



National Office Activity Report

2020 | Q3

July-September

MEETINGS

Annual Meeting September 17-19

Web Design

- Created new microsite with completely different look to house the annual meeting content
- Created new pages: Annual Meeting homepage, Agenda page, Speaker bios, Donation page/form
- Added custom fields to the WordPress admin area to allow for new page template updates
- Wrote CSS styling for the new page looks and coded microsite to be responsive and mobile friendly
- Coded a new email template to be used with annual meeting communications
- Updated mrpcmembers.com with information regarding the meeting

E-newsletters

[7/20] e-newsletter

- Subject line: MRPC Virtual Annual Meeting Save the Date
- Includes: Save the date-Date and times, name of meeting, preview of content
- Sent to: MRPC Current Roster
- Open rate: 34.0%
- Click rate: 7.5%

[8/6] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Don't miss the virtual National Meeting of the Great River Road on September 17th
- Includes: Save the date, description of the meeting, featured presentations
- Sent to: Annual Meeting Contacts
- Open rate: 29.8%
- Click rate: 9.1%

[8/13] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Additional sessions announced for Virtual National Meeting of the Great River Road
- Includes: Save the date, description of meeting, featured presentations
- Sent to: Annual Meeting Contacts
- Open rate: 28.4%

- Click rate: 7.9%

[8/27] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Registration now open for National Meeting of the Great River Road
- Includes: Save the date, registration info, agenda
- Sent to: Annual Meeting Contacts
- Open rate: 35.8%
- Click rate: 15.6%

[8/31] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Reminder on upcoming MRPC meetings, nominations
- Includes: Nomination form for MRPC Distinguished Service Award, full MRPC members meeting, board meeting, registration for National Meeting
- Sent to: MRPC Current Roster
- Open rate: 28.2%
- Click rate: 5.6%

[9/3] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Great River Road fans: Hear author Eddy Harris' stories
- Includes: Registration for Eddy Harris
- Sent to: Experience Mississippi River E-newsletter
- Open rate: 18.5%
- Click rate: 1.1%

[9/8] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Join us for the MRPC National Business Meeting on September 15
- Includes: National Business meeting info and agenda
- Sent to: MRPC Current Roster
- Open rate: 26.5%
- Click rate: 6.5%

[9/8] e-newsletter

- Subject line: REMINDER: Registration is open for the National Meeting of the Great River Road
- Includes: Save the date, registration, Drive the Great River Road Month sweepstakes

- Sent to: Annual Meeting Contacts
- Open rate: 23.0%
- Click rate: 4.9%

[9/14] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Reminder: MRPC National Business Meeting is tomorrow
- Includes: Meeting information and agenda
- Sent to: MRPC Current Roster
- Open rate: 29.4%
- Click rate: 8.7%

[9/14] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Reminder: National Meeting of the Great River Road is this Thursday!
- Includes: save the date, registration reminder
- Sent to: Annual Meeting Contacts
- Open rate: 26.2%
- Click rate: 7.1%

[9/16] e-newsletter

- Subject line: National Meeting of the Great River Road - How to log in
- Includes: Save the date, event info, login info, agenda
- Sent to: Annual Meeting Registrants
- Open rate: 44.7%
- Click rate: 23.4%

[9/16] e-newsletter

- Subject line: "River to the Heart" with Eddy Harris - How to log in
- Includes: Q&A form, meeting info
- Sent to: River to the Heart Registrants
- Open rate: 53.7%
- Click rate: 10.2%

[9/18] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Survey & resources from the National Meeting of the Great River Road

- Includes: Survey, link to site for recorded sessions, contact info for speakers
- Sent to: Annual Meeting Registrants
- Open rate: 47.7%
- Click rate: 20.8%

[9/21] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Thank you for attending “River to the Heart” with Eddy Harris!
- Includes: Survey, more on Eddy Harris
- Sent to: River to the Heart Registrants
- Open rate: 48.1%
- Click rate: 18.6%

Facilitation of Two Meetings - National MRPC Business and National meeting of the Great River Road

