards	
526	13	869	60	15	

Facebook Top Posts

- 7/26 (“Holy cow! Great shot of the Mississippi River in southwestern Illinois!” w/photo of sunset)
 - 6,696 people reached, 377 reactions, 13 comments, 0 shares, 242 post clicks
- 7/7 (“Throwback Thursday: A paddlewheeler cruises on the Mississippi River near Alton, Illinois” w/photo of boat in front of bridge):
 - 8,607 people reached, 317 reactions, 14 comments, 42 shares, 191 post clicks

August

Facebook fans		New Facebook fans		Facebook updates	
22,495		1,455		17	
Pinterest followers	New Pinterest followers	Pinterest pins	Pinterest repins	Pinterest boards	
542	16	893	112	15	

Facebook Top Posts

- 8/22 (“Planning a trip along the Great River Road? Check out some of our sample itineraries!” w/link to itineraries)
 - 8,985 people reached, 243 reactions, 9 comments, 74 shares, 541 post clicks
- 8/18 (“The more you know...” w/link to blog about 6 things you might not know about the Mississippi River):
 - 7,853 people reached, 219 reactions, 11 comments, 69 shares, 454 post clicks

September

Facebook fans		New Facebook fans		Facebook updates	
24,034		1,539		16	
Pinterest followers	New Pinterest followers	Pinterest pins	Pinterest repins	Pinterest boards	
558	16	917	44	15	

Facebook Top Posts

- 9/9 (“Photo Friday! The unique Black Hawk Bridge in Lansing, Iowa, was completed in 1931 and spans the Mississippi River between Iowa and Wisconsin.” w/photo)
 - 35,060 people reached, 1,878 reactions, 165 comments, 233 shares, 2,013 post clicks
- 9/1 (“It’s September, so you know that that means: it’s Drive the Great River Road Month! We’re encouraging folks to explore the nation’s oldest and longest National Scenic Byway all September long. Plus, we’re giving away \$500 in our Drive the Great River Road Month Sweepstakes!” w/link to website):
 - 23,213 people reached, 794 reactions, 37 comments, 207 shares, 1,253 post clicks

Facebook Advertising

General Page Likes Ad

- Impressions: 172,133
- Clicks: 4,753
- Click-through rate: 2.76%
- Fans added: 3,825

Facebook Audience

- Fan profile
 - Fans of page: 71% women (51% are ages 45-65+), 28% men (19% are ages 45+)
 - Engaged fans (those who are liking, commenting and sharing our material): 77% women (63% are 45+), 23% men (18% are 45+)
 - Top engaged cities (in order): Waukon, IA, Dubuque, IA, Lansing, IA, St. Louis, MO, Granite City, IL

Takeaways

- Scenic photos continue to be the most popular and engaging posts
- Posts and links to articles about road trips along the Mississippi River are always well-received

