



2024 Annual Report

Visit North Carolina

A Part of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina

The mission of Visit North Carolina, a part of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, is to unify and lead the state in positioning North Carolina as a preferred destination for travelers and film production and in maximizing economic vitality statewide.

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Visit North Carolina The logo consists of the letters 'NC' in a large, stylized, dark teal font. A small registered trademark symbol (®) is positioned to the upper right of the 'C'.

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2024 NC Travel and Tourism Board

Listed here is the Board for the year 2024 as required for the Annual Report. For information on the current board, please go to <https://www.visitnc.com/industry/about-visit-nc/travel-tourism-board>.

Kimberly Albritton

Great Smoky Mountain Railroad

Appointed By: Speaker of the House

Rolf Blizzard, Chair

Turnpike Properties

Appointed By: NC Travel & Tourism Coalition

Christopher Chung

Economic Development Partnership of NC

Appointed By: Economic Development Partnership of NC

Sen. Dave Craven

North Carolina Senate

Appointed By: Senate President Pro Tempore

Dennis Edwards

Greater Raleigh CVB

Appointed By: NC T&T Coalition

Arthur Fisher

Fisher Realty of Brevard

Appointed By: Senate President Pro Tempore

Shannon Gilligan

Hornets Sports & Entertainment

Appointed By: Governor

Sen. Bobby Hanig

North Carolina Senate

Appointed By: Senate President Pro Tempore

James Meacham

Rowan Co. CVB

Appointed by: DMANC

Rep. Charles Miller

North Carolina House of Representatives

Appointed By: Speaker of the House

Lynn Minges

NC Restaurant & Lodging Association

Appointed By: NCRLA – Lodging

Lee Nettles, Chair

Outer Banks Visitors Bureau

Appointed By: EDPNC

Steve Pasquantonio

Island Catering
Appointed By: Governor

Rep. Ray Pickett
North Carolina House of Representatives
Appointed By: Speaker of the House

Jessica Icenhour Roberts
Mount Airy TDA
Appointed By: NCTIA

Secretary Machelle Sanders
NC Department of Commerce
Appointed By: NC Department of Commerce

Andrew Schmidt
Greenville/Pitt Co. CVB
Appointed By: NCTIA

Vivek Tandon
Tandon IV, LLC
Appointed By: Speaker of the House

Greg Walter
Charlotte Motor Speedway
Appointed By: Senate President Pro Tempore

Visit North Carolina
a part of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina

October 2014 marked the transition to the nonprofit corporation known as the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC). The EDPNC was created to partner with the North Carolina Department of Commerce in consolidating and enhancing North Carolina's marketing and recruitment functions, previously conducted by the N.C. Department of Commerce. The partnership serves to oversee efforts in business recruitment and development, international trade, and tourism, film and sports development. As part of this transition, the Department of Commerce's Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development is currently referred to and doing business as "Visit North Carolina" or "Visit NC."

2024: The Year in Review

The North Carolina tourism industry saw tourism growth extend across most Eastern and Piedmont counties in 2024. Visitors to the state spent a record \$36.7 billion, an increase of 3.1 percent over 2023. 71% of North Carolina counties experienced growth in visitor spending as compared to 2023. Cleveland, Burke and Iredell were among the counties that led the state's 3.1% growth in visitor spending.

Growth in direct tourism employment was also seen by nearly two-thirds of counties. The state's tourism-supported workforce increased 1.4 percent to 230,338 jobs in 2024. Stokes led all counties with an 8.8% increase. Other counties with top increases in tourism employment were Burke (up 7.6%), Gaston (up 7.0%), Union (up 6.7%), and Ashe (up 6.2%).

Tourism payroll increased 2.6 percent to \$9.5 billion. Also, as a result of visitor spending, state and local governments saw record tax revenues of nearly \$2.7 billion.

Source: Tourism Economics

Partnerships with destinations, attractions, lodging and dining properties and associations statewide remain key to North Carolina's success. In 2024 North Carolina remained the fifth most visited state in the nation for domestic visitation.

Source: OmniTrak TravelTrakAmerica

Program Highlights for 2024

Direct employment generated by travelers in North Carolina increased 1.4 percent in 2024 to 230,338 jobs. Employment as a result of tourism still lags behind the record of 242,600 set in 2019.

Source: Tourism Economics

On an average day in 2024, visitors in North Carolina spent more than \$100 million and contributed nearly \$7.3 million in state and local taxes.

Source: Tourism Economics

Visit NC partners with SMARInsights to measure the effectiveness and ROI of paid media and awareness of advertising generated a 7-point lift in likelihood to visit North Carolina in 2024. The overall campaign influenced an overall travel increment of 2.7 percent.

2024 Results

Visitor Spending

In 2024, it is estimated that visitors to North Carolina spent \$36.7 billion in the state, an increase of 3.1 percent from 2023. Visitor spending directly supported 230,338 jobs for North Carolina residents and the tourism industry directly contributed \$9.5 billion to the state's payroll in 2024.

Traveler spending generated nearly \$4.6 billion in federal, state and local tax receipts, an increase of 2.9 percent from 2023.

Source: Tourism Economics

2024 Travel Volume

North Carolina person-trip volume was 39 million in 2024, ranking North Carolina No. 5 in total domestic person-trip volume.

Source: Omnitrak

2024 Total State Rankings by Volume

1. California
2. Florida
3. Texas
4. New York
5. **North Carolina**
6. Pennsylvania
7. Tennessee
8. Georgia
9. Ohio
10. Michigan

Source: Omnitrak

Average Trip Spending

North Carolina overnight visitor parties spent approximately \$992 per trip in 2024. Out-of-state visitors spent approximately \$1,165 per trip in 2024, while in-state resident travel parties spent \$688 per trip on average. This represents a 51 percent difference in average per trip spending among resident visitors traveling within the state and out-of-state visitor parties.

U.S. overnight travel parties on average spent \$1,077 per trip in 2024.

Source: Omnitrak

Average Overnight Trip Duration

The average length of stay of North Carolina visitors was 3.5 nights in 2024. Resident visitors stayed an average of 2.9 nights, while out-of-state visitors stayed an average of 3.9 nights.

U.S. travelers stayed an average of 3.4 nights per trip in 2024.

Source: Omnitrak

North Carolina's Top States of Origin for Overnight Visitors

- NC 36%
- VA 9%
- SC 9%
- GA 5%
- FL 4%
- PA 4%
- NY 4%
- MD 4%
- OH 3%
- TN 3%
- TX 3%

Source: Omnitrak

NC's Activities for Overnight Visitors

Research shows overnight visitors to North Carolina participate in a wide variety of activities, further emphasizing the diversity of the tourism product in the state.

While visiting friends and relatives and shopping are routinely mentioned every year among all travelers, other activities such as the beach, visiting historic areas, fine dining, rural sightseeing, state/national parks, local arts & crafts, wildlife viewing, museums, unique local cuisine, craft breweries and hiking were among the most popular specific activities participated in by overnight visitors to North Carolina.

Source: Omnitrak

Visit North Carolina Budget Overview

For fiscal years 2023-2024 (July 2023 to June 2024) and fiscal year 2024-2025 (July 2024 to June 2025) Visit NC received its recurring \$11.4 million budget plus non-recurring funding at \$7.5 million. An additional \$5 million in Hurricane Helene recovery funding was also received at the end of 2024.

Marketing Media Purchase & Production	\$4,682,919
One-time COVID Recovery Funding (marketing)	\$7,500,000
Personnel & Administration	\$1,930,559
Rent, Facilities and Computers (tech and licensing)	\$453,751
VisitNC.com Dev. & Maintenance (Interactive)	\$863,035
International Marketing (Canada, Germany, UK)	\$1,094,984
Film Office Marketing	\$429,656
Public Relations	\$517,503
Domestic Sales Promotion (Group, Sports and Outdoor NC)	\$343,647
RetireNC and Industry Relations	\$163,480
Research	\$941,949
TOTAL	\$18,921,483

North Carolina Visitor Services Budget Overview

Funded by appropriations from the General Assembly, the Visitor Services section is a part of the North Carolina Department of Commerce. Visitor Services, comprised of the State's nine Welcome Centers, the Tourism Call Center and the Tourism Warehouse, is staffed by about 48 FTEs annually. The Call Center operates in partnership with Visit NC, and the NC Departments of Adult Correction Safety and Transportation.