- Speakers – contacted, discussed, researched options, provided guidance/assistance and logistics
- Agenda – flow, timing, descriptions
- Production Vendor – Communicated, provided info, answered questions, followed up on details
- Promotion Schedule – Developed and implemented
- Zoom graphics/assets– Developed background options consistent with the meeting design
- Distribution database – Collected and Researched different lists based on stakeholders of the River
- Marketing Presentation – Researched, developed shell, powerpoint and talking points included in final presentation
- Registration – Developed materials and provided updates
- Zoom – Researched options for utilization
- Meeting Communication – Provided communication to registered attendees, speakers, production crew, board
- Bios – Researched, wrote and posted bios online
- National business meeting – Facilitated meeting, providing support and guidance to all involved
- Closing and Opening visuals, Powerpoints, surveys
- Speaker Meetings – Met with panel and speaker groups to walk through presentations
- Awards – Ordered and mailed awards, located photos and created recognition slides for honorees

- State Reports – Assisted states in slide development as needed
- Set up alternate options for speaker back up
- Resolution
- Survey – Developed, executed and summarized results
- Recordings – Collected, reviewed, edited, posted and communicated location
- Screenshot Collection – Took screenshots for future marketing use
- During Meetings – Facilitated Q&A for transportation session

Zoom and Conference Call Meetings

- July 8 - Marketing Committee Meeting
- July 9 - Awards Committee Meeting
- July 10 - Board of Directors Meeting
- July 17 - Annual National Planning Meeting
- July 21 - Transportation Committee Meeting
- July 27 - Annual National Planning Meeting
- July 28 - Annual National Planning Meeting
- July 29 - Annual National Planning Meeting
- July 31 - Annual National Planning Meeting
- August 12 - Marketing Committee Meeting
- August 24 - Annual National Planning Meeting
- August 31 - Annual National Planning Meetings
- September 1 - Transportation Committee Meeting
- September 2 - Annual National Planning Meeting
- September 3 - Awards Committee Meeting
- September 4 - Annual National Planning Meetings
- September 10 - Annual National Planning Meetings
- September 15 - National Business Meeting
- September 15 - Board of Directors Meeting
- September 16 - Annual National Meeting Rehearsal
- September 17 - Annual National Meeting
- September 30 - Annual National Meeting Wrap Up

WEBSITE

Analytics

www.experiencemississippiriver.com		
Total pageviews	175,795	
Total unique pageviews	141,615	
Total sessions	93,220	
Unique users	64,008	
New users	77.4%	
Returning users	22.6%	
Pages viewed per session	1.9	
Time spent per page visited	0:45	
Avg. session duration	1:25	
Top 10 Most Visited Pages		
	pageviews	avg. time on page
/the-great-river-road-the-best-drive-in-america/	13,379	1:32
/flavors/enter/	12,459	0:57
homepage	12,266	1:02
/interactive-tools/order-a-free-great-river-road-10-state-map/	12,176	1:57
/contests/2020/drive-the-grr-month/	12,083	1:15
/contests/2020/drive-the-grr-month/thanks.php	7,507	0:51
/river-attractions/	7,312	2:31
/flavors/thank-you-for-entering/	6,276	0:40
/app/	4,232	3:37
/interactive-tools/fun-facts/	3,613	3:40
Top 10 Referring Sites		
	sessions	avg. session duration
facebook.com	16,981	0:25
Pandbads.wufoo.com (sweepstakes entry form)	14,632	0:52
contestgirl.com	1,780	0:28
thediscoverer.com	1,285	1:37
online-sweepstakes.com	1,041	0:26
truesweepstakes.com	359	0:12
outsideonline.com	204	1:41
nikkisfreebiejeebies.com	195	0:07

travelandleisure.com	147	1:24
mrpcmembers.com	144	4:55
Top 10 Metro Areas		
	sessions	avg. session duration
Chicago IL	9,230	1:28
Minneapolis-St. Paul MN	9,186	1:26
St. Louis MO	4,356	1:06
Milwaukee WI	3,626	1:42
Madison WI	3,383	1:60
Cedar Rapids-Waterloo-Iowa City & Dubuque IA	3,102	1:04
Des Moines-Ames IA	2,161	1:23
La Crosse-Eau Claire WI	2,138	1:04
Atlanta GA	2,027	1:28
Davenport IA-Rock Island-Moline IL	1,811	1:12
Top 5 Channels		
	% sessions	avg. session duration
Organic Search	39.3%	2:08
Referral	23.8%	1:01
Social	18.5%	0:25
Direct	18.4%	1:26
Email	0%	0:55
User Demographics		
	% sessions	avg. session duration
age		
55-64	27.1%	1:05
65+	23.9%	1:16
45-54	18.1%	1:12
25-34	12.9%	1:24
35-44	12.1%	1:15
18-24	5.8%	1:29
gender	% sessions	avg. session duration
female	58.1%	1:07
male	41.9%	1:24
Device Usage		
	% sessions	avg. session duration
Mobile + Tablet	59.4%	1:19
Desktop	40.6%	1:48

