



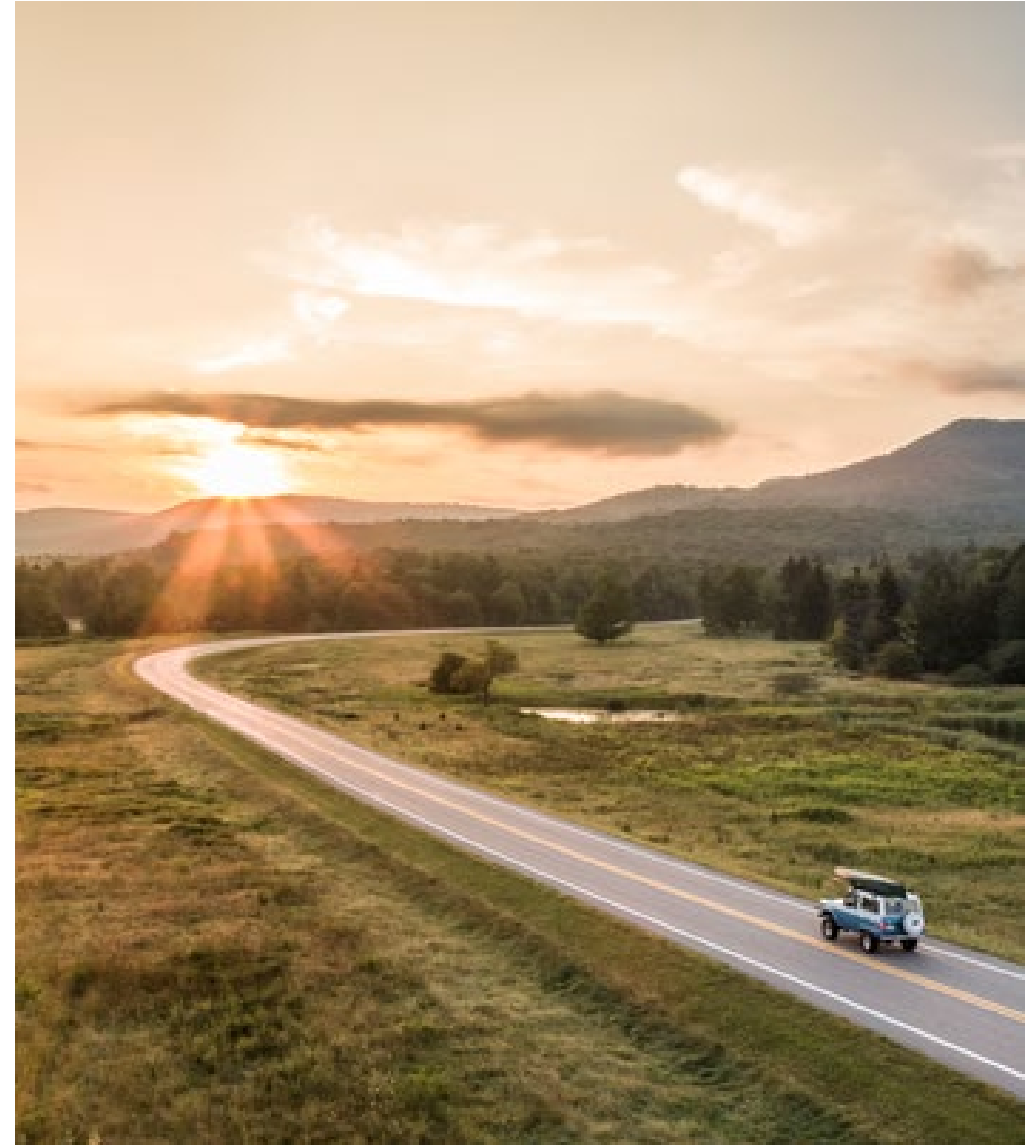
WEST  
VIRGINIA™

**TOURISM OFFICE**

**2018 ANNUAL REPORT**

## §5B-2I-4(h)

The West Virginia Tourism Office shall submit a report annually to the Governor, Secretary of Commerce 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.



# Development of the Tourism Industry

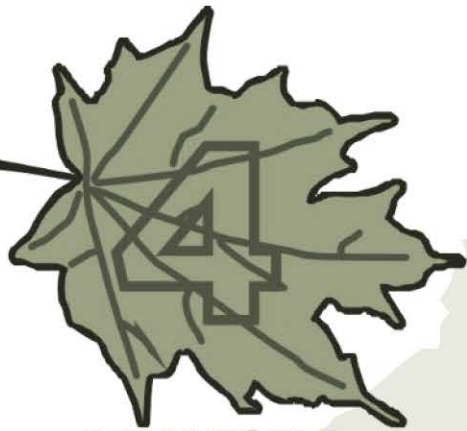
The tourism industry in West Virginia is strong and on a growth trajectory.