Appropriations included:

Welcome Centers	\$2,720,450
Inquiry/Fulfillment	395,593
Total	\$3,116,043

State Tourism Office Budgets: 2023-24

North Carolina's budget of approximately \$18.9 million included special one-time funding from the legislature to assist in COVID recovery for the state's tourism industry. Unfortunately, due to other states receiving similar funding for recovery efforts in their states, our budget continues to be the lowest among southern state tourism office budgets in 2023-24, significantly behind several states that are direct competitors.

State	2023-24 Budget	Number of FTE staff
Kentucky	71,790,535	29
Tennessee	61,146,372	29
Virginia	46,694,828	36
Louisiana	44,752,159	21
Alabama	35,207,000	14
West Virginia	31,535,825	13
South Carolina	26,397,817	23
Missouri	25,178,015	17
Arkansas	24,191,587	15
Mississippi	23,370,879	21
Georgia	21,531,880	20
North Carolina	18,900,000	14

**Budgets and staffing are estimates provided by State Tourism Directors to Travel South USA and do not include Welcome Center staff.*

Marketing Program Highlights for 2024

Visit NC partners with SMARInsights to measure the effectiveness and ROI of paid media and awareness of advertising generated a 7-point lift in likelihood to visit North Carolina in 2024. The overall campaign influenced an overall travel increment of 2.7 percent.

Brand Advertising Campaign

In looking to gain market share in domestic visitor volume, our vision for 2024 was clear— we aimed for North Carolina to be the first state that comes to mind for travelers seeking unforgettable experiences in the East. With a focus on enhancing unique offerings and creating memorable visitor experiences, we embarked on this journey to solidify our position as a premier travel destination – attracting travelers, encouraging them to stay longer and spend more, and prompting return visits sooner.

The fresh and dynamic “For Real, Visit North Carolina” campaign, launched in 2023, continued to build awareness and inspire incremental visitation to the state in 2024. Featuring bold, striking headlines juxtaposed with breathtaking visuals, the year round, four-season approach fueled with additional investment from the General Assembly showcases the deeply authentic experiences North Carolina is known for and that travelers desire.

Utilizing data-driven strategies to maximize visitation potential and ROI from priority geographic markets of origin, the video-centric campaign’s messaging is designed to resonate with Discoverers, hungry for adventure and discovery, and Enrichers, seeking unique experiences and hidden gems.

Building on prior performance and continually evolving and optimizing, our strategic media mix combined targeted cable TV buys in high-potential markets during the summer and fall with year-round streaming tactics, including CTT, programmatic pre-rolls, and diverse YouTube ad formats.

The campaign achieved impressive outcomes with third party Advertising Effectiveness/ROI research conducted by SMARInsights reporting:

- 46% consumer awareness of the campaign
- Cost per aware household of 25 cents, well below the benchmark of 41 cents
- Advertising generated a 7-point lift in likelihood to visit
- Campaign excelled at communicating its specific goals, with the majority of objectives ranking in the top 25 percent for comparable studies performed by SMARInsights
- Creative communicated the state’s natural beauty, enjoyable activities and its appeal as a place for disconnecting from the stresses of everyday life, important criteria to the target audience

Most importantly, SMARInsights reported a positive return on investment for the campaign including having:

- Sparked more than 610,000 trips and \$815 million in ad-influenced incremental visitor spending
- Generated \$71.7 million in state and local taxes
- ROI of \$144:1 in visitor spending per dollar of media investment

Overall, North Carolina recorded a record \$36.7 billion in total visitor spending in 2024, surpassing the previous high of \$35.6 billion in 2023. As a result of these efforts, North Carolina retained its position of the fifth-most visited state in the U.S. Each household in North Carolina benefited, saving an average of \$593 in state and local taxes due to visitor spending, with per capita savings averaging \$241.

North Carolina Ski Areas Association Co-op Campaign

Visit NC and the North Carolina Ski Areas Association (NCSAA) continued working together to build awareness and intent to visit NCSAA member resorts for winter travel. The November 2024 – February 2025 cooperative marketing effort targeted NC, FL, GA, SC, VA, TN and AL —in addition to a national targeting approach in select campaigns—and drove site visits to GoSkiNC.com and downstream referrals to the resorts' own websites. Continuing to strategically optimize and refine the media mix based on the prior year's results, the focused campaign leveraged digital video, paid search, and paid social to generate 57.3 million impressions, 23.3 million video views and 218,000 downstream clicks to NCSAA resort websites.

First in Fright® Campaign

For decades, tourism marketing has been a series of postcard-perfect stills and generalized messages of “we’re the perfect destination for you.” The modern traveler is looking for more personalized experiences. Knowing this, Visit North Carolina flipped the narrative, asking, “which travelers are perfect for us?” Paranormal tourism is a \$30B industry in the United States and growing. With hundreds of years of history and haunts, we sought to take advantage of our natural- and supernatural-assets and drive increased tourism and engagement through integrated storytelling.

With this mission in mind, we told the story of how North Carolina is not only First in Flight but also First in Fright. To raise awareness of North Carolina’s haunted happenings, Visit North Carolina created a robust ecosystem of spine-chilling content to generate awareness for the state’s spooky sites and capture highly engaged leads. To capture this audience, we made sure the devil was truly in the details.

At the core of the campaign was an 8-episode podcast revealing real travelers’ haunted experiences across the state, from camping experiences at Devil’s Tramping Ground to close encounters with Demon Dogs. This series was launched across traditional platforms like Spotify and Apple Podcast and also extended to a nontraditional podcast platform—YouTube. There, we connected with spooky searchers by uploading podcast episodes complemented by custom, atmospheric animations filled with easter eggs to reward the curious.

First in Fright® Results

Launched Friday, September 13, the First in Fright campaign gained quick traction. In an unexpected and tragic twist, Hurricane Helene devastated much of Western North Carolina just weeks after the campaign launched. This caused us to pause or cancel all paid activations.

Normally, this would be a significant hurdle for a campaign with results hard to recoup. In the case of First in Fright, it revealed the power of storytelling, owned channels, and significant—primarily organic—results.

- **Podcast:** In 6 months, the First in Fright podcast amassed 23,300 listens across platforms, gaining a spot in the Top 30 on Spotify and Top 50 on Apple Podcasts. YouTube uploads generated over 61,500 impressions and a watch time of over 528 hours.
- **Website:** Content supporting all owned channels gleaned over 89,700 organic views on the web with 62,100 new users.
- **Email:** The First in Fright email segment grew to 9,600 users, with an average open rate 34% higher than the industry benchmark and email users seeing an average 3:28 spent on First in Fright content.
- **Influencer:** Haunted adventures with content creators captivated new audiences and North Carolina travelers alike, earning 103,800 impressions during launch and generating valuable content for future use.
- **Organic social:** Content across channels amassed over 392,800 impressions and 17,900 engagements.

Beyond quantitative success, First in Fright was an opportunity for Visit North Carolina to serve a new niche of travelers and a valuable opportunity to connect with North Carolinian communities of all sizes and tell their stories.

Paid Social & Content Creator

In 2024, Visit NC executed a diverse social campaign across Meta (Facebook and Instagram), Pinterest, TikTok, and LinkedIn, targeting our core travel-intent audiences. We ran a mix of static and video creative—leaning more heavily into video—optimized for broad reach, engagement, and intent-driven actions like website traffic and email leads.

We placed a larger emphasis on lead generation to grow our CRM data, enabling us to further personalize the travel planning experience. We also expanded our creative formats, implementing units such as quiz ads and Pinterest collections to encourage new types of engagement and uncover deeper audience insights.

Our paid social efforts delivered more than 100.8 million impressions, 6.4 million engagements, 39 million video views, and more than 36,000 new email subscribers. Of this total, the mountain recovery campaign contributed 9.1 million impressions and 104.4K engagements.

