

An aerial photograph of a two-lane asphalt road with yellow double lines, curving through a dense, vibrant green forest. A small white car is visible on the road, moving away from the viewer. The text is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

WEST
VIRGINIA®

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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

STATE OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

§5B-2I-4(h)

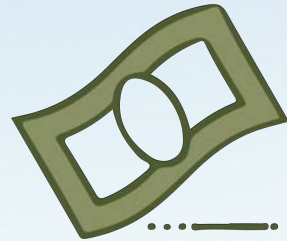
The West Virginia Department of Tourism shall submit a report annually to the Governor and the Legislature about the development of the tourism industry in the state and the necessary funding required by the state to continue the development of the tourism industry.

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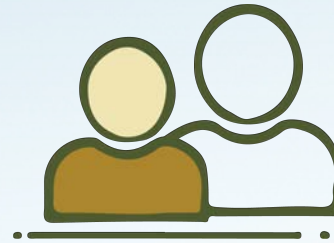
TOURISM WAS GROWING AT A RECORD-BREAKING LEVEL BEFORE THE PANDEMIC



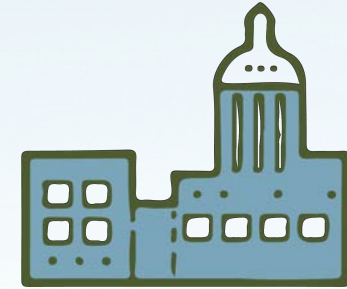
\$4.8 BILLION
IN TRAVELER SPENDING



\$1.2 BILLION
IN EARNINGS



47,600
TOURISM-SUPPORTED JOBS

