

— 2024 — ANNUAL REPORT



MISSION: The Mercer County CVB creates economic growth promoting the county as a destination.

Tourism is a tremendous economic driver in Mercer County!

Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

As we close the chapter on 2024, I am filled with gratitude and pride for the progress we've made together in showcasing Mercer County as a travel destination in the heart of Appalachia. This year has been one of collaboration, innovation, and storytelling, allowing us to highlight the unique experiences that make our county unforgettable.

In 2024, we continued to build on our mission to promote tourism, support local businesses, and drive economic development. From expanding our digital reach to fostering partnerships across the region, we have made significant strides in connecting with travelers and sharing the story of Mercer County.

Highlights from 2024 include:

Unforgettable Experiences: Mercer County's natural beauty remained a highlight for visitors in 2024. Thousands explored our hiking trails, uncovering breathtaking views and serene landscapes. Outdoor enthusiasts were drawn to our picturesque waterfalls, which offered a perfect escape into nature's tranquility. The Hatfield-McCoy Trail System and the Pocahontas Trailhead also continued to captivate adventurers seeking thrilling off-road experiences.

Digital Engagement: We significantly enhanced our online presence with innovative campaigns and tools that resonate with today's travelers. The launch of our AI-powered chatbot, Huey, on the Visit Mercer County website has revolutionized how we interact with visitors, providing instant, friendly assistance and recommendations. In addition, our growing presence on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, has expanded with engaging content.

Community Collaboration: Partnerships have been integral to our success in 2024. One standout example is the installation of a sunscreen dispenser at Camp Creek State Park, made possible through a collaboration with Princeton Community Hospital. This initiative reflects our commitment to visitor safety and wellness while strengthening ties within our community.

Seasonal Promotions: From the vibrant greens of summer to the golden hues of fall, and the cozy charm of winter, we've worked hard to ensure every season has its moment in the spotlight, inviting travelers to experience Mercer County year-round.

These achievements would not have been possible without the support of our community, our dedicated staff, and the Mercer County CVB Board. Each of you plays a vital role in shaping the vibrant and welcoming destination we call home.

As we look ahead to 2025, we will celebrate 40 years of work in our community. Our vision remains focused on growth, innovation, and collaboration. We are committed to continuing our efforts to share the story of Mercer County with the world and to fostering economic prosperity through tourism.

Thank you for being part of our journey. Together, we will continue to inspire exploration, create memories, and celebrate the beauty and spirit of Mercer County.

With warm regards and best wishes for the year ahead,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Null".

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Administrative Standard of Excellence

In 2024, Visit Mercer County achieved significant milestones in tourism leadership, advocacy, and recognition. By representing our region at key industry events and collaborating with statewide leaders, we have strengthened our role as a vital contributor to West Virginia's tourism success.

This year, our efforts were recognized on a grand stage as we were honored with the Best Public Relations Award at the Governor's Conference on Tourism. This prestigious accolade highlights our dedication to sharing Mercer County's story in innovative and impactful ways, showcasing our region as a premier travel destination.

Additional highlights include:

Participated in West Virginia Tourism Day at the Capitol to connect with state leaders and promote Mercer County's unique attractions.

Engaged in professional development at Hospitality University, refining our strategies to enhance visitor experiences.

Attended the Governor's Conference on Tourism, where we gained valuable insights and shared best practices with peers across the industry.

Hosted a Tourism Workshop in March of 2024 with the WV Department of Tourism and Digital Relativity for our partners.

Through these accomplishments, our administration team has continued setting the standard for excellence, ensuring Mercer County's voice is heard and celebrated across the state and beyond.



SCAN THE QR CODE

to view upcoming meeting dates, annual reports and other partner resources on our website.

\$203.6 million
in visitor spending in Mercer County

*Resource: Tourism Economics, 2023

In 2024,
tourism in
Mercer County
supported

1,569 jobs

Ensuring Exceptional Experiences

In 2024, the Destination Services team played a vital role in ensuring that visitors and partners had access to the resources and support needed to make their experiences in Mercer County exceptional. Through dedicated efforts, we distributed thousands of visitor guides, prepared custom welcome bags, and facilitated seamless event setups—all designed to enhance the visitor journey and strengthen our partnerships.

1 **WHITE OAK FALLS** was added as a new waterfall in Mercer County to the West Virginia Waterfall Trail.



2 **BY THE NUMBERS**
9,726 Visitor Guides were sent, shipped, and delivered. This includes:

>>22 cases (1,651 guides)
distributed through Job Squad

>>14 cases (1,075 guides)
shipped directly from our office via UPS

>>80 cases (6,000 guides)
hand-delivered to hotels, state parks, and tourism partners

3 **LEAVE NO TRACE**
We are currently certifying 5th graders in Mercer County.



