



WEST
VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

2023 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.

Significant Growth in Economic Impact



\$7+ BILLION
ECONOMIC IMPACT



\$887 MILLION
TAX REVENUE
GENERATED



59,000+
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT



NEARLY \$2 BILLION
TOTAL INCOME

A National Leader

WEST VIRGINIA HAD A 17% INCREASE

in visitor spending compared to pre-pandemic levels, far higher than the

UNITED STATES OVERALL 1%

post-pandemic tourism recovery.

Shattering Past Records



5 Source: Tourism Economics 2023, Dean Runyan Associates 2022



A look back on 2023

The Messaging

WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM TV ADS

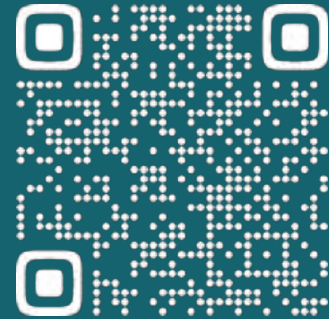
Spring/
Summer



Fall



Winter





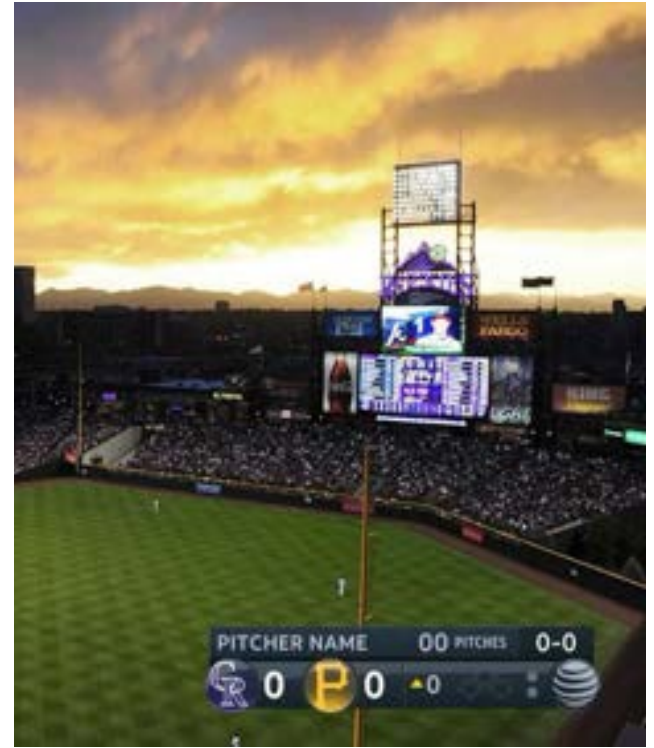
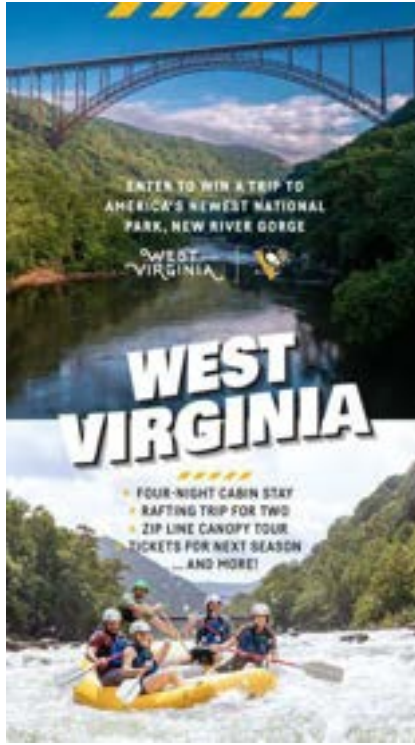
SAMPLE WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM PRINT ADS



SAMPLE WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM DIGITAL ADS - TRAVEL SPIKE



SAMPLE WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM OUT-OF-HOME



SAMPLE WEST VIRGINIA SPORTS MARKETING



SAMPLE WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

The Audience

Regional & National Media Markets

As our budget has grown, so has our reach, and we've entered global markets. Our international advertising primarily focuses on Canada and Europe, and we use matching funds from federal visa fees to amplify our international message.



