



# 2024 Annual Report

WEST  
VIRGINIA<sup>®</sup>  
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

*almost heaven<sup>®</sup>*



# 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



**\$8.7 BILLION**  
ECONOMIC IMPACT



**\$1 BILLION+**  
TAX REVENUE  
GENERATED



**60,000**  
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT



**\$2.1 BILLION**  
TOTAL INCOME

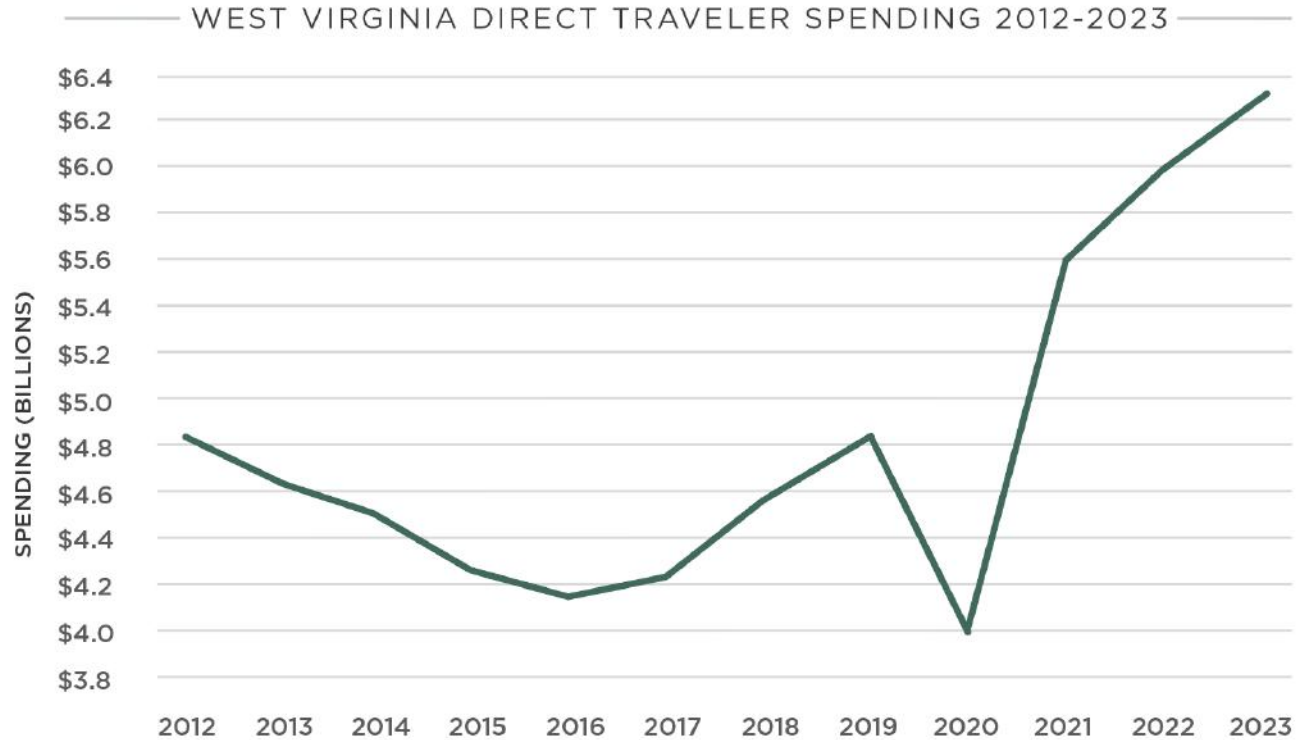
# A National Leader

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Visitor spending in **West Virginia** has grown **23%** since 2019, **compared to only 9% nationally.**