Web Maintenance

- Monthly website checks: Tested and updated links as necessary; Checked copy and photos; ensured content was current
- Flipped social media and website content to fall on Sept. 1
- SEO/analytics monitored weekly
- Completed security upgrade
- Completed SEO Audit
- Implemented ADA upgrades
- Optimized images and code for load speed

SEO Report

While the global pandemic and related state and local travel orders impacted travel in many areas of the route this quarter, the site performed well and did an effective job at connecting with a travel audience.

- Pageviews increased nearly 9 percent over Q3 2019 (175,795 vs. 161,846)
- The pandemic resulted in a shift in the website audience. While visits to the page from the United States increased by 19 percent, visits from the United Kingdom decreased by 50 percent, visits from Canada decreased 49 percent and visits from Australia decreased 33 percent. Because the majority of the site's audience is domestic, and that audience increased, these international declines did not result in a sitewide drop in site pageviews.
- While the most popular page was the Best Drive in America, traffic continues to shift to the site's homepage (#3), which has enjoyed an improvement in page ranking in recent months. Views on the homepage were up nearly 29 percent this quarter
- The Flavors giveaway drew a large volume of visitors to the site. The main entry page had 12,459 pageviews, about three times the traffic that a similar promotion received in 2019.
- The Drive the Great River Road promotion also was very successful in getting people on the site, receiving 12,083 pageviews in just the month of September.
- Views on the map order page increased about 16 percent over Q3 last year.
- While some attractions were closed or had limited access this quarter, there was robust engagement with the attractions content (7th most-viewed page on the site).
- The fun facts page also did well, landing in the top 10 pages (4 percent increase over Q3 2019).
- Site demographics were similar to last year, although the site did see a larger share of younger visitors this year (18-24) and a smaller number of visitors aged 55-64 which may be due to COVID travel concerns within an older demographic.

Web Takeaways

The site was effective at promoting the byway this quarter, even as the pandemic posted substantial challenges to the tourism industry. A number of metrics indicate people are still interested in travel and engaging with the byway--the increase in pageviews, the engagement with promotions and the surge in map orders. The site saw a greater share of domestic visitors, an obvious result of international travel limitations that kept international visitors off the route. With these restrictions in place, domestic visitors are looking for vacation options closer to home and in the months ahead, the site will continue to position the byway as an attractive option for vacationers in the United States. The small age shifts in visitors (more younger visitors, fewer older visitors) might suggest that younger people who face smaller COVID-19 risks were more ready to travel this quarter. Finally, the successful promotions boosted site traffic and demonstrated that people are eager to dream about their next getaway, a good sign for travel in the months ahead on the byway.

TOURISM E-NEWSLETTERS

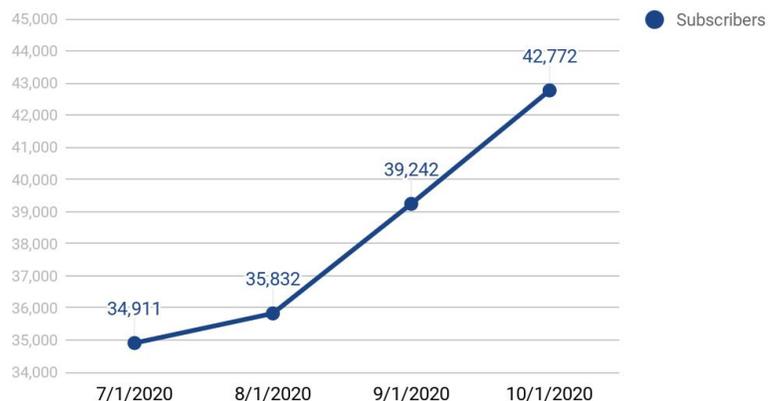
[8/4] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Win \$500 for a Great River Road trip!
- Promotion: Flavors of the Great River Road giveaway
- Open rate: 20.5%
- Click rate: 7.1%