Cooperative Advertising Program

What is Co-Op?

This public-private fund allows partners to access up to a

75% MATCH ON THEIR ADVERTISING.

Since it was established in 2017, the fund has been accessed to purchase

MORE THAN \$23 MILLION FOR 130 PARTNERS.



Experience all-natural, all together.

Trek to some of the most iconic sights in West Virginia on family-friendly hiking trails. From walking tours through historic towns to popular trails that lead to stunning views, set out on a hiking adventure to remember in the New River Gorge.

WVtourism.com/NewRiverGorgeCV9




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New River Gorge National Park & Preserve






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Peak adventure, here in the Mountain State.




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New River Gorge National Park & Preserve



With family-friendly water sports, amazing overlooks and scenic views - there are plenty of ways to take in the natural beauty of the New River Gorge National Park & Preserve. Escape to Southern West Virginia this summer for the ultimate family getaway.

WVtourism.com/SWYMS

JEFFERSON COUNTY + WEST VIRGINIA

PLAN NOW

SKI VALLEY + WEST VIRGINIA

PLAN NOW

VISIT MERCER COUNTY + WEST VIRGINIA

PLAN NOW

H + WEST VIRGINIA

PLAN NOW

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EXPLORE MORE

STONEWALL COUNTRY + WEST VIRGINIA

PLAN NOW

STONEWALL COUNTRY + WEST VIRGINIA

PLAN NOW

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Special Projects



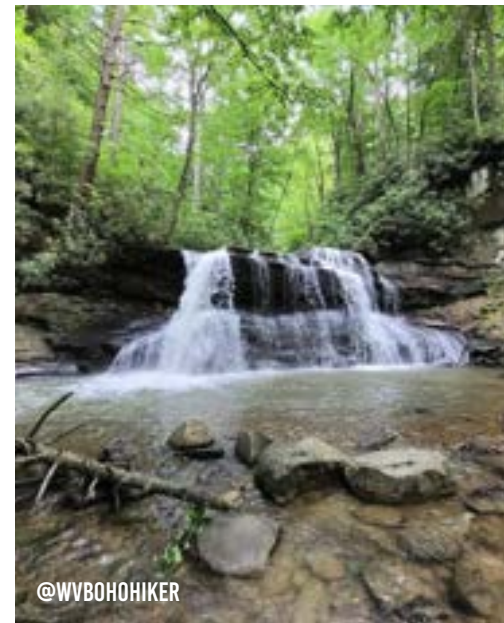
West Virginia Waterfall Trail

This year, nearly a dozen cascades were added to the successful Waterfall Trail. This trail now showcases 40 waterfalls across the state.

65K+
CHECK-INS

11 NEW
WATERFALLS ADDED

8.6K+
PRIZES SHIPPED





West Virginia Culinary Trail

Hand-selected by the current class of West Virginia Chef Ambassadors, the newly launched Culinary Trail features 27 restaurants across the state. With 3 restaurants per region, visitors can discover local favorites and hidden gems on this trail.

Just weeks after its initial launch in November 2023,

3,200+ USERS

have signed up for the Culinary Trail.