In 2024, we also executed a year-long creator program across Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest and blogs, partnering with six in-state and five out-of-state creators to authentically showcase North Carolina. Through their content, we highlighted accessibility, celebrated small businesses and brought to life the diverse regions of the state—from lesser-known hidden gems to the most popular destinations—all through the lens of real travelers. This approach not only generated authentic, ownable content but also ensured a more inclusive and well-rounded view of North Carolina's travel experiences.

Organic Social

The Visit NC team's organic social efforts in 2024 generated strong performance across multiple channels, while adapting to volatility among previous mainstay platforms like X and TikTok. Among the highlights:

- Visit NC yielded more than 6.7 million impressions and more than 297,000 organic engagements on content deployed across Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and TikTok during 2024.
- All average organic engagement rates surpassed travel industry benchmarks (Pinterest industry benchmarks are unavailable; X benchmarks have been omitted due to increased platform volatility)
 - Instagram: 5.62% (Travel Industry Benchmark: 0.62%)
 - Facebook: 1.24% (Travel Industry Benchmark: 0.24%)
 - TikTok: 3.86% (Travel Industry Benchmark: 3.23%)
- The benchmark achievement rate, as determined by internal benchmarks shaped by historical data and designed to hold Visit NC channels to a higher engagement standard than industry-wide benchmarks, was 85%.
- The top-reaching platform was Instagram, earning over 4.3 million organic impressions throughout CY24 across multiple media types including static, Reels and Stories.
- With ongoing question of TikTok's future access in the social media landscape, Visit NC also introduced YouTube Shorts into the organic content mix halfway through the year, earning more than 14,000 impressions with plans to further grow platform engagement in 2025.

Paid Search

Visit NC continued to drive meaningful impact in 2024 through refined and data-driven paid search strategies. By capturing and converting high-intent users, we efficiently directed qualified traffic to VisitNC.com while driving key conversion actions such as Travel Guide requests, Travel Brochure views and E-Newsletter sign-ups.

Google continued serving as our primary platform, driving performance through a balanced full-funnel strategy combining traditional search campaigns with YouTube. This dual approach effectively reached travelers already considering North Carolina while inspiring those still in the exploration phase.

Together, Google and Bing reached an impressive 13.8 million impressions, 679,300 clicks, and nearly 144,546 downstream clicks. Our paid search initiatives also resulted in 13,000 travel brochure page views, 4,000 Travel Guide sign-ups and 167 E-Newsletter sign-ups. Initial mountain recovery efforts during the fourth quarter accounted for 257,000 impressions and 21,922 clicks of this total.

E-News

In 2024 our e-News program evolved significantly to leverage new capabilities and inspire travelers more effectively while reducing churn. We launched our Welcome Journey; an ongoing series of three e-mails that aid us in gathering first party information from new subscribers about travel motivators and interests. This Journey, which includes partner program placements, held an impressive open rate of over 45%. Through the introduction of dynamic content this Journey, as well as emails within our Travel Insider and Seasonal Events e-News programs, deliver personalized subject lines and recommendations to travelers.

We also began two net new segmented sends, one for haunted tourism in support of First in Fright and one for Eat & Drink. Both of these new segments were introduced for partner programs for FY 25/26 and sold out. Overall, our e-News subscriber list net growth for 2024 was around 2%, with an additional 3.6% growth within the First in Fright segment.

Looking toward 2025, we will 1. Look to audit e-News Partner Programs to provide the best value to Partners while also delivering motivating and relevant inspiration and 2. Seek to develop more specialized dynamic content around interest affiliation to maintain engagement in a competitive landscape.

Print

In 2024, the plan included titles and categorized bundles based on strategic alignment across both brand and co-op partner interest.

Atlanta Magazine
Blue Ridge Country
Blue Ridge Outdoors
Bridal Guide
Carolina Country
Cleveland Magazine
Columbus Monthly
Garden & Gun
Orlando Magazine
Outside Magazine
Our State Magazine
Philadelphia Magazine
Pittsburgh Magazine
South Carolina Living
Southern Living
Tennessee Magazine
Washingtonian

Hurricane Helene/Western NC Tourism Recovery Efforts

Background

Visit NC responded immediately to the storm's initial impact through extensive partner communications, proactive media relations, its well-publicized interactive Travel Advisory map and more. The team's focus quickly transitioned to supporting the mountain destinations less affected as they began welcoming visitors again during the vital fall season. Visit NC leveraged the \$5 million in incremental recovery funds allotted in 2024 to the fullest, and with the same sense of urgency. While looking to extend the recovery campaign through all four seasons, more emphasis was placed on inspiring travel during the holiday, winter and spring travel seasons to stimulate economic recovery as quickly as possible.

Overview of Visit NC's Recovery Campaign progress for 2024:

- Research – Consumer sentiment and visitor profiles studies continue to inform and shape Visit NC's messaging and recovery marketing initiatives.
- Results of an initial post-storm survey conducted by SMARInsights included:
 - Only 22% of respondents agreed the central part of the state was unaffected.
 - Only 32% of respondents agreed NC's beaches were unaffected.
 - 48% of respondents agreed they would be interested in traveling to NC to support the survival of small businesses.
 - 15% of all respondents cited the storm damage as their reason for not likely visiting the state in the next year.
 - Based on 2023 performance reported by Tourism Economics, a 15 percent loss could represent \$5.34 billion in visitor spending and \$202 million in state and local tax revenues.
- Markets – Top markets of origin for the mountain region were prioritized based on the level of funding to ensure impact and effectiveness, and they included:
 - NC, SC, GA, FL, TN and AL.
 - VA was added to the above states as part of the seasonal co-op advertising partnership with the North Carolina Ski Areas Association.
- International – Visit NC also addressed perceptions, and misperceptions, among key international audiences through earned and paid media efforts.
- Messaging – Campaign tagline for the initial phase was "Our best way back is for you to come back."
 - Dedicated campaign landing page on VisitNC.com complemented the ongoing [travel advisory page](#) that has been live during and after the storm.
- Industry Partners – We collaborated with partners such as Explore Asheville and Biltmore on markets and media schedules to maximize the impact of each organization's investment in recovery.
- Piedmont and Coast support – Recovery funds provided flexibility within Visit NC's core budget to boost Piedmont and Coast messaging and address misperceptions about the storm's impact and conditions in those regions as well.

Paid Media Overview

Holiday

- Flight Dates:
 - 11/8 - 12/31
- Markets + Creative rotation:
 - In-State: Mountains + NC Ski
 - South Carolina: Mountains + NC Ski
 - Georgia: Mountains + NC Ski
 - Florida: Mountains + NC Ski

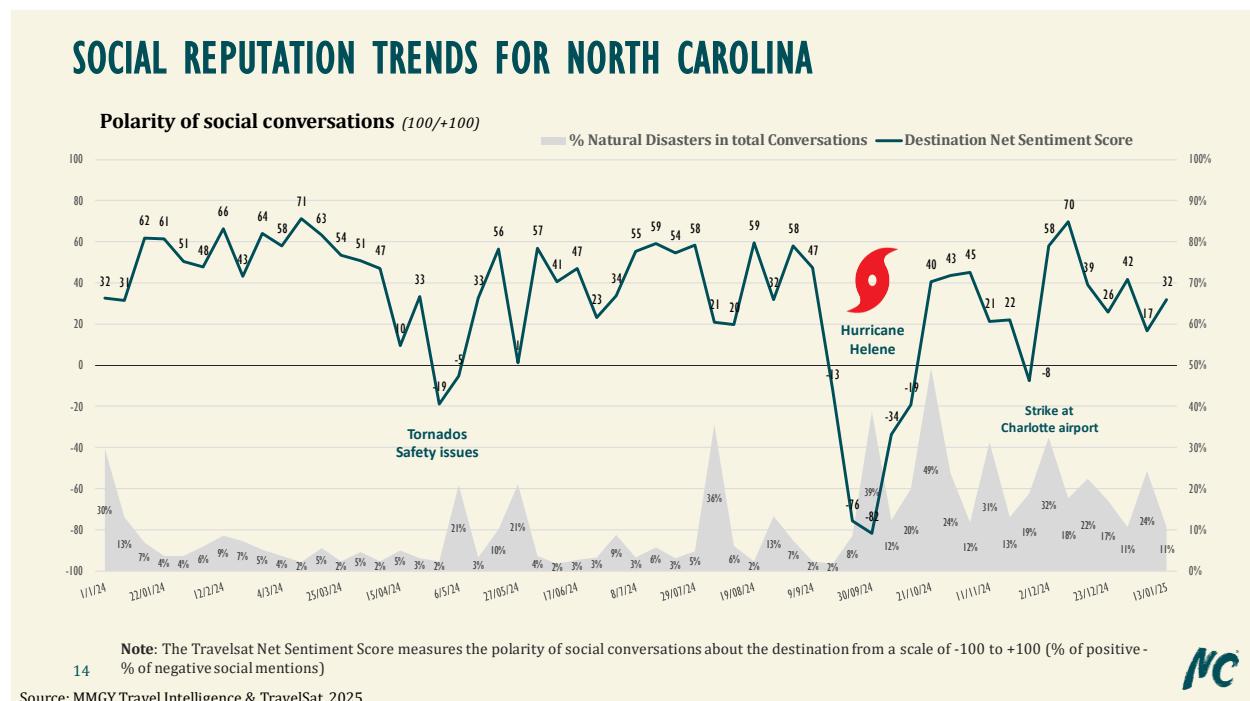
- Tennessee: Mountains + NC Ski
- Alabama: Mountains + NC Ski
- Virginia: NC Ski
- Media Mix:
 - Paid Social
 - Paid Search
 - Display
 - Audio
 - DOOH (Ski only)
 - Digital Video (Ski only)

