



DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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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'S ECONOMIC IMPACT IN WV IS AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH



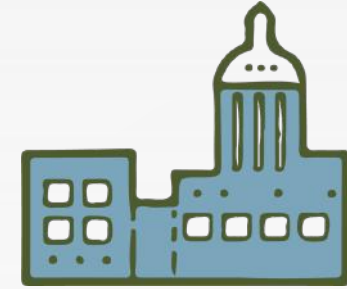
\$4.9 BILLION
IN TRAVELER SPENDING



\$1.3 BILLION
IN EARNINGS



44,400
TOURISM-SUPPORTED JOBS



\$754 MILLION
IN TAX REVENUE GENERATED

Source: West Virginia Travel Impacts, Dean Runyan Association, 2022

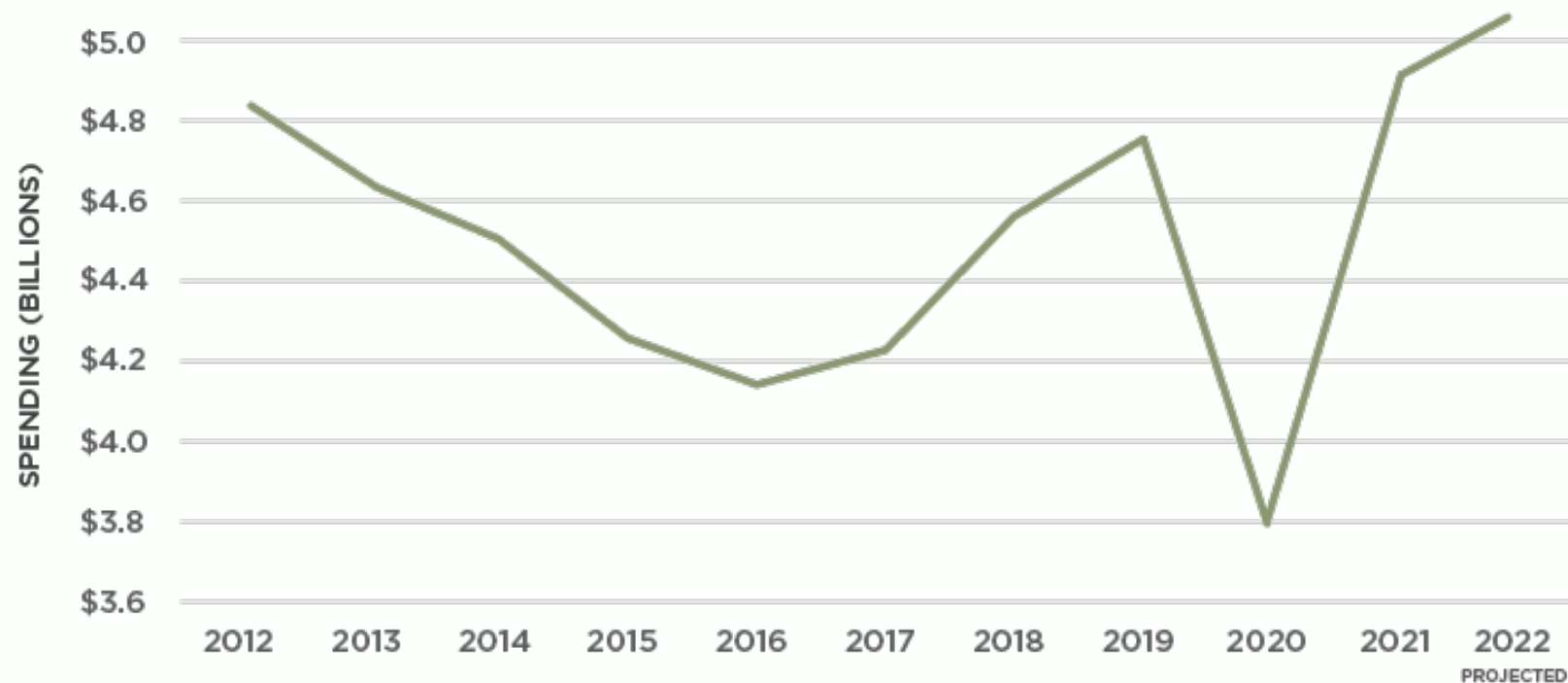
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WEST VIRGINIA HAS NOW FULLY RECOVERED FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOSSES.

Nationally, traveler spending was still lagging behind by 27% in 2021, but in WV, traveler spending rates surpassed pre-pandemic spending by 3.4%. 2022 is projected to be an even greater year.