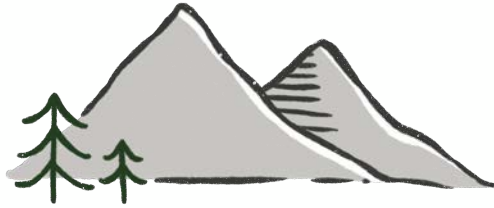


\$791 MILLION
IN-STATE & LOCAL TAX REVENUE

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



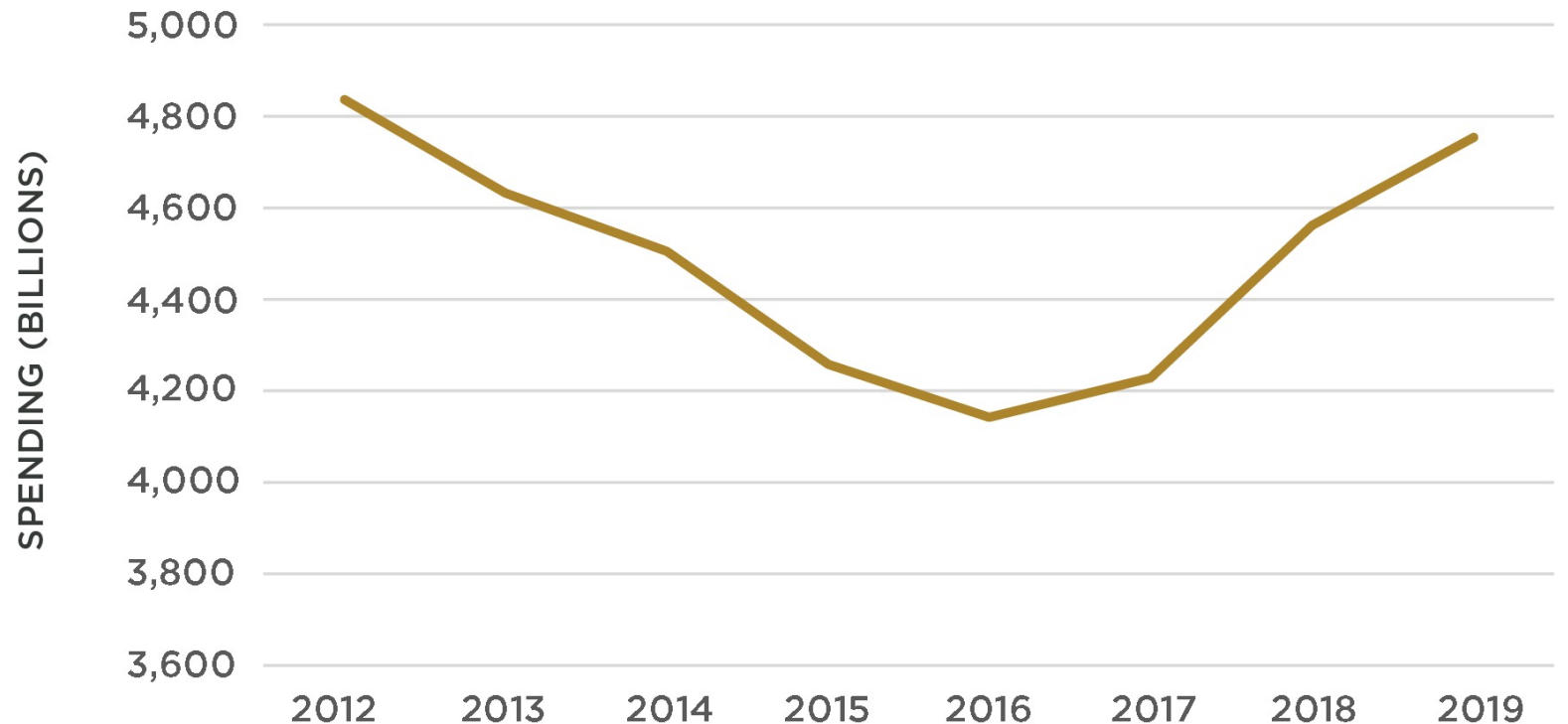
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**THANKS TO INCREASED
INVESTMENT, TRAVELER
SPENDING GREW
BY 14.8% IN JUST
THREE YEARS**

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

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



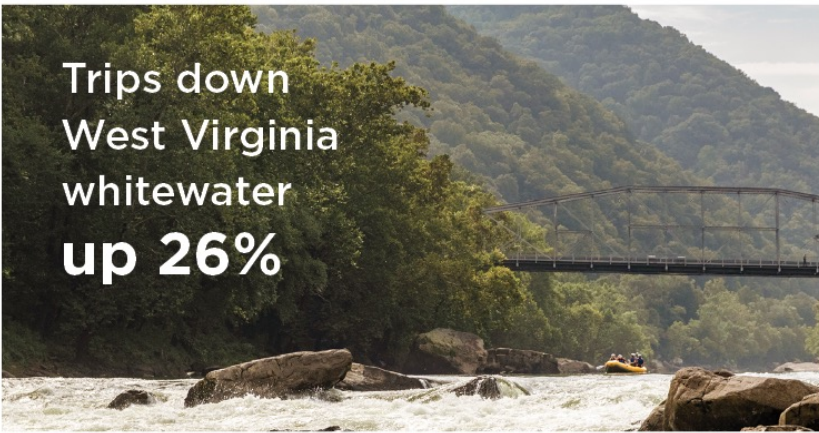
2021 visitor arrivals
to West Virginia at
all-time high



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

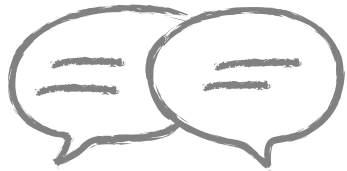


The Department of Tourism's campaign for industry partners during the COVID-19 pandemic, #PlaceIBelongWV, won a U.S. Travel Mercury Award for Community Building.

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OUR SOCIAL CHANNELS ARE TAKING OFF

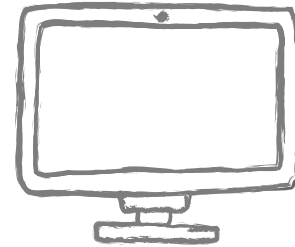
We continue to promote West Virginia as a four-season vacation destination across our social media platforms, and we're seeing landmark success.