Paid Media

- Planned seasonal spend 11/8-2/28 @ \$2,060,000
- Paid Media Impressions (through 1.5.25): 72,744,952

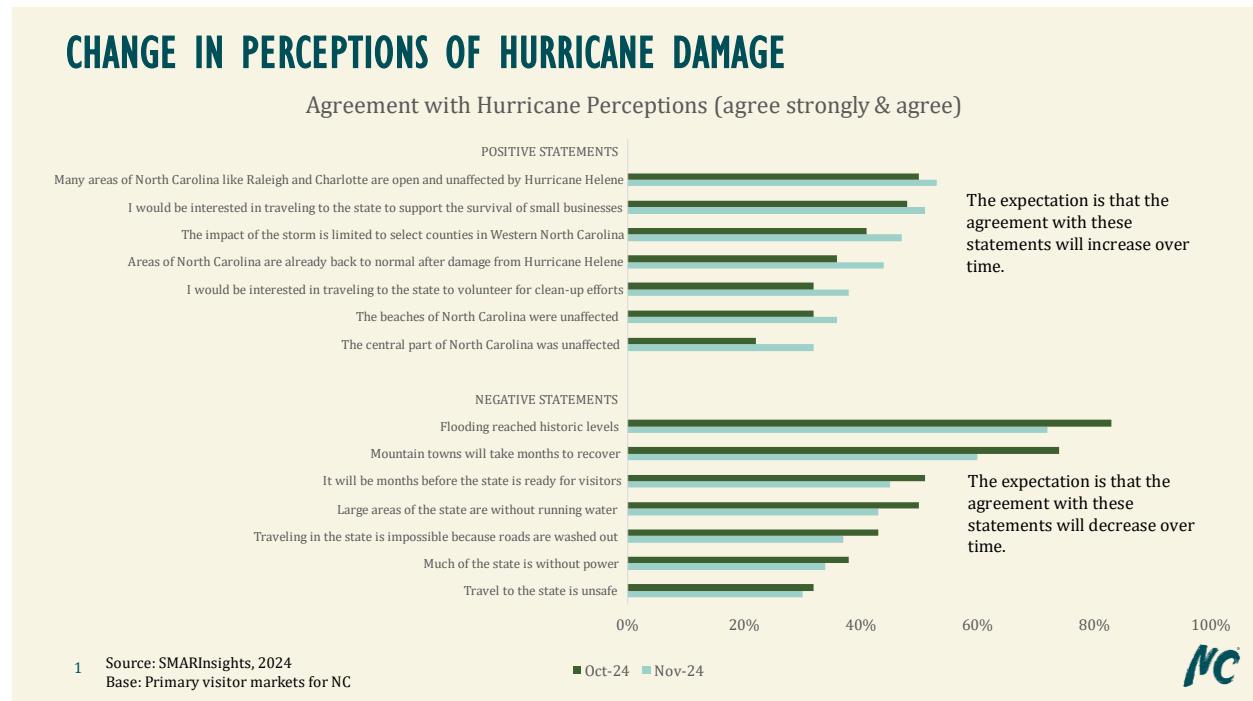
Research Insights to date (through 2024)

Research shows that Hurricane Helene did tremendous damage to the state's social reputation in addition to the actual damage caused by the storm.



Our task was to counter these perceptions as soon as possible to shift the focus away from the scenes of devastation and showcase what was available and open to visitors despite the storm.

In just more than a month of advertising, visitor perceptions of North Carolina have improved in almost all categories. Potential visitors show a higher percentage of positive perceptions and a lower percentage of negative perceptions.



VisitNC.com

Overview

VisitNC.com serves as North Carolina's official travel website, connecting thousands of local industry partners with millions of travelers exploring the diverse offerings across the state. Providing inspiration and information on stunning landscapes, vibrant cities, and unique attractions, VisitNC.com highlights the best of what North Carolina has to offer, making it a valuable resource for those planning their next visit.

VisitNC.com 2024 Key Performance Indicators

- 8,881,718 site page views
- 5,053 site visitors participating in sweepstakes
- 19,861 Travel Guides ordered from website
- 11,822 Travel Guide downloads
- 19,078 downloads or views of virtual brochures
- 1,969,125 views of story pages
- 16,335 clicks to view travel deals
- 945 on-site video views
- 14,509 mobile phone calls

Featured Event Listings

47 participating partners
84 total featured events

Sweepstakes

4 sweepstakes
5,053 total entries

Most Popular Sweepstakes

Don't Sweat It (3,288 entries)
2024 Outdoor NC Pledge Sweepstakes – p4 (1,086 entries)

Family of Sites

Media.VisitNC.com

29,455 visits
4.2 actions (page views, downloads, outlinks and internal site searches) per visit
16 min 8s average visit duration

RetireNC.com

91,959 views
2.75 page views per active user
2:05 avg. engagement time

SportsNC.com

25,439 views
2.71 page views per active user
0:42 avg. engagement time

FilmNC.com

193,597 views
3:14 page views per active user
1:54 avg. engagement time

OutdoorNC.com (launched April 2024)

28,897 views
1.69 page views per active user
0:27 avg. engagement time

Database and Web Management

Working in collaboration with hundreds of partners statewide, the team provided timely maintenance and technical support for VisitNC.com's extranet database of more than 7,000 lodging, attraction, activity, event and dining listings reaching all 100 counties.

During the year, the team created and distributed a consistent program of e-newsletters, advisories and informational mailings to local tourism offices across the state.

In-State Marketing Initiatives

While out-of-state visitors tend to stay longer and spend more when visiting the state, North Carolinians are also a point of focus within Visit NC's program. Residents typically comprise approximately one-third or more of annual visitation, and partnerships with the North Carolina Association of Broadcasters, the North Carolina Press Foundation and PBS North Carolina remain key to Visit NC's ability to cost-effectively reach more than ten million prospective travelers in the state's own backyard.

North Carolina Association of Broadcasters

Member television and radio stations aired 78,164 announcements representing a value of \$5,141,863.

North Carolina Press Foundation

Member publishers published 3,650 ads representing an estimated value of \$875,000.

PBS North Carolina

PBS North Carolina's award-winning team airs 52 weekly episodes of its popular show *North Carolina Weekend*. In its 22nd year, every episode of *North Carolina Weekend* was broadcast multiple times statewide and into parts of South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Georgia on: PBS NC, The Explorer Channel and the North Carolina Channel. Viewed across all PBS NC media platforms including on-air, online and print materials, Visit NC's partnership with PBS NC and *North Carolina Weekend* provided \$3,074,686 in valuable exposure for destinations, attractions and events across the state.