WEST VIRGINIA TRAVELER SPENDING 2012-2022

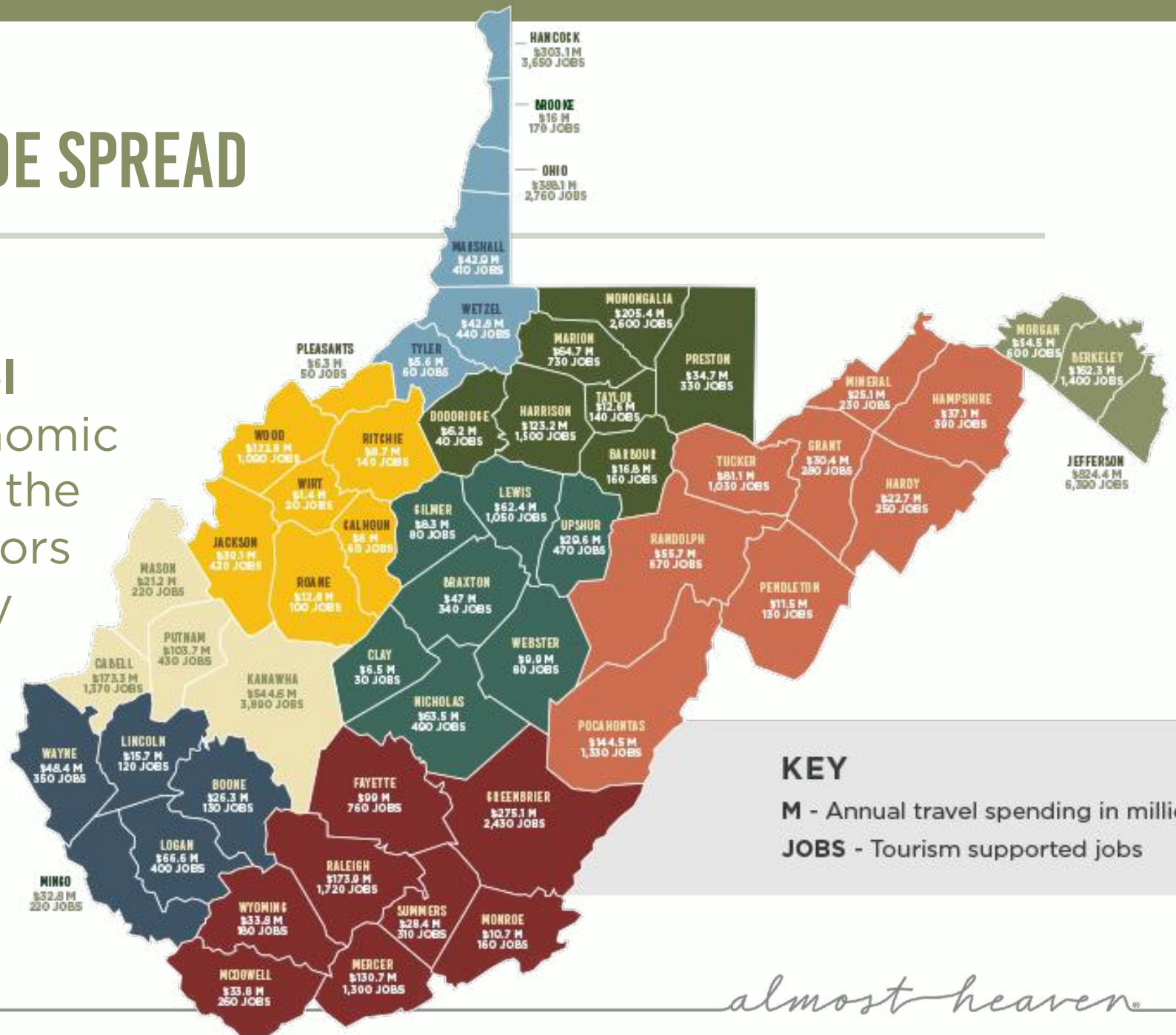


Source: West Virginia Travel Impacts, Dean Runyan Associates 2022

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GROWTH HAS BEEN WIDE SPREAD

West Virginia has seen **growth in all nine travel regions**. Tourism's economic impact is the highest in the state's history with visitors spending approximately **\$13.6 million per day**.



Source: West Virginia Travel Impacts,
Dean Runyan Associates 2022

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A LOOK BACK ON 2022

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TOURISM ADVERTISING IS PAYING DIVIDENDS

Thanks to continued investment, paid media efforts continue to reach new target markets. The Almost Heaven brand is reaching more people than ever, with more than **6,023,231,920** brand impressions in 2022.

