

MILES PARTNERSHIP × STS PARTNER WEBINAR

The Power of Specificity

Creating destination stories that stand out

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Campaign Manager, Creator Partnerships & Marketing

TODAY

One idea, told five ways

3:05	Why specificity matters	Dylan
3:15	Specificity in practice	Dylan
3:25	Creators as storytellers	Annika
3:40	Case studies: Virginia Beach and Reno Tahoe	Annika
3:50	Practical takeaways	Dylan + Annika
3:55	Q&A and closing	Miles / STS



PART 01 • DYLAN • 3:05

Why specificity matters

Broad stories blend together. Specific ones get saved, shared and planned around.

Most destination stories sound the same.

Something for everyone

A vibrant dining scene

Pristine beaches

Endless adventure

A hidden gem

Great art and culture

Make memories that last

Swap the destination name and nothing changes. **Nobody plans a trip around something that could be anywhere.**

second spot mostly showing off their
State's



4:07 / 32:03



Reviewing tourism ads from all 50 states

THE MIDWEST, USA

ROAD TRIP!



HOUSE ON THE ROCK, WISCONSIN

43.1, -90.136

ODYSSEY
CREATORS

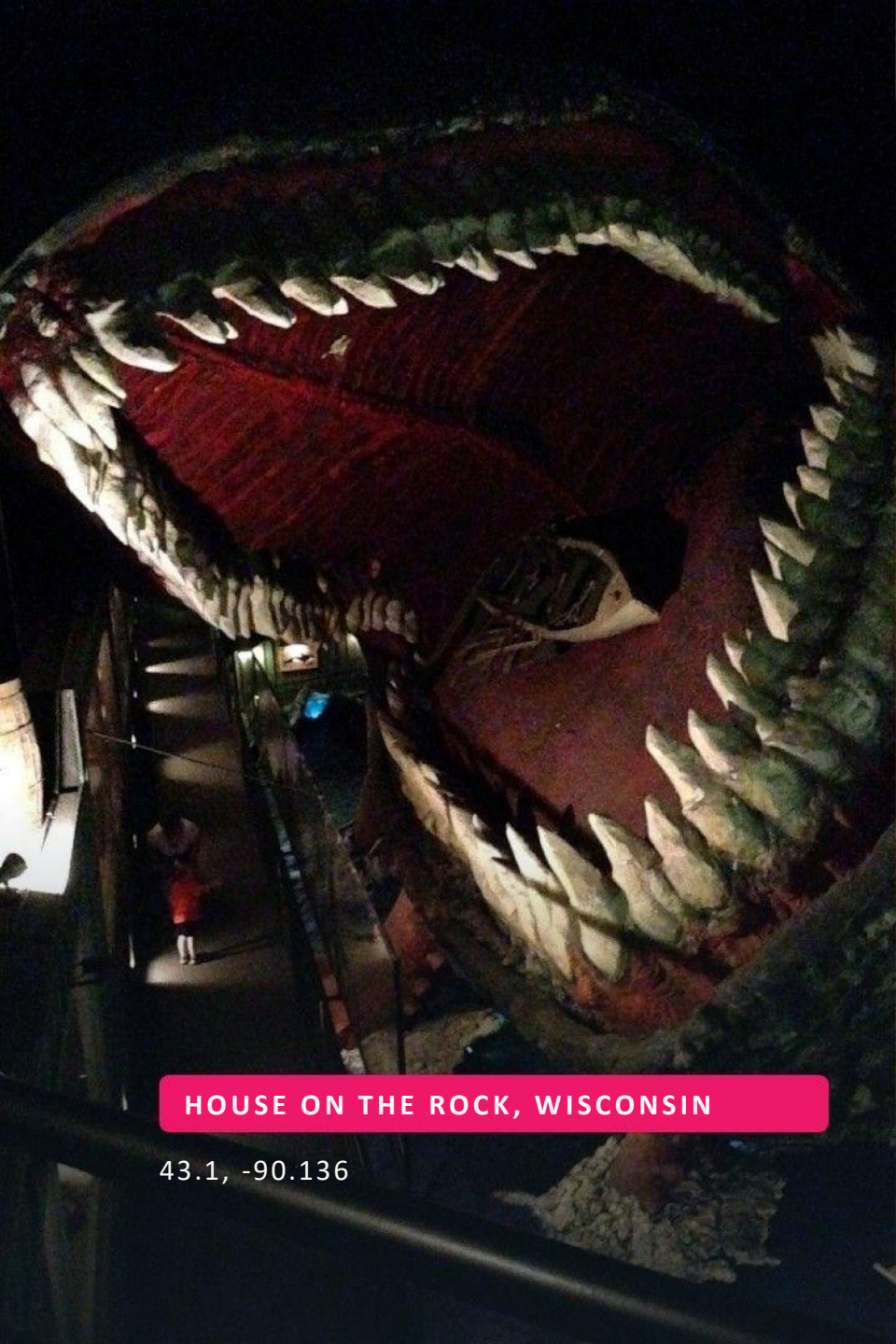
HOUSE ON THE ROCK, WISCONSIN

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HOUSE ON THE ROCK, WISCONSIN