Public Relations

In 2024, the Public Relations program played to the strength of its core media relations strategy with hosted visits from editors and writers. Over the course of the year, Visit NC supported 55 trips by domestic and international media representatives on individual and group visits to 25 destinations, more than half of them Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties.

Out-of-state media missions returned as a key program that enables partners from local tourism offices to meet with travel media to generate interest in visitation and coverage. Visit NC's PR team led small-scale missions to New York, Atlanta, Boston and Chicago with 20 different destination partners participating. The team also hosted a successful in-state media mission in Raleigh with 40 local tourism partners and 40 media representatives attending. The Visit NC PR team also met with media at US Travel's IPW conference, TravMedia's IMM event and other industry gatherings.

Additional PR success resulted from response to proactive and reactive media leads. From these efforts, the team garnered more than 373 placements in outlets including Travel & Leisure, Conde Nast Traveler, Esquire, People, AFAR, Essence, Southern Living, Readers Digest, Country Living, Garden & Gun, Men's Journal and Fodor's Travel. Consumer reach from PR activity totaled more than 2 billion impressions.

Visitor Services

North Carolina's nine Welcome Centers hosted **7,145,662** visitors in 2024. A breakout of the number of visitors by Welcome Center location is below:

2024 Welcome Center Estimated Visitors	
I-95 S	813,108
I-95 N	1,513,996
I-85 S	773,794
I-85 N	540,611
I-77 S	469,814
I-77 N	948,792
I-40 W	652,251
I-26 W	291,668
I-26 E	1,141,628
Total:	7,145,662

- Welcome Centers greeted 6,513 self-identifying visitors from other countries in 2024.
- Throughout the year, multiple Welcome Centers upgraded to fiber internet connections to enhance operational efficiency. In addition, the Call Center implemented Cloud Solution technology supported by broadband internet connectivity. These upgrades will continue throughout 2025.
- The I-40 West Welcome Center closed on September 27, 2024, due to Hurricane Helene, and reopened on March 1, 2025.
- The I-95 South Welcome Center relocated to its newly built facility on September 23, 2024.

Publications

As a result of work throughout 2024, Visit NC contracted with Meredith Travel Marketing to produce the Official 2025 North Carolina Travel Guide published annually each year by mid-December 2024. The Official Travel Guide serves as Visit NC's primary fulfillment piece for potential visitors to and within the state. To underscore the breadth of travel options and depth of the program, the guide features three-page cover for each of the state's three major regions. The journey begins with a three-page cover package. The series of aerial images, all shot after dark, starts with Fayetteville's ZipQuest Waterfall & Treetop Adventure, a bold adventure with nighttime tours. The canopy tour photo is followed by the Old Baldy lighthouse, the oldest of NC's seven Atlantic beacons, and Biltmore, an Asheville landmark that embodies history, elegance and innovation. By the time readers reach the end of the guide, they'll have passed through 158 towns and cities to glimpse more than 300 attractions, restaurants, lodging properties and events. A detachable map with color-coded regions helps travelers plot the possibilities.

In all, the 118-page guide connects trip planners to everything from high adventure to pure tranquility across 500 miles of scenic wonder. A detachable fold-out map, which is supported by a Town and City Index, expedites navigation as travelers chart getaways. Among other editorial highlights, "Get Social," showcases the state's booming social district scene; "No Limits," featuring wheelchair-accessible and sensory-friendly destinations; and "Bird Spotting," an illustrated field guide to where and how to see the Great Blue Heron, White-Eyed Vireo, Tundra Swan and other species. An autumn-focused collection goes beyond foliage splendor to tap into Visit NC's First in Fright campaign with its podcast, haunted trails and fear-infused attractions.

The print edition is available at the state's nine [Welcome Centers](#) or by calling 800-847-4862 (800-VISITNC). Readers can also link to [VisitNC.com/travel-guides](#) to request a copy, access the digital edition or download a PDF version. In addition to traditional distribution channels, additional steps were taken to reach target audiences. Visit NC polybagged 60,000 of the 2025 Travel Guides with Midwest Living and Better Homes and Gardens, national brands that align with Visit NC's audience. Nearly 3,500 guidebooks were distributed directly to inbound travelers through Asheville Regional Airport, Charlotte Douglas International Airport, and Wilmington International Airport.

The 11-page, 2025 Travel Guide was produced by People, Inc. It was financed by private industry support with \$892,995 in advertising. The self-mailer format for printed copies reinforces the green initiatives of Visit NC and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina.

NewsLink

Emailed weekly to nearly 3,400 subscribers, NewsLink is an electronic publication designed to provide information to the North Carolina tourism industry. The mailing list also includes legislators, economic developers and media. In 2024, NewsLink covered more than 507 stories within 49 weekly and two "Special Edition" issues, providing timely information on tourism-related research, statewide and international trends, media leads, updates on conferences and events, and other items of interest to those in the tourism field.

There is no subscription charge for this e-newsletter and it is available to anyone with a valid email address. It is only sent to those requesting to receive the newsletter.

Outdoor NC

Interest in the outdoors reached new heights during the pandemic and elevated the importance of preserving North Carolina's natural environments to ensure the use and enjoyment of the state's much desired recreational resources for future generations. Visit NC launched Outdoor NC in collaboration with the **NC Outdoor Recreation Industry Office** and **Leave No Trace Center** to educate visitors and residents on appropriate behavior and care for our outdoor spaces.

We expanded the Outdoor NC initiative to further enhance industry partnerships, destination stewardship, and visitor experiences including introducing new programs. In the winter of 2024, Visit NC hosted two Outdoor NC Stewardship Workshops. The full day workshops reviewed all the Outdoor NC programming and highlighted evolving destination trends, insights and inspirational case studies related to accessible outdoors, destination stewardship and responsible recreation. Outdoor NC Stewardship Workshops were open to Outdoor NC alliance partners and staff and were one of the first step towards partners achieving the Outdoor NC Trail Town Designation.

Areas of Focus:

- Destination stewardship which brings together community allies to find a balance between residents' quality of life and visitors experience.
- Responsible travel which encourages visitors to balance enjoyment of local heritage and nature with respect for community assets.
- Sustainable tourism which emphasizes industry operations that balance economic returns with social responsibility and environmental conservation.

Flagship Programs:

Outdoor NC Partner Alliance – Encourages visitors to balance enjoyment of local heritage and nature with respect for community assets. The Outdoor NC Partner Alliance is designed to educate guests and help stakeholders amplify responsible recreation including utilizing the 7 Outdoor NC Leave No Trace Principles.

Accessible Outdoors - Aims to increase information transparency so individuals can make informed decisions about exploring NC's outdoor spaces based on their abilities.

Trail Town Stewardship Designation & Visitor Guide - Helping destinations activate and celebrate stewardship activities. Destination stewardship brings together community allies to find a balance between residents' quality of life and guests experience while preserving natural and culture resources.

Launch of the Trail Town Guide, August 2024

Visit NC's new Official North Carolina Trail Town Guide is a collection of pathways for adventure-loving travelers and culture seekers exploring the Great Trails State. Created through the Outdoor NC initiative in partnership with 15 allied destinations, the digital-only guide serves as a go-to resource for natural wonder. For each destination, the guide links to a selection of trails, accessibility details, responsible recreation practices and trip tips from local experts. It also includes a map, a list of the seven Outdoor NC Leave No Trace principles, and an invitation to "join the movement" toward sustainable travel.

The Trail Town Guide heightens our partners' commitment to destination stewardship while highlighting trails with more than muscle appeal. As designated in the guide, the 15 towns and surrounding areas are Asheville, Blowing Rock, Brevard, Burgaw, Eden, Gastonia, Highlands, Old Fort, Nags Head, Smithfield, South Mills, Southern Pines, Sylva, Waynesville, and Wilkesboro.

Statewide Trail Assessment

Hannah Guschel, a second-year occupational therapy doctorate student at West Virginia University, collaborated with Visit NC on a Capstone Experience to improve travel for people with disabilities in North Carolina and make the state's sites and experiences more accessible to everyone with a focus on our outdoor spaces.