PROMOTIONS

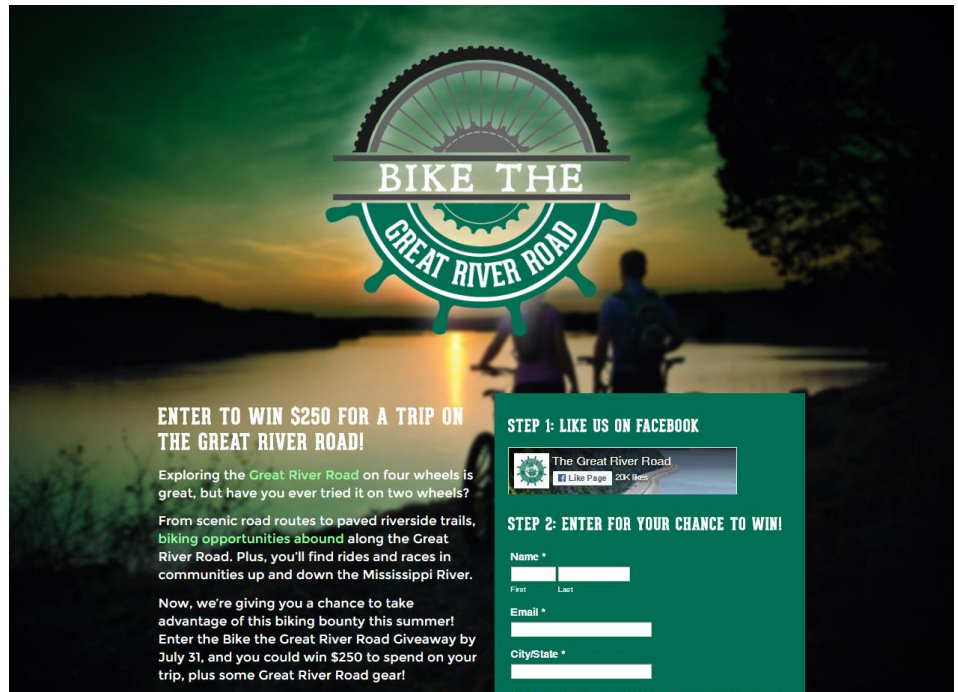
BIKE THE GREAT RIVER ROAD SWEEPSTAKES

Run dates

- 6/6/16-7/31/16

Overview

The Bike the Great River Road Sweepstakes is a simple sweepstakes tied to an increased effort to promote biking as a recreational activity along the Great River Road.



To enter, fans will have to like the Great River Road Facebook page, provide basic contact information (name, e-mail address, city/state) and tell us where they heard about the giveaway.

During the promotion period, we will use the Great River Road's social media channels and blogs to post about the giveaway, the best places/routes to bike along the Great River Road, information about the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) and more.

Goals

- To promote biking options along the Great River Road, especially the Mississippi River Trail (MRT)
- To increase interaction and fan numbers on the Great River Road's social media channels

Prizes

- \$250 pre-paid credit card
- (1) Men's or Women's Great River Road jacket from the Great River Road online shop (\$75)
- A copy of the Great River Road 10-state map

Total Entries

- 1,144

Means of advertising

- Social media posts (Facebook, Pinterest, blog)
- Facebook ads
- E-newsletters
- Press releases
- Pop-up on experiencemississippiriver.com
- Social media toolkit available to state MRPC organizations

How entrants heard about the contest (in order)

- Facebook page
- Other (E-newsletter, Wisconsin Travel Best Bets appearance on WEAU in Eau Claire, WI, sweepstakes site, Twitter)
- Facebook ads
- Interpretive centers

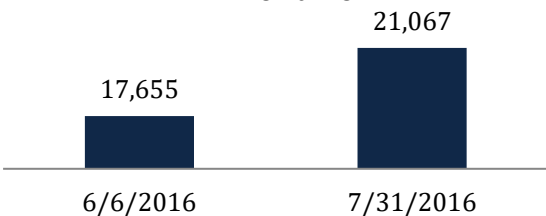
Winner

- Rob Stalder, Memphis, TN

What kind of biking events/activities are you interested in? (in order of most popular response) (Entrants could select multiple responses)

- Casual rides (998)
- Guided tours/rides (390)
- Mountain biking opportunities (236)
- Races (68)
- Other (self-guided, motorcycle, etc) (66)

Facebook Fan Growth - Contest Timeframe



Contest Start (6/6/2016)	Contest End (7/31/2016)	Growth Percentage
17,655	21,067	19.32%

E-news Subscribers - Contest Timeframe



Contest Start (6/6/2016)	Contest End (7/31/16)	Growth Percentage
11,232	14,440	28.6%

Public Relations

- Press releases distributed at beginning and end of promotion
- Promoted during a live interview on WEAU (Eau Claire, WI) discussing biking opportunities during Bike Month (June)

Takeaways

- The number of e-newsletter signups grew by an impressive 28% during the promotion – people who are interested in the Great River Road and open to being marketed to. Take advantage of this warm market in the future with more regular e-newsletters encouraging travel.
- We asked entrants what kind of biking events and activities they were interested in along the Great River Road and while the vast majority responded with “casual rides,” a substantial number indicated an interested in guided bike tours along the byway. Thought should be given to providing this as an offering in bike-friendly communities along the road.
- Judging by the success of the promotion, biking opportunities along the Great River Road should be incorporated more regularly into the marketing materials (social media, e-newsletters, etc.).

DRIVE THE GREAT RIVER ROAD SWEEPSTAKES

Run dates

- 9/1/16-9/30/16

Overview: The Drive the Great River Road Month Sweepstakes is a simple sweepstakes designed to promote September as Drive the Great River Road Month, the fourth annual iteration of this celebration.