[9/1] e-newsletter

- Subject line: Win \$500 for your next Great River Road adventure!
- Promotion: Drive the Great River Road Month sweepstakes
- Article: What is Drive the Great River Road month?
- Open rate: 21.2%
- Click rate: 7.7%

E-newsletter Subscribers



FACEBOOK

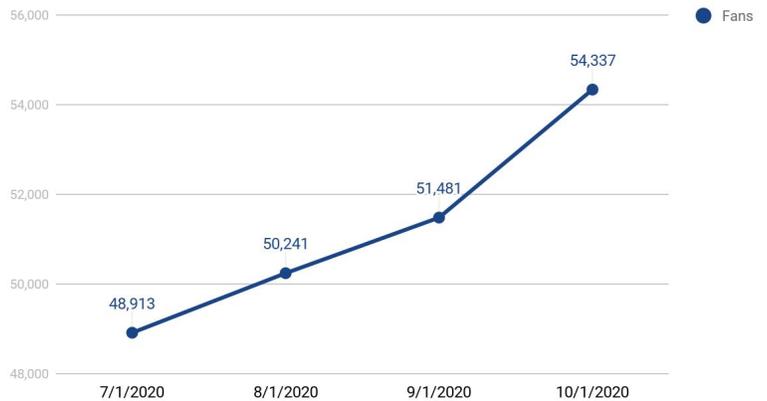
Overview

- Facebook fans: 54,337
- New Facebook fans: 5,424
- Facebook updates: 50

Facebook Top Posts

- September 1
 - “Enter to win \$500 to explore the wonders of the Great River Road, whenever you decide to travel!” w/link to Drive the Great River Road Month Sweepstakes
 - 193,776 people reached, 7,600 reactions, comments & shares, 13,537 post clicks
 - 5,993 people reached organically; 189,359 people via paid ad
- August 29
 - “Get ready for a great show” w/link to fall color blog on experiencemississippiriver.com
 - 36,999 people reached, 4,464 reactions, comments & shares, 871 post clicks
 - 5,639 people reached organically; 189,359 people via paid ad
- July 24
 - “Hungry? Win \$500 to spend on a delicious Great River Road trip! Enter now:” w/link to Flavors of the Great River Road Giveaway
 - 79,462 people reached; 3,944 reactions, comments & shares; 4,147 clicks
 - 229 people reached organically; 79,425 people via paid ad

Facebook Fans



The Great River Road
Published by Alan Hamari [?] · September 1 · 🌐

Enter to win \$500 to explore the wonders of the Great River Road, whenever you decide to travel!

The Great River Road
Published by Alan Hamari [?] · August 29 · 🌐

Get ready for a great show.

The Great River Road
Published by Kate Hagen [?] · July 24 · 🌐

Hungry? Click Learn More to enter to win \$500 to spend on a delicious Great River Road trip!

FLAVORS OF THE GREAT RIVER ROAD GIVEAWAY
ENTER NOW!

EXPERIENCMISSISSIPPIRIVER.COM
Experience the Flavors of America!
Enter to win \$500 to explore foodie fare along the Mississippi River.

Demographics/Engaged fans

- Top cities: Chicago, Des Moines, Milwaukee, Madison, Davenport
- 38% age 55-64 (27% women, 11% men); 26% 65+ (19% women, 7% men), 22% 45-54, 9% 35-44, 1.8% 25-34
- 69% women, 30% men

Facebook Advertising

Page likes

- Runs continuously, updated throughout year
- 156,744 impressions
- 5,952 clicks
- 3.80% click-through rate
- Added 2,644 fans

Post engagement

- Engagement on various Facebook posts - runs continuously, updated throughout year
- 161,209 impressions
- 12,188 clicks
- 7.56% click-through rate
- Received 11,282 post engagements

Drive the Great River Road Sweepstakes

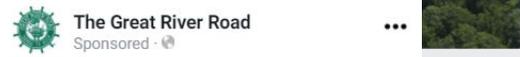
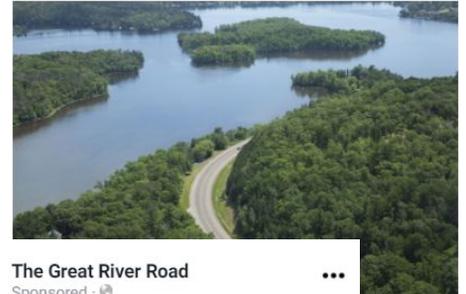
- Post engagement ad that drove traffic to Drive the Great River Road promo entry page
- 441,521 impressions
- 20,142 clicks
- 4.56% click-through rate
- Received 14,162 post engagements

