

Flamingo Lodge & Restaurant in Everglades National Park PR Opening Case Study



Lodge & Restaurant Opening

THE ASK

Benhaim PR was hired to manage the PR campaign for the opening of Flamingo Lodge & Restaurant, the only hotel within Everglades National Park. Both are operated by Guest Services, Inc., an authorized concessioner of the National Park Service.

THE PROJECT:

- **Media Relations:** We handled all aspects of media relations, from pitching relevant media to preparing for interviews to follow-ups to fact-checking.
- **Partner Focus:** The ability to manage partner relationships was critical, as we worked in tandem with the National Park Service to align messaging. We also worked closely with the Visit Miami and Visit Florida Keys tourism boards. The lodge and restaurant are uniquely located in Monroe County, within the Florida Keys, but often accessed from Miami, so that was an additional nuance.

On the following pages, see the results achieved in the six-month PR opening campaign.



The Results

- **Total Exposure:** The combined pieces have a huge reach of around **1 billion**, spanning local, regional, national, and international audiences. Key placements include **Travel + Leisure** and **USA Today**.
- **New York Times Highlight:** Flamingo, Florida was the only Florida destination - and one of only 10 U.S. destinations on the coveted annual list, published each January.
- **International Reach:** In addition to the local South Florida and national markets, we handled media relations for the key Latin American audience. A media visit in collaboration with Visit Miami led to a full feature on the Everglades in Folha de Sao Paulo, Brazil's biggest newspaper. Additionally, we worked with Visit Miami on an eco-friendly press trip for LatAm media, leading to coverage through spring 2024 and beyond.
- **Round-Ups Success with Forbes and National Geographic:** In addition to feature pieces, we also leveraged opportunities for inclusion in relevant round-up articles. We pitched and were included in a round-up of eco-lodges in Forbes. We also handled an inquiry from National Geographic, resulting in inclusion in a list of national park lodges to visit in the winter.

98

Media Placements

Placements ranged from local to regional to national outlets, including print, online, and broadcast.

1B

Total Potential Reach

Total combined potential reach of all media coverage secured.

9

Goal Outlets Secured

Placements in 9 top-tier goal outlets were secured in the six-month opening campaign.

27K

Press Release Page Views

The grand opening announcement was viewed more than 27,000 times - within the top three of all park press releases since 2016.

Sometimes, they don't even look like a hotel

Often, ecolodges don't look anything like a regular hotel. Consider the newly reopened [Flamingo Lodge](#) in Everglades National Park. The original Flamingo Lodge, built in the 1960s, was destroyed by hurricanes. The new Flamingo Lodge and its adjacent restaurant are made from shipping containers that are raised off the ground. But you can still enjoy sunrise and sunset views over the Florida Bay.



The best winter getaways for thrill seekers and stargazers

Flamingo Lodge, Everglades National Park, Florida

Winter fun: Birdwatching, hiking, or paddling

Shipping containers—some elevated on stilts—were used to construct the new [Flamingo Lodge](#) near the southernmost visitor center of [Florida’s Everglades National Park](#). The only hotel in the park replaces earlier structures felled by hurricanes. In addition to bright, simple rooms, guests find an indoor-outdoor restaurant and views of Florida Bay.

From the lodge, hike the [Guy Bradley](#) or [Coastal Prairie](#) trails to spot herons, egrets, ibis, and spoonbills. Or rent canoes or kayaks and paddle through mangrove tunnels and rivers of grass on the 99-mile-long [Everglades Wilderness Waterway](#).

The new lodge “really is beautiful,” says Charlie Arazoza of the [Alliance for Florida’s National Parks](#). “The birdwatching out of Flamingo is incredible and the best place to see a crocodile in Florida is at the marina.”

Florida’s Everglades National Park Is Getting Its First Hotel — Take a Peek Inside

New York Times 'Best Places to Go' list for 2024 includes this Florida gem close to Naples

Visiting the Everglades? New hotel offers AC, bug protection and elevation from storms



‘Subtle on the views,’ big on wildlife: What to know about Everglades National Park



EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK
A look inside the Everglades' new, long-awaited Flamingo Lodge



Look inside the newly opened Flamingo Lodge, the only hotel in Everglades National Park

The park's iconic Miami Modern visitor center got a breezy refresh, too.