Goals:

- Promote fall travel along the Great River Road and Drive the Great River Road Month
- Increase fan numbers and interaction on the Great River Road Facebook page
- Increase visits to the experiencemississippiriver.com website
- Increase downloads of the Drive the Great River Road mobile app

Prizes

- \$500 pre-paid credit card

Total Entries

- 1,799

Means of advertising

- Social media posts (Facebook, Pinterest, blog)
- Facebook ads
- E-newsletters
- Press releases
- [Experiencemississippiriver.com](http://experiencemississippiriver.com) pop-up
- Social media toolkit available to state MRPC organizations

The image shows a promotional graphic for the 'Drive the Great River Road Month Sweepstakes'. On the left, there is a circular logo with 'GREAT RIVER ROAD' and 'FROM MINNAPOLIS TO GULF'. The main text reads: 'Drive the GREAT RIVER ROAD MONTH SWEEPSTAKES'. Below this, it says 'WANT TO EXPLORE THE GREAT RIVER ROAD? ENTER TO WIN \$500!' and provides a description of the Great River Road as a National Scenic Byway. It then offers a chance to win \$500 for a trip along the road. At the bottom, it says 'Start your Great River Road adventure today! (Need some help planning your trip? [Order a free 10-state map](#) or [download our free app.](#))'.

On the right, there is a registration form titled 'STEP 1: LIKE US ON FACEBOOK' and 'STEP 2: ENTER FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN!'. The form includes a Facebook profile picture for 'The Great River Road' with 23,192 likes. Below that, it asks for 'Name *' (with 'First' and 'Last' sub-fields), 'Email *', and 'City/State *'. It also has a question 'How did you hear about the Drive the Great River Road Month Sweepstakes?' with radio button options: 'Great River Road Facebook page', 'Facebook advertising', 'E-mail', and 'Other'. At the bottom, there is a 'SUBMIT' button and a small disclaimer: 'By entering, you agree to the [official rules](#) and [privacy policy](#) and you acknowledge that the Mississippi River Parkway Commission may contact you via e-mail.'

How entrants heard about the contest (in order)

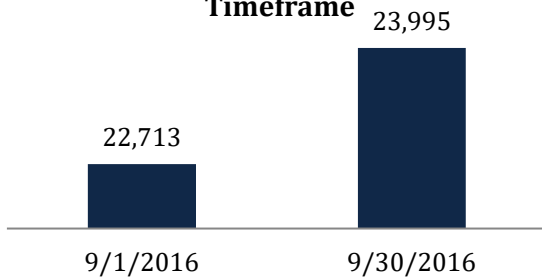
- E-mail (by far the most popular method of reaching people)
- Facebook page
- Other (Website, friends, web search, Instagram, newspaper article, online ad, etc.)
- Facebook ads

Winner

- Not confirmed at the time of this report

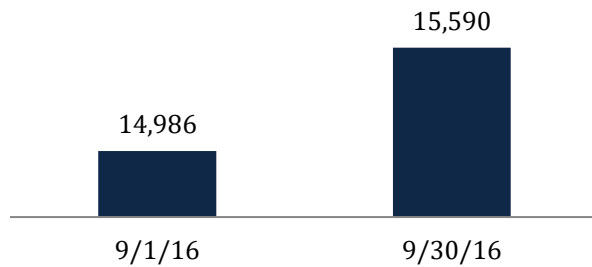
Facebook

Facebook Fan Growth - Contest
 Timeframe



Contest Start (9/1/2016)	Contest End (9/30/2016)	Growth Percentage
22,713	23,995	5.6%

E-news Subscribers - Contest
 Timeframe



Contest Start (9/1/2016)	Contest End (9/30/16)	Growth Percentage
14,986	15,590	4.0%

Promotion advertising (9/1/16-9/30/16)

Post Engagement Ad

Impressions: 51,615
 Clicks: 174
 Click-through rate: 0.34%
 Post engagements: 5,494

Public Relations

- Press releases distributed at beginning and end of promotion
- See PR/Publicity next section for media pickups

Takeaways

- The Great River Road Facebook page gained almost 1,300 new fans during the promotion, with a total of approximately 1,800 entries. This indicates an influx of new fans, rather than only reaching current ones.
- The promotion gathered approximately 600 new e-newsletter signups – a large pool of new potential travelers to market to moving forward.
- The e-newsletter was, by far, the most popular method people listed for learning about the contest. Incorporation of regular e-newsletters would be a great way to reach this warm market and encourage them to travel the Great River Road.

