§5B-2I-4(h)

The West Virginia Tourism Office shall submit a report annually to the Governor, Secretary of Commerce and the Legislature about the development of the tourism industry in the state and the necessary funding required by the state to continue the development of the tourism industry.
Development of the Tourism Industry

The tourism industry in West Virginia is strong and on a growth trajectory.
West Virginia’s Tourism Industry is Strong
Unmatched outdoor recreation
Scenic beauty in all nine travel regions
An affordable and safe place to visit and stay
Natural paradise near urbanized east coast
Traveler Profile

**2.7 Nights**
Average Length of Stay

**87%**
Of annual visitation comes from returning visitors

**$449**
Average spend per visitor

**53%**
Of visitors report a household income of less than $50,000 per year

**Reason for Visit**
- **Family**: 45%
- **Outdoors**: 9%
- **Tour**: 10%
- **Casino/Gaming**: 6%

**Top DMAs of Origin**
- Washington, DC, 11%
- Charleston-Huntington, 9%
- Pittsburgh, PA, 6%
- Cleveland, OH, 4%
- Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill, 4%
- New York, NY, 4%

**State of Origin**
- OH 13%
- WV 21%
- VA 12%

Source: Longwoods International, 2018
West Virginia’s Tourism Industry is Growing
Internal Indicators: Web Traffic

36.47% more pageviews
32.09% longer average session duration
15.07% more users
13.55% more sessions
Internal Indicators: Social Channels

- 21,820 new Facebook likes for a total of more than 264,000
- 10,000 new Instagram followers for total of 40,000
- 7,500 new Twitter followers for a total of nearly 15,000
- Doubled YouTube followers to 2,000
- 50,000 uses of #AlmostHeaven across all trackable platforms
Internal Indicators: Visitor Counts

3.96 million visitors came through the eight welcome centers managed by the Tourism Office compared to 2.9 million in 2017.

36.55% more visitors than 2017
Revenue Reporting: Economic Impact

• Traveler spending in West Virginia grew in 2017 after four years of steady decline, and that growth was on track to continue in 2018.

• West Virginia’s growth rate of 3.9% was 30% higher than the national rate of 3.0%.

• Travel spending excluding gaming grew even more at 5.0%.

$4.3 billion
DIRECT CONSUMER SPENDING

$519 million
STATE AND LOCAL TAXES

45,000
TOURISM-SUPPORTED JOBS

Source: Dean Runyan Associates, 2018
Revenue Reporting: Hotel Occupancy

• Hotel occupancy data was positive every month in 2018 with double the previous year’s increases according to a national survey of hotels and motels.

• The average daily rate grew slightly, reversing a trend of decline.

• Higher demand and room rates combined created a projected revenue increase of 13.5%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupancy</td>
<td>-10.28%</td>
<td>5.87%</td>
<td>10.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Daily Rate</td>
<td>-3.94%</td>
<td>-0.61%</td>
<td>2.04%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revenue Per Available Room</td>
<td>-13.81%</td>
<td>5.23%</td>
<td>13.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply (rooms available)</td>
<td>2.64%</td>
<td>1.23%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand (rooms sold)</td>
<td>-7.91%</td>
<td>7.18%</td>
<td>11.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>-11.54%</td>
<td>6.53%</td>
<td>13.49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Smith Travel Research
Revenue Reporting: State Parks Sales

- State Park online sales showed strong growth going into the second year of its new central reservation platform, which went live in mid-August 2017.
- Online sales increased 25% September-December compared to same period in 2017.
- December online sales were up 63% year-over-year thanks to promotions and email marketing.
Strategic Efforts

A new advertising campaign, a new cooperative advertising program, industry development, and public relations efforts contributed to growth in 2018.
Almost Heaven Advertising Campaign

• The Tourism Office launched a new research-based state advertising campaign in April 2018.

• “Take Me Home, Country Roads,” John Denver’s classic anthem that christened the state “almost heaven,” serves as the creative and emotional centerpiece of the campaign.
  • Acquiring the rights to use the song was a major milestone in 2017.
  • Research suggests hearing the song makes West Virginia seem more appealing to consumers as a destination.
IS IT A HIKE

OR A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY?

almost heaven

Can a rocky trail offer a path to new awareness? Transformations happen in West Virginia. Across rolling hills. Through unspoiled wilderness. Along clear-running streams. Here, that yearning to feel your spirit move is quenched with each new step. Why not find a trail and see where it takes you? You might just be surprised.