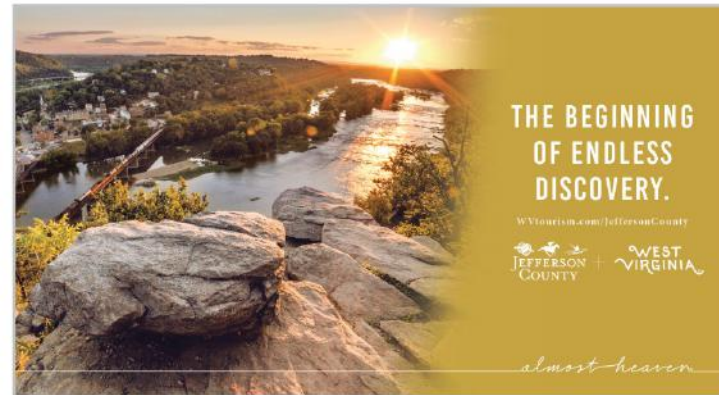
SAMPLE WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM ADS



PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS EXCEEDED \$14 MILLION

The Department of Tourism's public-private partnership fund has been used by partners to purchase more than **\$14 million in advertising.**

This investment has supported the advertising of **over 100 tourism businesses** across the state since the creation of the Cooperative Advertising Program in 2017.



LARGE-SCALE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Through the Cooperative Advertising program, a partnership was formed with ACE Adventure Resort, Adventures on the Gorge, Visit Southern WV CVB and New River Gorge CVB, creating an innovative promotion: Kids Raft Free. In this collaboration large-scale opportunities were secured – from sweepstakes programs with the Columbus Crew, Cincinnati Reds and Pittsburgh Penguins to an exhibit sponsorship within the Cincinnati Children’s Museum.



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INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

The Department of Tourism partners with Brand USA and Travel South USA to promote the state to international tour operators, retail travel agents, journalists and other travel professionals. Through these partnerships, the Department of Tourism was able to attend travel shows, place advertisements through international media vendors, foster relationships with international tour operators and promote the state as a top-tier global destination.

Through Brand USA and Travel South USA, the Department of Tourism was able to continue growing the state's international presence through the below initiatives.

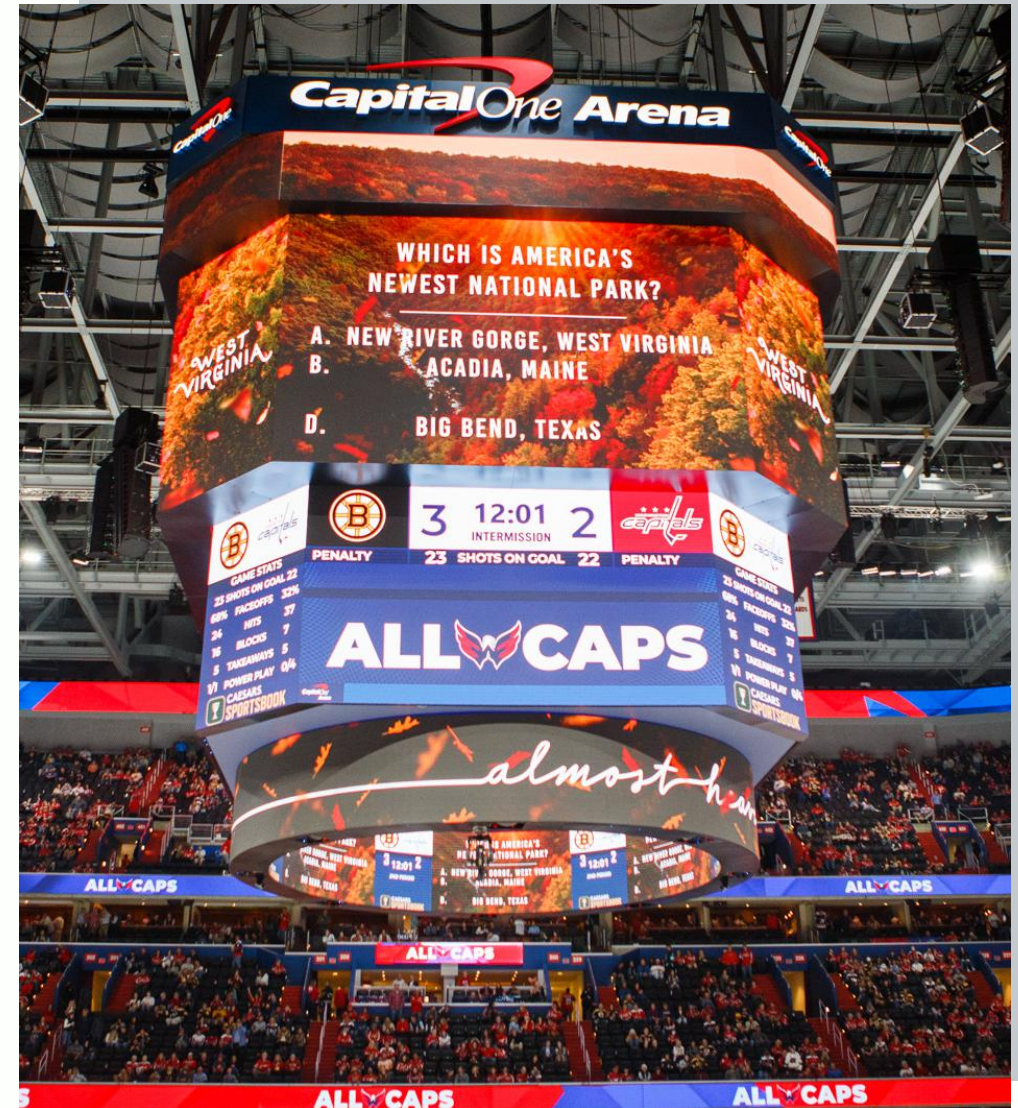
- Attended the Travel South USA Global Summit
- Welcomed Brand USA to West Virginia for a major video shoot
- Provided international marketing focused breakout sessions at the Governor's Conference on Tourism
- Attended the Travel South International Showcase
- Hosted 20 international tour operators on two familiarization tours throughout the state