PR/PUBLICITY

- Wrote/distributed release announcing Drive the Great River Road Sweepstakes
- Picked up by
 - Marion Evening Times (Arkansas) (<http://www.theeveningtimes.com/site/2016/09/05/fall-in-love-with-the-mississippi-river-drive-the-great-river-road-month-returns/>)
 - Wilton-Durant Advocate News (Iowa) (http://www.northscottpress.com/wdadvocateneews/news/briefs/article_c0ecec30-75eb-11e6-9898-936f1f8ee300.html)
 - Hastings Star Gazette (Minnesota) (<http://www.hastingsstargazette.com/news/4125172-september-drive-great-river-road-month>)
 - La Crosse Tribune (Wisconsin) (http://lacrossetribune.com/drive-the-great-river-road-month-returns/article_561faec5-9888-573d-a52f-a69ffa2b141c.html)

WEB MAINTENANCE

1. ■ google / organic

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016

Jul 1, 2015 - Sep 30, 2015

2. ■ (direct) / (none)

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016

Jul 1, 2015 - Sep 30, 2015

3. ■ m.facebook.com / referral

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016

Jul 1, 2015 - Sep 30, 2015

4. ■ Experience Mississippi River E-newsletter / email

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016

Jul 1, 2015 - Sep 30, 2015

5. ■ bing / organic

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016

Jul 1, 2015 - Sep 30, 2015

6. ■ experiencemississippiriver.com / referral

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016

Jul 1, 2015 - Sep 30, 2015

7. ■ yahoo / organic

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016

Jul 1, 2015 - Sep 30, 2015

8. ■ drivethegreatriverroad.com / referral

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016

Jul 1, 2015 - Sep 30, 2015

9. ■ facebook.com / referral

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016

Jul 1, 2015 - Sep 30, 2015

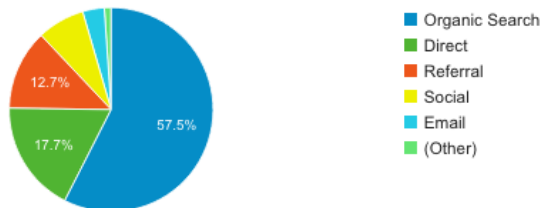
10. ■ secure.pilchbarnet.com / referral

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016

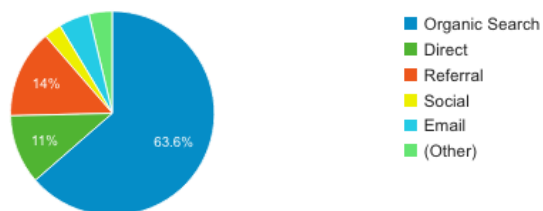
Jul 1, 2015 - Sep 30, 2015

Top Channels

Jul 1, 2016 - Sep 30, 2016



Jul 1, 2015 - Sep 30, 2015



www.experiencemississippiriver.com			
2016-07-01 to 2016-09-30			
Total sessions		66291	
Unique visitors (users)		54668	
New users	▼	81%	
Returning users	▼	19%	
Pages viewed per session		2.3	
Time spent per page visited		0.9 minutes	
Avg session duration		2.2 minutes	
Top 10 most visited pages			
Page	Pageviews	sessions	Avg time on page (minutes)
homepage	20786		1.2
/river-attractions/	16100		2.3
/the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/	13406		1.3
/interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/	11729		1.8
/itineraries/	6399		1.1
/states/wisconsin/	5116		2.2
/the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/drive-the-great-river-road-month/	4744		0.7
/interactive-tools/fun-facts/	4725		4.4
/mrpc/drive-the-grr-month-sweepstakes-2016/	4567		1.4
/states/iowa/	4489		2
Top 10 Referring Sites			
Page	Pageviews	sessions	Avg time on page (minutes)
m.facebook.com	3064		0.8
experiencemississippiriver.com	1857		0.9
drivethegreatriverroad.com	1009		1.7
secure.pilchbarnet.com	934		2.2
facebook.com	893		2
l.facebook.com	482		1.8
hunt4freebies.com	363		1.5
sampleaday.com	325		1.9
mysavings.com	226		1.2
usatoday.com	221		2.9
Facebook referrals: 3037			
Top 10 Facebook Referrers			
Source	Page		Sessions
m.facebook.com / referral	homepage		760
m.facebook.com / referral	/6-things-might-not-know-great-river-road/		511
m.facebook.com / referral	/welcome-drive-great-river-road-month/		361
m.facebook.com / referral	/interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/		297
m.facebook.com / referral	/itineraries/		252
m.facebook.com / referral	/mrpc/drive-the-grr-month-sweepstakes-2016/		221
m.facebook.com / referral	/exploring-mississippi-river-wine-county/		174
facebook.com / referral	homepage		172
m.facebook.com / referral	/activities-recreation/agritourism/		152
facebook.com / referral	/6-things-might-not-know-great-river-road/		137

