



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mendocino Railway
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MENDOCINO RAILWAY HONORED WITH PRESTIGIOUS 2026 VISIT CALIFORNIA POPPY AWARD FOR *BEST CONTENT MARKETING*

FORT BRAGG, SACRAMENTO & SANTA PAULA, CA (March 12, 2026) – Mendocino Railway is proud to announce that it was honored as the *Best Content Marketing* winner in the 2026 Visit California Poppy Awards this week. Every two years, the Poppy Awards recognize excellence in tourism marketing and destination stewardship for California, identifying the most creative and impactful tourism campaigns from across the state. For 2026, Visit California received more than 170 campaign submissions from destinations, attractions, and other tourism marketing organizations.

Mendocino Railway was recognized as a finalist in three of the Poppy Awards' eight categories—*Best Content Marketing*, *Best Influencer Campaign*, and *Best Strategic Partnership*. Mendocino Railway won the *Best Content Marketing* category for a tourism business for its Skunk Train viral video, [*The Whizzle Stop: The Swankiest Restroom on Rails.*](#)

"We are incredibly grateful to the Poppy Awards judges for this recognition," said David Morrissey, Chief Marketing Officer of Mendocino Railway. "California's tourism community is one of the most creative and collaborative in the world—and it means a great deal to see our team's work recognized alongside so many inspiring campaigns."

"California's tourism industry continues to set the standard for creativity and excellence," said Caroline Beteta, president and CEO of Visit California. "This year's Poppy Award winners have demonstrated exceptional innovation in their campaigns, showcasing the incredible diversity and vitality that makes California the nation's top travel destination."

Mendocino Railway is committed to connecting travelers with the beauty and heritage of the Golden State through its train and Railbike experiences at the Skunk Train, the River Fox Train, and the Sunburst Railbikes. Winning the *Best Content Marketing* Poppy Award highlights Mendocino Railway's ability to pair historic rail travel with modern storytelling.

"This award reflects both the uniqueness of Mendocino Railway's experiences and the passion our team shares for welcoming new travelers to California," Morrissey added.

“We’re especially proud to have been recognized as a finalist across three Poppy Awards categories for work that promoted smaller California communities—like Mendocino County, West Sacramento, and Santa Paula—against much larger tourism and destination marketing giants.”

Only a few tourism organizations earned multiple finalist selections in 2026. In addition to Mendocino Railway, those organizations included Visit San Luis Obispo, Visit Newport Beach, Visit Oceanside, and the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance. For a full list of 2026 Poppy Award winners, please see [Visit California’s press release](#).

ABOUT MENDOCINO RAILWAY’S RECOGNIZED CAMPAIGNS:

Best Content Marketing: Winner

The Whizzle Stop: The Swankiest Restroom on Rails

By leaning into humor and parody-style video, the campaign transformed the addition of an everyday guest amenity into a memorable brand moment.

[Watch the YouTube video](#)

[Watch the Instagram reel](#)

Best Influencer Campaign: Finalist

All Aboard Creators: Influencer Partnerships Across Mendocino Railway

All Aboard Creators brought together more than 150 content creators to share authentic stories that drove more than 20 million views, strong audience engagement, and ticket sales.

[View a video showcasing the campaign](#)

Best Strategic Partnership: Finalist

All Aboard Together: Mendocino Railway + Amtrak San Joaquins

This collaboration demonstrated how transportation and destination experiences can work together to promote rail-based travel while expanding reach and engagement for both brands.

ABOUT MENDOCINO RAILWAY

Mendocino Railway is a federally recognized Class III public utility and common carrier railroad providing freight, excursion, and commuter passenger services across Northern California. Formed in 2004 with approval from the Surface Transportation Board, Mendocino Railway owns and operates several lines, including the California Western Railroad in Mendocino County—home to the world-famous Skunk Train—and the River Fox Train along the Sacramento River in Yolo County. Mendocino Railway is committed to safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible rail operations. The company continues to invest in infrastructure, sustainability, and community partnerships that preserve California’s rail legacy and support the regions it serves. For more information, visit www.mendocinorailway.com

ABOUT VISIT CALIFORNIA

Visit California is a nonprofit organization with a mission to develop and maintain marketing programs—in partnership with the state's travel industry—that keep California top-of-mind as a premier travel destination. For more information about Visit California and for a free California Official State Visitor's Guide, go to visitcalifornia.com. For story ideas, media information, downloadable images, video and more, go to media.visitcalifornia.com.

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