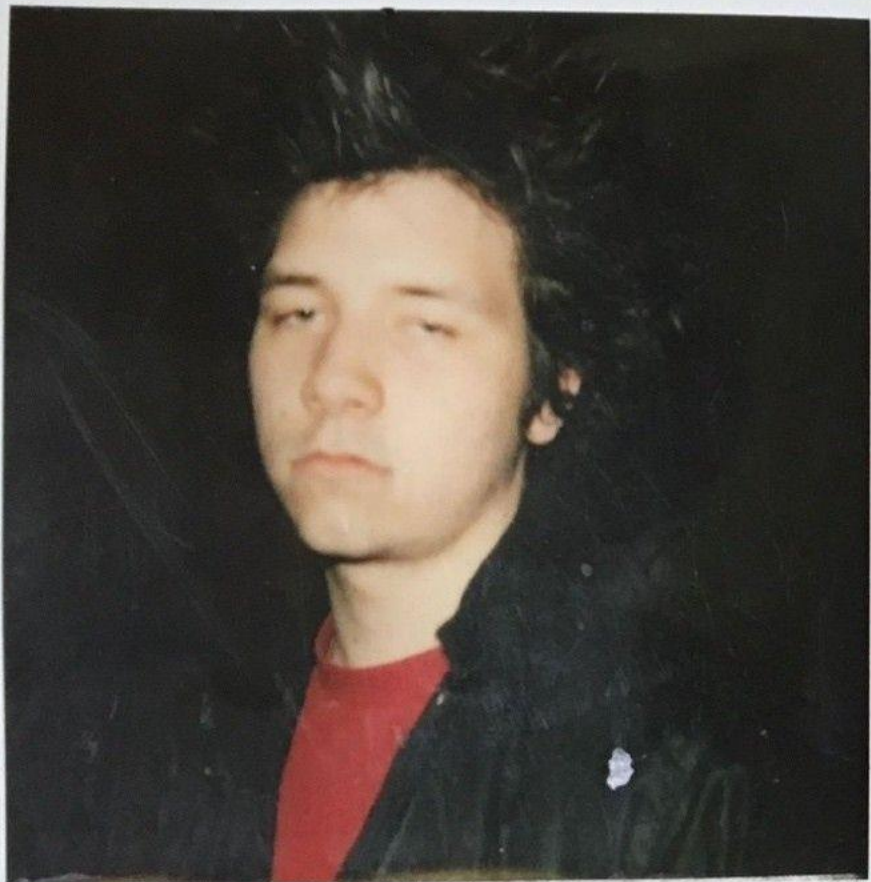
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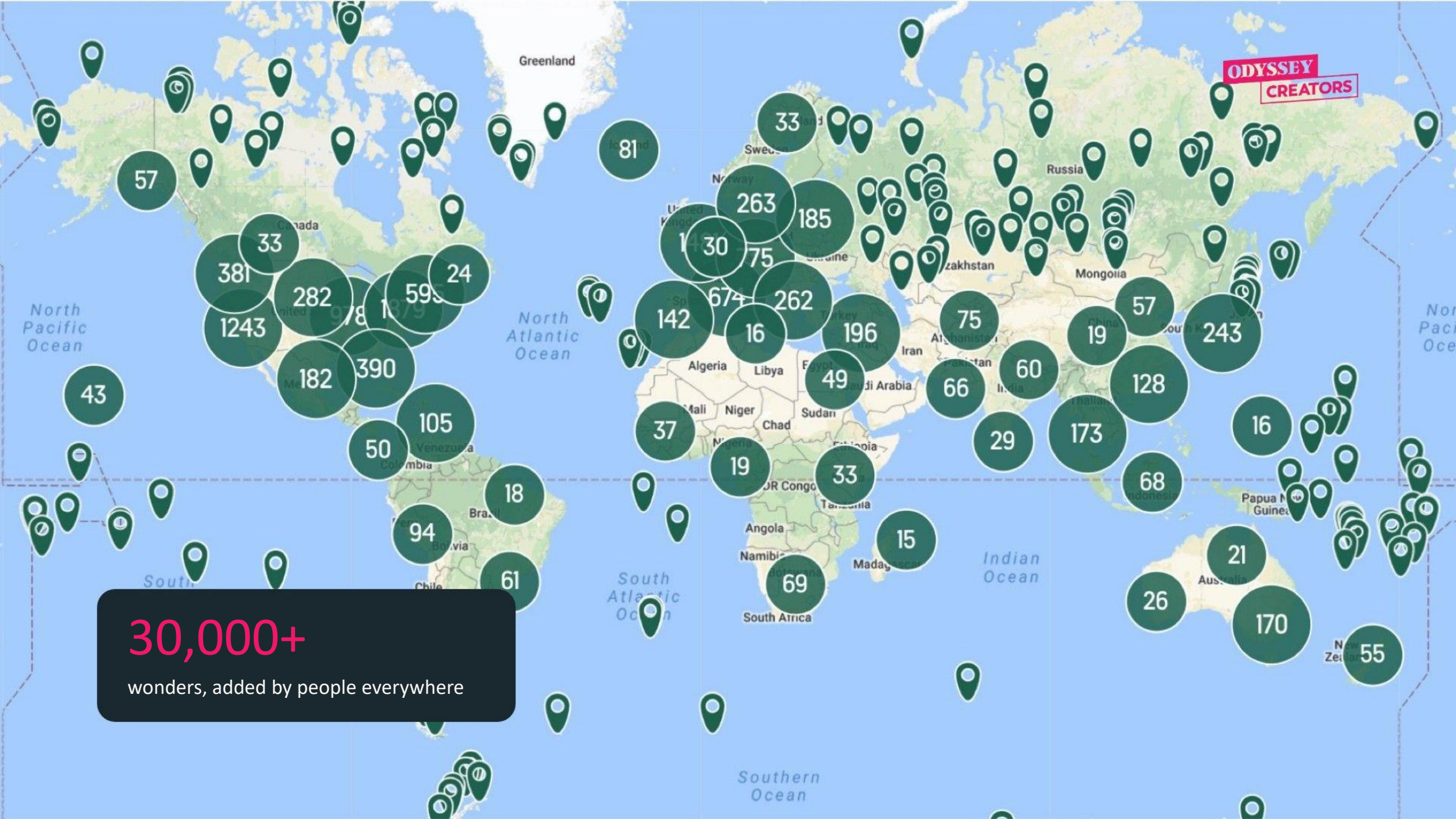
GOLD MEDAL FLOUR, MINNEAPOLIS

