

An aerial photograph of a two-lane asphalt road with yellow center and white edge lines, curving through a dense, vibrant green forest. A small white car is visible on the road, traveling away from the viewer. The text 'WEST VIRGINIA' is overlaid in a large, white, stylized font with a registered trademark symbol.

WEST  
VIRGINIA®

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

*almost heaven*



An aerial photograph of a two-lane asphalt road with yellow center and edge lines, curving through a dense green forest. A small blue car is visible on the road. The text is overlaid on the lower left portion of the image.

# STATE OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

§5B-2I-4(h)

The West Virginia Department of Tourism shall submit a report annually to the Governor 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.

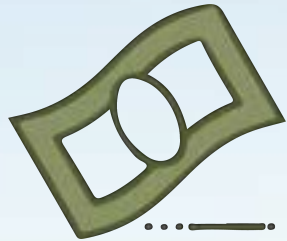
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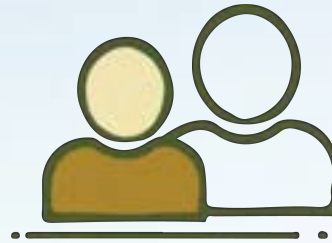
# TOURISM WAS GROWING AT A RECORD-BREAKING LEVEL BEFORE THE PANDEMIC



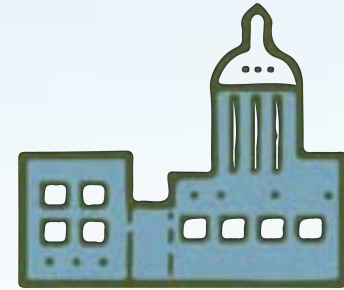
**\$4.8 BILLION**  
IN TRAVELER SPENDING



**\$1.2 BILLION**  
IN EARNINGS



**47,600**  
TOURISM-SUPPORTED JOBS



**\$791 MILLION**  
IN-STATE & LOCAL TAX REVENUE

Source: West Virginia Travel Impacts, Dean Runyan Association, 2020



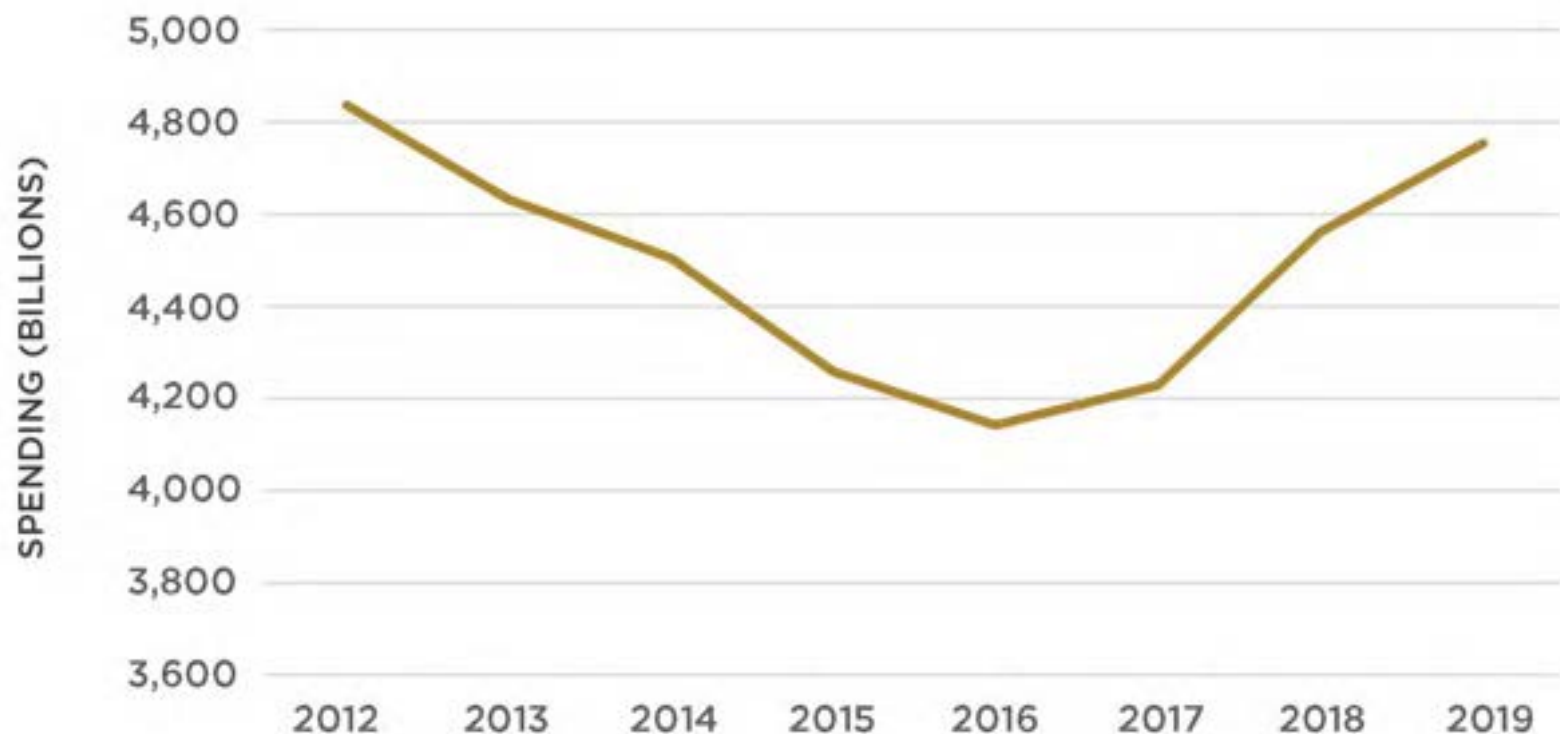
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## THANKS TO INCREASED INVESTMENT, TRAVELER SPENDING GREW BY 14.8% IN JUST THREE YEARS