Flavors of the Great River Road Sweepstakes

- Post engagement ad that drove traffic to Flavors of the Great River Road promo entry page
- 208,535 impressions
- 7,930 clicks
- 3.80% click-through rate
- Received 6,696 post engagements



Drive the Great River Road, which follows the Mississippi River through 10 states from northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico.



Get ready for a great show.



EXPERIENCEMISSISSIPPIRIVER.COM
Chasing fall color on the Great River Road - Experience Mississippi River



Enter to win \$500 to explore the wonders of the Great River Road, whenever you decide to travel!



EXPERIENCEMISSISSIPPIRIVER.COM



Hungry? Win \$500 to spend on a delicious Great River Road trip! Enter now:



EXPERIENCEMISSISSIPPIRIVER.COM
Experience the Flavors of America!
Enter to win \$500 to explore foodie fare along the Mis...

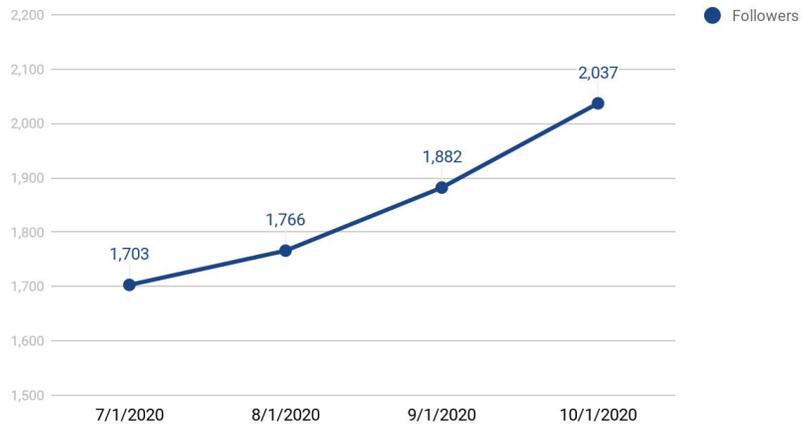
👍❤️👎 Oz Ma... 112 Comments 413 Shares

INSTAGRAM

Overview

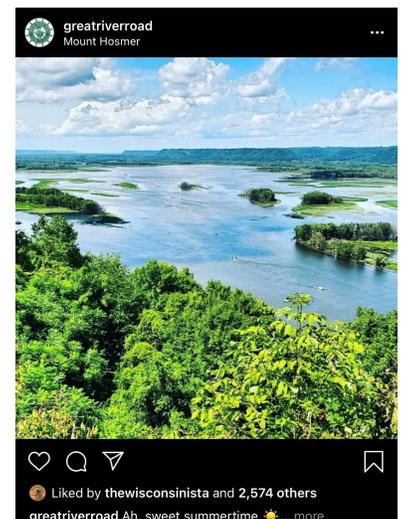
- Instagram followers: 2,037
- New Instagram followers: 334
- Instagram updates: 14 posts
- Replying to user messages

Instagram Follower Growth



Instagram Top Posts

- 7/16
 - Caption: Ah, sweet summertime
 - 711 people reached organically, 2,580 reactions, 1 share, 24 bookmarks, 3 profile visits
- 8/5
 - Caption: Little pieces of history along the Great River Road... check out Fort de Chartres in Illinois for your next trip!
 - 716 people reached organically, 2,122 reactions, 5 shares, 61 bookmarks, 5 profile visits
- 8/17
 - Caption: Thank you @rthomast_historyandtravel for capturing this beautiful sunset over the mighty Mississippi!
 - 778 people reached organically, 2,405 reactions, 2 shares, 36 bookmarks, 2 profile visits



Demographics/Engaged fans

- Top age range: 35-44 (29%)
- Top locations: Alton, Godfrey, Minneapolis
- Top gender: Women (63%)