44.97938, -93.25711



ODYSSEY
CREATORS

30,000+
wonders, added by people everywhere





SECRET APARTMENT, EIFFEL TOWER, PARIS



EVERLASTING LIGHTNING STORM, VENEZUELA





HISTORY OF SCIENCE MUSEUM, ITALY

43.767, 11.255

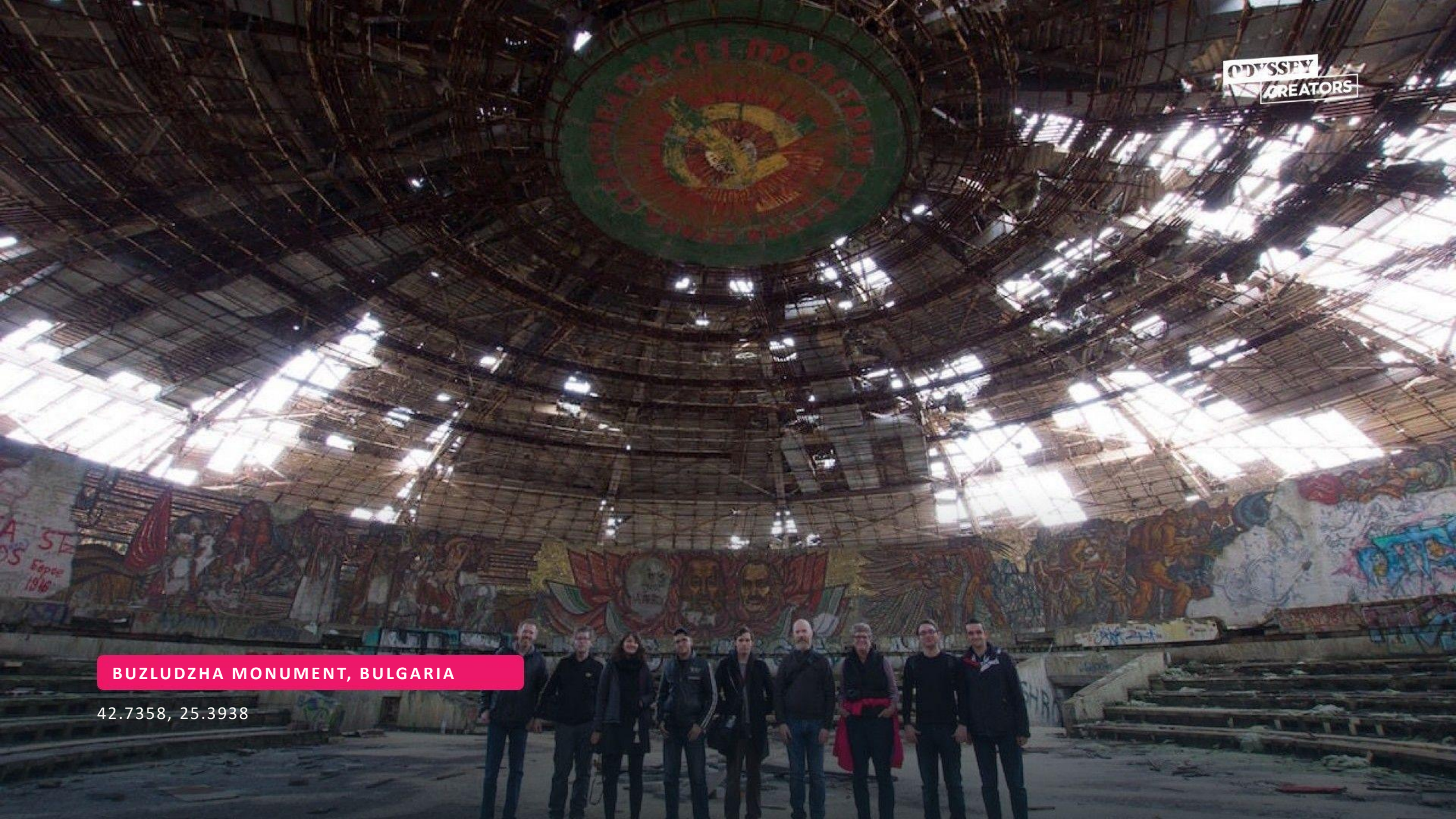
RA PAULETTE'S CAVES, NEW MEXICO

36.3031, -106.0467



BUZLUDZHA MONUMENT, BULGARIA

42.7358, 25.3938



MONARCH MIGRATION, MEXICO

PRIPYAT, UKRAINE

51.4084, 30.0551

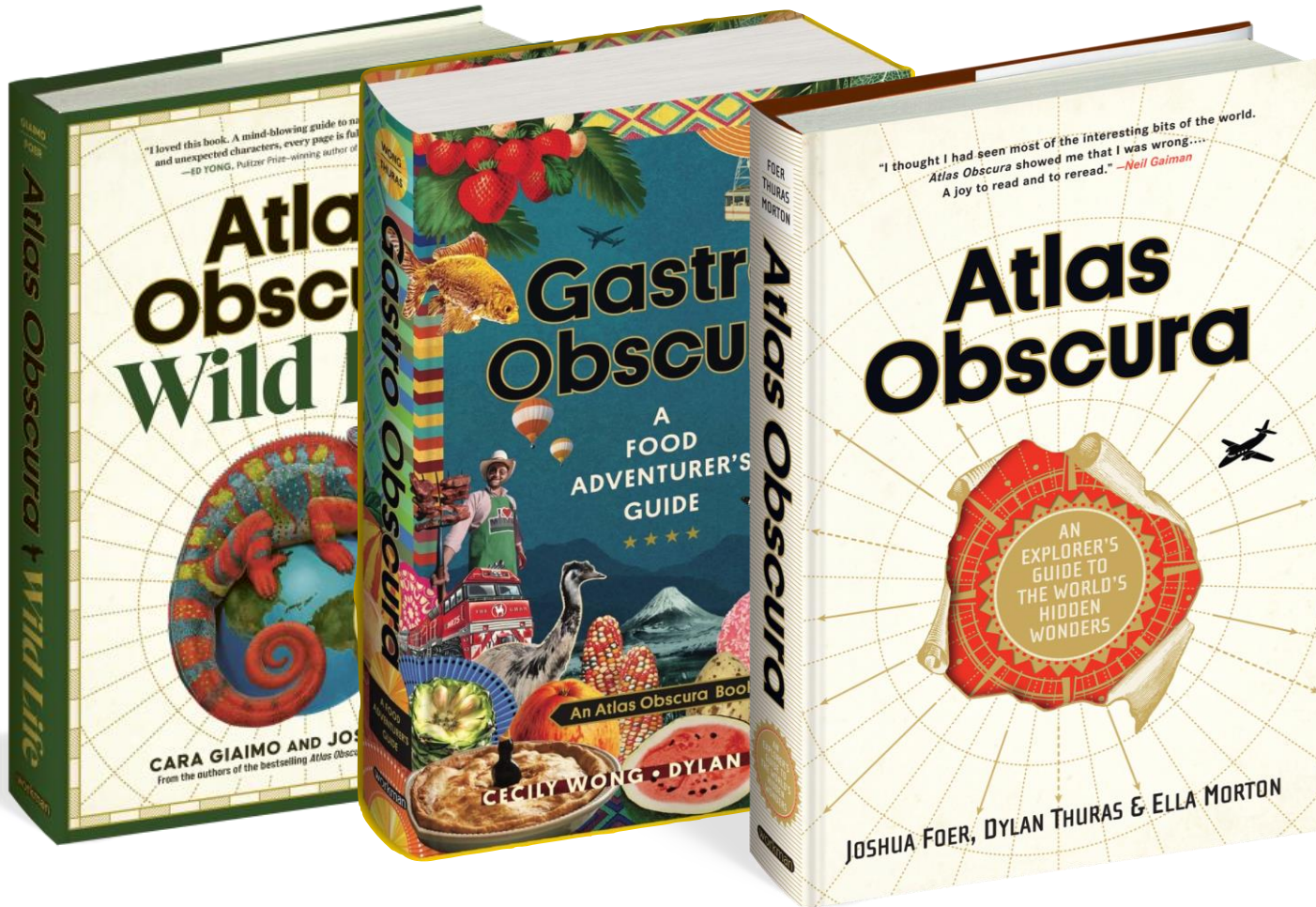


PERUVIAN AMAZON



PERUVIAN AMAZON





NY Times #1 Best Seller

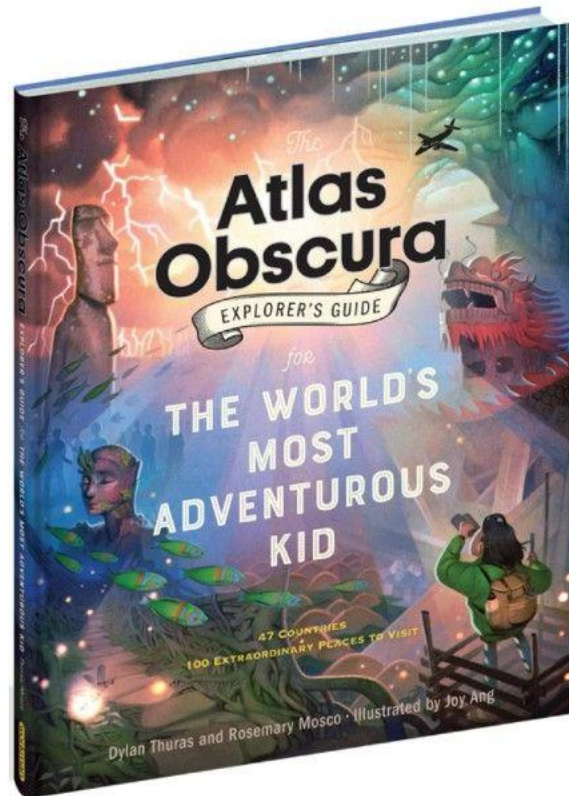
#1 on Amazon

#1 Gift Book, Christmas

Three bestsellers

2M copies in print

Top 5 Most Wished for Travel Books of all time on Amazon.com



#1 Gift Book, Christmas 2016 · Top 5 Most Wished for Travel Books of All Time on Amazon.com

WHO IS THIS GUY?

Fifteen years finding out what makes a story travel.

CO-FOUNDER

Atlas Obscura, a media company built on the premise that the most specific, unusual and unexpected places in the world are also the most compelling.

