

# **ARCATA HOTEL GIFT CARD PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION**

APRIL 2026

## **Overview**

This memo provides a summary of the proposed 2026 Gift Card Marketing Promotion that will be presented to the Arcata Lodging Alliance (ALA) Board on April 17, 2026. The program is designed to drive incremental overnight stays across Arcata hotel properties by pairing a compelling consumer incentive with a targeted, high-impact media strategy.

Pending Board approval, the initial campaign is expected to launch in May and June 2026. While the media campaign itself is time-bound, the gift card incentive has been structured to provide ongoing value, allowing participating hotels to continue using the cards as a promotional tool well beyond the initial campaign window.

## **Campaign Objective**

At its core, the campaign is designed to increase overnight bookings and encourage longer stays by attracting visitors from outside the immediate region. The strategy prioritizes travelers from the Bay Area, Sacramento, and other Northern California markets who are actively seeking multi-day getaways centered around outdoor experiences.

By focusing on these higher-value segments, the campaign aims to generate incremental demand rather than simply shifting existing travel patterns. The messaging and media approach are built to meet potential visitors at key decision-making moments, using clear, value-driven incentives to motivate action.

## **Program Concept: \$100 Gift Card Incentive**

The centerpiece of the proposed program is a straightforward and highly marketable offer: guests who book a stay at participating Arcata hotels receive a \$100 gift card.

Gift cards will be delivered to Arcata hotels within two to three weeks of order placement and activated upon arrival, and will be distributed based on the total number of rooms at each property. Because the cards do not carry an expiration date, individual properties can deploy them not only during the campaign period but also in future promotions as needed throughout the year.

This approach ensures that the investment continues to provide value over time, while also giving hotel operators a practical tool to support occupancy during softer periods.

### **Messaging Strategy**

The campaign will take a flexible, performance-driven approach to messaging, allowing for multiple creative directions to run concurrently and inform ongoing optimization. For example, one direction will lean into a clear, direct value proposition (for example, “Stay in Arcata. Get \$100 Back.”). However, other creative directions will frame the incentive more emotionally, such as positioning it as a way to “cover the cost of gas” while enjoying the Redwoods. By testing both approaches in-market, the campaign will identify which messages resonate most strongly and adjust accordingly to maximize performance.

### **Media Strategy and Tactics**

The campaign utilizes a fully integrated media strategy designed to reach potential visitors across multiple channels. A regional sports partnership with the San Francisco Giants provides access to a highly engaged Bay Area audience through email, digital placements, and radio broadcasts. Digital media across Meta (Facebook and Instagram) and Google will drive engagement and conversion through targeted ads, retargeting, and high-intent search and video placements. Together, these channels create a cohesive, full-funnel strategy from awareness through booking.

### **Campaign Timing and Targeting**

The proposed campaign is structured as an initial eight-week media flight, with a planned launch in May 2026, pending Board approval. The campaign will focus on travelers located within a four- to five-hour drive of Humboldt County, ensuring that messaging reaches audiences most likely to convert.

### **Investment Summary**

The total proposed investment for the program is \$896,250, with approximately 80% of this amount going directly towards the cost of the gift cards themselves. The allocation prioritizes a meaningful consumer incentive while ensuring sufficient media support to drive measurable results.

### **Key Benefits of the Proposed Approach**

The promotion is designed to deliver both immediate and long-term value. The simplicity of the \$100 incentive makes it easy for consumers to understand and act upon, while the targeted media strategy ensures the message reaches audiences most likely to travel. At

the same time, the gift card structure's flexibility allows participating hotels to extend the program's impact beyond the initial campaign window.

### **Next Steps**

Pending approval at the April 17 Board meeting, Misfit will be creative development for the campaign and production will proceed immediately thereafter, with media activation anticipated in May 2026.

### **Conclusion**

The 2026 Gift Card Marketing Promotion represents a focused and practical approach to driving overnight visitation in Arcata. By combining a strong, value-driven incentive with a strategic media plan, the campaign is positioned to generate incremental demand while equipping local hotels with a flexible promotional tool they can continue to leverage over time.