# West Virginia's Tourism Industry is Strong





**1,000+**  
HISTORIC SITES  
TO EXPLORE

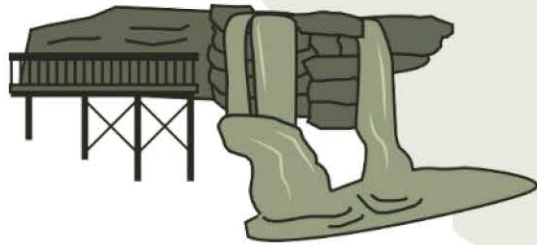


**BEAUTIFUL  
SEASONS**



**164,000  
ACRES OF  
PUBLIC LANDS**

**45 STATE PARKS & FORESTS**



**130+  
GOLF  
COURSES**



**6**  
**MAJOR  
SKI AREAS**

**MORE THAN A DOZEN  
RESORTS**

**HUNDREDS  
OF LOCAL EATERIES**

**5  
CASINOS**



**600+  
MILES OF  
ATV TRAILS**

**26  
CRAFT  
BREWERIES**



- ▶ 20+ wineries & distilleries
- ▶ 2 dozen lakes for fishing & swimming
- ▶ Miles and miles of zip lines
- ▶ Dozens of museums
- ▶ 3 scenic train companies
- ▶ 4 minor league baseball teams
- ▶ 9 national parks, forests, & recreation areas
- ▶ 30+ spas
- ▶ 40+ bed & breakfasts
- ▶ 62.3 million total visitors

**2  
D1 SPORTS  
TEAMS**

**450  
FAIRS  
& FESTIVALS**



**Unmatched  
outdoor  
recreation**



**Scenic beauty  
in all nine travel  
regions**



**An affordable  
and safe place  
to visit and stay**



**Natural paradise  
near urbanized  
east coast**

# Traveler Profile



**2.7** NIGHTS  
AVERAGE LENGTH  
OF STAY



**87%**  
OF ANNUAL  
VISITATION COMES  
FROM RETURNING  
VISITORS



**\$449**  
AVERAGE SPEND  
PER VISITOR



**53%**  
OF VISITORS REPORT A  
HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF  
LESS THAN \$50,000  
PER YEAR

## REASON FOR VISIT



FAMILY  
**45%**



OUTDOORS  
**9%**



TOUR  
**10%**



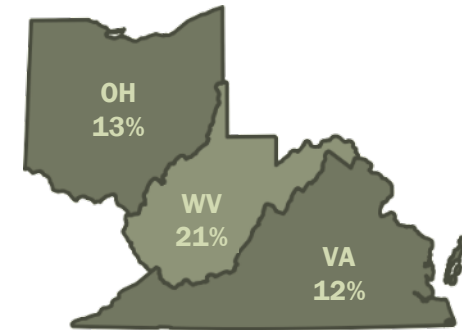
CASINO/GAMING  
**6%**

## TOP DMAs OF ORIGIN



Washington, DC, 11%  
Charleston-Huntington, 9%  
Pittsburgh, PA, 6%  
Cleveland, OH, 4%  
Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill, 4%  
New York, NY, 4%