TODAY, AT MILES PARTNERSHIP

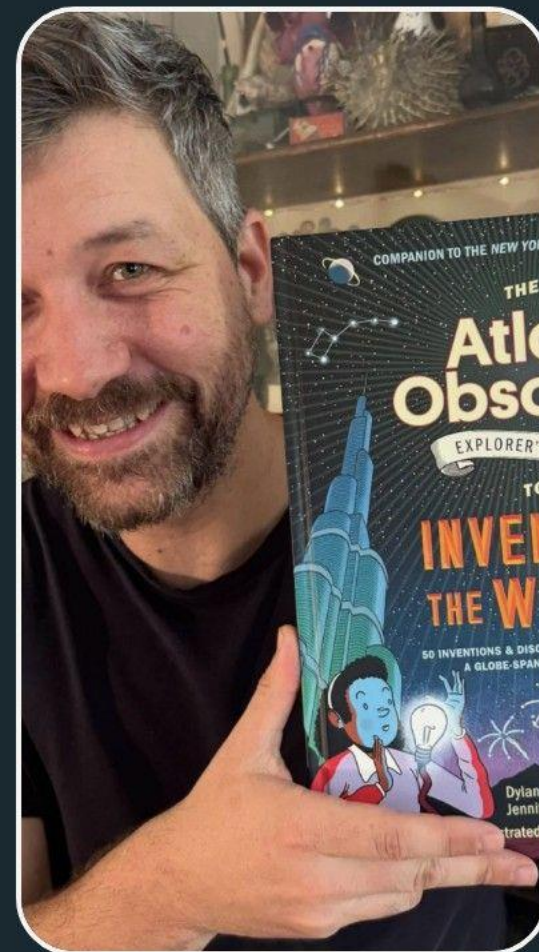
I help destinations and their stakeholders figure out what to say, where to say it, and how it'll land.

AUTHOR

#1 New York Times bestseller. #1 travel podcast, built around finding a singular place that tells a bigger story.

WHY I'M HERE TODAY

Many of the instincts that built Atlas Obscura are now the biggest organic social advantage a destination has in 2026.



THE WHOLE TALK IN ONE LINE

The most specific story you can tell is
also the most strategic.

Platforms in 2026 reward depth, authenticity, search intent and real people telling stories.

SHIFT 01

Social is a search engine now, and it's slowly becoming a booking engine.

~33%

of consumers now start product or place searches on TikTok, Instagram or YouTube, not Google.

40%

of young users go to TikTok or Instagram for things they would have searched on Google five years ago.

1 in 4

Gen Z and Millennials prefer social media over search engines for discovery.

SHIFT 02

Where you post may matter more than how often you post.

FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM

2-5%

organic reach for most pages. It's not the quality of your content. The squeeze is real.

TIKTOK & YOUTUBE SHORTS

0 → 1,000s

A brand-new account with zero followers can still be served to thousands of people in a day.

SHIFT 03

Watch-through is the new reach.

Algorithms used to count likes. Now they weigh saves, shares and how long someone actually stays.
Polished, fast-cut, text-stuffed marketing video is losing.

+28%

more engagement for user-generated content than for branded content.

30-60s

Reels in this range generate the highest engagement rates on Instagram.

2.5x

higher share rate for Reels than for static posts. And carousels are king.

2026 TRAVEL TRENDS

In 2026, emotion is leading the way.

Travelers are chasing a feeling over a destination: nostalgia, community rituals, and hands-on experiences that feel human, real and memorable.

25%

of travelers now begin their search with a vibe or a feeling (Accor, 2026)



💡 :- it's just Nepal, why are you crying?

Walking Around The World977 · 7-2

Not just a country or Nature,, Its a Full of dream, [more](#)

🎵 Papaoutai - Afro Soul - mlkeeysmind & Chil77 & Unjeps

THE SPECIFICITY THEOREM

A story about one place beats a list of ten famous landmarks.



The 1,000th Eiffel Tower post

Recognizable. Also entirely ignorable.



The secret apartment inside the tower

They save it and they plan a trip around it. You can now book it.

PART 02 · DYLAN · 3:15

Specificity in practice

Frameworks for finding the people, places and details that make your destination distinct.

THE ALGORITHM HAS CAUGHT UP

This is what people actually type into TikTok and Instagram search.

LOW INTENT: TOO GENERIC TO WIN

"things to do in [your destination]"

"best beach hotel"

"good restaurant near me"

HIGH INTENT: SPECIFIC, SAVED, CONVERTED

"best oyster happy hour on the water"

"where do locals eat on a tuesday"

"cabin with a hot tub near the trailhead"

"dive bar with karaoke downtown"

Built for the left column, you're invisible. Built for the right, you have a chance, **even with 200 followers.**

HOW TO ACTUALLY DO THIS

Three rules of specificity.

01**Make it for one real person.**

Posting for everyone is posting for no one. Picture one traveler planning one trip. What would they type into TikTok at 10 PM?

02**Find your one weird detail.**

Every place has one: a ritual, a legend, a dish named after somebody's grandfather, a regular who's been coming for 30 years.

03**Tell it like you're at the bar.**

Don't think like a censor. Think like someone two drinks in. Where's the tension? Where's the surprise?

CLOWN MOTEL · TONOPAH, NEVADA

If a clown motel next to a miners' cemetery can become a pilgrimage, anything can.

A town of 2,500 people, four hours from Las Vegas. Once its story was told, travelers started making the trip, and spending money in town along the way.



TROUBLE IN PARADISE

Everyone piles into the same few places, while singular places quietly disappear.



Trolltunga, Norway

The photo of solitude is really a line for the photo.



Venice, Italy

About 60,000 visitors a day in high season, for about 55,000 residents.



Kovac's Planetarium, Wisconsin

Hand-built, 5,000 hand-painted stars, closed because too few people found it.

THE MIDDLE PATH

Dispersal is a gift to all.

The traveler

Isn't stuck in a herd. Sees something unique, has real interactions, and comes home with a better story.

The community

Less jammed up. Visits spread across the calendar and the map, so cool local shops stay open.

The businesses

Don't have to compete with the mega-attraction. A steady stream beats a single rush.

How a specific story takes shape

Four formats, each shaped around a voice, an audience, and what makes the place worth discovering.

Creator itineraries

A structured journey through a place, shaped by one point of view.

"A Designer's Palm Springs Weekend"

Why here?

Curiosity-driven stories that reveal what makes a place stand out.

"What Makes Savannah Feel So Weirdly Timeless?"

Local knowledge

A place seen through the recommendations of people who know it best.

"The Small Chicago Spots Worth a Trip on the L"

Signature moments

Rooted in the traditions and experiences that define a place.

"How to Experience Cherry Blossom Season in D.C."

DISCOVERABILITY

Social SEO is now just SEO.

TikTok and Instagram read your video the way Google reads a webpage. Write for the search bar.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Say your keywords out loud. | Audio is transcribed. "The best raw bar on the island" is a search signal. |
| 2 | Put the same words on screen. | Visual text gets indexed too. Bold, readable, in the first frame. |
| 3 | Write captions like searches. | Real phrases people type: place + thing + qualifier. Then add the vibe. |
| 4 | Tag the location, every time. | Surfaces you to people nearby and to anyone searching the area. |
| 5 | Answer questions in comments. | Comment answers now rank in search. A good one is a permanent asset. |

SHOW UP THE SAME WAY

Don't post one-offs. Build a series.

A series teaches the algorithm who you are and teaches viewers to come back. It's also easier to make, because the format is already decided.

"The Catch"

What came in this morning. Same dock, same angle, every week.

"Locals Only"

Where do the surf instructors eat on their day off?

"Through Time"

Main Street in 1965, 1985 and today. The menu from 1985.