The Results

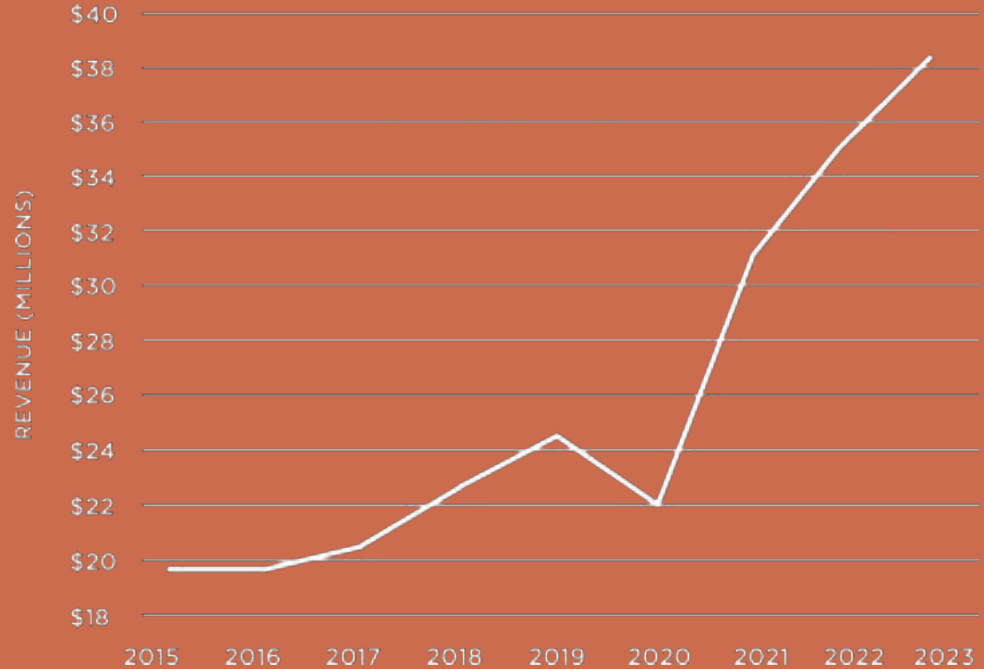
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State Parks Annual Revenue

The past five fiscal years have seen the **best financial performance** in the history of our park system.

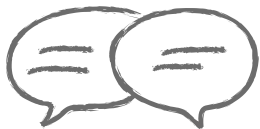
State Parks are completing **\$200+ million** in improvements, which included upgrades at every single state-operated lodge and every cabin across the state.

Increased marketing and advertising resulted in online sales hitting an all-time high of **\$15 million+ in revenue last year.**



Landmark Social Media Success

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



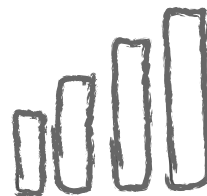
Engagement
up 192%



Link clicks
up 76.5%



Web sessions
from social
referrals
up 224%



Web
conversations
from social
referrals
up 284%



Combined
social
following
476,979

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

Vertical Video is King

Since the introduction
of daily Reel posting

VIDEO VIEWS:

46,000,000+

335.3% increase from 2022



Increased Visitation to WVtourism.com

- Pageviews **up 54%**
- Web conversions **up 106%**
- New and returning users **up 33%**



A Boom in Vacation Guide Requests

**140,500+
REQUESTS**

149.07% increase
from 2022

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Public Relations Triumphs

West Virginia tourism-related content received **more than 33 billion** impressions in 2023 – more than quadrupling 2022 numbers.