# Shattering Past Records



# Impacts are Statewide

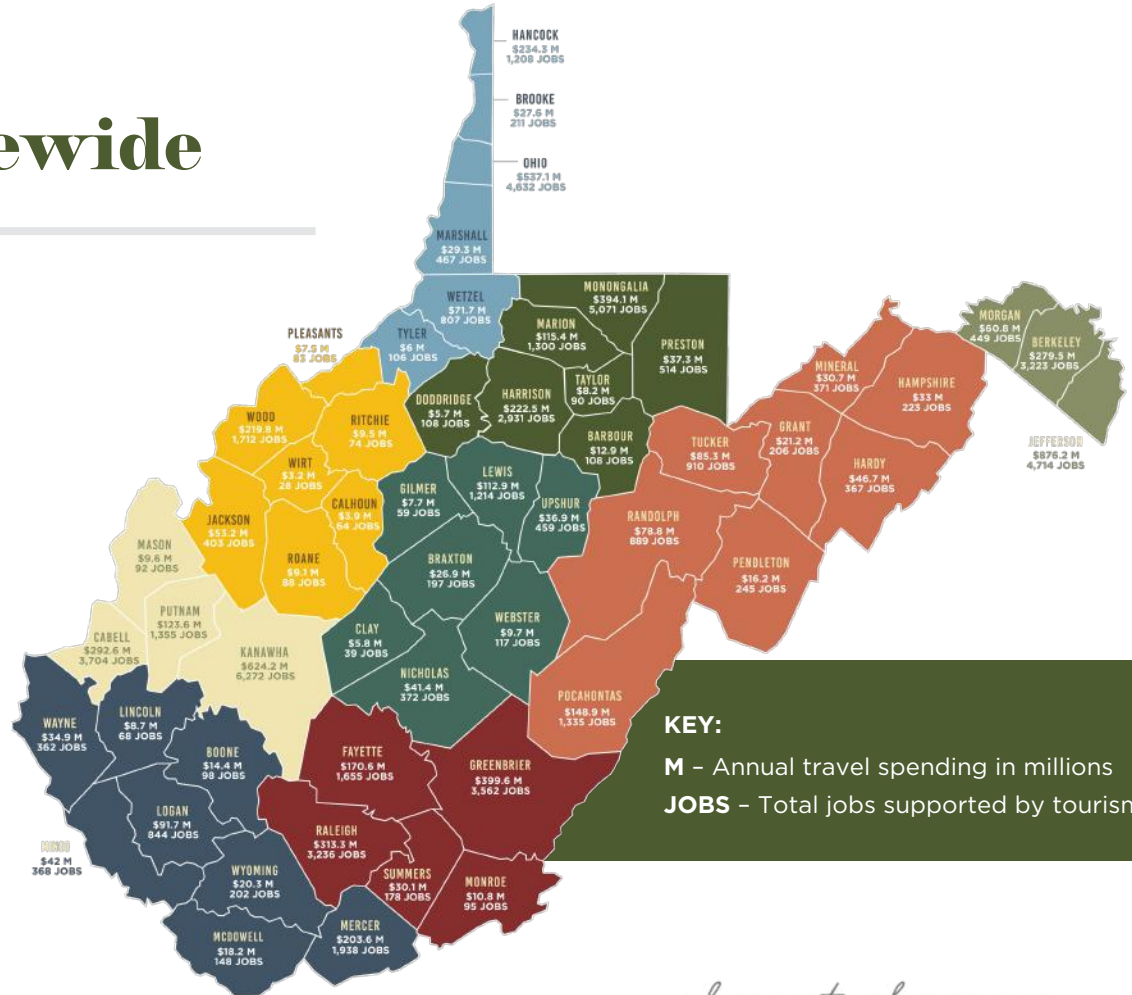
Visitors spend on average

**\$17 MILLION**

per day in West Virginia.