"Behind the Bar"

One bartender, one old recipe, the story behind the name.

Then extend it. One good video can live on TikTok, Reels, Shorts, email, your website and partner screens.



Smaller is fine. Local is great.

57%

of marketers say micro-influencers (under 100K followers) outperform big-name creators, especially for local and experience-driven brands.

Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025

HOW TO SPOT A GOOD ONE

- ✓ **Engagement rate over follower count.**
A 5K account with high engagement can beat a 100K account with low.
- ✓ **Real, relevant followers.**
Click into the comments. Is the audience you want actually there?
- ✓ **Watch three of their posts.**
If their content sounds like an ad, yours will too.
- ✓ **Start with who already loves you.**
Creators posting about your destination unprompted are already in your corner.



Odyssey Creators

PART 03 · ANNIKA · 3:25

Creators as storytellers

How the right creators turn a destination's specifics into stories people follow.



How people
discover places
has changed.



The shift, in three numbers.

ODYSSEY
CREATORS

80%

of travelers say social media influences where they travel.

41%

of Gen Z travelers use social platforms as their primary search tool.

92%

of tourism boards are increasing their creator budgets.



Creator storytelling is where travel decisions start, and how you tell those stories is **the strategy**.



Creators aren't followed for ads. They're followed for who they are.

The more the work feels true to the creator, the more audiences respond.

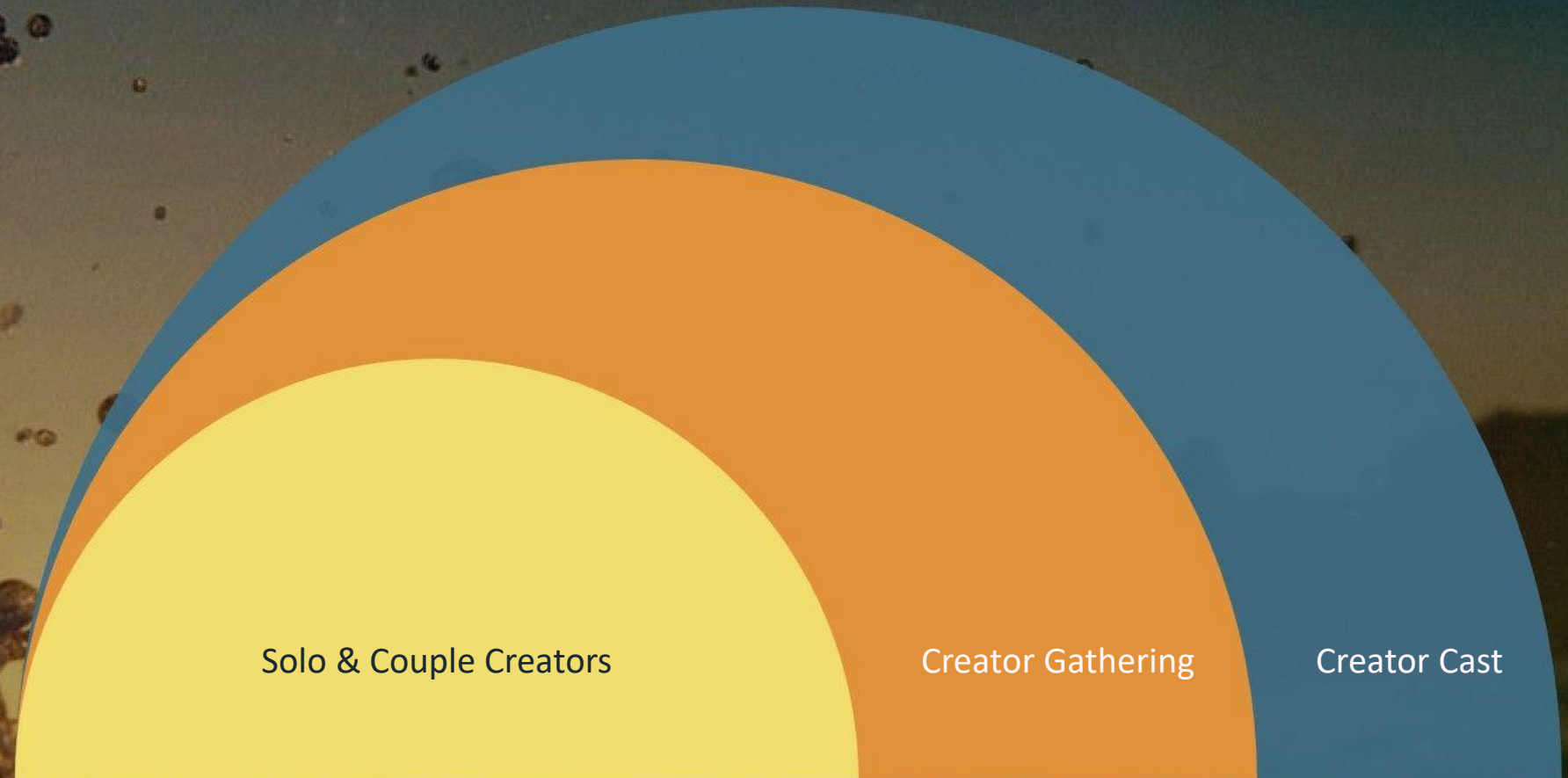


Great creator work is cast, not just bought.

We'll help you find the right creator, audience, and storytelling format to ensure the work feels authentic and natural.

Odyssey Creators

From single-creator stories, to multi-creator moments, to ongoing creator planning.



ODYSSEY CREATORS

Three ways to bring a destination to life

From single-creator stories, to multi-creator moments, to year-round creator planning.

Solo & Couple Creators

One clear story through a personal lens. Fast to market, responsive to quick-turn needs.

Creator Gathering

Multiple creators, one shared moment: a festival, a weekend, a curated series of events.

Creator Cast

A long-term program: deeper strategy, smarter casting, and refinement season after season.

Solo & Couple Creators



Individual creators. One clear story.

Creators bring a place into focus, turning its culture, rhythms and defining moments into a story audiences want to follow. We cast and curate the best creators for your needs.

This is an à la carte option, responsive to quick-turn needs. We find great creators and put them in market.

SAMPLE CAMPAIGN #1

How to Eat New Orleans Without Wasting a Meal

A foodie's New Orleans itinerary becomes the story: where to go first, what's worth waiting for, and the spots that make the city feel unforgettable.

DELIVERABLES

- 1 creator (fly-in)
- 1-5M guaranteed impressions
- 3 in-feed posts per creator
- 12 IG Stories per creator
- 15 images for brand library use



SAMPLE CAMPAIGN #2

The Portland Spots Locals Don't Gatekeep

A Portland local becomes the guide, sharing the coffee shops, restaurants and everyday recommendations visitors would never find on their own.

DELIVERABLES

- 1 creator (local)
- 1-5M guaranteed impressions
- 2-3 in-feed posts per creator
- 12 IG Stories per creator
- 6 Steller Trips

Quick-turn creator work without cutting corners

Solo & Couple Creators offers a fast, focused way to get strong creator work into market, without sacrificing casting, story or quality.