UNITED STATES

Everglades Park is a wild paradise just an hour from Miami

Region lives rebirth after years suffering from precarious constructions damaged by hurricanes



Everglades National Park opens Flamingo Lodge & Restaurant

Reservations now accepted for stays starting Nov. 1



Visiting the Everglades? New hotel offers AC, bug protection and elevation from storms



Flamingo Lodge, a new hotel, elevates Everglades National Park outpost



Long-closed Flamingo Lodge & Restaurant reopens in Everglades National Park (Photos)



Experience nature in comfort as Flamingo Lodge at Everglades National Park reopens

Travel + Leisure

We starting teasing the news to Travel + Leisure early, with an initial reachout in early August. Once we had a press release distribution date, we gave them a heads-up a week in advance. Travel + Leisure asked for the exclusive. Our team managed the conditions of the exclusive between the outlet, the concessionaire, and the National Park Service, and provided the information under embargo. The piece published just after the press release went live on the NPS website.

In total, the Travel + Leisure announcement of the lodge and restaurant opening was the 10th top referring site to the Flamingo Everglades homepage between August 2023 and January 2024.

This late September coverage kicked off the opening coverage, which continued through the official opening on November 1.

Readership: about 16 million unique monthly visitors

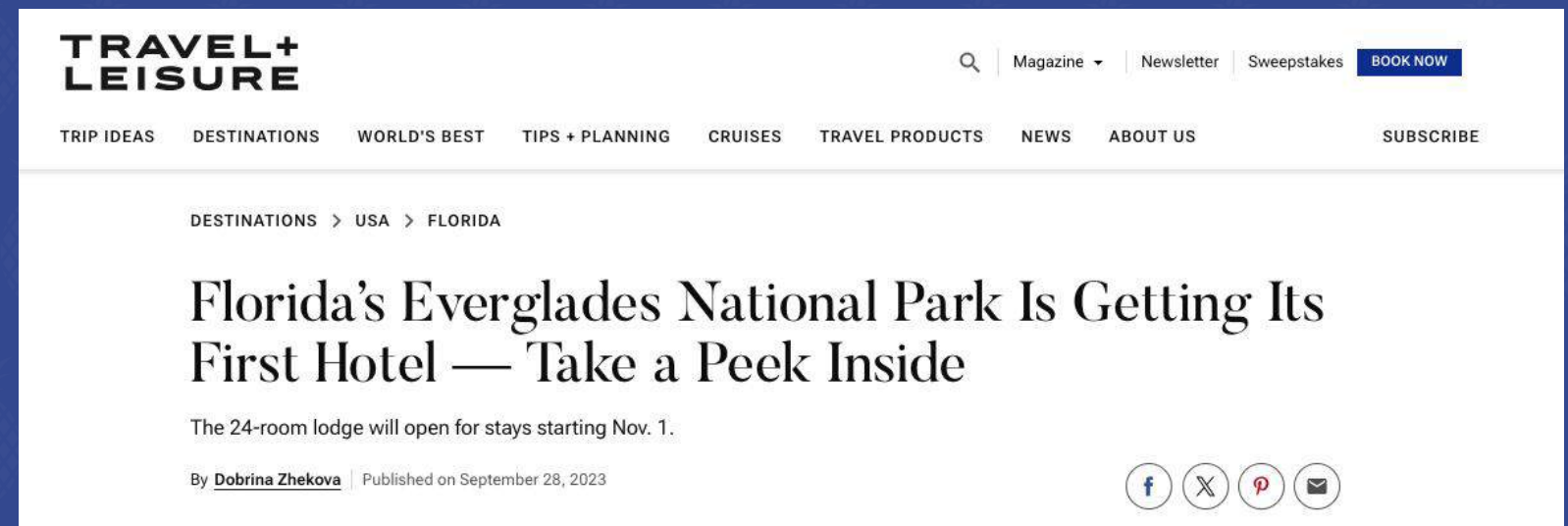


PHOTO: COURTESY OF FLAMINGO LODGE

Travelers heading to [Florida's Everglades National Park](#), a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the world's largest wetlands, can book a stay at the park's newest — and only — hotel. It will officially open its doors on Nov. 1.

