Visit Cook County
Promoting Beyond Our Borders
Communities

- Lutsen-Tofte-Schroeder (LTSA)
- Gunflint Trail (GTA)
- Grand Marais (GMATA)
- Grand Portage (GP)
Attributes & Highlights

Visit Cook County MN is the communities of Lutsen-Tofte-Schroeder (LTTA), Grand Marais (GMATA), Gunflint Trail (GTA), and Grand Portage (GP).

Largest Ski Resort in the Midwest: Lutsen Mountains

America’s Coolest Small Town: Grand Marais

Tallest Waterfall in MN: High Falls at Grand Portage State Park

Largest XC Trail System in North America: Over 400KM groomed cross-country trails
Attributes & Highlights...cont.

Highest Density of Moose:
In Cook County, there are almost more Moose than year-round residents.

Most BWCAW Entry Points:
Of the 87 entry points in the BWCA, 43 are located in Cook County MN.

3rd Largest Arts Economy in MN:

Highest Point & Lowest Point in MN:
Highest: Eagle Mountain at 2,301 ft
Lowest: Lake Superior

And the list goes on....
Specific Goals
Maintaining Individual Areas’ Identity

Visit Cook County continues to work to strengthen each individual area brand while creating a Cook County brand of its own.
Marketing Dollars

With combined lodging tax dollars and marketing efforts we can hire outside marketing and media relations firms and leverage more marketing power.
Individual Tourism Associations

Visit Cook County administration seeks input on the seasonal marketing focus and helps identify the best utilization of the 1% event budget.
History

The history of deliberately marketing the Arrowhead region as a tourism destination began with the Arrowhead Tourism Association in 1924.

1936
Gunflint Trail Tourism Association formed.

1993
Lutsen Tofte Tourism Association formed.

1993-94
Grand Marais Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center Board was formed.

2000
Grand Marais Area Tourism Association (GMATA) incorporated. The functions of the Chamber of Commerce and GMATA were delineated.

2000
The Grand Marais Chamber of Commerce hired a separate director.

June 2007
CCEVB (Cook County Events and Visitors Bureau) formed with implementation of a 1% addition to lodging tax collection and 1 – 3% the recreation tax statute. The current tourism associations assigned a seat(s) on CCEVB Board, to coincide with the amount of tax revenue collected. Lutsen Mountains voluntarily collected a maximum 3% recreation tax and the Grand Portage band was invited to contribute and participate.
March of 2010

Gunflint Trail Association, Lutsen Tofte Tourism Association, Lutsen Mountains Corp., Grand Marais Area Tourism Association, CCEVB and Grand Portage combined efforts to create combined management team for to represent each individual tourism group. Board representatives were appointed and the new group worked on the details regarding staffing and business location. The existing staff was asked to interview for positions and hiring offers were made with the new organization – Visit Cook County.
The following reasons were identified as key:

- Less or no membership dues
- Sufficient staff to free-up time for business owners to focus on running their businesses
- Economy of scale—combined management with decreased overhead and more efficiency
- Rather than one director per organization, implementation of a larger and more specialized staff to develop and focus on specific skill sets
- More marketing dollars
- A combined voice allows for more political leverage especially at the county and state level
Visit Cook County Organizational Structure
2019-20 Board of Directors & Area of Representation

Dave Seaton, Board Chair, GTA
Jennifer Kennedy, Vice Chair, GMATA
Dennis Rysdahl, LTTA, Past Chair
Nancy Burns, LTTA, Secretary
Charles Skinner, LMC, Treasurer
Brian Sherburne, Grand Portage
John Fredrickson, GTA
Jim Vick, LTTA
Thom McAleer, LTTA
Emily Haussner, LTTA
Mike Larson, LTTA
Dave Tersteeg, GMATA
Beth Kennedy, GMATA
Visit Cook County Staff

Linda Kratt, Executive Director
Molly O’Neill, Administrative Manager
Maggie Barnard, Communications Manager
Kjersti Vick, Marketing Manager
Lily Nelson-Pedersen, Events Resource Coord.

Carah Thomas, Information Center Manager
Carolyn Higgins, Information Center-GM
Dan Helmerson, Information Center-GM
Chris Powell, Information Center-GM
Aaron Carlson, Information Center-GM
Bill Wehesler, Information Center-Tofte
Lodging Tax
Lodging Tax

Lodging businesses itemize the 1% event tax from the 3% lodging tax

- The 1% is paid directly to the County, who in turn pays Visit Cook County
- Businesses may pay monthly, quarterly, or annually
- Businesses are held accountable and lodging tax amounts can be approximated/verified by sales tax paid

Each association (per their Bylaws) has the discretion to distribute the 3%. The County holds a 1% administrative fee for handling the disbursements. The Executive Director is required to report annually to the County Commissioners regarding the use of the 1% event portion of the tax.
Cook County Chamber of Commerce
- Advocacy
- Public policy
- Economic development
- Networking
- Talent development

Visit Cook County
- Tourism marketing
- Brand awareness
- Social media
- Public relations
- Advertising
- Event promotion
- Visitor Information Centers

A Strong Cook County Economy
Events
Events

- The events budget is 1% of the 4% lodging tax collection
  - Lutsen Mountains and Grand Portage voluntarily contribute additional funds
- This 1% tax statute provides flexibility for funding tourism initiatives that are not marketing related such as events and activities that enhance visitor experiences
- VCC works in collaboration with event stakeholders to produce events as our staffing capacity is small
Events

• Some events are only funded by the association that hosts the event:
  • Lutsen 99er is funded by Lutsen Mountains and LTTA
  • Boundary Waters Expo is funded by GTA
  • Moose Madness is funded by GMATA
• Grand Marais is the community with the most event and festival identity. The GMATA board offers, by annual application process, $13,000 in marketing grants to non-profit organizations
• Some events have allocations from each board (example: The Lake Superior Storm Festival)
Events

- Some events bolster our greater marketing initiatives.
Events

• Some events bolster seasonal events
Marketing-
It’s What We Do Best!
Our Marketing Partners

Giant Voices
Seasonal Marketing
Print Ad Series
Marketing

Transit Shelter Takeovers

Marketing Excellence Award
Marketing
Digital Billboards
Marketing

Bus Wraps
Partnerships
Creative Execution
Lutsen Mountains
Social Media
#donorthmn

Facebook
- @VisitCookCountyMN
- @GrandMaraisMN
- @Lutsen-Tofte
- @GunflintTrailAssociation

Twitter
- @CookCoVisitor
- @GrandMaraisMN
- @Lutsen_Tofte

Instagram
- @DoNorthMN

YouTube
- @visitcookcounty