Visitor spending reduced  
the tax burden by

**\$835 PER HOUSEHOLD**



KEY:

M - Annual travel spending in millions

JOBS - Total jobs supported by tourism





# A Look Back On 2024

# The Messaging

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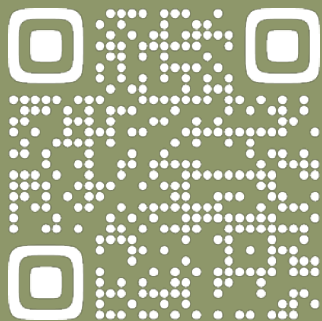
WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM TV ADS

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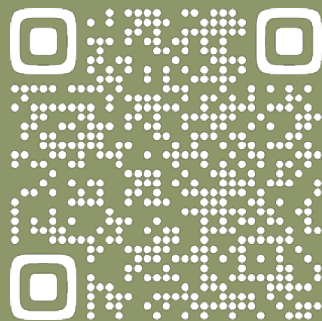
**Spring/  
Summer**



**Fall**



**Winter**



## OUTSIDE MAGAZINE PRINT AD



*almost heaven*

With more than 1,500 miles of breathtaking hiking trails, West Virginia can take you to some spectacular places. Welcome to the Mountain State. Beauty at every turn. Excitement with every step. [WVtourism.com](http://WVtourism.com)

WEST VIRGINIA

# Adventure has its high points.

© New River Gorge National Park & Preserve

## DIGITAL RICH MEDIA AD



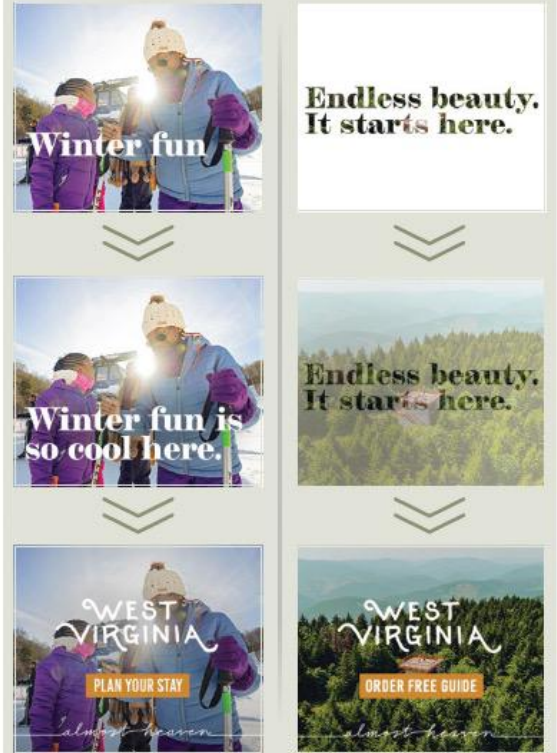
# You'll give it a 5-star review.

WEST VIRGINIA

GO STARGAZING

*almost heaven*

## ANIMATED DISPLAY ADS



Winter fun

Endless beauty. It starts here.

Winter fun is so cool here.

Endless beauty. It starts here.