4 **VISITOR BAGS PREPARED**
We assembled 350 customized bags for groups, with three group requests fulfilled.

5 **EVENT SUPPORT**
Our team provided five event setups to support local and regional gatherings. Our biggest event is Bridge Day.

6 **BUSINESS PARTNER ENGAGEMENT**
We hosted 30 business partner meetings, fostering collaboration and ensuring alignment with our mission to promote Mercer County as a premier destination.

This year's achievements underscore our commitment to providing exceptional service to both visitors and partners. By equipping travelers with comprehensive resources and supporting our partners through tailored services, **we've reinforced Mercer County's reputation as a welcoming and vibrant destination.**



Digital Campaigns

Spring

Budget: \$10,805

► RESULTS:

3,056,907 impressions
68,243 clicks
CTR: 2.23%

Summer

Budget: \$12,395

► RESULTS:

13,205,411 impressions
54,617 clicks
CTR: 1.7%

Fall

Budget: \$12,395

► RESULTS:

2,992,608 impressions
51,543 clicks
CTR: 1.72%

Festival Season

Budget: \$5,297

► RESULTS:

1,159,382 impressions
69,206 clicks
CTR: 5.97%

Winter

Budget: \$7,894

► RESULTS:

1,566,599 impressions
32,007 clicks
CTR: 2.04%

2024 'Things to Do' Google Search Campaign

Budget: \$2,362

► RESULTS:

49,668 impressions
4,280 clicks
CTR: 8.62%

Social Influencer Campaign



14 Posts
Total Reach: 38K
Impressions: 1.3M
0.09%
Engagement Rate



195 59 13.8K
You're not sad! You just need a summer getaway to Mercer County in West Virginia! If you l...

*This was just one of several influencer campaigns in 2024.

Visit Mercer County invested \$22,750 in Cooperative Advertising with WV Tourism resulting in:

10,515,409
Impressions

148,984
clicks

Harnessing the Power of Data and Technology

In 2024, Visit Mercer County continued to harness the power of data and technology to drive tourism growth and enhance the visitor experience. By leveraging key insights and modern tools, we've been able to better understand traveler behaviors, optimize our strategies, and stay ahead of trends in an ever-evolving industry.

Several key metrics and advancements in technology stood out this year:



61.3%

Occupancy Rate

According to the STR report, Mercer County's occupancy rate reached 61.3% as of November 2024, with October having the highest occupancy rate.

3.2 Days

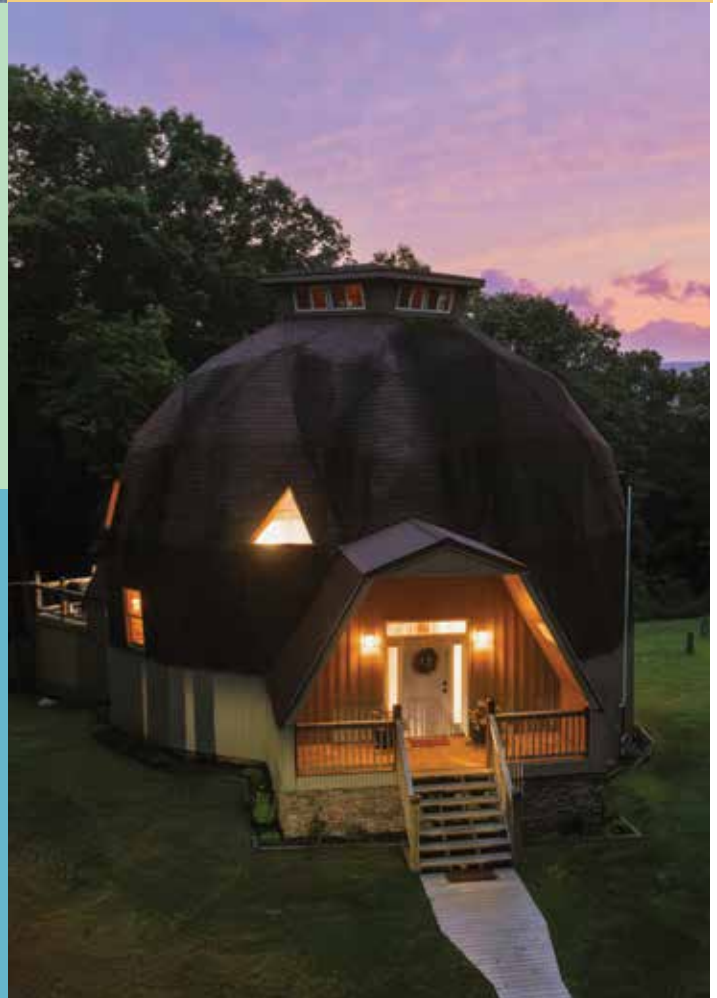
Typical Length of Stay

AIRDNA data revealed an average lead time of 40 days for vacation rental bookings, with a typical length of stay of 3.2 days, indicating an increase in extended stays and a growing preference for Mercer County as a destination.