New Outdoor NC Dedicated Channels

New Outdoor NC platforms launched in April and May. These dedicated channels help us amplify our Outdoor NC partners stewardship stories while educating visitors. These channels will support our goals of growing brand awareness, support and grow partners, and develop individual connections.

Launched New Outdoornc.com Website

We launched OutdoorNC.com on Earth Day, April 22, 2024. Highlights include:

- New tool to leverage for partnerships
- Opportunity to optimize the partner experience and build personal connections
- Reimagine existing series of landing pages on visitnc.com with new presentation of Outdoor NC principles
- Implement meaningful & resourceful blogs focused on responsible recreation leading with inspirational activities and presents the OutdoorNC principles in a useful way with additional context for each activity or experience.
- Reimagined partner highlights and site features adding greater value to partnerships and amplifying all partner brands as well and their individual stewardship stories
- Collaboration with the Visit NC website to allow for user experience flow from one site to the other
- Additional visibility for partners has been integrated to drive traffic to their websites and create a stronger tie between Outdoor NC and our partners.

Outdoor NC Social Media

The team launched two new dedicated Outdoor NC social media channels with an Earth Day campaign in partnership with Eagles Nest Outfitters (ENO).

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/outdoornorthcarolina>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/outdoor.nc/>

Enews

We relaunched the Outdoor NC consumer e-newsletter. This e-newsletter was quarterly during the 1st and 4th quarter, shifting to monthly for April –September.

Outdoor Economy Conference, October 21-24, 2024, Cherokee, NC

The Outdoor Economy Conference brings together thought leaders, industry experts, and enthusiasts from across the nation to explore, learn, and collaborate on fostering a sustainable and thriving outdoor economy. As the nation's largest outdoor recreation-focused economic development gathering, the Outdoor Economy Conference aims to provide a holistic understanding of the intricate relationship between outdoor recreation, community health, and economic vitality. The conference was postponed due to Hurricane Helene, but the Visit NC booth space and partnership were carried over to 2025.

AdventureELEVATE Conference, June 11-13, 2024, Asheville, NC

In conjunction with the Adventure Travel Trade Association conference in Asheville, the Visit NC team worked with destination partners to host 14 travel writers on three familiarization tours highlighting a wealth of outdoor activity.

After landing at CLT, the writers joined the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority for an introductory tour of the Queen City before departing for the mountains. Explore Boone's itinerary included hikes at Grandfather Mountain State Park, Moses H. Cone Memorial Park and Julian Price Memorial Park; a 4WD EV run at Sky Valley Zip Tours; and time on the Watauga River with RiverGirl Fishing Co. The Explore Brevard trip featured climbing at Looking Glass

Rock with Pisgah Climbing School, mountain biking at DuPont State Recreational Forest with Pura Vida Adventures, a Nero Coffee Hikes excursion to see waterfalls, and a plunge at Sliding Rock. Signature experiences with Explore Bryson City included a Great Smoky Mountains Railroad ride with rafting at Nantahala Outdoor Center plus a waterfall hike and Fontana Lake kayaking led by Carolina Bound Adventures. The adventure continued to Cherokee with a stop at Oconaluftee Indian Village and time on the Fire Mountain Trails with Cherokee Historical Association. Visit NC escorted the media participants and joined destination marketing organization hosts on the trails for adventure.

After the PreAdventures, the writers arrived in Asheville for more hospitality and adventure arranged by Explore Asheville, the conference sponsor. With a spotlight on education and networking, AdventureELEVATE attracts media, outbound tour operators and thought leaders in the adventure travel community.

The Great Trails State Conference, September 11-12, 2024, Winston-Salem, NC

Visit NC participated in the Great Trails State Conference in Winston-Salem. The conference brought together more than 300 trail planners, designers and builders, recreational professionals, community and elected leaders, tourism partners, and others from across the state to learn and share best practices to advance trail and greenway development and promotion throughout North Carolina. Visit NC presented during the "Trails for All" and "Balancing Resources Protection with Recreational Use" sessions, discussing the Outdoor NC Accessible Outdoor program and toolkit aimed at assisting individuals in making informed decisions about exploring NC's outdoor spaces based on their own abilities. She also discussed the Outdoor NC Trail Town program as a destination stewardship case study. Tuttell provided a Visit NC agency update alongside NC Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources, NC Dept. of Transportation and NC's Outdoor Recreation Economy Office to close out the conference.

Outdoor NC Hurricane Helene Partner Communications

Four out of the six Outdoor NC Guides were in the area impacted by Hurricane Helene. All were safe, but many paused their work to assist in recovery efforts. Visit NC participated in regular check-ins and communications with NC State Parks, NC Forest Service, and NC Wildlife Resources to provide status updates and align on messaging.

Ahead of the Great Trails State Day, Visit NC helped communicate to partners how they could be involved. It looked a bit different with many trails and communities impacted by Hurricane Helene. We reminded partners that it was a great time to educate visitors on key Outdoor NC principles like how to plan ahead and be prepared, check trail conditions, respect closures and share information on lesser-known trails in your destination. For those able and willing to plan an event for Great Trails State Day we suggested they consider utilizing the Outdoor NC Cleanup Kit to help their community host a cleanup event or plan one for the future.

Outdoor NC Assists with Partner Hurricane Helene Messaging

Hurricane Helene has impacted outdoor spaces in Western North Carolina, highlighting the importance of responsible outdoor stewardship. Guests are encouraged to plan ahead and prepare by checking official government and park websites for updates on conditions, closures, routes and safety guidelines. It is essential to be mindful of your impact while communities work to rebuild; your consideration can make a significant difference. By focusing on visiting open areas, you can support both recovery efforts and the local economy. As you explore, embrace the seven Outdoor NC Leave No Trace principles. These practices will help our diverse ecosystem heal and flourish anew. Thank you for being a considerate visitor during this crucial time.

AllTrails Webinar, October 22, 2024 (virtual)

We worked with AllTrails to provide the opportunity for partners to learn about the Public Lands program which is a free resource for agencies and non-profit organizations that help destination marketing organizations to understand how visitors use your trails, manage trail information to help your visitors recreate responsibly and connect with AllTrails' 65 million+ users and share up-to-date alerts. Partners were encouraged to invite their

stakeholders and land managers to join this webinar to learn more about the portal and how to gain access. The recording was made available in the Outdoor NC toolkit.

Sports

SportsNC Memorandum of Understanding

Visit North Carolina, under the brand SportsNC, is excited to announce our continued partnership with the North Carolina Sports Association. It has always been a team effort focused on capitalizing on hosting sports events in the state, increasing awareness of North Carolina as an inspiring desirable destination for hosting sports events, aimed at driving and growing sports event rights holders' interest in North Carolina destinations for more frequent, higher spend and larger events.

The execution of a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Visit North Carolina and the North Carolina Sports Association will strengthen North Carolina's brand awareness in the sports market, providing a consistent shared voice to promote North Carolina to sports event organizers and events rights holders.

We will be doing this together under the brand SportsNC. This partnership serves the mutual interest for the parties through a shared goal of engaging event organizers and sports rights holders in messages about hosting sports events in the state. Building on our existing collaboration and reinforcing our partnership with the goal of making it easier for sports event organizers to discover North Carolina's world-class facilities and exciting vacation destinations. Strengthening our ability to connect them with the resources they need to seamlessly plan and host a successful event.

TEAMS Conference, September 23-26, Anaheim, CA

The North Carolina Sports Association and partners attended the TEAMS Conference in Anaheim, CA. We assisted in providing branding materials to help build brand awareness and create a consistency among the NC attendees with the partners under the branding of SportsNC including new table runners.

Cycle NC Mountains to Coast Ride, October 5-12, 2024, Statewide

More than 900 cyclists from 42 states – plus Washington, D.C., Canada, and the United Kingdom – participated in Cycle NC's 25th Annual Mountains to Coast Ride. This year the ride was shortened due to Hurricane Helene but still overnighted in six towns across the state while passing through several more.