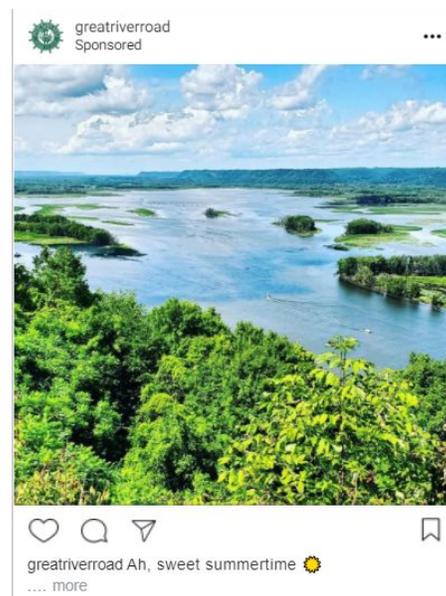
Instagram Advertising

Post engagement

- Engagement on various Instagram posts - runs continuously, updated throughout year
- 99,645 impressions
- 247 people clicked on the ad
- 0.25% click-through rate
- Received 11,357 post engagements

Flavors of the Great River Road - post engagement

- Engagement on post about Flavors of the Great River Road promo; directed visitors to contest website
- 9,547 impressions
- 147 people clicked on the ad
- 1.54% click-through rate
- Received 2,886 post engagements



FLAVORS OF THE GREAT RIVER ROAD

Description

This summer, we highlighted the culinary heritage of the states along the Great River Road, as well as highlighting traditional cuisines, the best places for local ingredients, agritourism options (wineries, farmers' markets, etc.) and more along the route. This promotion ran from July 22 to August 25, 2020.

We ran a simple sweepstakes (enter for a chance to win) called, "Flavors of the Great River Road Giveaway." To enter, fans submitted their name, email address and ZIP code for a chance to win a grand prize. The sweepstakes helped build the GRR e-newsletter list and Facebook fan base and increased website traffic.

Through social media and this contest, we continued to promote the food-related website content that we've developed over the last few years. This includes itineraries, testimonials, agritourism content and more. We also encouraged entrants to submit their recommendations for favorite dishes, recipes and more as part of the entry process. This content allows us to continue building up the website so we can continue promotion of the Great River Road's food offerings year-round.

We ran social media ads to promote the above components—monitoring and adjusting the budget throughout the promotion in order to meet the objectives outlined below. In 2019's "Flavors" giveaway, the majority of people said they heard about the contest from Facebook. To capitalize on this platform, we encouraged people to tag their friends in a Facebook post about the sweepstakes for them to earn an additional entry.

Objectives

- Promote the culinary heritage and recipes and general food themes without specifically calling out restaurants right now along the Great River Road
- Increase fan numbers and interaction on the Great River Road social media channels
- Encourage organic/social dialog about food themes along the Great River Road
- Increase traffic on experiencemississippiriver.com (especially dining pages and new blogs)
- Promote GRR food info using existing website content
- Receive 3,000 entries
 - Received 5,981 entries
- Gain 1,000 e-newsletter subscribers
 - Gained 3,808 subscribers
- Gain 1,000 Facebook fans
 - Gained 1,097 fans

The winner was:

- Caroline Lennek, Rolla, Missouri



How did you hear about the sweepstakes?

- Facebook: 3,253
- E-mail/E-newsletter: 1,921
- Experiencemississippiriver.com website: 351
- Contest website: 327
- Other website/online search: 89
- From a friend/family member: 215
- Instagram: 65
- Magazine/newspaper: 8
- Other: 26

Entries by DMA:

- WI: 846
- IL: 727
- IA: 566
- MN: 473
- MO: 362
- CA: 277
- FL: 252
- TX: 219
- TN: 185
- LA: 171
- MS: 160
- MI: 148
- NY: 132
- OH: 119
- KY: 117
- AR: 111
- PA: 108
- NC: 101
- GA: 96
- IN: 91
- VA: 78

DRIVE THE GREAT RIVER ROAD GIVEAWAY

The 2020 Drive the Great River Road Sweepstakes launched September 1, tying into the ongoing promotion of September as Drive the Great River Road Month.

The campaign focused on traveling the Great River Road in fall--this year's iteration focusing on outdoor travel that's safe for visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contest messaging encouraged people to travel the Great River Road when they consider it safe to do so. Knowing all travelers will have a different level of comfort with travel, our language was sensitive to speak to a wide-ranging audience. The contest was promoted through Facebook posts and advertising, an e-newsletter and the experiencemississippiriver.com website.