This increase in traveler spending of \$611 million reversed 4 consecutive years of decline.

### West Virginia traveler spending 2012 - 2019



Source: West Virginia Travel Impacts, Dean Runyan Association, 2020



# COVID HURT TOURISM EVERYWHERE

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But it's impact on West Virginia was less than the national average thanks to our strong marketing & outdoor recreation opportunities.




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# WE ARE BOUNCING BACK FAST

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2021 visitor arrivals  
to West Virginia at  
**all-time high**



Hatfield-McCoy  
Trail permit sales  
**up 46%**



Vacation rentals are booming, bringing in  
**more than \$10 million**  
in NEW sales tax



Trips down  
West Virginia  
whitewater  
**up 26%**



**37% increase** in skier visits



Visitation to New River Gorge  
National Park  
**up 30%**

*Source: Arrivalist; Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreational Trail Authority; West Virginia Whitewater Commission; West Virginia Ski Areas Association; National Park Service, U.S. Travel*

# A LOOK BACK ON 2021



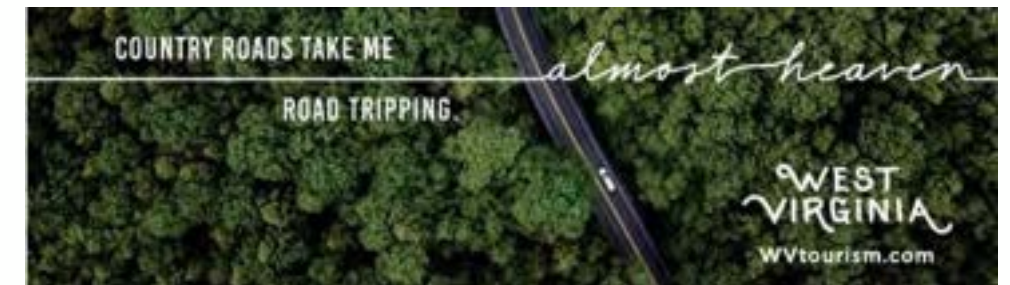
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# TOURISM ADVERTISING IS PAYING DIVIDENDS

The state's investment in tourism marketing has improved our image in key regional markets.

## SAMPLE WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM ADS







## THE ALMOST HEAVEN BRAND IS BEING RECOGNIZED ON A NATIONAL SCALE

The 2021 West Virginia Vacation Guide won a U.S. Travel Association Mercury Award for Printed Collateral Materials and was described as “a *keepsake-quality product that would instantly elevate the consumer’s perception of West Virginia.*”

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# THE ALMOST HEAVEN BRAND IS BEING RECOGNIZED ON A NATIONAL SCALE

The Department of Tourism's campaign for industry partners during the COVID-19 pandemic, #PlaceIBelongWV, won a U.S. Travel Mercury Award for Community Building.