WEST VIRGINIA

PLAN YOUR STAY

WEST VIRGINIA

ORDER FREE GUIDE

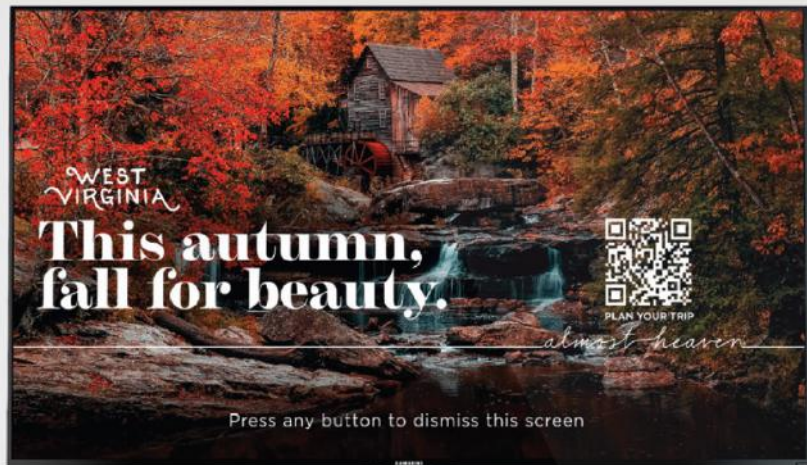
*almost heaven*

## OUTDOOR BILLBOARDS

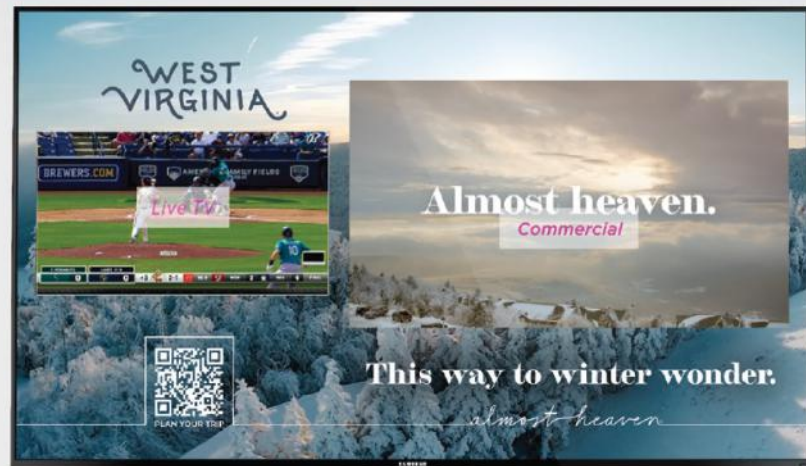




## STREAMING TV PAUSE AD



## LIVE SPORTS TV AD



# The Audience

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# Regional & National Media Markets



## Explore country roads and mountain towns in West Virginia

West Virginia's country roads are so charming that they've been written into song. Driving routes like the Skyguard Scenic Highway join together culture-packed towns and scenic, forested state parks.

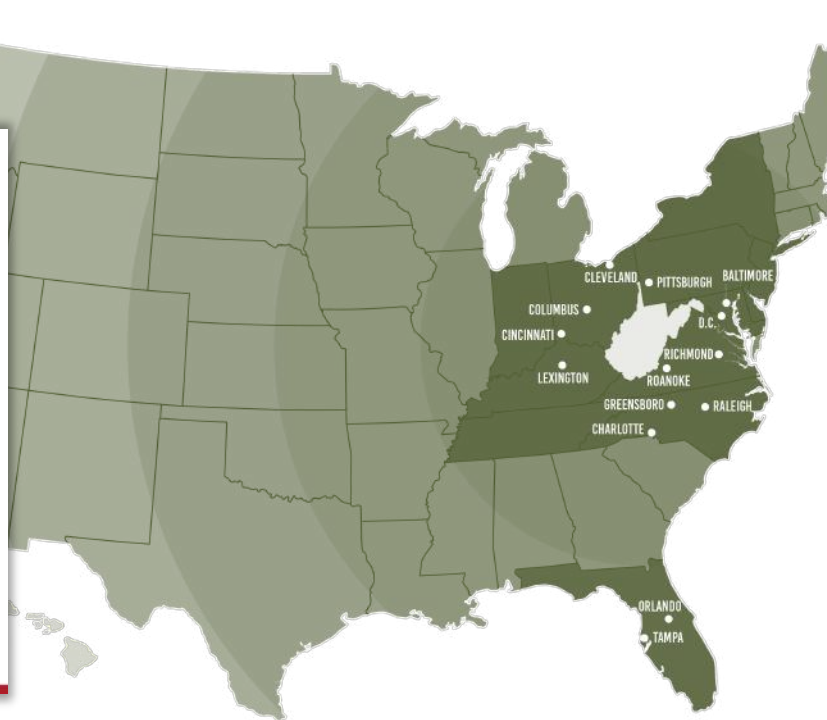
**Charleston**  
West Virginia's capital has a historic charm. It's home to Old Charleston, an Appalachian cultural district, and the historic Kanawha River. Charleston is also home to the Kanawha River, which is known for its scenic views and recreational opportunities. The city is also home to the Kanawha River, which is known for its scenic views and recreational opportunities.

**Lexington**  
There are just four continuously operating Carnegie libraries in the world, and one of them is in the heart of Lexington. This Georgian Revival style building, which is known for its historic architecture, is also home to the Lexington Public Library. The city is also home to the Lexington Public Library, which is known for its historic architecture and recreational opportunities.