Overlooking the scenic Florida Bay, [Flamingo Lodge & Restaurant](#) will feature 24 guest rooms built from repurposed shipping containers, perched on stilts, and raised off the ground with stairs. (Four rooms are ADA-accessible via an elevator.)

The rooms vary from studios to one- and two-bedroom suites that accommodate up to six guests. Each room has a private balcony with seating facing east and tropical decor with plenty of Florida references, such as vivid blues and greens and palm tree prints.

New York Times

On the day of the press release announcement in late September, we pitched the news of the Flamingo Lodge & Restaurant opening to the Miami bureau chief for the New York Times. We included links to past New York Times coverage on Flamingo Lodge. The editors were potentially interested in it for places to visit in 2024, and asked to set up an interview in October with an Everglades NPS ranger. As that required additional approvals, we helped manage that process and drafted talking points for approval. We then offered assistance with the photographer for his December visit. The piece went live in January, appearing in an interactive round-up online and in the Sunday print paper. A social media spotlight was an added bonus.

Notably, the inclusion managed to mention numerous key messages, including the new visitor center and existing eco-tents - plus the appeal for birders, anglers, and stargazers.

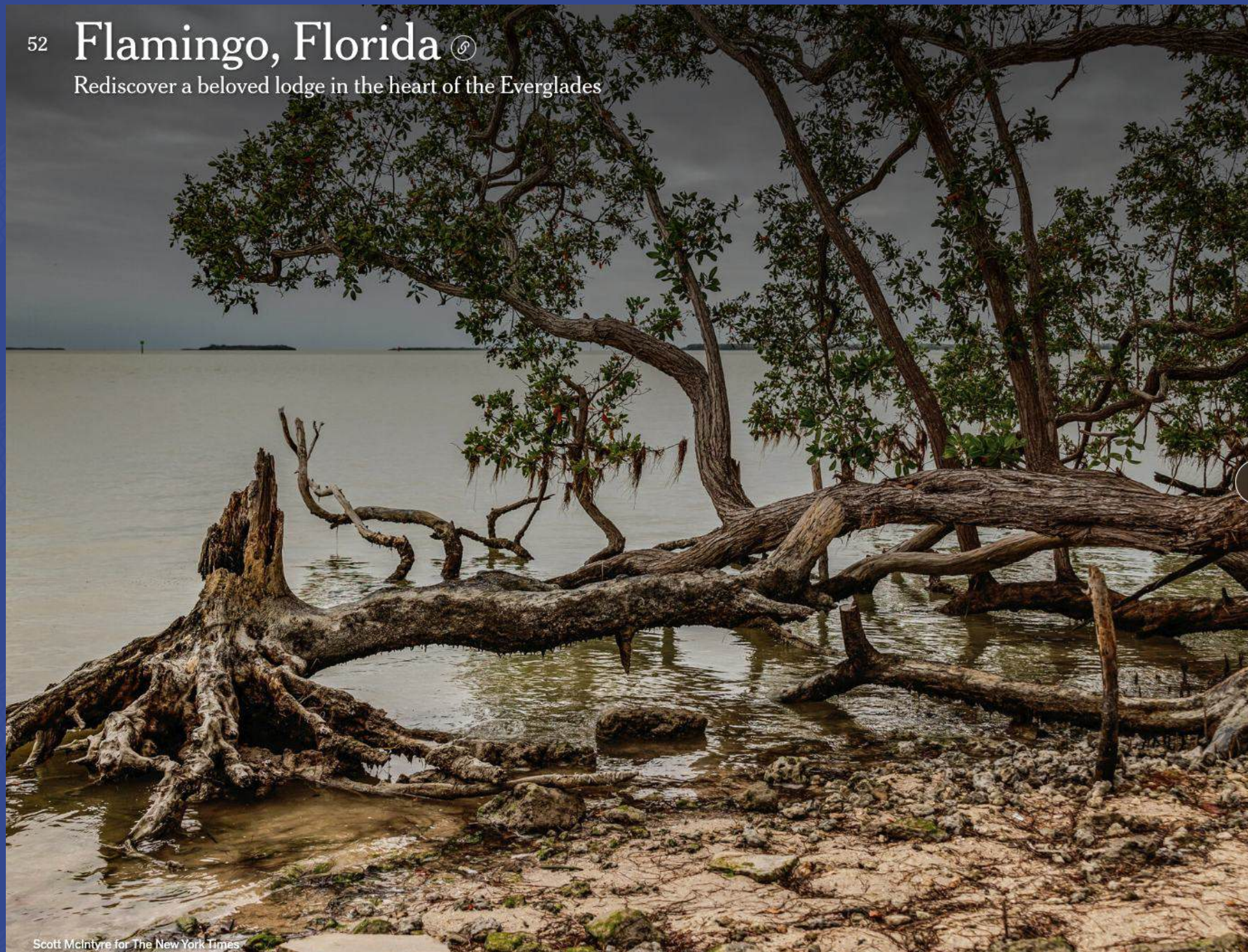
Audience: 164 million total audience (across print, online, and social media)