Top-Tier Feature Publications

Outside

Best Family Trip
New River Gorge
National Park

Forbes ADVISOR

**Best Place to
Travel in 2023**
St. Albans

Southern Living

South's Best Small Towns
Shepherdstown, Lewisburg,
Harpers Ferry

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

**"Most Under-the-radar
Stargazing Destination
in the U.S."**

Money

**Best Place to
Travel in 2023**
Harpers Ferry

Forbes

**"Charleston Is West Virginia's
Hottest Destination For
Craft Beer Lovers"**

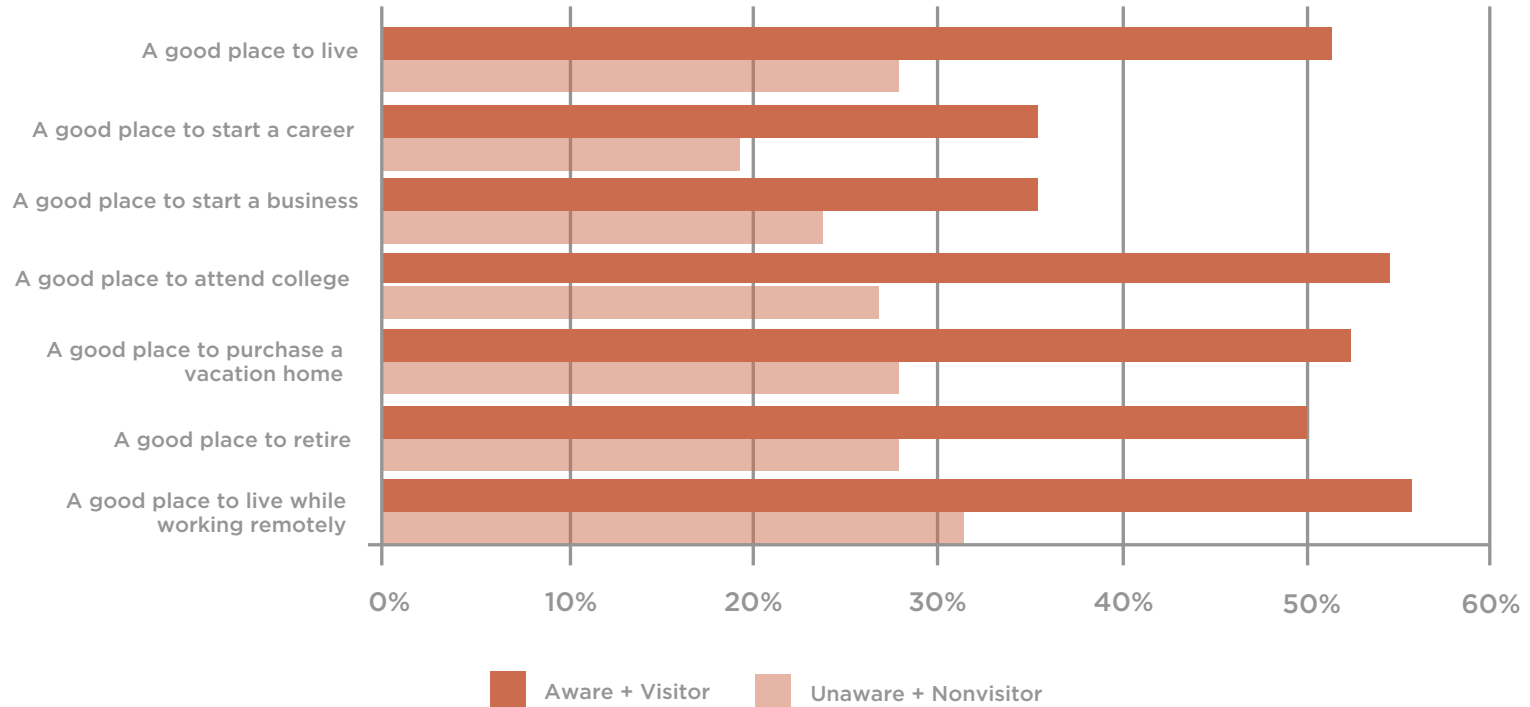


The Impact of Advertising

58%

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.”**

The Halo Effect



An aerial photograph of a lush green valley. A winding road with yellow and black markings curves through the forest. A river flows through the center of the valley. In the distance, a bridge spans across the valley. The text "Industry Growth" is overlaid in the top left corner.

Industry Growth



**Scan to explore the list
of complied grants
and incentives**



2023 Tax Credits Approved

The West Virginia Department of Economic Development approved six Tourism Development Act Tax Credit projects.