**Wendoverville**  
A lovely little town known for its scenic views and recreational opportunities. The town is also home to the Wendoverville Public Library, which is known for its historic architecture and recreational opportunities.

**Elkins**  
A charming little town known for its scenic views and recreational opportunities. The town is also home to the Elkins Public Library, which is known for its historic architecture and recreational opportunities.

Plan your scenic road trip in West Virginia today: [www.westvirginia.com](http://www.westvirginia.com)



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.

*almost heaven.*



# Cooperative Advertising Program

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# What is Co-Op?


Co-Op has supplemented our private partners' advertising investments by **\$30 million+** since its creation in 2017 for over **130+ partners**.

In addition to the state's match, participants get **20-30% lower** media rates on average by partnering.

Participants gain access to state-controlled marketing content, including the ability to use "Country Roads" in TV and radio ads.




## PARTNER PRINT ADS



**Autumn will leave  
you awestruck.**





The essence of autumn lies in Almost-Heaven. From the charming town of Fayetteville to the woodlands of the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, you'll be immersed in the best of fall at every turn.

*almost-heaven*

New River Gorge National Park and Preserve



**Wintertime. Perfect  
for family time.**



Gear up for frosty fun the whole family can enjoy. From skiing and tubing to shopping and dining, there's something for every explorer atop Snowshoe Mountain. This winter, confront the cold with the warmest of moments.



*almost-heaven*

Snowshoe Mountain

## PARTNER BROADCAST ADS



**VISIT SOUTHERN  
WEST VIRGINIA**  
Spring/Summer 2024



**HATFIELD MCCOY  
TRAILS**  
Fall/Winter 2024-25



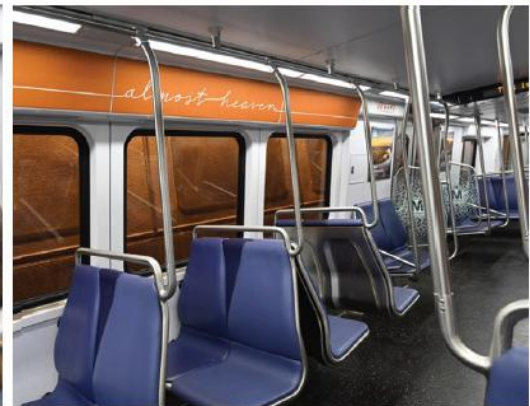
PARTNER DIGITAL ADS



EXPLORE MORE

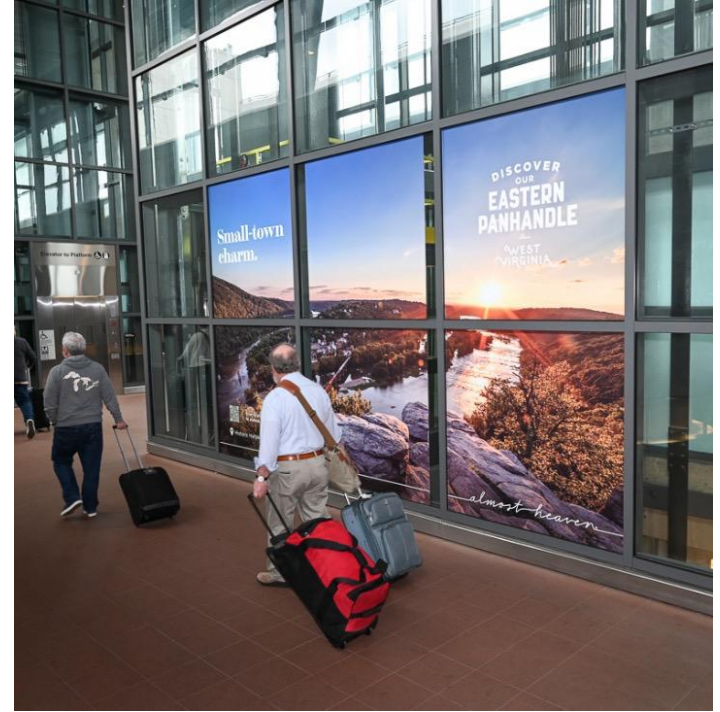


## PARTNER D.C. METRO TAKEOVER





## PARTNER DULLES AIRPORT TAKEOVER



# Special Projects

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# West Virginia Waterfall Trail

This year, the Waterfall Trail surpassed 100k check-ins, demonstrating its landmark impact on visitation.