## STATE OF ORIGIN



Source: Longwoods International, 2018

# West Virginia's Tourism Industry is Growing



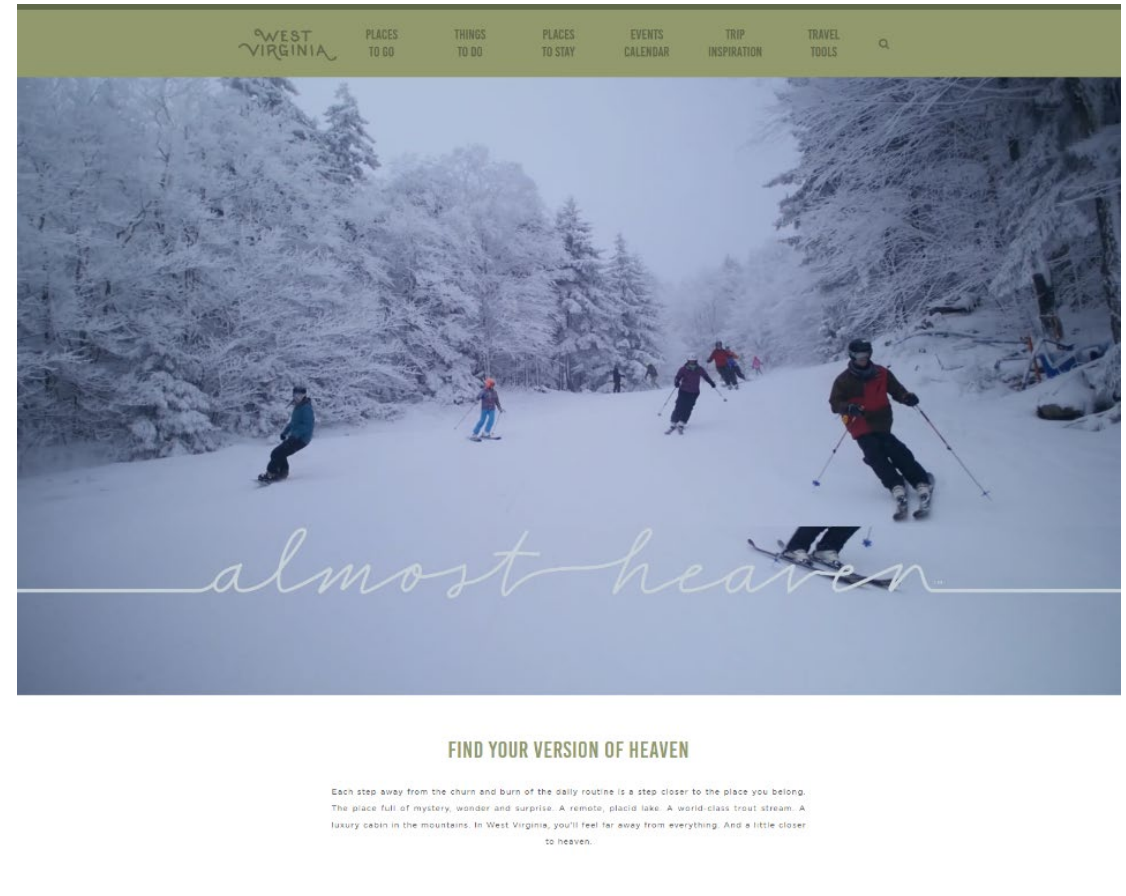
# Internal Indicators: Web Traffic

**36.47%**  
more pageviews

**32.09%**  
longer average session duration

**15.07%**  
more users

**13.55%**  
more sessions





# Internal Indicators: Social Channels



**21,820 new  
Facebook likes  
for a total of  
more than  
264,000**



**10,000 new  
Instagram  
followers for  
total of 40,000**



**7,500 new  
Twitter  
followers for a  
total of nearly  
15,000**



**Doubled  
YouTube  
followers to  
2,000**



**50,000 uses of  
#AlmostHeaven  
across all  
trackable  
platforms**

# Internal Indicators: Visitor Counts

3.96 million visitors came through the eight welcome centers managed by the Tourism Office compared to 2.9 million in 2017.

**36.55%**  
more visitors than 2017



# Revenue Reporting: Economic Impact

- Traveler spending in West Virginia grew in 2017 after four years of steady decline, and that growth was on track to continue in 2018.
- West Virginia's growth rate of 3.9% was 30% higher than the national rate of 3.0%.
- Travel spending excluding gaming grew even more at 5.0%.



**\$4.3 billion**  
DIRECT CONSUMER SPENDING



**\$519 million**  
STATE AND LOCAL TAXES



**45,000**  
TOURISM-SUPPORTED JOBS

Source: Dean Runyan Associates, 2018

# Revenue Reporting: Hotel Occupancy

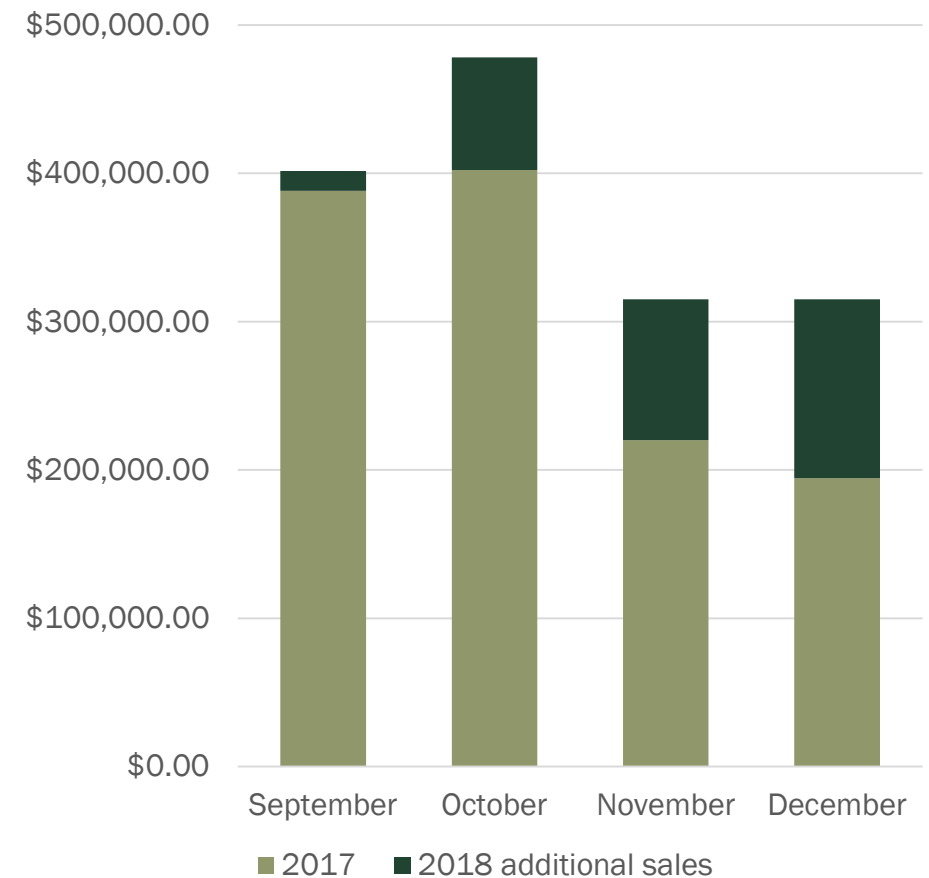
- Hotel occupancy data was positive every month in 2018 with double the previous year's increases according to a national survey of hotels and motels.
- The average daily rate grew slightly, reversing a trend of decline.
- Higher demand and room rates combined created a projected revenue increase of 13.5%.