Throughout 2022, the Department of Tourism provided one-on-one training sessions with more than two dozen partners interested in expanding their international marketing efforts.



STRATEGIC BRAND PARTNERSHIPS

A partnership with the Washington Capitals has provided the opportunity to reach a target audience in a new way. Through in-arena promotions, sweepstakes, radio commercials and more, the Almost Heaven brand has found a unique and successful platform.



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STRATEGIC BRAND PARTNERSHIPS

This year, the Country Roads Camper attended dozens of events and trade shows across the country and internationally. At events such as the Toronto Outdoor Adventure Show and the Washington DC Travel & Adventure Show, West Virginia was showcased to hundreds of thousands of travelers.



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STRATEGIC BRAND PARTNERSHIPS

The Department of Tourism partners with several events each year, and 2022 was the same. These events showcase the state's unique offerings to in-state, out-of-state and international travelers.



UCI Mountain Bike World Cup welcomed **6,000 international travelers** to Snowshoe.



Mylan Park hosted the **2022 USA Diving National Championship** in the state-of-the-art facility recently constructed in Morgantown.

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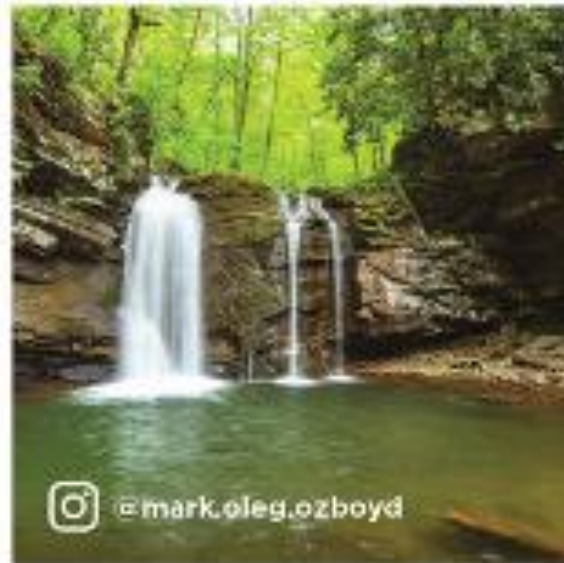


WEST VIRGINIA WATERFALL TRAIL

In June, the **first-ever statewide Waterfall Trail** was launched, driving traffic to 29 waterfalls across the state.



NEARLY 30,000
Check-ins



Visitors from
49 STATES



OVER 4,000
exclusive prizes shipped
across the country



ALLTRAILS PARTNERSHIP

In September, a first-of-its-kind partnership with AllTrails was launched, showcasing the state's **1,500+ miles of world-class hiking trails**.