West Virginia
WVtourism.com
FOLLOW THE RIGHT PATH.
AND YOU’LL END UP IN PARADISE.

Almost Heaven

That road is more than you think. A journey across West Virginia, you’ll experience something new at every turn. Whether you discover it by car, foot, hearth or even ATV, there’s a stunning display at every twist. For nature lovers, it’s practically heaven-sent.

Good Friends. A Warm Fire.

Almost Heaven

Sounds Like Paradise.
Media Markets

All in-state markets
Target out-of-state markets
  Washington, DC
  Pittsburgh, PA
  Harrisburg-Lancaster-York, PA
  Columbus, OH
  Cleveland, OH
  Roanoke, VA
  Richmond, VA
  Charlotte, NC
A Layered Approach

The campaign appears in a select number of regional target markets where the state could afford to go in with a layered approach that achieves a high level of frequency for potential visitors. Audiences were exposed to a combination of messages spanning multiple platforms including TV, radio, out of home, print, and digital.
Media Mix

The new campaign launched in April 2018 with a diverse media program.
The call-to-action on all advertising for the campaign asks viewers to visit WVtourism.com. On that measure, overall web traffic from the target markets grew compared to its usual level while the messages were in market.

The results were striking. Web traffic overall increased 30.86%, but traffic coming from the campaign’s target markets increased even more during and after the ads ran.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Markets</th>
<th>Growth in sessions*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>80.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>75.39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbus, OH</td>
<td>89.97%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleveland, OH</td>
<td>64.60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlotte, NC</td>
<td>28.11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roanoke, VA</td>
<td>98.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrisburg, PA</td>
<td>79.11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
<td>55.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*reflects sessions during media flight dates in spring/summer 2018 compared to same period in previous year
Cooperative Advertising Program

• The Tourism Act of 2017 replaced the outdated MAPP grant program with a new Cooperative Advertising Program.

• The program opened to partners in late 2017 for ads running in 2018, and participation in the program’s first year was strong.

• The Tourism Office made several tweaks to the program based on results and feedback.

• Partner participation has increased for the program’s second year.

FIRST YEAR PARTICIPATION

| 63 | participating partners |
| 412 | media placements |
| $1.4M | partner investment |
| $2.8M | total in media |
Almost Heaven is waiting to be discovered this winter at Snowshoe Mountain.

WVTourism.com/Snowshoe
Public Relations
Public Relations: Media Outreach

Fam Tours

• The Tourism office hosted two media familiarization tours in 2018
  • Rafting tour in the New River Gorge
  • Fall tour from Washington, D.C. through the Eastern Panhandle and Potomac Highlands

• Social Influencer Results
  • More than 200 posts
  • 2.2 million impressions
  • 644,071 in audience reach
  • Nearly 100,000 post engagements
Public Relations: Strategic Partnerships

Fallout 76

• Gamers across the world were exposed to the state for the first time when the newest edition of this blockbuster game was set in West Virginia

• The Tourism Office entered into an official no-cost partnership with the game publisher to cross-promote the state to gamers.

Spartan Race

• The Spartan North American Championship returned to Summit Bechtel Reserve for a second year with sponsorship from the Tourism Office.

• About 10,000 racers had a direct economic impact of $3.6 million and generated $66,400 in state and local taxes.*

*Source: Bureau of Business & Economic Research, West Virginia University College of Business and Economics
Public Relations: Promotions

Almost Heaven photo contest

- Governor Jim Justice put out a call in March for photos showcasing the state’s attractions.
- 6,500 submissions in one week were narrowed to top 100 featuring ever region of the state, parks, tourism partners, hunting, fishing, camping, and more.

West Virginia Day sticker campaign

- The tourism office issued a limited-edition sticker featuring Almost Heaven and 1863 to celebrate West Virginia’s 154th birthday on June 20, 2018.
- Stickers were available at tourism businesses and attractions around the state to encouraged participants to go out and explore the state. “Sticker Stop” signs helped promote social engagement.
- More than 25,000 stickers were distributed during the promotion.
Industry Development
Industry Development

• More than 250 industry representatives attended the annual Governor’s Conference on Tourism in Morgantown in September.