	2016	2017	2018
Occupancy	<b>-10.28%</b>	<b>5.87%</b>	<b>10.77%</b>
Average Daily Rate	<b>-3.94%</b>	<b>-0.61%</b>	<b>2.04%</b>
Revenue Per Available Room	<b>-13.81%</b>	<b>5.23%</b>	<b>13.03%</b>
Supply (rooms available)	<b>2.64%</b>	<b>1.23%</b>	<b>0.40%</b>
Demand (rooms sold)	<b>-7.91%</b>	<b>7.18%</b>	<b>11.21%</b>
Total Revenue	<b>-11.54%</b>	<b>6.53%</b>	<b>13.49%</b>

Source: Smith Travel Research

# Revenue Reporting: State Parks Sales

- State Park online sales showed strong growth going into the second year of its new central reservation platform, which went live in mid-August 2017.
- Online sales increased 25% September-December compared to same period in 2017.
- December online sales were up 63% year-over-year thanks to promotions and email marketing.



# Strategic Efforts

A new advertising campaign, a new cooperative advertising program, industry development, and public relations efforts contributed to growth in 2018.

# Almost Heaven Advertising Campaign

- The Tourism Office launched a new research-based state advertising campaign in April 2018.
- “Take Me Home, Country Roads,” John Denver’s classic anthem that christened the state “almost heaven,” serves as the creative and emotional centerpiece of the campaign.
  - Acquiring the rights to use the song was a major milestone in 2017.
  - Research suggests hearing the song makes West Virginia seem more appealing to consumers as a destination.

*almost heaven*<sup>TM</sup>

IS IT A HIKE

OR A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY?