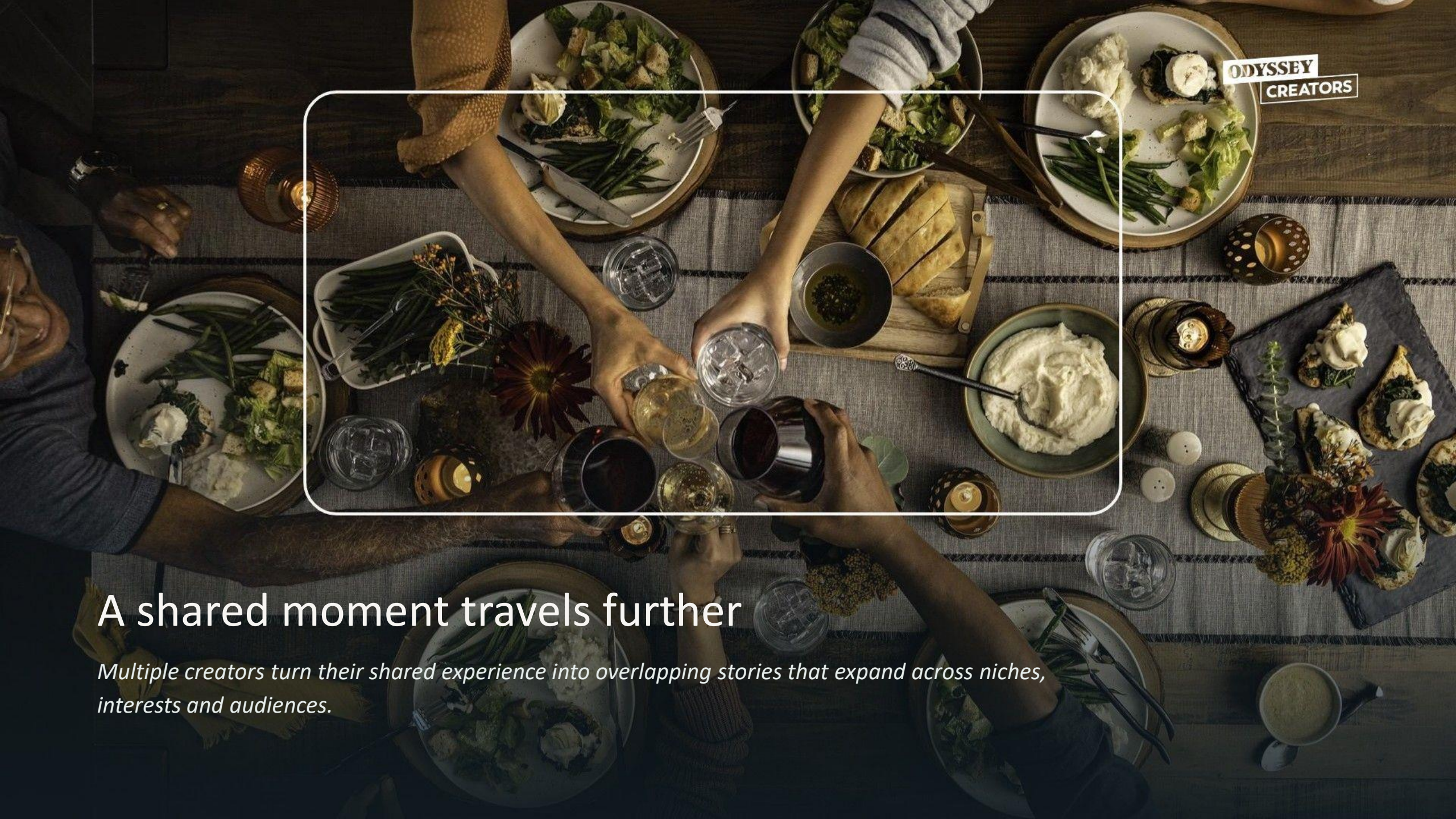


Creator Gathering

Multiple creators. One shared moment.

A destination becomes the center of attention as multiple creators experience it at once, turning a festival, weekend or curated series of events into many overlapping stories that travel across different audiences.

Creators interact directly, cross-post, and share a unique experience.



ODYSSEY
CREATORS

A shared moment travels further

Multiple creators turn their shared experience into overlapping stories that expand across niches, interests and audiences.

How Creator Gatherings work

The strongest gatherings are curated around a shared experience that gives creators something specific to see, do and talk about:

Signature events

A festival, opening weekend or major cultural happening gives the gathering built-in energy and a reason to show up.

Curated access

Private tastings, studio visits and behind-the-scenes experiences that share what makes a destination distinctive.

Hosted experiences

Chefs, artists, makers and guides give creators a memorable way into the destination's food, culture and character.

Designed moments

Bespoke meals, group outings and workshops give creators something visually compelling and socially native to share.

SAMPLE CAMPAIGN #1

When the Smokies Start to Blink

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, North Carolina

For a short window each year, the Great Smoky Mountains pulse with synchronized fireflies after dark. It's technically a mating ritual, but it feels more like the forest putting on a light show.

Firefly Season Gathering

Sample campaign #1

The fireflies anchor the gathering, while surrounding programming in Asheville and the Smokies gives creators multiple ways into the story, from science and food to music, craft and mountain culture.

DELIVERABLES

- 4-5 days of publishing
- 6 creators (fly-in + local)
- 15M guaranteed impressions
- 2-3 in-feed posts per creator
- 12+ IG Stories per creator
- 40+ images for brand library use

SAMPLE CREATOR GATHERING · GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS

One moment. Six directions.

For a short window each year the Smokies pulse with synchronized fireflies. A cast handpicked to take that one moment to six different audiences.



Science communicator

The science behind the
spectacle



Food creator

Asheville's restaurants and
flavors



Music creator

How the mountains shape
the sound



Visual artist

Local makers and handmade
traditions



Outdoor creator

The mountains beyond the
fireflies



Cinematic creator

How the moment is seen
and remembered

Fireflies bring people in. Our programming broadens the story.

Surrounding programming turns a single spectacle into a multifaceted story, with a clear angle for each creator.

Firefly viewing

The emotional centerpiece of the trip, and the reason to be there in this exact window.

Biologist-led access

Adds scientific context and a stronger narrative thread around the spectacle itself.

Hosted Asheville dinner

Roots the gathering in the city's food culture and gives creators a shared social moment.

Maker visit & live music night

Extends the story into Asheville's creative scene: local craft, sound and cultural texture.

Some partners need a creator campaign. Others need a **smarter creator strategy.**

A top-down view of a green backpack and various camping gear laid out on a wooden surface. The backpack is centrally located, surrounded by items like a coffee maker, water bottles, a stove, a compass, and other outdoor equipment. The text "Creator Cast" is overlaid in the center.

Creator Cast

Creator strategy that goes from discovery to booking and beyond

Creators and organic social are the front door of every brand. Creator Cast is for anyone who wants them at the center of their plans, rather than an add-on.