Together with Statesville CVB Cycle NC raised \$10,247 by hosting hot air balloon rides for participants. They also took direct donations to the Downtown Spruce Pine Alliance, DT's Café and the Gastropub (all in Spruce Pine) at the Cycle NC Rider Services and check-in table each day. Many cyclists brought donations of goods/food to Lenoir and Pittsboro. Cyclists had the option to donate their hotel refund for Spruce Pine directly to the town. The Hiddenite Heritage Center also raised money at the Cycle NC rest stop to repair their historic house following storm damage.

For the eighth year, Visit NC sponsored the Retire NC Excursions. These daily excursions gave participants and those traveling with them the opportunity to take a break from the ride and experience North Carolina. Participants varied from cyclists wanting a day off to rest their legs or simply explore different areas of the state, to friends/family of the cyclists who weren't riding but were traveling with the group. A dedicated motorcoach departed from the overnight host city in the morning and stopped at a few attractions and a destination for lunch each day before arriving at the next overnight host city in the late afternoon. Participants paid a fee to help offset costs to the attractions that hosted them. Participants also had the opportunity to shop and learn more about the state for future visits. This was an opportunity to spread the economic impact of the Cycle NC ride to many more communities on or near the route of the ride.

Visit North Carolina is a founding sponsor of Cycle North Carolina's Mountains to Coast, Fall and Spring rides. Cycle North Carolina offers one of the largest cross-state bicycle tours in the United States. The three annual rides are designed to promote North Carolina's scenic beauty while providing substantial economic impact to small towns across the state.

Esports

SportsNC served as a liaison to both public and private groups in North Carolina. The Esports Industry Grant Program is administered by the Commerce Finance Center, a unit of the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

The North Carolina Esports Summit, May 31, 2024, Raleigh, NC

In partnership with Visit Raleigh, Visit NC hosted the N.C. Esports Summit at the Raleigh Convention Center. This was an opportunity for destinations, municipalities and parks and recreation departments to learn from industry and institutional leaders, discover how Esports can drive economic impact and local careers, and an opportunity for them to hone their skills through workshops, tournament exhibitions and unparalleled networking opportunities. Whether attendees are just starting to explore the world of Esports, standing-up local youth programs or are already hosting professional events, this inaugural event was a gateway to navigate the Esports ecosystem for communities across the state.

Esports Travel Summit, May 29-31, Raleigh, NC

Visit NC attended the Esports Travel Summit in Raleigh. The Esports Travel Summit is one of the largest gathering of Esports tournament and video-game event organizers and the only event focused on the travel side of the Esports industry. Visit NC took appointments during the marketplace with event producers and presented on Esports as an Economic Development sharing the ins and outs behind North Carolina being the first state to offer incentives for Esports events held in the state. For more information on the North Carolina Esports incentive, a 25% rebate on qualifying Esports expenses, visit Sportsnc.com.

International Marketing

Visit NC marketing to international visitors through partnerships with Brand USA and Travel South USA. Brand USA is the United States' official destination marketing organization, a public-private partnership that promotes the country as a travel destination to international visitors to drive economic growth. Visit NC partners with Brand USA in several countries to market to visitors through cooperative efforts. Travel South USA is the official regional destination marketing organization for the southern United States. The non-profit organization promotes travel to and within its member states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. We are represented through a cooperative marketing agreement by Travel South in countries such as Canada, UK, Germany, Benelux, Brazil, France, Italy, Australia and the Nordics.

Overseas Visitors

In 2024, North Carolina attracted 913,175 international visitors who spent an estimated \$1.1 billion in the state. Canada, the U.K., India, Germany, China and Mexico were the top countries of origin to the state in terms of visitor volume. Other top countries of origin were Brazil, Australia, France, Japan, South Korea, Italy, Spain and Sweden.

North Carolina's Top 20 International Markets by Market Share (Ranked by Visitors)

Rank	Country of Origin	2024 Estimated Visitors	2024 Estimated Spending	Average Spending per Visitor
1	Canada	385,592	\$204,803,863	\$531
2	United Kingdom	62,040	\$119,153,751	\$1,921
3	India	54,702	\$79,258,061	\$1,449
4	Germany	43,963	\$64,953,199	\$1,477
5	China	33,474	\$93,907,164	\$2,805
6	Mexico	26,469	\$7,805,943	\$295
7	Brazil	23,135	\$48,543,469	\$2,098
8	Australia	15,846	\$42,012,978	\$2,651
9	France	15,687	\$20,645,719	\$1,316
10	Japan	13,979	\$18,611,468	\$1,331
11	South Korea	13,018	\$23,072,273	\$1,772
12	Italy	12,519	\$16,275,684	\$1,300
13	Spain	11,371	\$13,940,114	\$1,226
14	Sweden	5,814	\$7,430,947	\$1,278
15	Ireland	5,683	\$8,479,053	\$1,492
16	Argentina	5,263	\$7,816,445	\$1,485
17	Poland	5,148	\$9,440,664	\$1,834
18	Taiwan	4,915	\$5,851,944	\$1,191
19	Denmark	4,754	\$9,275,964	\$1,951
20	Israel	4,156	\$5,128,602	\$1,234
Total		913,175	\$1,099,670,289	\$1,204

Source: *Tourism Economics, 2025*

German Trade Familiarization Tour, June 2024

Visit NC and partners Visit Raleigh and Outer Banks Visitors Bureau hosted three German travel trade operators from American Unlimited, Canusa Touristik and CRB on a familiarization tour to promote new access to the state with Lufthansa. The new Lufthansa flight offers nonstop service from Frankfurt to RDU. This new route provides travelers with seamless access and opens the world of possibilities for leisure travel to the state. Frankfurt is the hub for Lufthansa group, the largest airline group in Europe.

Visit North Carolina's international efforts are a joint collaboration with destination marketing partners across the state. As part of its international marketing, Visit NC partners with CVBs, attractions and hotels to showcase all that North Carolina has to offer international visitors. Hosting familiarization tours is a successful way that allows tour operators to experience various aspects of the state so they can better promote travel to North Carolina.

NC promotion in Munich, November 2024

The Carolina Panthers played the NY Giants in Munich. Visit NC and Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority hosted tour operators and media for the game itself. Leading up to the game there was a reception at the US Consul General's residence on Friday evening and State Reception of Bavaria on Saturday. Both these events featured NC food products through Dept. of Ag and Panther souvenirs.

U.S Travel Association's IPW, May 2024

Visit NC attended the U.S. Travel Association's IPW in Los Angeles. At the show, international tour operators and media met to discuss options for international visitors that are returning to pre-COVID levels for the state. The NC team, along with partners from Visit Charlotte, Greater Raleigh CVB and Explore Asheville, had pre-scheduled appointments from top tour operators and media from around NC's top international markets.

Brand USA

Visit NC took part in the Brand USA Travel Week show for European tour operators. We met with more than 40 operators over the three-day show. We answered many questions about the damage to the mountain region of the state following Hurricane Helene with tour operators, media and fellow DMOs from around the country.

Visit NC also co-hosted an evening event with South Carolina, Atlanta and Savannah where we were again able to reinforce the mountain recovery and reassure them that the rest of the state is ready for visitors.

Other co-ops with Brand USA included:

- Global Inspiration Media Campaign provided 8,121,553 impressions in the Australia, Germany, France, and UK markets. The Global Inspiration Guide was published and distributed via consumer and travel trade channels.
- Custom Explore the South content in Germany with more than 4 million impressions 189 room nights booked and 36 flights.
- Custom Explore the South content in Australia with more than 3.5 million impressions, 233 room nights, and 37 flights.
- Explore the South Adara campaign received more than 3.6 million impressions, 233 room nights and 247 flights.

Travel South USA

Travel South Global Partnership Representation

In all markets, NC was featured in travel trade newsletters, trainings, and press releases throughout the year. Other co-ops include:

Wanderlust - In partnership with Travel South the Wanderlust campaign included 342,000 readerships of print advertorial and editorial features, 60,000 page views of the Digital Immersive Experiences, 10 million impressions of traffic driving ads.

Sojern 2024 – We leveraged Sojern to reach the right visitors at the right time driving both brand awareness and bookings. This campaign ran in Australia, UK and Canada, Over the course of the 90-day campaign it generated 2,464 activities and 519 hotel stays.