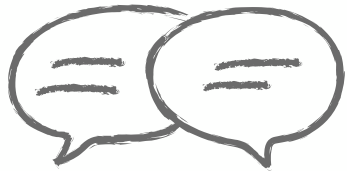
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# OUR SOCIAL CHANNELS ARE TAKING OFF

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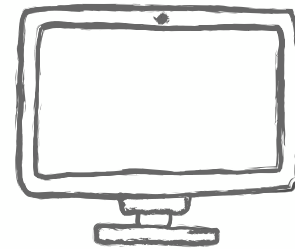
We continue to promote West Virginia as a four-season vacation destination across our social media platforms, and we're seeing landmark success.



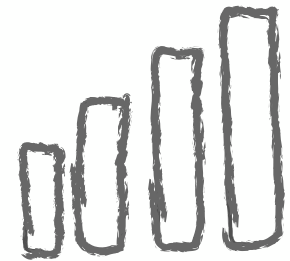
Engagement  
**up 34%**



Link clicks  
**up 170%**



Web sessions  
from social  
referrals  
**up 214%**



Web  
conversations  
from social  
referrals  
**up 757%**



# MORE TRAVELERS ARE VISITING WVTOURISM.COM

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- Pageviews **up 17.93%**
- Unique pageviews **up 25.77%**
- New and returning users **up 40%**





# PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS HAVE PUT ALL EYES ON WEST VIRGINIA

An aerial photograph of a vast forest in West Virginia during autumn. The trees are covered in a mix of vibrant reds, oranges, yellows, and greens. In the center-right of the image, a small waterfall cascades over a rocky ledge into a pool below. The sky above is filled with heavy, grey clouds, creating a dramatic backdrop for the colorful forest.

West Virginia tourism-related content received **more than 3 billion** impressions in 2021.



# WE WERE THE ONLY STATE TO BE FEATURED IN ALL MAJOR TRAVEL LISTS FOR 2022

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TOP TRAVEL  
REGION



CONDÉ NAST BEST  
PLACES TO GO



TOP 10 FAMILY  
VACATION DESTINATION



BEST PLACES TO VISIT  
IN 2022



# NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE RECEIVED LANDMARK COVERAGE

The Department's public relations efforts focused heavily on promoting America's newest national park.

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**898 MILLION**  
earned media  
impressions



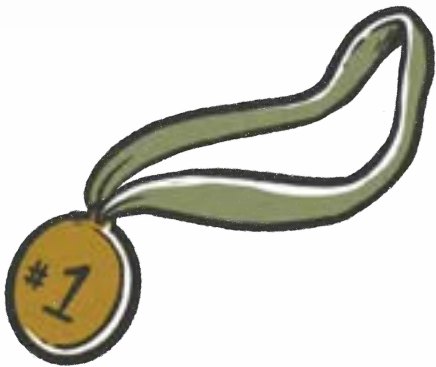


# WEST VIRGINIA PROUDLY HOSTED MAJOR INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC EVENTS IN 2021

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UCI Mountain Bike World Cup welcomed **7,500 international travelers** to Snowshoe.



Spartan Race welcomed more than **10,000 visitors** to Summit Bechtel Reserve.



# PRIVATE INVESTMENT REMAINS STRONG

Since 2019, the Tourism Development Act tax credit program has received more applications than in its first 10 years of existence. Recent applications represent more than **\$250 million** in investment in West Virginia's tourism industry.



Hotel Morgan • Opened March 2021



Cordoroy Inn • Opened December 2020



Timberline • Opened December 2020



The Schoolhouse Hotel • Opening Spring 2022

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# STATE PARKS CONTINUE TO REACH NEW HEIGHTS

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- With **\$151 million** in improvements in the past four years, along with increased marketing, our state parks system has become a national leader.
  - More than **8.9 million visitors**.
  - Annual revenue **up 52%** in just 4 years.



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# TRAVELERS ARE REDISCOVERING THEIR LOVE OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS

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Last year's hunting and fishing license revenue was the **highest in more than 20 years.**

*Source: West Virginia Department of Tourism; West Virginia Division of Natural Resources*



# PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TOPPED \$10 MILLION

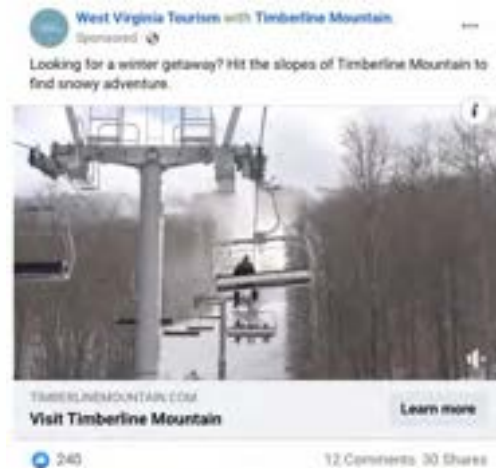
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- The Department of Tourism's public-private partnership fund has purchased **more than \$10 million** to support the advertising of **nearly 100 tourism businesses** across the state since the creation of the Cooperative Advertising Program in 2017.
  - Extended increased 80/20 match to help businesses advertise through the Pandemic.
  - Expanded program to allow short-term participation from rentals and vacation homes.

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# PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS



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When outdoor adventure calls, a summer road trip to Jefferson County is the answer. Bring along your bike or set out for a hike on the Appalachian Trail. Afterward, beat the summer heat with one of River Riders' exhilarating whitewater rafting expeditions. Then, end an eventful day with cold brews at Bavarian Brothers or Abolitionist Ale. This summer, let Almost Heaven set the perfect road trip itinerary.

**WVtourism.com/JeffersonCounty**

**JEFFERSON COUNTY**  
HARPERS FERRY • BOLIVAR  
SHEPHERDSTOWN • CHARLES TOWN

**WEST VIRGINIA**

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# WE CONTINUED TO OFFER NEW TRAINING AND RESOURCES TO PARTNERS

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The Department of Tourism has continued its commitment to partner education hosted trainings with leading travel and tourism brands such as:





# OUR NETWORK OF PARTNERS CONTINUES TO EXPAND

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**Nearly 300** industry partners joined our industry database to access trainings, cooperative advertising, public relations assistance and more.

- **135** of which were new contacts or businesses we brought into the fold of our weekly communications







**TOURISM ADVERTISING IS KEY FOR CONTINUED GROWTH**

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# TOURISM ADVERTISING WORKS

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60%

of those who saw at least  
one West Virginia tourism  
ad said they'd

**“probably or definitely  
take a trip to West Virginia  
in the next 12 months.”**

- *Longwoods International*

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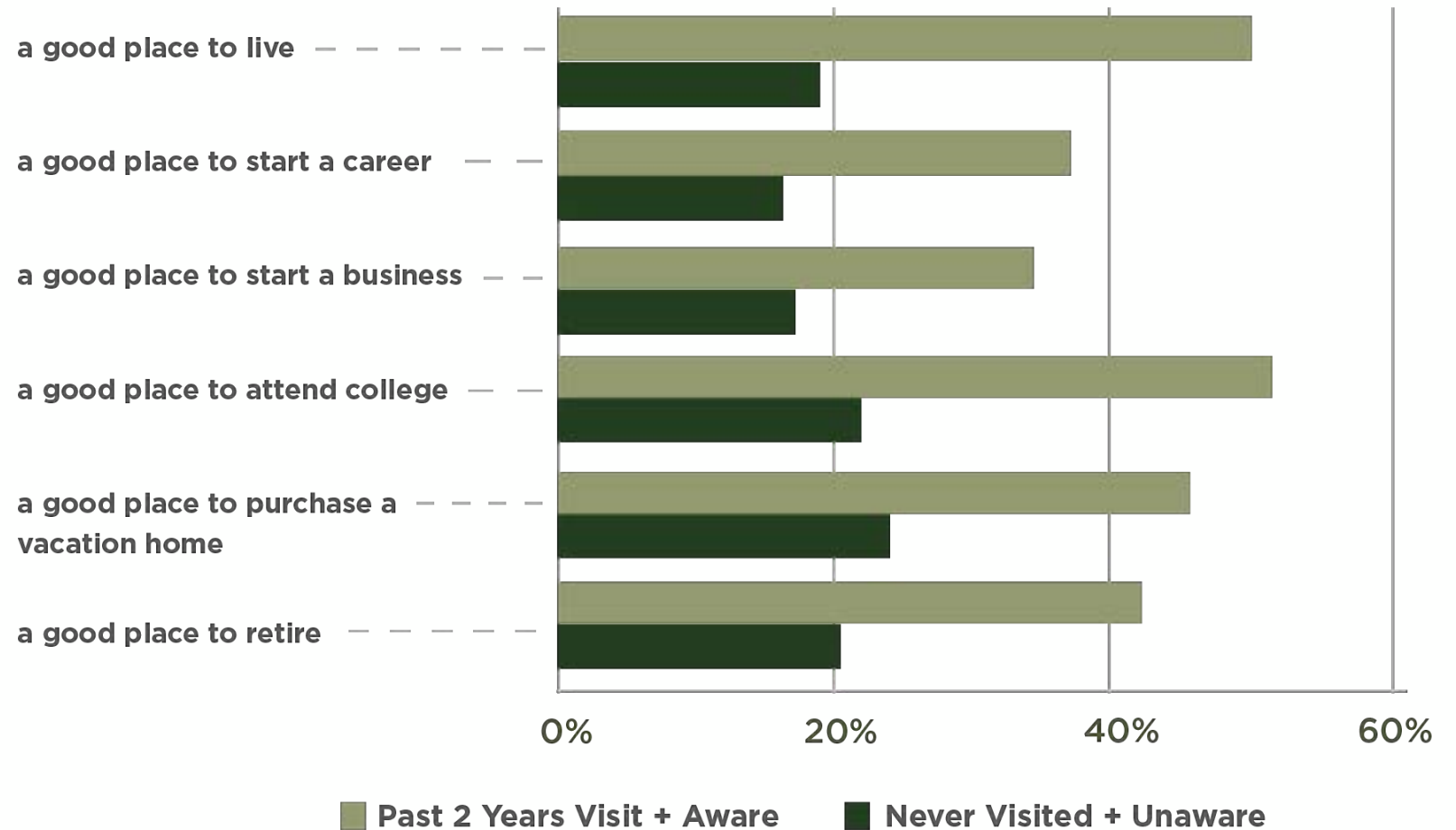