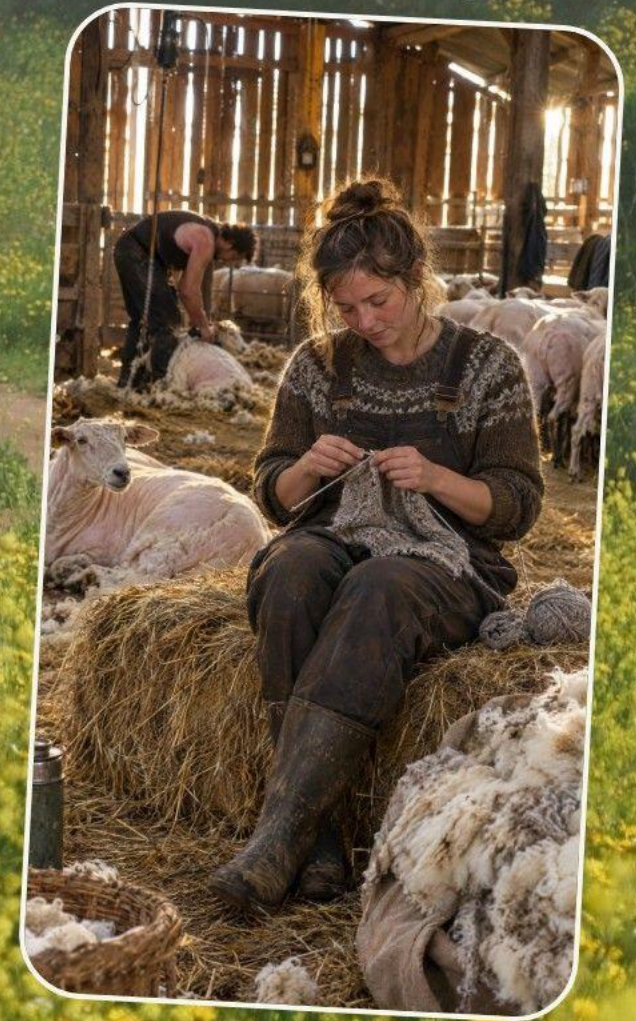
We'll shape your stories, sharpen your platform strategy, support distribution, and refine the work over time.

WORKS WITH

Internal social teams, agency partners, media buyers and creator vendors



A knitter at shearing time. A cyclist in
wildflower season. A food creator
during harvest.



The strongest creator work happens when **real interests meet the right moment.**

A full-page underwater photograph featuring a large whale shark with a white body and dark spots swimming towards the left. A diver in a black wetsuit and yellow fins is swimming alongside the shark's head. The water is clear blue, and many small fish are visible in the background. In the top right corner, there is a logo for 'ODYSSEY CREATORS' in white text on a black rectangular background.

ODYSSEY
CREATORS

Creator Cast helps your creator strategy **keep pace with the platforms** it lives on.

What Creator Cast includes

Each engagement is shaped around the partner, but the work typically lives across four areas:

Audit

Review past creator campaigns, owned channels and performance patterns to see what's working, and what isn't.

Shape

Clarify the story, creative direction and content angles that should guide the next round of work.

Support

Stronger briefs, production guidance, rollout planning and team coordination.

Refine

Use results to adjust the approach over time, making each round stronger than the last.

The long view changes what creator work can do

Planning across seasons, story priorities and channel needs lets Creator Cast match the right creators to the moment, develop new series, and build a coherent year of work.

Cast with intention

Cast around real passions, seasonal relevance, and the stories a market wants to own.

Build recurring formats

Move beyond one-off posts with repeatable creator and owned-channel formats.

Coordinate production

Plan shoots, asset capture and rollout against the calendar, not one campaign at a time.

Improve with each round

Sharpen briefs, improve fit, and make the next wave of work stronger.

When creator work is planned as a program

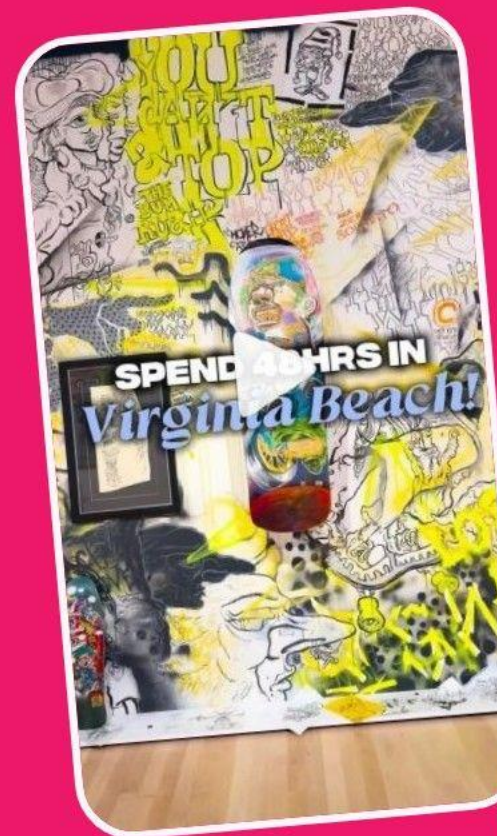
Creator Cast is for brands and destinations that want each round of work to build on the last, with more intentional casting, more coordinated planning, and a clearer through line across the year.

PART 04 • ANNIKA • 3:40

Case studies

Visit Virginia Beach

Visit Reno Tahoe





VISIT VIRGINIA BEACH • SPRING 2026

The goal: show the whole region through local eyes.

Showcase Virginia Beach's diverse attractions to local and drive-market visitors through local, engaging creators. Build awareness, inspire travel intent, drive visits.

\$128K

Budget

4

Hero creators

7M

Guaranteed impressions

Drive

Target market

THE APPROACH

Four creators. Four specific lenses.

Hand-picked creators, from cultural foodies to surf pros, each curated Virginia Beach through their own lens: tasting the food, taking in the surf, and supporting locally owned businesses and tour companies.

Every post pointed back to a video-infused trip itinerary: a roadmap to restaurants, attractions, surf-inspired hotels and insider tips.

VISIT VIRGINIA BEACH

Each lens became its own itinerary.



Rob Kelly
@robkellysurf
87K followers

**How to Have a Super
Surfing Weekend in
Virginia Beach**

**How to Have a Super Surfing
Weekend in Virginia Beach**

23 itinerary requests



Stormy
@_stormyblue
168K followers

**How to Spend a Fantastic
Time in Virginia Beach**

**How to Spend a Fantastic Time in
Virginia Beach**

134 itinerary requests



Selam & Emily
@dmvbite
164K followers

48 Hours in Virginia Beach

48 Hours in Virginia Beach

213 itinerary requests



Tessa & Jason
@dcfoodgod
118K followers

**A Fantastic Foodie
Weekend in Virginia Beach**

**A Fantastic Foodie Weekend in
Virginia Beach**

43 itinerary requests

4 hero creators plus paid amplification posted **58 pieces of content**. All of it pointed back to the trip itineraries.

VISIT VIRGINIA BEACH · RESULTS

8.1M impressions against a 7M guarantee.

\$540,554

Earned media value

806,399

Total reach

8,155,156

Impressions

8.2%

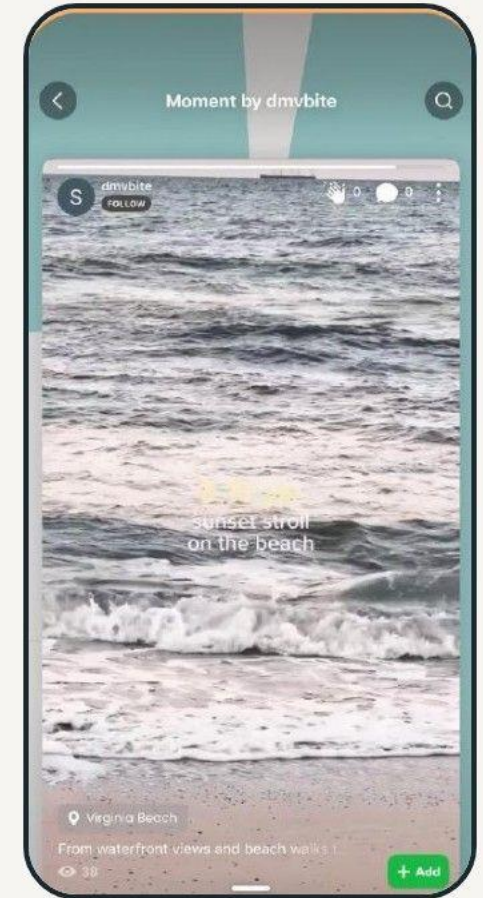
Social engagement rate

43

Trips planned

413

Itinerary requests



Creator content, distributed in-app

WHAT VIRGINIA BEACH LEARNED

Specific lenses turned views into plans.