More than
24,000 AllTrails Pro
subscriptions given out to
visitors from all 50 states



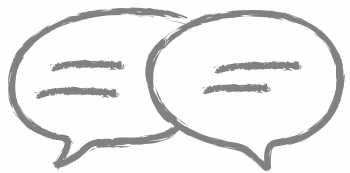
Over
145,000,000
media impressions



Updated
GPS MAPPING
for dozens of trails
across the state

WV TOURISM SOCIAL CHANNELS HAVE TAKEN OFF

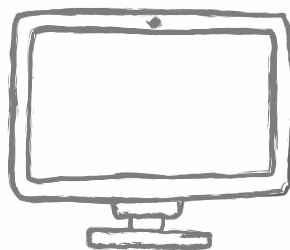
The Department of Tourism continues to promote West Virginia as a four-season vacation destination across several social media platforms, generating landmark success.



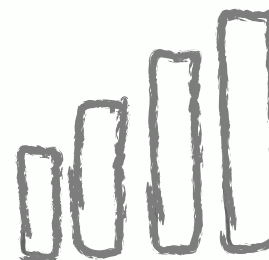
Engagement
up 46.3%



Link clicks
up 50.5%



Web sessions
from social
referrals
up 55.24%



Web
conversations
from social
referrals
up 83.24%



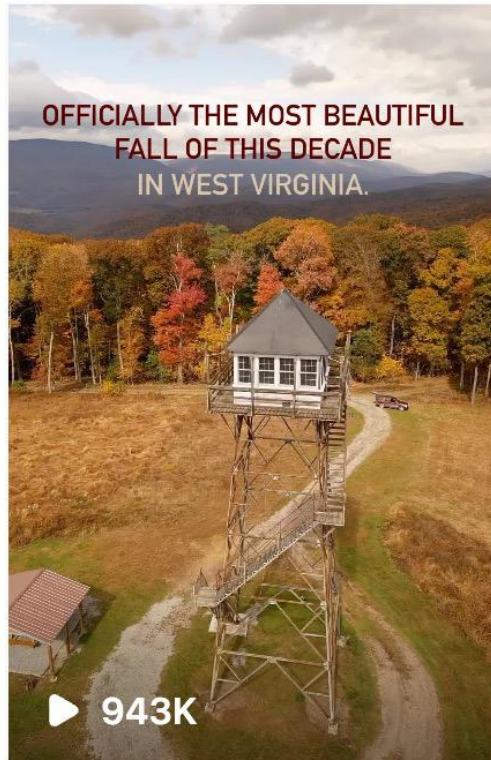
Combined
social
following
431,502

*Combined social following includes: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest & LinkedIn

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NEW SOCIAL INITIATIVES

POSTING REELS DAILY



- Social video views: **up 103.8%**
- Top social video: **943K views**

ADVERTISING ON PINTEREST



- Pinterest impressions: **8.57M**
- Pinterest engagement: **179.88k**
- Total Pinterest audience: **2.6M**

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MORE TRAVELERS ARE VISITING WVTOURISM.COM

- Pageviews **up 18.09%**
- Unique pageviews **up 19.31%**
- New and returning users **up 52.19%**

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PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS HAVE PUT ALL EYES ON WEST VIRGINIA

West Virginia tourism-related content received **more than 7 billion** impressions in 2022 – more than doubling 2021 numbers.

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WEST VIRGINIA WAS THE ONLY STATE TO BE FEATURED IN ALL MAJOR TRAVEL LISTS FOR 2022



TOP TRAVEL
REGION



CONDÉ NAST
BEST PLACES
TO GO



TOP 10 FAMILY
VACATION
DESTINATION



22 OF THE USA'S
MOST UNDERRATED
DESTINATIONS



BEST PLACES
TO VISIT IN
2022

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A TASTE OF ALMOST HEAVEN

In September, the Department of Tourism launched The West Virginia Chef Ambassador program. This initiative is designed to promote local, Appalachian cuisine through media events and promotional activities, while nurturing the industry for future growth through educational training and seminars.

As part of this program, nearly thirty Almost Heaven-inspired meal kit boxes were sent to top-tier journalists across the country, featuring an original recipe created by award-winning chef and one of the West Virginia Chef Ambassadors, Paul Smith.

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PRIVATE INVESTMENT REMAINS STRONG

In the past four years, the Tourism Development Act tax credit program has received more applications than in its first 14 years of existence. Recent projects and applications represent nearly **\$300 million** in investment in West Virginia's tourism industry.