**100K+**  
CHECK-INS

**MORE  
THAN HALF  
OF CHECK-INS AT  
LESSER-KNOWN FALLS**

**12,000+**  
PRIZES SHIPPED



*almost heaven*



# West Virginia Paranormal Trail

Capitalizing on the nationwide trend of spooky tourism, the West Virginia Paranormal Trail was launched in 2024. Highlighting local legends and historic haunts, this trail drove visitation to eerie landmarks across West Virginia.



## 6,800+

users explored  
West Virginia's spooky  
landmarks in just  
under four months.





# The Results

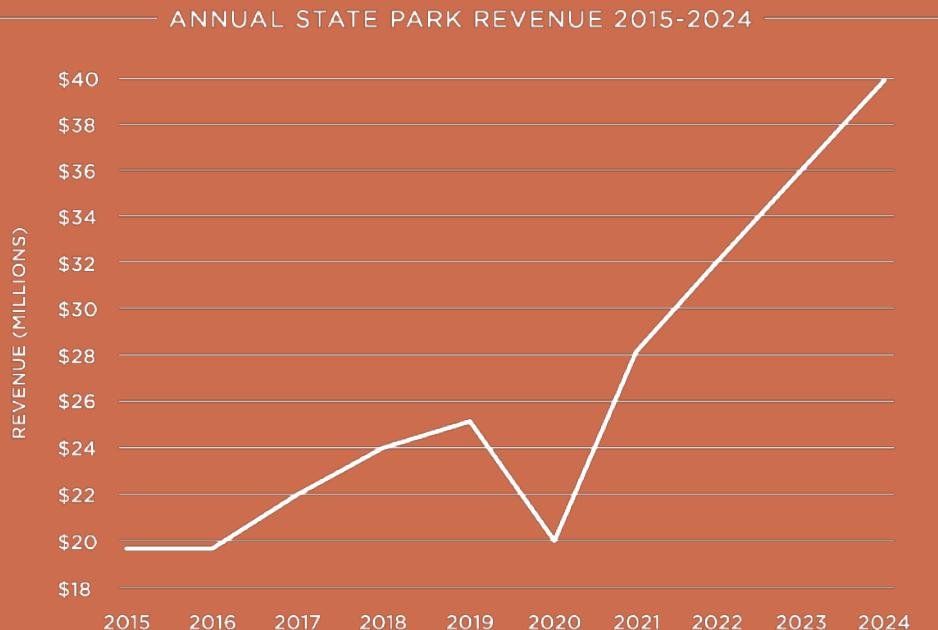
*almost heaven*

# 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  
**\$250+ 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.

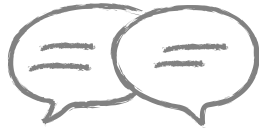




# Landmark Social Media Success

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



**Over 400M**  
Impressions



**Nearly 50%**  
More video  
views



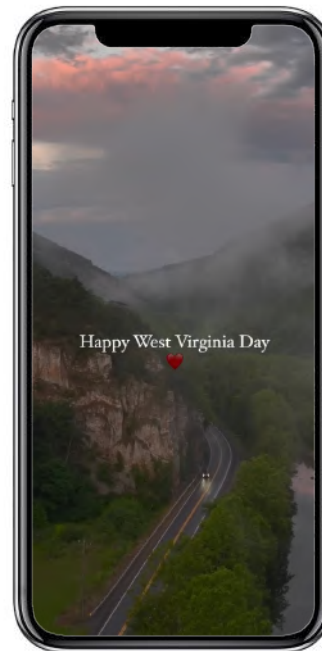
**Over 700K**  
Social  
following

Social following\* includes: Instagram, Facebook,  
Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest & LinkedIn

# Vertical Video is King

Introducing vertical video and other best practice strategies has secured West Virginia's place in the social conversation.