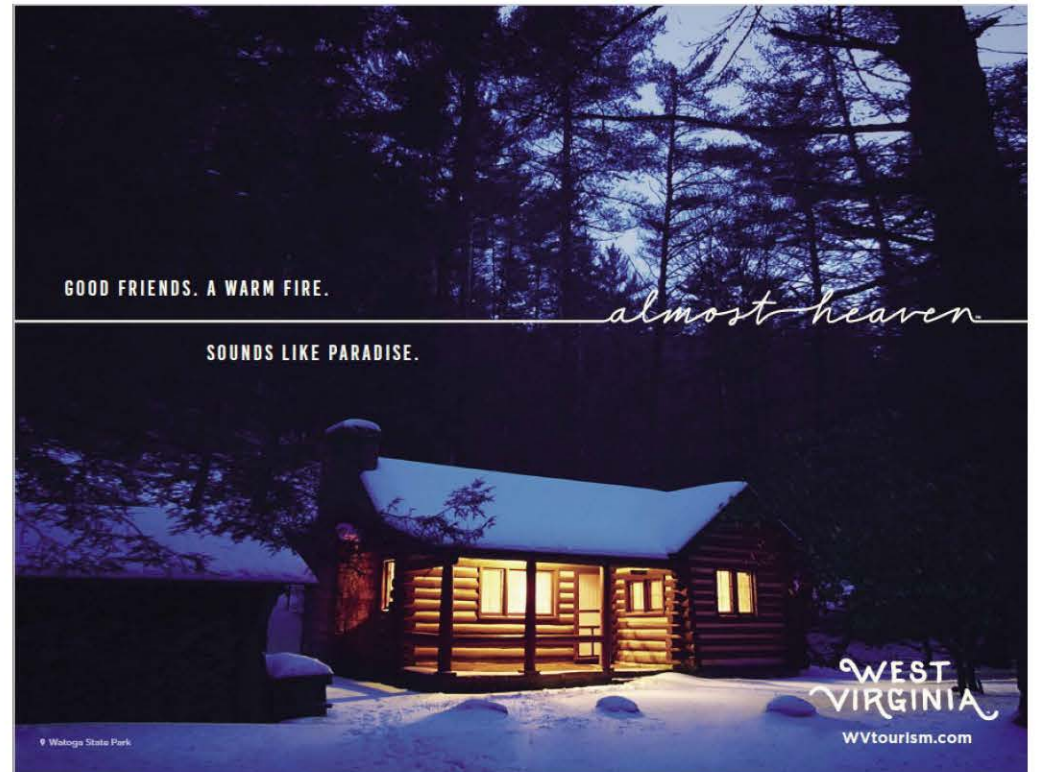
*almost heaven*

Can a rocky trail offer a path to new awareness? Transformations happen in West Virginia. Across rolling hills. Through unspoiled wilderness. Along clear-running streams. Here, that yearning to feel your spirit move is quenched with each new step. Why not find a trail and see where it takes you? You might just be surprised.