Adventures on the Gorge • Expanded July 2022



WV Botanic Garden Event Center • Opened August 2022

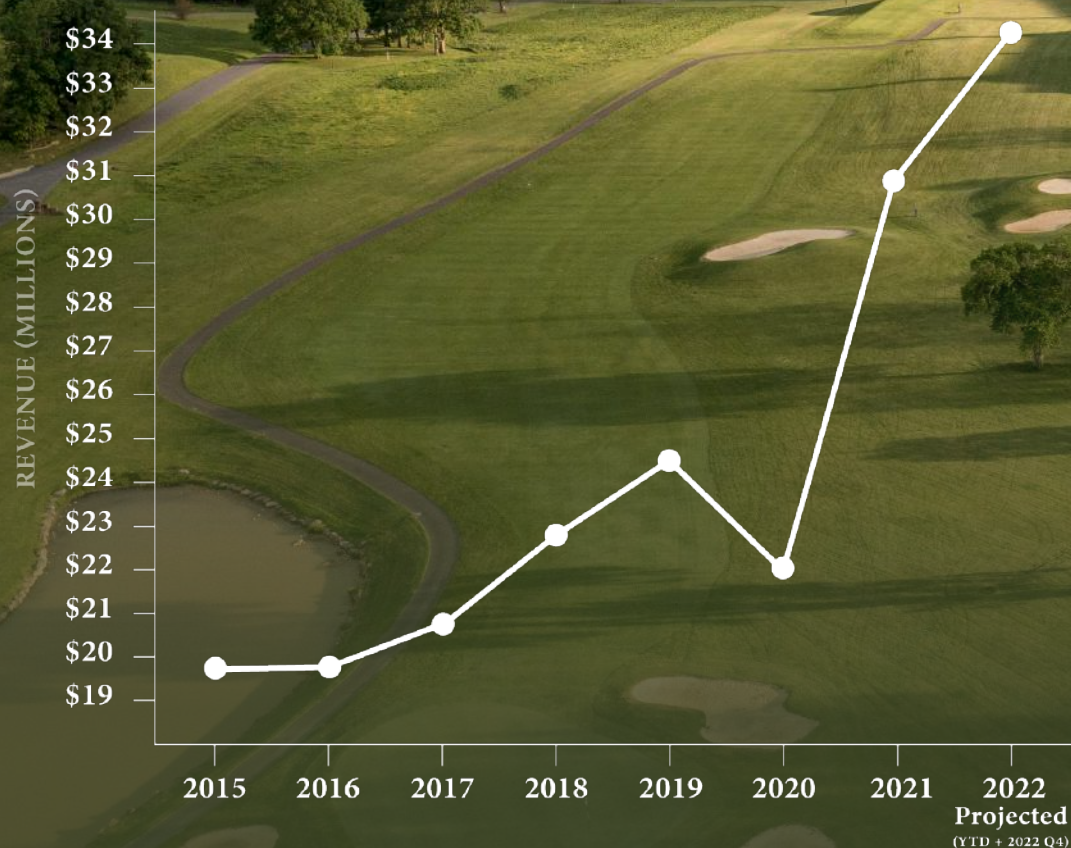


Greenbrier Valley Aquatic Center • Opened May 2022



The Schoolhouse Hotel • Opened June 2022

STATE PARKS ANNUAL REVENUE



STATE PARKS ARE SOARING

Thanks to continued investment in the improvement of the state parks system, all previous records have been shattered. In just five years, the **self-sufficiency of the state's parks has increased with 10 parks now at 95% or greater sufficiency.**

This trend puts West Virginia on a path of continued growth and sustainability.

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STATE PARKS MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS

More than \$150 million worth of improvement projects were completed throughout West Virginia's state parks system over the past five years.



LODGE RENOVATIONS
\$35,232,996



CAMPSITE DEVELOPMENT
\$13,488,000



CACAPON'S NEW LODGE
\$32,530,366



ACTIVITY INFRASTRUCTURE
\$29,135,729



CABIN RENOVATIONS
\$24,583,500



INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES
\$16,524,500

TOTAL RENOVATIONS & UPGRADES **\$151,295,091**

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NEW TRAININGS AND RESOURCES CONTINUE TO BE OFFERED TO PARTNERS

The Governor's Conference on Tourism, held in Huntington in September of 2022, brought together more than 250 registrants, more than ever before. The conference provided attendees with opportunities to hear from experts in tourism and hospitality and encouraged meaningful networking across sectors and regions.

Throughout 2022, monthly industry training webinars were held to spread the word about tourism opportunities and to keep partners up to date on best practices from advice on applying for grants and building outdoor recreation infrastructure to tips on marketing their regions from nationally recognized experts.