• The Tourism Office launched monthly industry training webinars on topics relevant to the marketing needs of partners.

• New Partner Extranet went live in September with centralized access to business and event listings on WVtourism.com, access to research, archived industry newsletters and more.

• Partners joined the Tourism Office for domestic and international trade shows.

• The Tourism Office facilitated film projects by connecting filmmakers interested in shooting in the state with local contacts, including convention and visitor bureaus.
Necessary Funding to Continue Growth

Increased spending across all strategic initiatives is necessary to compete with our neighbors and increase the economic impact of tourism in West Virginia.
More Funding for Brand Promotion

• West Virginia's tourism advertising has focused on maximizing available dollars in a limited number of regional drive markets.

• Expanding our media footprint to farther drive markets and strategic air travel markets requires significant additional investment.

• Potential additional markets that hold the most potential for growth also have a high buy-in cost.
  • Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Detroit

• A portion of these additional dollars would be made available to partners through the Cooperative Advertising Program.
More Funding for Public Relations Efforts

• **Media Outreach**
  - More frequent and niche-focused fam tours would result in additional media coverage.
  - These fam tours result in valuable editorial coverage that complement paid media.

• **Consumer Outreach**
  - Magazine-style vacation guides provide the starting point for any overnight visit.
  - A well designed consumer-facing website is critical for ad effectiveness and trip planning.
  - Chat software to connect visitors to travel advisors would modernize telemarketing.
  - Welcome Center upgrades are necessary to turn bathroom breaks into return visits.

• **Promotions**
  - Consumer events like musical concerts would generate affinity for the destination.
  - A community mural program would further extend the almost heaven brand.
More Funding for Industry Development

- **Trade and Consumer Shows**
  - These shows provide an excellent opportunity for businesses and attractions to make connections with tour operators, group sales representatives, and direct consumers.
  - Increased participation in these shows and more dedicated resources to pursuing group sales represent a significant growth opportunity for the industry.

- **Governor’s Conference on Tourism & Industry Training Sessions**
  - These opportunities to provide marketing education and development to the state’s variety of attractions and marketing organizations are a valuable investment in small and local businesses.
  - Increased investment in educators for these opportunities would be of benefit to industry partners.
More Funding for Events and Sponsorships

• Destination Event Sponsorships
  • The popular Spartan race series has held championships in West Virginia the past two years thanks largely to significant investment from the Tourism Office.
  • Additional events such as fishing tournaments would be possible with seed investment.
  • Ideally these events should become self-sustaining and the Tourism Office should focus on providing seed money for new events.

• Media Sponsorships
  • Mountain Stage and Fly Rod Chronicles are two locally produced shows with national audiences that have messaging aligned with tourism marketing.
  • Additional investment in media sponsorships would be funneled toward programming with audiences that match our targets.
  • These types of partnerships can increase brand affinity within strategic audiences.
More Funding for State Parks and Recreation Advertising

- Outdoor recreation is one of the primary drivers of visitation to the state, much of which is covered in public lands without significant marketing budgets.
- The marketing budget for state parks is approximately $250,000 to promote 46 parks and forests, including resorts, golf courses, campgrounds, cabins, and day-use parks.
- The current funding level is not sufficient to do meaningful out-of-state advertising that would promote our world-class parks to a wider audience.
- Drawing in additional visitors, especially those from further away who tend to stay longer, will require a significant investment in strategic markets.
- Putting this money in the tourism budget guarantees these efforts would be fully integrated with the state-level tourism strategy.
## Additional Funding Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Area</th>
<th>Additional Funding Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand Promotion</td>
<td>$10,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>$1,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events and Sponsorships</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Development</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Parks and Recreation Advertising</td>
<td>$1,500,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Value of Tourism Advertising

- Tourism advertising in West Virginia has proven to be a strong investment.
- For every dollar spent on tourism advertising, the state yields $8 in state and local tax revenue and $106 in direct traveler spending.
- Without this tourism-generated revenue, each household in West Virginia would have to pay an additional $690 per year in state and local taxes.

Source: Longwoods International, 2018
Tourism spending helps more than just tourism.
Research shows tourism advertising improves West Virginia’s image as a place to live, start a business, go to college, and retire.

Source: Longwoods International, 2018