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# Media Markets

All in-state markets

Target out-of-state markets

Washington, DC

Pittsburgh, PA

Harrisburg-Lancaster-York, PA

Columbus, OH

Cleveland, OH

Roanoke, VA

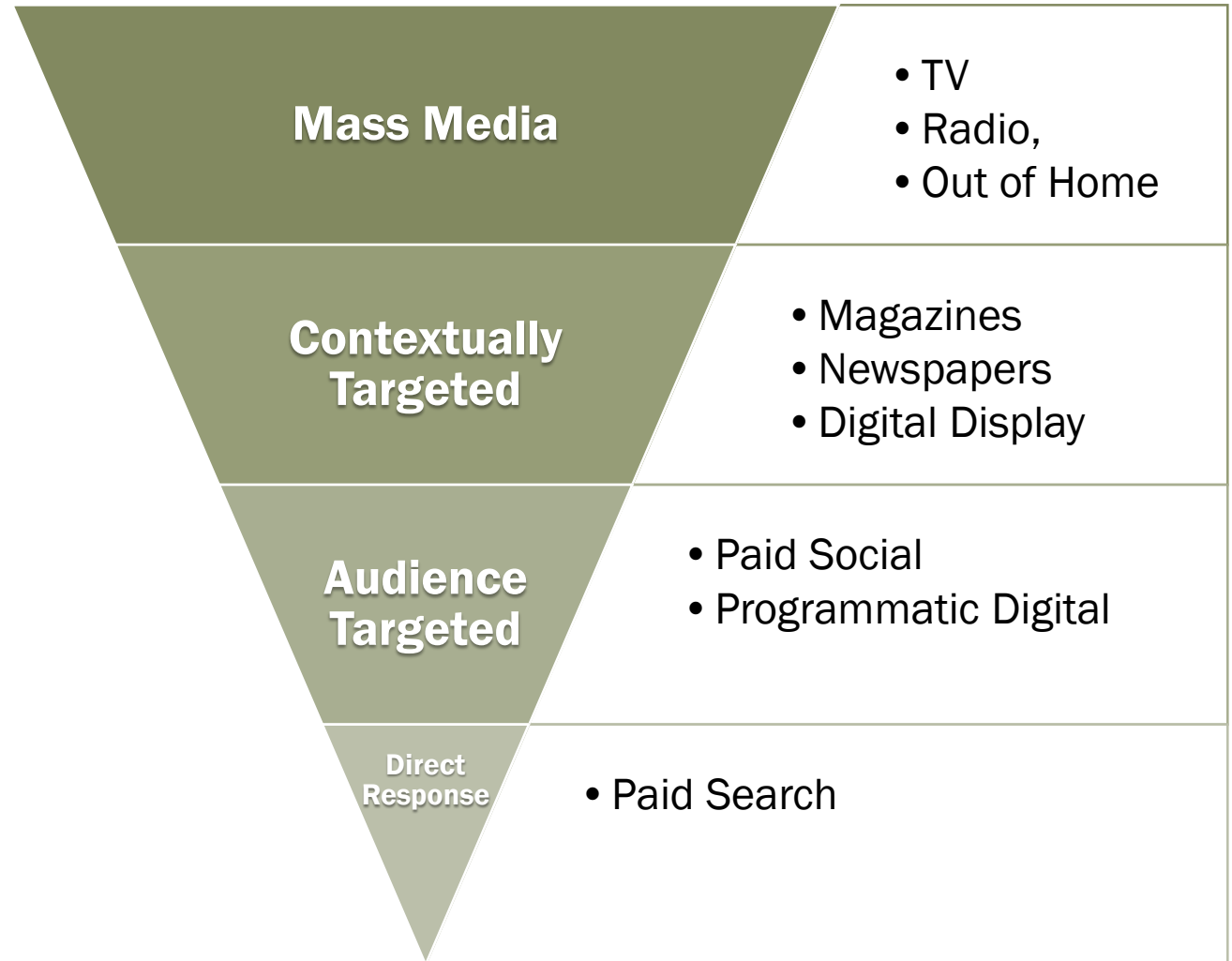
Richmond, VA

Charlotte, NC



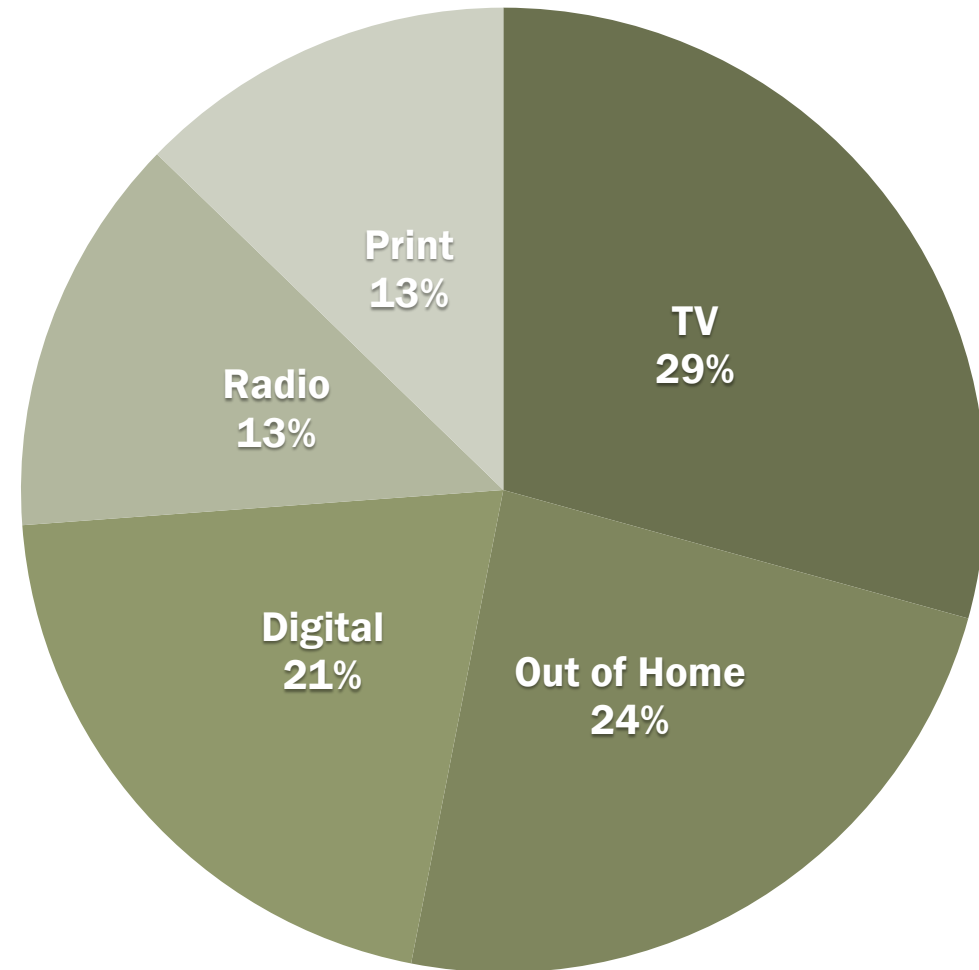
## A Layered Approach

The campaign appears in a select number of regional target markets where the state could afford to go in with a layered approach that achieves a high level of frequency for potential visitors. Audiences were exposed to a combination of messages spanning multiple platforms including TV, radio, out of home, print, and digital.



## Media Mix

The new campaign launched in April 2018 with a diverse media program.



## Campaign Action

The call-to-action on all advertising for the campaign asks viewers to visit WVtourism.com. On that measure, overall web traffic from the target markets grew compared to its usual level while the messages were in market.

The results were striking. Web traffic overall increased 30.86%, but traffic coming from the campaign's target markets increased even more during and after the ads ran.

	Growth in sessions*
<b>Target Markets</b>	75.31%
<b>Washington, DC</b>	80.26%
<b>Pittsburgh, PA</b>	75.39%
<b>Columbus, OH</b>	89.97%
<b>Cleveland, OH</b>	64.60%
<b>Charlotte, NC</b>	28.11%
<b>Roanoke, VA</b>	98.41%
<b>Harrisburg, PA</b>	79.11%
<b>Richmond, VA</b>	55.76%

\*reflects sessions during media flight dates in spring/summer 2018 compared to same period in previous year

# Cooperative Advertising Program

- The Tourism Act of 2017 replaced the outdated MAPP grant program with a new Cooperative Advertising Program.
- The program opened to partners in late 2017 for ads running in 2018, and participation in the program's first year was strong.
- The Tourism Office made several tweaks to the program based on results and feedback.
- Partner participation has increased for the program's second year.