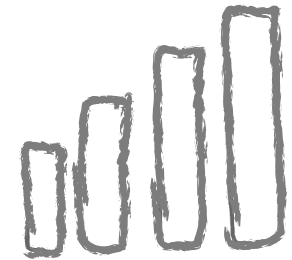
Engagement
up 34%



Link clicks
up 170%

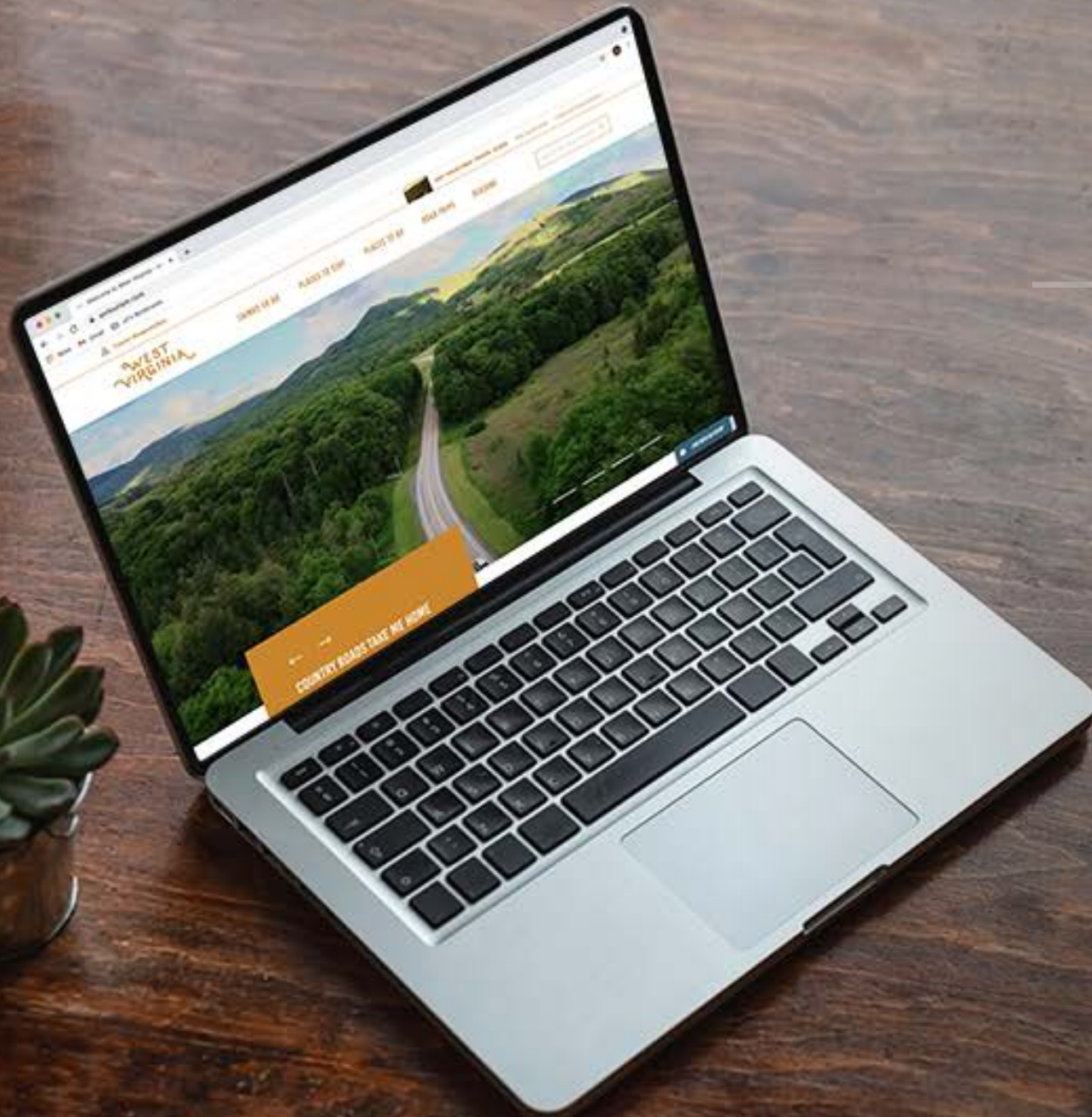


Web sessions
from social
referrals
up 214%



Web
conversations
from social
referrals
up 757%

MORE TRAVELERS ARE VISITING WVTOURISM.COM



- 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 dense forest in West Virginia during autumn. The trees are in various stages of color change, with vibrant reds, oranges, and yellows interspersed with evergreen trees. In the center-right of the image, a waterfall cascades over a rocky ledge into a small pool. The sky above is filled with dramatic, grey and blue clouds, suggesting an overcast day.

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



TOP TRAVEL
REGION



CONDÉ NAST BEST
PLACES TO GO



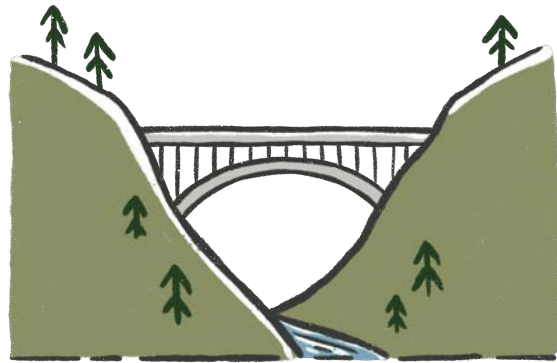
TOP 10 FAMILY
VACATION DESTINATION



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.



898 MILLION
earned media
impressions



WEST VIRGINIA PROUDLY HOSTED MAJOR INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC EVENTS IN 2021



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

- 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



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


- 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

West Virginia Tourism with Timberline Mountain.
Sponsored · 🌐

Looking for a winter getaway? Hit the slopes of Timberline Mountain to find snowy adventure.