Southern Living



INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN BICYCLING ASSOCIATION

Frommer's®



expedia group™
media solutions

Longwoods
INTERNATIONAL



TRAVEL+
LEISURE



THE NETWORK OF PARTNERS CONTINUES TO EXPAND

Nearly 350 new industry partners joined the Department of Tourism's industry database last year to access training, cooperative advertising, public relations assistance, guidance with funding sources and more.

The Destination Development team met with tourism businesses, ranging from new start-ups to well established resorts and outfitters, connecting them with valuable resources and acting as liaisons with other state agencies. In 2022 alone, the team met with **over 90 tourism-related businesses and entrepreneurs** about their economic development goals.

This past year, weekly standing video calls began to be offered. These sessions walked partners through exactly how to access resources online and provided a consistent opportunity for partners to talk through questions and issues with Department of Tourism staff.



An aerial photograph of a two-lane asphalt road that curves through a dense forest. The trees are mostly green, with some showing early autumn colors of yellow and orange. A small, light-colored car is visible on the road, driving away from the viewer. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

**TOURISM ADVERTISING IS KEY
FOR CONTINUED GROWTH**

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TOURISM ADVERTISING WORKS

63%

of those who saw at least one West Virginia tourism ad said they **strongly agreed that West Virginia is “a place I’d really enjoy visiting.”**

Source: Longwoods International, 2021

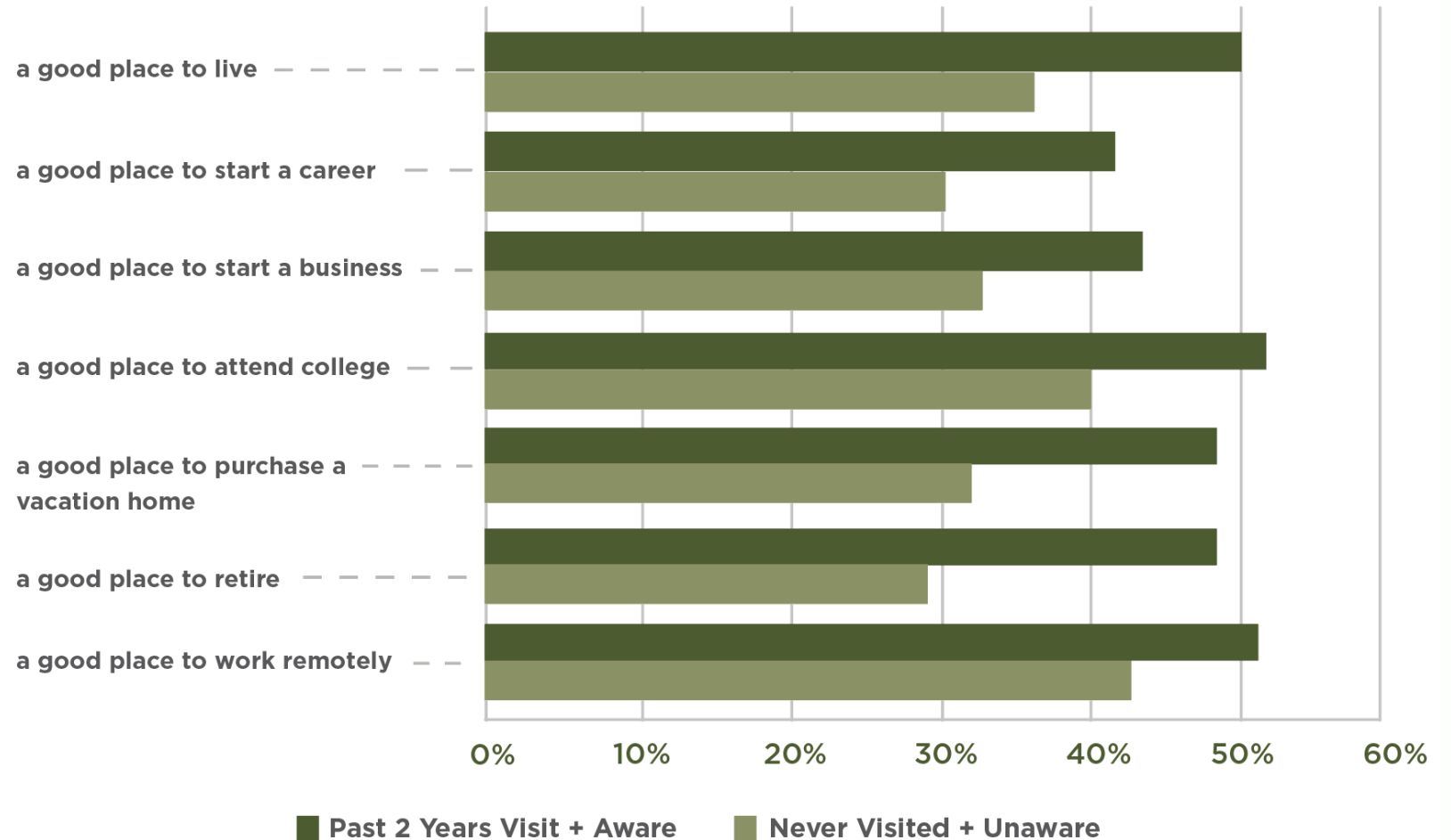
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THE HALO EFFECT