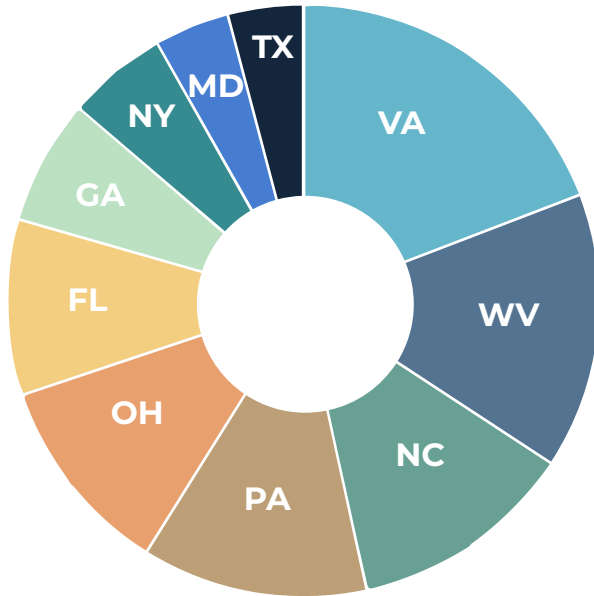
62%

Year-Over-Year Increase in Vacation Rental Listings

One of the most notable trends has been the increase in vacation rental listings. In 2023, we saw a 62.0% year-over-year increase, with a 100.9% growth over two years, signaling the rising popularity of Mercer County in the vacation rental market.



Top States Visiting the Website



Website Innovation

On the technology front, the introduction of our AI-powered chatbot, Huey, has enhanced our website's ability to serve visitors. Huey provides immediate answers to frequently asked questions, helping website visitors quickly find information and improving their experience. The AI bot also supports our staff by identifying popular content topics, making it easier to create relevant and engaging material for our audience.



Looking Ahead

We are excited to launch a new website in Spring 2025, which will feature enhanced functionality, a more user-friendly interface, and improved tools for both visitors and partners.

Digital Data



267,806

Unique Users

448,915

Website Page Views

317,447

Website Sessions

1.40

Website Pages/Session

1 min 11 sec

Average Session Duration

42,738

Partner Click-Thrus

2,188

Visitor Guide Requests

375

Newsletter Sign-ups

1,551

ATV Guide Clicks

20,714 / 72,577

Facebook Followers / Engagements

5,518 / 8,333

Instagram Followers / Engagements

Earned Media Success

In 2024, our earned media efforts resulted in a huge increase in coverage for Mercer County. A total of 338 stories across 130 media outlets resulted in reaching a total circulation of over 10 billion.

67% of placements appeared in top-tier publications with circulations exceeding 100,000. 20+ pieces of coverage were syndicated to high-impact outlets such as Yahoo! Life, MSN, and AOL, extending the reach of each story significantly.

Notable Coverage Highlights:

Yahoo!

Celebrating Great Outdoors Month in Pipestem State Park

Free Lemonade Days return to the Bluefields

Southern Living

The 10 Most Underrated Summer Vacation Destinations In The South,

The 18 Cutest Christmas Towns In The South

The 7 Best Things To Do In West Virginia This Fall

AOL

Where to Find the Most Iconic Retro Diner in Your State



West Virginia's Governor's Conference on Tourism 2024 Stars of Almost Heaven Awards

WINNER: OVERALL EARNED MEDIA

Mercer County won the Overall Earned Media award, which is presented to the industry partner with the best-earned media coverage—from television and radio to print news, feature stories and social posts.

yahoo!life

WorldAtlas

Citizen
Times

LYNCHBURG
LIVING

ONLY IN YOUR STATE

Aol.

Tralee
TRAVEL

wv living
MAGAZINE

Southern Living



MATADOR
network

Blue Ridge Country
EXPERIENCE THE MOUNTAINS OF THE SOUTH

EST. 1967 — MAGNOLIA GREENE

MAGNOLIA
MOONSHINE

msn