Mobile Usage (percent)	
56%	
Top 10 Metro Areas	
Metro	Users
Chicago IL	6037
Minneapolis-St. Paul MN	4916
St. Louis MO	2274
Madison WI	2172
Milwaukee WI	1685
Cedar Rapids-Waterloo-Iowa City & Dubuque IA	1363
Davenport IA-Rock Island-Moline IL	1168
Des Moines-Ames IA	1142
New York NY	1111
Dallas-Ft. Worth TX	1096

Ongoing web checks & maintenance

- Monthly website checks
 - Tested and updated links as necessary
 - Checked copy and photos, ensured content was current
 - Removed expired packages

Takeaways

Sessions on the site are up by 14% overall, which helped bump up users by 18% and pageviews by 6%.

The main source of traffic to the site came from organic search again. A few of the popular search keywords were:

- Mississippi River
- Great River Road
- Mississippi River Facts
- Great River Road Map
- The Great River Road

Facebook was the top referrer this quarter, bringing almost 3,616 users to the site. That is a 268% increase from last years Facebook referrals. The majority of these referrals came from mobile devices.

The Drive the Great River Road Sweepstakes has been doing well thus far. It had nearly 6,942 pageviews and got 1,799 entries.

Mobile devices accounted for 56% of the sites traffic this quarter. The mobile bounce rate decreased by almost 8% this quarter.

WEB AND MOBILE APP

Drive the Great River Road app

- Total number of downloads as of 9/31/16
 - 2,395 Apple
 - 1,682 Android
 - 4,077 total downloads
 - Near 50% increase in downloads since last quarter
 - Mainly due to Apple downloads increased by 728



NATGEO TOURISM SITE LAUNCH

mississippiriver.natgeotourism.com

- Surveyed site content to identify missing interpretive centers; sent list to state partners to ensure a complete listing.
- Created “Trip plans” by reworking content from itineraries from *experiencemississippiriver.com* itineraries.
- Manually added Great River Road logo and *experiencemississippiriver.com* link to each interpretive center posting.
- Worked with NatGeo staff to add links to interpretive center listing page.
- Wrote and posted information about the Mississippi River Parkway Commission.
- Created posts for individual state byways.

FULFILLMENT

Map requests

- Over 3,100 requests for Great River Road Travel Map (online form, email and phone inquires)

MISCELLANEOUS

- Completed Fast Act Tourism Infrastructure Committee nomination application of Diana Threadgill in collaboration with MN-MRPC and Board of Directors.

JATA SEMINAR

Tokyo, September 22-26

- Delegates:
 - Lyn Pilch, Doug Bourgeois, Naomi Hattori, Zach Holifield, Jan Kemmerling, Yuko Miyamoto, John Haas, Roger Carmack
- Presentation
 - Participants:
 - Minnesota, Mall of America, Illinois, Illinois Great River Road, Arkansas, Houmas House, Louisiana, Memphis, Mississippi
 - Collected photos and bullet points
 - Researched and wrote bullets points
 - Created PowerPoint
 - Submitted PowerPoint for translation
 - Wrote powerpoint summary/profile sheet, sent for translation, printed and distributed
- Flyers
 - Printed and distributed app flyers
- Chef's notes
 - Wrote notes on MRC agriculture: dairy/farming, seafood, traditional dishes, beer/cocktails/wine



FAM TOURS

Fall Fam Tour 10/20-10/27

- Missouri, Arkansas and Kentucky
- Contacted partners to help create itinerary
- Compiled itinerary
- Sent final itinerary for state to review
- Booked flight/car/lodging