52

Flamingo, Florida

Rediscover a beloved lodge in the heart of the Everglades



Scott McIntyre for The New York Times

FLAMINGO

Full List



Family, Nature, Revitalization

The vast beauty of the Florida Everglades is perhaps best appreciated at night, when the national park is all constellations and creatures. But for those who don't care to brave the elements (or the mosquitoes) while camping outside or in an R.V., it has been impossible to stay anywhere with air-conditioning since two hurricanes destroyed the park's only hotel in 2005.

That changed in November with the reopening of the Flamingo Lodge, now elevated and made out of sturdy shipping containers. A renovated visitor center and restaurant have been built to better withstand sea level rise caused by climate change.

The return of the beloved facilities, along with glamping "eco-tents," has given birders, stargazers and anglers a reason to reconnect with the outpost of Flamingo, on mainland Florida's southernmost tip and less than two hours by car from Miami.

And if you're lucky, you may spot flamingos in Florida Bay.

— Patricia Mazzei

CREDITS

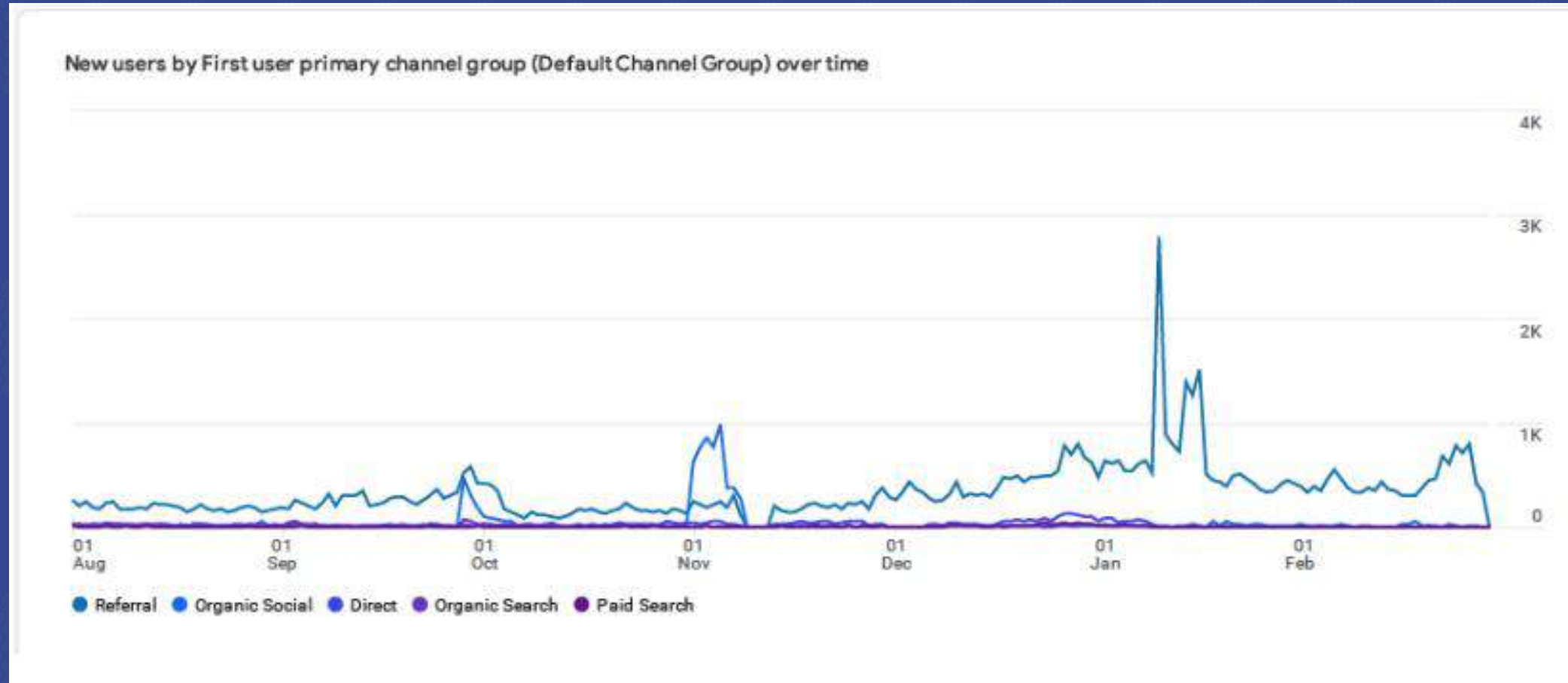
Design and Production

Nico Chilla and Gabriel Gianordoli

Editing

Danial Adkison, Jake Doherty, Eric Dyer, Wendy Fawthrop, Elisabeth Goodridge, Stephen Hiltner, Ken

Flamingo Everglades Website Traffic



The above Google Analytics graph shows the web traffic spikes on the Flamingo Everglades website as a result of media coverage. Below are the corresponding events:

- Late September through early October was from the Travel + Leisure announcement
- Early November was from the various media coverage secured of the lodge now open, with top referrers including the Miami Herald, Time Out Miami, Axios Miami, WPLG (local ABC affiliate), and WSVN (local FOX affiliate)
- The first early January spike was from the New York Times piece going live online, followed by the print version and the Folha de Sao Paulo piece going live.
 - The second spike around late February was from the Miami Herald online piece

National Park Service Website Traffic



In total, the above press release announcement of the new lodge, restaurant, and visitor center secured more than

27,800 page views from August 2023 through January 2024.

For context:

- More than 7,000 of those visits came from the New York Times article
- The Flamingo Grand Opening was Everglades National Park's 3rd highest press release by page views since August 2016
- The press release is in the top 20 page views of all press releases across all National Park Service releases nationwide

Visitor Center Data

As the grand opening announcement also celebrated the new Guy Bradley Visitor Center as well as the new Flamingo Lodge & Restaurant, it's important to note the impact on the visitor center.

- **Visitor Center Visitation:** From August 2023 through January 2024, the Guy Bradley Visitor Center welcomed more than double the visitors than the same period in 2022 into 2023. This demonstrates the interest in the new visitor center and in Flamingo overall.
- **Grand Opening Celebration:** Media coverage leading up to the Grand Opening Celebration of the new Flamingo Lodge & Restaurant and Guy Bradley Visitor Center helped increase interest and exposure. **Pre-event coverage included a broadcast and online segment with NBC Miami and a front page, feature story in the Miami Herald and online.** About 350 attendees came to celebrate the two new park facilities.

33K

More Visitor Center Visits & Inquiries

The new visitor center welcomed more than 33,000 more visitors and phone calls during this time frame than last year.

4.5K

More Visitors Engaged

Thanks to the increased visitation at the visitor center, the park was able to engage more than 6,000 visitors at the Flamingo location, 4.5X the previous year.

120

More Visitor Center Programs

Thanks to more staff, space, and visitors, the new visitor center was able to offer more programs.

350

Attendees at Grand Opening Celebration

Attendees celebrated the opening of the new visitor center and lodge.

“Melissa and her team expertly handled the Flamingo Lodge opening, managing to generate interest from numerous local, national, and international outlets. They integrated easily with our National Park Service partners to manage a steady stream of media coverage pre- and post-opening. We are very impressed with the results and look forward to our continued work to promote Flamingo Everglades as an ideal destination for the outdoor adventurer.”

NICO FORIS

Chief Executive Officer, Guest Services Inc. (parent company of Flamingo Lodge & Restaurant)