**VIDEO VIEWS:**  
**99,000,000+**  
Nearly 50% increase  
from 2023



# Increased Visitation to WVtourism.com

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**4.4M+**  
ACTIVE USERS

**Nearly 7%**  
INCREASE FROM 2023





# A Boom in Vacation Guide Requests

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**190,000+  
REQUESTS**

Nearly 8% increase  
over 2023

*almost heaven*





## Public Relations Triumphs

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West Virginia tourism-related content received **more than 7 billion** impressions in 2023 – more than quadrupling 2022 numbers.



# Top-Tier Feature Publications



**"Best of the World"**  
**Top 20 Travel Experiences**

Whitewater rafting on  
the New River



**Best Dark Sky Retreats**  
Seneca State Forest



**10 Best Rivers for  
Tubing 2024**

Potomac River,  
Harpers Ferry



**8 Most Beautiful Places to  
Live in West Virginia**

**South's Best Cities  
on the Rise**  
Morgantown



**Most Charming Weekend  
Getaway from DC**  
Thomas & Davis



**West Virginia is  
Having a Moment**



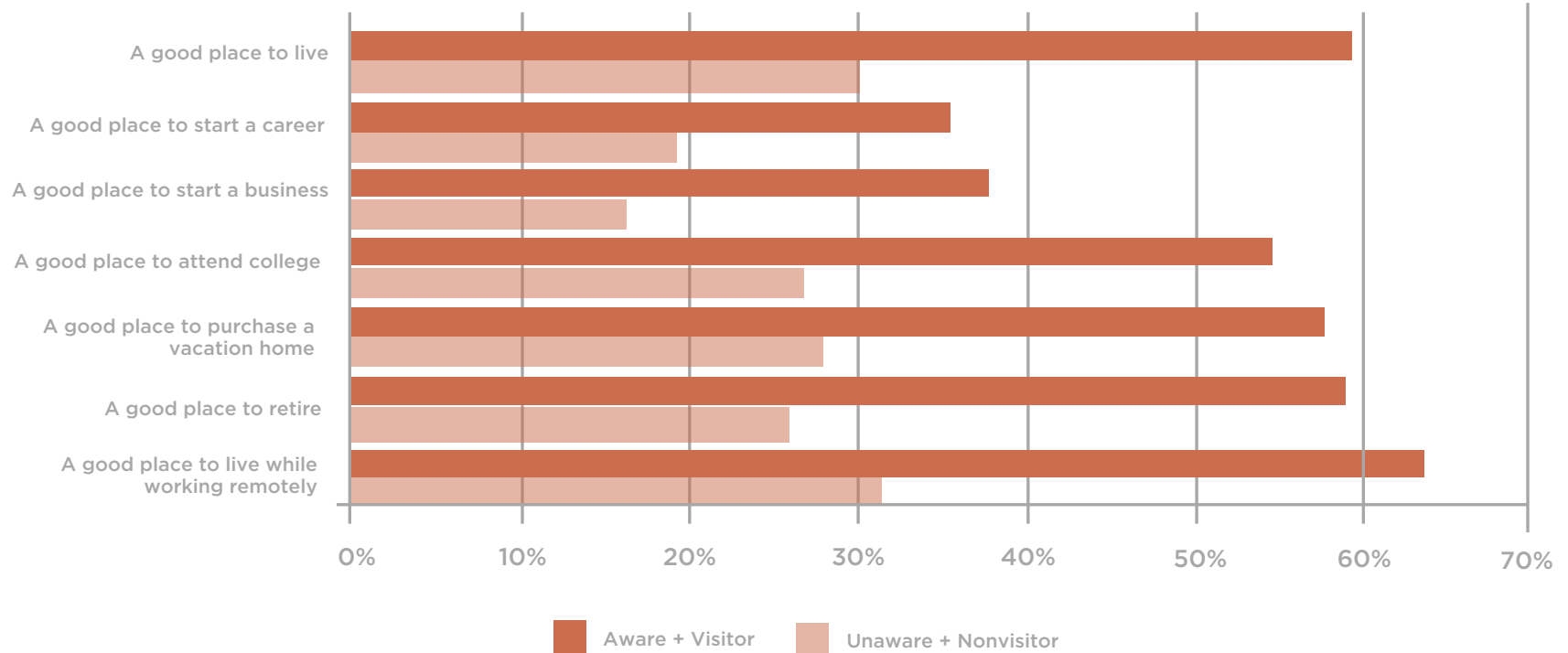
# The Impact of Advertising

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**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 deep, forested valley. A thick layer of white clouds fills the bottom of the valley, creating a 'sea of clouds' effect. The surrounding hills are covered in dense green forest. In the distance, more hills and a body of water are visible under a soft, hazy sky. On the left side, a small wooden structure or observation deck is visible on a hillside.

# Industry Growth



Scan to explore the list  
of complied grants and  
incentives.







Devil's Backbone



Shepherdstown Opera House



Oglebay Resort



Ashland Scenic Campground



Fisher Mountain Golf Club

# Record-Breaking Private Investment

Private investment is soaring with with **\$295 million** flowing into the state through this tax credit program alone over the last 8 years. This is more than three times the investment over the previous 12 years of the tax credit program.



# 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](http://WVtourism.com/tourismworks)  
to learn more.



# Strengthening the Tourism Workforce

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## THE OPPORTUNITY

**21,000**

**JOB OPENINGS**

projected in tourism annually, including