Measurable goals included growing the e-newsletters subscriber base, website traffic and Facebook audience. The sweepstakes ran from September 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020.

Objectives

- Continue the promotion of September as Drive the Great River Road Month
- Promote outdoor recreation and attractions along the Great River Road
- Promote the 10-state map
- Promote virtual MRPC annual meeting
- Increase website traffic
- Gain 3,500 entries
 - Gained 7,369 entries
- Increase Facebook fans by 800
 - Increased by 2,851
- Grow e-newsletter subscriber list by 800
 - Grew by 3,472

The winner was:

- April Ferrie, Cedar Rapids, IA

Drive the GREAT RIVER ROAD MONTH SWEEPSTAKES

Win \$500 for your next Great River Road adventure!

September is Drive the Great River Road Month—a perfect time to explore the outstanding fall colors and wonderful outdoor recreation options on the National Scenic Byway that follows the Mississippi River from northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico.

Now, we're giving you a chance to win \$500 to spend on your next Great River Road adventure, whenever you choose to travel.

Enter today, and start planning your next Great River Road trip!

Step 1: Like us on Facebook

The Great River Road
50,151 likes

Like Page Send Message

Step 2: Enter the contest!

Name *
First Last

Email *
Zip code *

How did you hear about this giveaway? *

Facebook
 Instagram
 E-mail/E-newsletter
 experiencemississippiriver.com
 Other

By entering, you agree to the official rules and privacy policy and you acknowledge the Mississippi River Parkway Commission may contact you via e-mail.

Please check the box below. *

I'm not a robot

SUBMIT

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Official Rules](#)

Disclaimer: This Promotion is in no way sponsored, endorsed or administered by, or associated with Facebook or Instagram, and any questions, comments or complaints regarding the Promotion should be directed to Sponsor at the Promotion Address, not Facebook or Instagram. By entering this giveaway, you are providing your information solely to the Mississippi River Parkway Commission and not to Facebook or Instagram. The information you provide will not be shared with other organizations or individuals but may be subject to disclosure pursuant to public records laws. Read the full terms & conditions of use.

How did you hear about the sweepstakes?

- Facebook: 4,944
- E-mail/e-newsletter: 1,732
- Experiencemississippiriver.com website: 279
- Contest website: 148
- Other website/online search: 57
- From a friend/family member: 140
- Instagram: 21
- Newspaper: 13
- TV/Radio: 7
- Other: 22

Entries by DMA:

- WI: 1241
- IL: 1217
- IA: 1028
- MN: 680
- MO: 523
- FL: 218
- TN: 193
- LA: 176
- MS: 170
- CA: 165
- TX: 162
- AR: 132
- KY: 125
- MI: 94
- PA: 88
- OH: 87
- NY: 84
- IN: 83
- GA: 80

PR

- National Office drafted and distributed a release promoting Drive the Great River Road Month. Some of the pickups that included live interviews and direct quotes are listed below.
- National Office worked with Quad-Cities Times and Dispatch-Argus on article about Drive the Great River Road Month (published 9/9:
https://qctimes.com/entertainment/road-trip-time-hop-in-the-car-and-celebrate-drive-the-great-river-road-month/article_8aa05a71-6c5f-5be0-9952-56a650b00823.html)
- National Office did radio interview with KBUR (Burlington, IA) on 9/4

ADMIN/MISCELLANEOUS

Financial/Bookkeeping

- Paid bills, monitored state dues and related paperwork, processed donation checks
- Reconciled through August and provided financial reports

Fulfillments

- Fulfilled 3,158 requests this quarter
- Created address and shipping labels and mailed
- Prepped guides for fulfillments

Phone, Email and Online Inquiries

- Answered phone calls, returned voicemails
- Corresponded to online inquiries

Misc

- MRPC Members Site
 - Made ongoing web updates and email correspondence
- Mobile App
 - iOS
 - # of downloads in Q3: 1,412
 - # of downloads to date: 19,888
 - Android
 - # of downloads in Q3: 824
 - # of downloads to date: 6,683

- Total (combined)
 - # of downloads in Q3: 2,236
 - # of downloads: 26,571
- Doodle polls
 - Created and sent doodle polls for setting meeting dates and communications