\$43 MILLION

In new investment this year

- MACK'S BINGO
- TYGART HOTEL
- SNOWSHOE

\$357 MILLION

In project spending since its inception

- RIVER RIDERS
- GRAND PATRICIAN
- BAVARIAN INN

New training and resources continue to be offered to partners

The Governor's Conference on Tourism, held at Canaan Valley Resort State Park, saw record-breaking interest with over 300 registrants in 2023. The conference provided attendees with opportunities to learn from a range of experts in tourism, hospitality, and outdoor recreation, including hands-on learning labs and one-on-one meetings to connect partners with individualized resources.



Strengthening the Tourism Workforce

THE OPPORTUNITY

21,000 JOB OPENINGS

projected in tourism annually, including

10,000 MANAGEMENT-LEVEL

openings with salaries approaching

\$60,000

THE SOLUTION

Supporting West Virginia's existing tourism professionals and creating pathways for students and jobseekers to enter the field

Introducing Tourism Works

This program is funded by a **\$5.1 million grant awarded** by the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

We have three primary areas of focus:

TRAIN YOUR TEAM



EDUCATE OUR COMMUNITIES



SHAPE OUR FUTURE



SCAN HERE OR GO TO
WVtourism.com/tourismworks/
to learn more



An aerial photograph of a two-lane asphalt road with yellow center and edge lines, winding through a dense, lush green forest. A small white car is visible on the road, moving away from the viewer. The trees are vibrant green, suggesting a healthy, mature forest.

Newly Launched Tourism Programs

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.

Tourism Works: Key Accomplishments in 2023

Tourism Works is a set of comprehensive workforce programs serving everyone from K-12 students to seasoned hospitality professionals. In 2023, the program made the following strides:

1. Added tourism curriculum into schools in all 55 counties.
2. Enrolled over 9,000 K-12 students in courses that will include tourism-related educational content in the 2023-2024 school year.
3. Provided training for over 140 teachers, counselors, and administrators about tourism career paths and curriculum development.



Tourism Works: Key Accomplishments in 2023

4. Allocated funds for four new or expanded college-level tourism degree or certificate programs, all of which will include partnerships with local high schools.
5. Began creating a series of online modules focused on the basic skills needed for hospitality and tourism in West Virginia.
6. Began rolling out funding for tourism businesses looking to provide training to current employees.





Necessary Funding to Continue Growth

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Budget Overview

FUND	FY24	FY25 Governor's Recommendation
3067 - Operations		
66200 - Operations	\$4,451,771.00	\$4,582,523.00
61800 - Advertising	\$2,422,407.00	\$2,422,407.00
46300 - Telemarketing Center	\$82,080.00	\$82,080.00
0246 - Marketing & Advertising		
61803 - Brand Promotion	\$3,000,000.00	\$18,000,000.00
61804 - Public Relations	\$1,500,000.00	\$1,500,000.00
61805 - Events & Sponsorships	\$500,000.00	\$500,000.00
61806 - Industry Development	\$500,000.00	\$8,500,000.00
61900 - State Parks & Recreation Advertising	\$1,500,000.00	\$1,500,000.00
11601- Tourism Development Opportunity Fund	\$0.00	\$0.00
0246 - Marketing & Advertising Surplus		
61893 - Brand Surplus	\$7,000,000	\$0.00
61896 - Industry Development Surplus	\$8,000,000	\$0.00
3072 - Tourism Promotion Fund	\$4,808,142.00	\$4,808,142.00
<i>Spending authority</i>	\$10,000,000.00	\$15,000,000.00
8903 - Federal Funds (EDA Grant)	---	---
<i>Spending authority</i>	\$5,148,017.00	\$2,765,115.00
Total	\$33,764,400.00	\$41,895,152.00

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 2024 Spartan Race at the Bechtel Summit. In the past 6 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
7/1/22 - 6/30/23	\$1,487.70
TOTAL	\$4,373.22



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Questions?

Contact

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