# THE HALO EFFECT

Research continues  
to show tourism  
advertising improves  
West Virginia's image  
as a place to live,  
start a business, go  
to college and retire.

*Source: Longwoods  
International, 2020*





# THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT FOR WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM

69%

of Americans have a renewed  
appreciation for the outdoors

Source: Destination Analysts, The Harris Poll

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# THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT FOR WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM

Pinterest searches for things like natural travel and lake fishing are up **more than 250%**

*Source: Destination Analysts, The Harris Poll*

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# THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT FOR WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM

Enjoying scenic beauty (**60%**) and  
visiting U.S. national parks (**54%**) are  
among top trip characteristics of interest

Source: Destination Analysts, The Harris Poll

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# THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT FOR WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM

Rural nights  
Booked on  
Airbnb are  
**up 180%**

*Source: Destination Analysts, The Harris Poll*

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# NECESSARY FUNDING TO CONTINUE GROWTH



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# LEVEL FUNDING REQUEST FOR FY2023

Revenue Source	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023 Request
Lottery	\$12,115,474	\$11,357,898	\$11,540,567	\$11,540,567	\$11,540,567	\$11,652,513*
Surplus		\$2,500,000	\$7,000,000		\$7,000,000	
General			\$7,000,000	\$14,000,000	\$12,000,000	\$14,000,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$12,115,474</b>	<b>\$13,857,898</b>	<b>\$25,540,567</b>	<b>\$25,540,567</b>	<b>\$30,540,567</b>	<b>\$25,652,513</b>

*\*Proposed salary adjustments*

The Legislature appropriated an additional \$7 million in general revenue and \$7 million in surplus in FY22 to promote tourism in West Virginia.

Maintaining level marketing funding for FY23 will be critical to further growth in the state's tourism industry as we work to position West Virginia as the perfect post-covid destination.

General Revenue Appropriation	Total
Brand Promotion	\$10,000,000
Public Relations	\$1,500,000
Events & Sponsorships	\$500,000
Industry Development	\$500,000
State Parks & Recreation Advertising	\$1,500,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$14,000,000</b>



# BECHTEL SUMMIT REVENUE

In compliance with §11-3-9(h)(7)(A) and §11-3-9(h)(11), the Tourism Office has received three deposits into the Tourism Promotion Fund from revenue generated at the Bechtel Summit Reserve since 2015.

The funds were used to assist with marketing of the 2021 Spartan Race at the Bechtel Summit. In the past 4 years, the event has attracted more than 40,000 annual attendees and generated a significant boost for the local economy.

Date	Amount
7/1/17 - 6/30/18	\$321.85
7/1/18 - 6/30/19	\$555.74
7/1/19 - 6/30/20	\$638.87
7/1/20 - 6/30/21	\$416.92
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,933.38</b>

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