TIMBERLINEMOUNTAIN.COM
Visit Timberline Mountain [Learn more](#)

👍 240 12 Comments 30 Shares



WEST VIRGINIA COUNTRY ROADS LEAD TO >
Hatfield McCoy Trails



WEST VIRGINIA | *Explore* SUMMERS COUNTY
WVtourism.com

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JEFFERSON COUNTY | **WEST VIRGINIA**
HARPERS FERRY • BOLIVAR
SHEPHERDSTOWN • CHARLES TOWN

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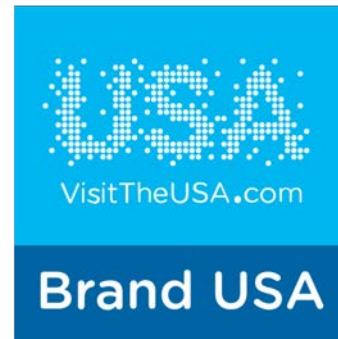
When outdoor adventure calls, a summer road trip to Jefferson County is the answer. Bring along your bike or set out for a hike on the Appalachian Trail. Afterward, beat the summer heat with one of River Riders' exhilarating whitewater rafting expeditions. Then, end an eventful day with cold brews at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

WVtourism.com/JeffersonCounty

JEFFERSON COUNTY | **WEST VIRGINIA**
HARPERS FERRY • BOLIVAR
SHEPHERDSTOWN • CHARLES TOWN

WE CONTINUED TO OFFER NEW TRAINING AND RESOURCES TO PARTNERS

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

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

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 |
| TOTAL | \$12,115,474 | \$13,857,898 | \$25,540,567 | \$25,540,567 | \$30,540,567 | \$25,652,513 |

**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 |
| TOTAL | \$14,000,000 |

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 |
| TOTAL | \$1,933.38 |

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