Tourism spending helps more than just the tourism industry. Research shows that travel-focused advertising improves West Virginia's image as a place to live, start a business, go to college and retire. The Almost Heaven advertising campaign creates a halo effect that improves West Virginia's image over all, not just for tourism.

Source: Longwoods International, 2021



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STRENGTHENING THE TOURISM WORKFORCE THROUGH “TOURISM WORKS”

One of the most meaningful parts of the work of the Department of Tourism involves supporting training and education programs to bring new jobseekers into the tourism workforce and to upskill the existing workforce.

PROJECTED JOB OPENINGS

While **tourism already supports 44,400 direct jobs** in the state, an additional 21,000 are projected each year through 2025, including 10,000 management-level positions, with salaries approaching \$60,000

To prepare for the industry's anticipated growth, the Department of Tourism has leveraged **\$5.1 million in federal grant funds** from the US Economic Development Administration to create the “Tourism Works” program.

THE VISION FOR TOURISM WORKS

To work with educators, administrators, guidance counselors and tourism businesses across the state to create a robust and highly educated workforce and to spread the word that the tourism industry sets students up for success, including many fulfilling career paths in a thriving industry that is seeing record-breaking economic impact statewide.

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2022 TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY WORKFORCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

While nearly all tourism businesses surveyed (83%) expect to see growth in employment over the next five years, nearly 40% indicate that currently no money is allotted in their budgets for employee training and they face significant issues when it comes to hiring.

Businesses surveyed also indicate they are ready and willing to hire and train West Virginians to fill these roles:

- **97.8%** of respondents said many of the employees they hire are already living locally.
- **67%** of respondents said they are willing to host individuals of all education levels seeking apprenticeships and training in their industries.

TOURISM WORKS PROGRAM GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

TRAIN YOUR TEAM

- Provide and coordinate customized training and certification programs for new and existing tourism businesses
- Make targeted outreach to promote the very-successful Learn & Earn workforce program to tourism industry businesses

EDUCATE OUR COMMUNITIES

- Develop a widely accessible online hospitality and tourism course for West Virginians

SHAPE OUR FUTURE

- Provide tourism education to middle and high school students across the state
- Establish career pathways for high school students to begin earning credit toward future degree or certificate programs
- Create new degree and certificate programs with institutions of higher learning

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NECESSARY FUNDING TO CONTINUE GROWTH

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KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING: GOVERNOR'S FUNDING REQUEST FOR FY2024

Revenue Source	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024 Request
Lottery	\$11,357,898	\$11,540,567	\$11,540,567	\$11,540,567	\$11,652,513	\$11,786,291
Surplus	\$2,500,000	\$7,000,000		\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$20,500,000
General		\$7,000,000	\$14,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000
TOTAL	\$13,857,898	\$25,540,567	\$25,540,567	\$25,540,567	\$25,652,513	\$39,286,291

FY 2024 Changes	Total
Increase to Operations Fund for proposed pay raises	\$133,778
Increase to Brand Promotion Fund for national advertising campaign	\$6,000,000
Increase of Industry Development Fund to create new trail grant program	\$7,500,000
TOTAL	\$13,633,778

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OUTDOOR RECREATION ON THE RISE: A NEW TRAIL DEVELOPMENT FUND



In order to keep supporting widespread growth in outdoor recreation, we must continue investing in our trail systems. Currently, the Department of Highways is the only agency with dedicated trail grant funding. In the past 4 years, they've received nearly \$20 million in requests but have only had about \$1.3 million annually to award from the Recreation Trails program.

This \$7.5 million will allow us to pilot a state-funded program to help support the growth of trail development in all nine travel regions.

BECHTEL SUMMIT REVENUE

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

The funds will be used to assist with marketing the 2023 Spartan Race at the Bechtel Summit. In the past 5 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
7/1/21 - 6/30/22	\$952.14
TOTAL	\$2,885.52

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