**10,000**

**MANAGEMENT-LEVEL**

## THE SOLUTION

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

# Key Education Accomplishments

1. Added tourism curriculum in all 55 counties.
2. Enrolled over 13,000 K-12 students in courses with tourism content.
3. Provided training for nearly 200 K-12 educators.
4. Funded four new and enhanced college-level tourism programs with high school pathway components.
5. Created a free, online hospitality and tourism course available to all West Virginians.
6. Provided funds to train nearly 600 tourism professionals in new skillsets.





# New Training and Resources Continue to be Offered to Partners

The Governor's Conference on Tourism, held at the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center, saw record-breaking numbers again this year, with registration up 33% compared with the previous year. Over 400 tourism partners signed up for the event in 2024, taking advantage of networking opportunities, one-on-one social media audits and other individual appointments with experts, as well as a roster of nationally-recognized speakers.





# Necessary Funding to Continue Growth

*almost heaven*

# Budget Overview

FUND	FY2025 BUDGET
<b>3067 - Operations</b>	
66200 - Operations	\$4,451,771
61800 - Advertising	\$2,422,407
46300 - Telemarketing Center	\$82,080
<b>0246 - Marketing &amp; Advertising</b>	
61803 - Brand Promotion	\$8,000,000
61804 - Public Relations	\$1,500,000
61805 - Events & Sponsorships	\$500,000
61806 - Industry Development	\$2,500,000
61900 - State Parks & Recreation Advertising	\$1,500,000
11601- Tourism Development Opportunity Fund	---
<b>0246 - Marketing &amp; Advertising Surplus</b>	
61893 - Brand Surplus	\$7,000,000
61896 - Industry Development Surplus	\$6,000,000
<b>3072 - Tourism Promotion Fund</b>	\$4,808,142
Spending authority	\$10,000,000
<b>8903 - Federal Funds (EDA Grant)</b>	---
Spending authority	\$2,765,115
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$38,766,400</b>



# 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 2025 Spartan Trifecta World Championship. Our state will make history as this championship makes its debut on U.S. soil.

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
7/1/23 - 6/30/24	\$2,634.06
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,007.28</b>



# WEST VIRGINIA

Questions?

Contact

**Chelsea A. Ruby**

*Cabinet Secretary*

[chelsea.a.ruby@wv.gov](mailto:chelsea.a.ruby@wv.gov)