256

Food and culture drove demand.

The food and culture creators generated 256 of the 413 itinerary requests.

33.9%

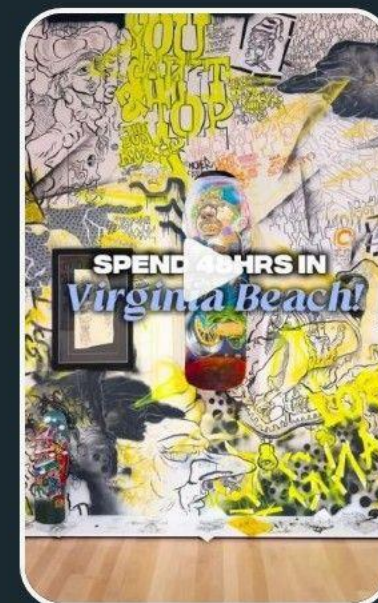
Itineraries hold attention.

Viewers watched videos, explored stops, used the map, shared and saved. Average planned stay: 2.8 days.

4,649

Paid extends the best organic work.

Amplifying creator content drove clicks to the destination page and itineraries, plus 156,044 video views.



153K

views · @_stormyblue



109K

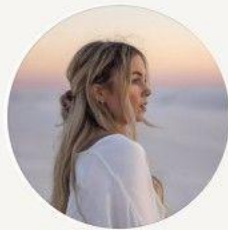
views · @dmvbite

VISIT RENO TAHOE • 2026 CREATOR CAMPAIGN

Seven creators. Seven itineraries. 150+ locations.



Bay Area Kids Go



Michelle Lawrence



The Walton
Adventure Family



Sarowly



Dayla & Danny



Katie



Michele Venlee

196

Posts and stories

8.49M

Impressions

7.84M

Interactions

\$5.5M

Estimated media value, 30x scope

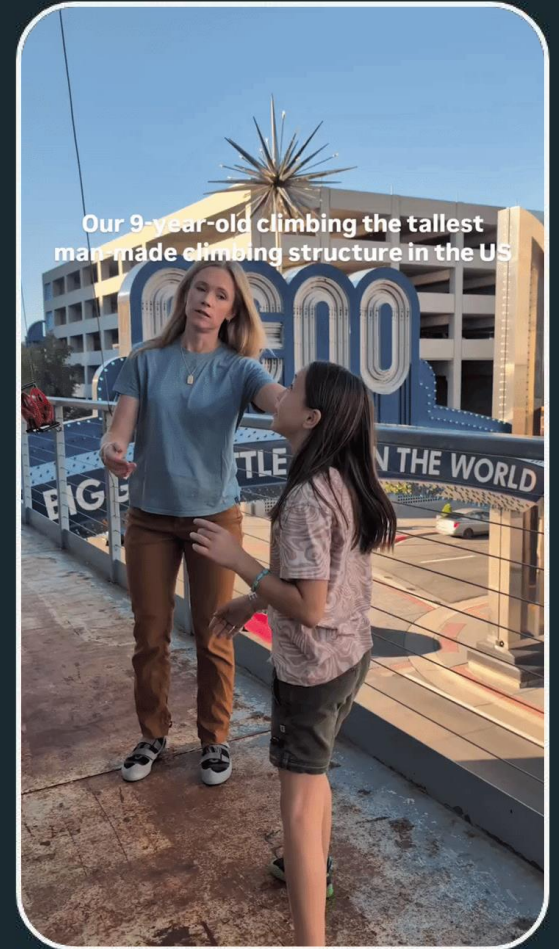
VISIT RENO TAHOE · WHAT WE LEARNED

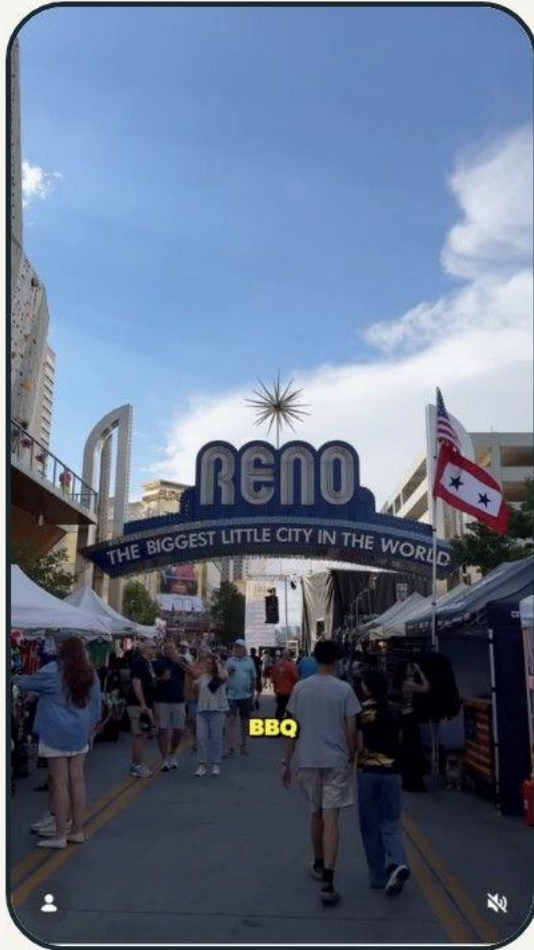
The best post wasn't in the brief.

The Walton Adventure Family filmed their kids on the 164-foot BaseCamp climbing wall at the Whitney Peak Hotel, where they were staying. That one Reel hit **nearly 7 million interactions**. The top comment: *"where is this?"*

TAKEAWAY

Authentic, well-aligned itineraries leave room for unscripted moments, and those moments can become the campaign's top performers.





VISIT RENO TAHOE • WHAT WE LEARNED

Real local events give a trip its hallmark moment.

Michele Venlee: BBQ, Brews & Blues Festival and the Riverwalk Wine Walk

Katie Williams: Reno River Festival

Creators said the events made the trip better, and the content more exciting, while still delivering classic itinerary-guide content.

NEXT

Build trips around seasons and key events, invite top creators back, and secure paid usage rights to promote the same event next year.

Five things to take home.

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 01 | Lead with the detail nobody else can claim. | One weird door beats ten famous landmarks. |
| 02 | Answer the specific question. | Write for the search bar: place + thing + qualifier. |
| 03 | Cast for passion and moment, not follower count. | Real interests meeting the right season. |
| 04 | Give every lens its own itinerary. | And leave room for the unscripted moment. |
| 05 | Anchor stories to real events and seasons. | And secure the rights to use them again next year. |

THE ASSIGNMENT

Now go find your
destination's best
weird thing.

The most specific thing about your place that nobody else can claim.
Brief one creator on it. See what happens.

THANK YOU · Q&A

You have Q's? We have A's!

One thing to remember: **the most specific story you can tell is also the most strategic.**

Dylan Thuras

Head of Creative & Storytelling

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Annika Knutsen

Campaign Manager, Creator Partnerships & Marketing

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