



Visit Bend Wins First Ever Leave No Trace Destination of the Year Award

For Immediate Release—December 22, 2023: Visit Bend announces it has won the 2023 [Leave No Trace](#) Destination of the Year Award, which recognizes a tourism entity that embodies what it means to lead, promote, educate, and advocate for responsible recreation and visitation practices.

According to Leave No Trace, a non-profit organization committed to protecting the planet by providing science, research, and [simple guidelines](#), Visit Bend is a shining example of a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) that embodies the Leave No Trace mission by demonstrating the Leave No Trace ethics, doing this through its organizational commitment to effect positive contributions within its communities, cultures and natural places. Through Visit Bend’s actions and commitments to bring Leave No Trace education to its visitors and residents, Leave No Trace considers it a true champion for emphasizing conservation as a solution for “today, tomorrow, and for years to come.” This is the first year Leave No Trace has awarded a Destination of the Year Award.

“Visit Bend is committed to educating visitors and residents by making Leave No Trace practices a through-line in its content marketing strategies,” said Faith Overall, Community Engagement Manager, Leave No Trace. “They demonstrated their innovation by collaborating with Visit Central Oregon, welcoming all nine affiliate DMOs to share the messaging through the Central Oregon region’s estimated 4.5 million annual visitors and weaving Leave No Trace ethics throughout its marketing

efforts, ensuring every photo and video shoot follows the Leave No Trace principles. Their status as Destination of the Year is well earned.”

Visit Bend was the first DMO in the state of Oregon to create a partnership with Leave No Trace, creating seven Bend-specific Leave No Trace principles with the support of local land managers. This effort resulted in visitors seeing consistent messaging throughout the region, creating a synergy of brand awareness that can be impactful for adopting Leave No Trace ethics. Visit Bend also partnered with other local nonprofits, the Forest Service, and State Parks to ensure they supported the efforts to spread the word about Bend’s specific Leave No Trace principles.

“We are proud of this designation because it shows our commitment to stewardship of our resources, a huge priority at Visit Bend,” said Serena Bishop Gordon, Visit Bend’s Sustainability Director. “We believe that a focus on caring for the outdoor resources that so many enjoy will help our city and other communities in our area thrive economically, socially, and environmentally in the future. The Leave No Trace principles align perfectly with this philosophy.”

Visit Bend’s leadership also connected Bend Parks and Recreation and the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council with Leave No Trace so that they might, in concert, pursue the Leave No Trace Spotlights Program grant, which they received and allowed them to connect with residents and visitors, educating them about why Leave No Trace principles were so critical to the health of the Deschutes River.

“We were thrilled to partner with Visit Bend and Bend Park and Recreation District to be a part of Leave No Trace’s Spotlight Program,” said Kolleen Miller, Education Director at Upper Deschutes Watershed Council. “Our largest annual event, the Deschutes River Cleanup, was the keystone community stewardship project that showcased our mutual commitment to connecting our community to the protection and active stewardship of the Deschutes River and its sensitive riparian areas. We were

excited to have Leave No Trace join us for an inspiring weekend of stewardship activities.”

Visit Bend’s social media posts supported the Leave No Trace effort in a variety of ways, including promoting partners that use Leave No Trace principles but also hosting and promoting influencers who will abide by Leave No Trace efforts during the course of their stay in Bend, including the criteria such as requiring at least two pieces of contracted content to include the Leave no Trace messaging, the use of the #roambetterbend hashtag to align social content with responsible recreation messaging, and other tags for partners to keep on the outdoor packs such as Leave No Trace stickers as takeaways for the 7 Bend-specific principles. Since July 2022, Visit Bend has hosted over 40 influencers, reaching nearly 12 million viewers on social media platforms worldwide.

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ABOUT VISIT BEND: Visit Bend is a non-membership, non-profit economic development organization dedicated to promoting tourism responsibly on behalf of the City of Bend. We’re a leading provider of information on Bend, Oregon hotels, restaurants, activities, and Oregon vacation planning. To learn more or to order a complimentary Official Visitor Guide to Bend, contact Visit Bend at 1-800-949-6086 or visit visitbend.com

ABOUT LEAVE NO TRACE: Using the power of science and research, education for all, and stewardship to support and protect nature, Leave No Trace is on a mission to ensure a sustainable future for the outdoors and the planet. Leave No Trace’s state and regional tourism partnerships work to provide a consistent message of sustainable tourism to visitors in states and communities across the country. These partnerships provide unique opportunities to

expose outdoor visitors to Leave No Trace first while planning their visits and then at specific touch-points all throughout their trip. Learn more at: www.LNT.org.