## FIRST YEAR PARTICIPATION

**63**

participating partners

**412**

media placements

**\$1.4M**

partner investment

**\$2.8M**

total in media

*almost heaven*



Escape to Snowshoe Mountain: part ample adventure, part pure comfort, 100% happiness. Explore three distinct slope areas with unique personalities, features to please every skill level, and the best snow in the region. Experience a mountaintop village with a vibrant après scene, complete with delicious meals, lively dance floors and a tranquil spa.

Almost heaven is waiting to be discovered this winter at Snowshoe Mountain.

[WVtourism.com/Snowshoe](http://WVtourism.com/Snowshoe)



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FIND YOUR HEAVEN >  
AT TAMARACK

almost heaven

With its rich history and small-town charm, West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle always feels inviting, just an hour from Washington, D.C.  
Learn more at [WVtourism.com/EasternPanhandle](http://WVtourism.com/EasternPanhandle)  
Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races

almost heaven

Camp under the stars in the crisp fall air as night falls in Summers County. Spend your days exploring history in the rail town of Hinton or marveling in the colorful autumn views at Pipestem Resort. Float along the scenic rivers with rolling rapids or fish at Bluestone State Park. Find your slice of almost heaven in Summers County.  
[WVtourism.com/SummersCounty](http://WVtourism.com/SummersCounty)

almost heaven

West Virginia is an idyllic winter destination for snow sport beginners and experts alike. Hit the slopes to ski, snowboard and snow tube down mountains so picturesque, you'll want to stop to take in the views. Your version of winter heaven awaits in West Virginia.  
[WVtourism.com/SkiWV](http://WVtourism.com/SkiWV)

almost heaven

Crisp air welcomes fall in Logan County where local festivals and mountain trails are almost heaven.  
[WVtourism.com/atvtrails](http://WVtourism.com/atvtrails)



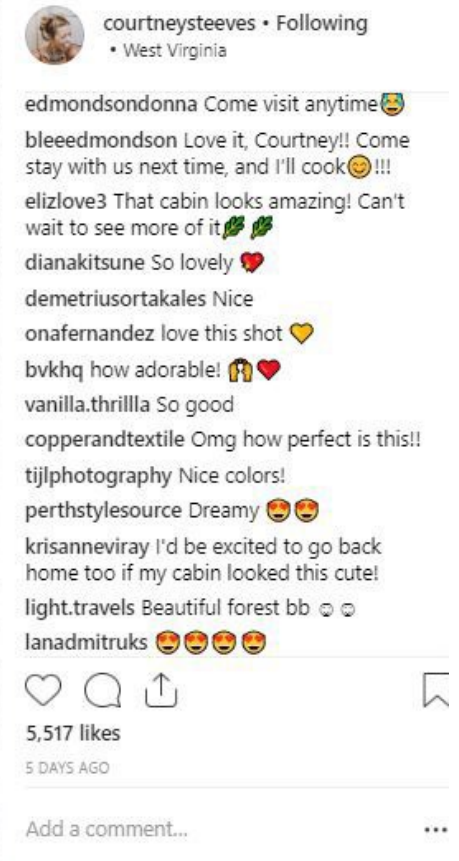
# Public Relations



# Public Relations: Media Outreach

## Fam Tours

- The Tourism office hosted two media familiarization tours in 2018
  - Rafting tour in the New River Gorge
  - Fall tour from Washington, D.C. through the Eastern Panhandle and Potomac Highlands
- Social Influencer Results
  - More than 200 posts
  - 2.2 million impressions
  - 644,071 in audience reach
  - Nearly 100,000 post engagements



# Public Relations: Strategic Partnerships

## Fallout 76

- Gamers across the world were exposed to the state for the first time when the newest edition of this blockbuster game was set in West Virginia
- The Tourism Office entered into an official no-cost partnership with the game publisher to cross-promote the state to gamers.

## Spartan Race

- The Spartan North American Championship returned to Summit Bechtel Reserve for a second year with sponsorship from the Tourism Office.
- About 10,000 racers had a direct economic impact of \$3.6 million and generated \$66,400 in state and local taxes.\*

\*Source: Bureau of Business & Economic Research, West Virginia University College of Business and Economics



# Public Relations: Promotions

## Almost Heaven photo contest

- Governor Jim Justice put out a call in March for photos showcasing the state's attractions.
- 6,500 submissions in one week were narrowed to top 100 featuring ever region of the state, parks, tourism partners, hunting, fishing, camping, and more.



## West Virginia Day sticker campaign

- The tourism office issued a limited-edition sticker featuring Almost Heaven and 1863 to celebrate West Virginia's 154th birthday on June 20, 2018.
- Stickers were available at tourism businesses and attractions around the state to encouraged participants to go out and explore the state. "Sticker Stop" signs helped promote social engagement.
- More than 25,000 stickers were distributed during the promotion.

# Industry Development

WEST  
VIRGINIA

GOVERNOR'S  
CONFERENCE  
ON TOURISM

*almost heaven*

WEST  
VIRGINIA



GOVERNOR'S  
CONFERENCE  
ON TOURISM

*almost heaven*

WEST  
VIRGINIA



# Industry Development

- More than 250 industry representatives attended the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism in Morgantown in September.
- The Tourism Office launched monthly industry training webinars on topics relevant to the marketing needs of partners.
- New Partner Extranet went live in September with centralized access to business and event listings on WVtourism.com, access to research, archived industry newsletters and more.
- Partners joined the Tourism Office for domestic and international trade shows.
- The Tourism Office facilitated film projects by connecting filmmakers interested in shooting in the state with local contacts, including convention and visitor bureaus.



**PROVIDED PHOTOGRAPHY SERVICES TO MORE THAN 20 PARTNERS**



**HELPED TO PITCH PARTNERS TO NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL PUBLICATIONS**



**PROMOTED OVER A HUNDRED PARTNERS ON WVTOURISM.COM AND SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS**



**WORKED WITH HUNDREDS OF PARTNERS TO IMPROVE THEIR LISTINGS ON WVTOURISM.COM**

# Necessary Funding to Continue Growth

Increased spending across all strategic initiatives is necessary to compete with our neighbors and increase the economic impact of tourism in West Virginia.

# More Funding for Brand Promotion

- West Virginia's tourism advertising has focused on maximizing available dollars in a limited number of regional drive markets.
- Expanding our media footprint to farther drive markets and strategic air travel markets requires significant additional investment.
- Potential additional markets that hold the most potential for growth also have a high buy-in cost.
  - Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Detroit
- A portion of these additional dollars would be made available to partners through the Cooperative Advertising Program.





# More Funding for Public Relations Efforts

- **Media Outreach**

- More frequent and niche-focused fam tours would result in additional media coverage.
- These fam tours result in valuable editorial coverage that complement paid media.

- **Consumer Outreach**

- Magazine-style vacation guides provide the starting point for any overnight visit.
- A well designed consumer-facing website is critical for ad effectiveness and trip planning.
- Chat software to connect visitors to travel advisors would modernize telemarketing.
- Welcome Center upgrades are necessary to turn bathroom breaks into return visits.

- **Promotions**

- Consumer events like musical concerts would generate affinity for the destination.
- A community mural program would further extend the almost heaven brand.

# More Funding for Industry Development

- **Trade and Consumer Shows**

- These shows provide an excellent opportunity for businesses and attractions to make connections with tour operators, group sales representatives, and direct consumers.
- Increased participation in these shows and more dedicated resources to pursuing group sales represent a significant growth opportunity for the industry.

- **Governor's Conference on Tourism & Industry Training Sessions**

- These opportunities to provide marketing education and development to the state's variety of attractions and marketing organizations are a valuable investment in small and local businesses.
- Increased investment in educators for these opportunities would be of benefit to industry partners.

# More Funding for Events and Sponsorships

- **Destination Event Sponsorships**

- The popular Spartan race series has held championships in West Virginia the past two years thanks largely to significant investment from the Tourism Office.
- Additional events such as fishing tournaments would be possible with seed investment.
- Ideally these events should become self-sustaining and the Tourism Office should focus on providing seed money for new events.

- **Media Sponsorships**

- Mountain Stage and Fly Rod Chronicles are two locally produced shows with national audiences that have messaging aligned with tourism marketing.
- Additional investment in media sponsorships would be funneled toward programming with audiences that match our targets.
- These types of partnerships can increase brand affinity within strategic audiences.

# More Funding for State Parks and Recreation Advertising

- Outdoor recreation is one of the primary drivers of visitation to the state, much of which is covered in public lands without significant marketing budgets.
- The marketing budget for state parks is approximately \$250,000 to promote 46 parks and forests, including resorts, golf courses, campgrounds, cabins, and day-use parks.
- The current funding level is not sufficient to do meaningful out-of-state advertising that would promote our world-class parks to a wider audience.
- Drawing in additional visitors, especially those from further away who tend to stay longer, will require a significant investment in strategic markets.
- Putting this money in the tourism budget guarantees these efforts would be fully integrated with the state-level tourism strategy.

# Additional Funding Summary

Funding Area	Additional Funding Required
Brand Promotion	\$10,000,000
Public Relations	\$1,500,000
Events and Sponsorships	\$500,000
Industry Development	\$500,000
State Parks and Recreation Advertising	\$1,500,000

# Value of Tourism Advertising

- Tourism advertising in West Virginia has proven to be a strong investment.
- For every dollar spent on tourism advertising, the state yields \$8 in state and local tax revenue and \$106 in direct traveler spending.
- Without this tourism-generated revenue, each household in West Virginia would have to pay an additional \$690 per year in state and local taxes.



Source: Longwoods International, 2018

# The Halo Effect



## **Tourism spending helps more than just tourism.**

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

Source: Longwoods International, 2018