Vacaay.com 2024 – We teamed with this online inspiration travel site targeted at international travelers from Australia and the UK. This campaign resulted in 7,213,173 impressions. It highlighted 93 points of interest.

Hotelbeds 2024 - This successful campaign featured a 17% increase year over year in bookings with room nights booked in 35 NC destinations. The campaign ran in Canada, UK, Germany and Australia.

CAA Campaign 2024 – This campaign included social media, virtual agent training, a CAA Niagara homepage banner, dedicated email eblast, and CAA APP Ad carousel components targeting the Canadian market.

Canadian Sales & Media Mission

Visit NC, along with Charlotte Regional Visitor Authority, joined Travel South USA in a Canada Sales and Media Mission in Toronto and Montreal. The group spent four days in those markets and met with travel trade and media during several events, which included two evening events covering the seven states and several cities represented. Canadian visitation to North Carolina is rebounding to near pre-pandemic levels.

Amsterdam and Nordic Mission

In February, we participated in a Travel South USA sales and media mission that included two days of trade and media appointments in and around Amsterdam. We also participated in the FDM (Federation of Danish Motorists) consumer show drawing nearly thousands of potential visitors to the South and NC. Other activities on the mission included:

Swanson's Travel Show – Swanson is the largest US specialist tour operator in Sweden. We participated in this show where we met with hundreds of their clients during the one-day event.

Discover America – This trade and media show was in Copenhagen where we highlighted our area to the Danish travel trade. Travel South held a press conference where we spoke about the Icelandair flight expansion to daily, year-round trips to RDU airport.

German Mission

Visit NC, along with Visit Raleigh, traveled to Frankfurt and Hamburg to promote the new Lufthansa air service from Frankfurt to RDU. The mission included trade and media receptions in Hamburg, followed by a trade event with the U.S. Consulate in Frankfurt. Each event had more than 40 tourism representatives in attendance. In addition, U.S. Consul General Norman Thatcher Scharpf hosted a reception at his residence. He spoke of many of the activities his family has had across North Carolina. Lufthansa also had a representative speak about the positive image and expectations for the state and the flight, which began in June 2024.

Visit NC also hosted a media familiarization tour in coordination with the inaugural flight. The media representatives visited Raleigh, Durham and Wilmington.

IFTM Paris, September 2024, Paris

Visit NC joined other Travel South partners at IFTM (International French Travel Market). Visit NC had preset appointments with tour operators, influencers and travel trade media over the course of three days. Travel South also hosted a reception after the show where we featured NC Midnight Moon moonshine drinks. This tradeshow brings 30,000 travel trade professionals together to meet with destinations around the world. With two non-stop flights from Paris' Charles De Gaulle airport, North Carolina saw nearly 16,000 visitors from France, who spent \$20.5 million in the state in 2024.

Travel South International Showcase, December 2024, Atlanta

We participated in the 11th annual Travel South International Showcase in Atlanta. Visit NC, along with partners from Explore Asheville, Fayetteville Area CVB, Outer Banks VB and Visit Raleigh, met with international tour operators and media to increase interest in international visitation to North Carolina. The North Carolina delegation was among 134 travel trade specialists interested in creating trips to the southern US for international visitors. These international tour operators came from 16 countries considered to be key and emerging markets for the southern US. Visit NC also hosted a post-familiarization tour with delegates from Australia, Brazil, Denmark, Italy

and South Korea, who visited Charlotte, Lexington, Greensboro and Raleigh.

Tourism Development

Visit NC's Partner & Industry Relations Manager continued to work with rural communities to foster visitation to the lesser-known areas of the state. In addition, working with these communities to foster its culture and heritage through various genres of traditional and heritage music and heritage trails and programs across the state. Small towns are an important part of the North Carolina landscape.

Visit NC is actively involved in ongoing programming either independently or in conjunction with partners such as the **NC Rural Center**, the **Department of Commerce's Division of Community Assistance**, **Department of Natural & Cultural Resources**, **NC Arts Council**, **NC Folklife Institute**, **Preservation NC** and other entities to foster revitalization that will make the communities more attractive to residents and visitors. To do so, Visit NC's Tourism Development team:

- Set goals for the Tourism Development Program and improved the delivery of information for the program on the Visit NC website. The effort was designed to make local communities more aware of resources within Visit NC as well as other opportunities for tourism development.
- Continued to research available resources for partner organizations across the state in the form of grants, technical assistance and development (state, federal, private philanthropic).
- Made presentations to partners throughout North Carolina on Cultural Heritage Tourism Development and ways to work with Visit NC.
- Represented Visit NC in partnership the African American Heritage Commission.
- Continued to assist with the promotion of the Blue Ridge Music Trails of NC, Freedom Roads, US Civil Rights Trail, NC Civil War Trails, NC Civil Rights Trail and other products in the regions.
- Continued promotion of the NC Certified Retirement Community Program.
- Worked with communities in developing their Juneteenth Celebration events.

Destination Immersion

In 2024, Visit NC replaced its TRAC (Tourism Resource Assistance Center) program with Destination Immersion. This new program brings Visit NC's team, along with a representative each from our advertising agency of record and Commerce's Visitor Services/Welcome Centers, into communities to experience tourism-related aspects such as touring attractions and taking part in activities. The team then meets with the local DMO and their partners for in-depth discussions. Visit NC seeks to hold such familiarization visits quarterly.

In the inaugural year of the program, Visit NC had four Destination Immersions with DMO partners in Henderson, Granville, Transylvania and Cumberland counties.

Consumer Show Attendance

Visit NC led groups of in-state partners at three Consumers Shows in 2024:

- Travel & Adventure Show DC – Partners (Greenville-Pitt County CVB, Onslow TDA, Johnston County Visitors Bureau, Franklin & Nantahala TDC, Boone TDA, Crystal Coast TDA, NOC, DNCR)

- Travel & Adventure Show NYC – Partners (Greenville-Pitt County CVB, Pender County Tourism, DNCR, Johnston County Visitors Bureau, Crystal Coast TDA, Franklin & Nantahala TDC)
- Travel & Adventure Show ATL – Partners (Boone TDA, NOC, Onslow TDA, Yadkin TDA, Asheboro TDA, Cleveland TDA, DNCR)

Community Partnerships and Heritage Development

Visit NC also continued to be actively engaged in the development of outdoor recreational/ecotourism/agritourism/heritage opportunities in the regions across the state. Farms, waterways, hiking and biking trails, greenways and open spaces are important features in a community that improve and promote quality of life and link people with their natural and cultural heritage. These partnerships include assistance in researching resources for communities, working with communities interested in Tourism Development Authority development, marketing initiatives, heritage trails development and product development plans.

Visit NC supports the **Blue Ridge National Heritage Area** (BRNHA) through a partnership to assist in coordinating planning for the 25 counties in the designated region. Visit NC continued to assist in the implementation of the initiatives outlined in each county's heritage plan. We had an active role in assisting the BRNHA in developing, facilitating and guiding communities along the Blue Ridge Parkway for themes such as agriculture, arts and culture, traditional music, history/heritage and natural resources.

In addition, Visit NC continued work on the **Blue Ridge Music Trails of North Carolina** with the BRNHA and the **NC Arts Council**, as well as collaborated closely with the communities participating with the **NC Rural Center** and the **NC Main Street Program**. Visit NC partnered in a six-county regional tourism Development initiative in Northeast NC called the **African American Experience of Northeast North Carolina** (AAENENC). We also continue to add sites and businesses to the project. Visit NC continues to work with the Capital City Juneteenth Celebration committee and promotes other Juneteenth celebrations throughout NC.

North Carolina Civil War Trails

The Civil War Trails Program is marketed in five states – Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina, with more than 1,000 interpretive markers. Visit NC continued to partner with the **NC Department of Transportation** and **NC Department of Natural & Cultural Resources** to promote the NC Civil War Trails program. Marketing Universals were developed by Civil War Trails Inc. and all five state partners to display the program as the “best” and most factually authentic way to experience Civil War history, using social media, print and online advertising.

An updated Civil War Trails map has been printed and is accessible online and available in all NC Welcome Centers. Visitors can download Civil War Trails maps from www.VisitNC.com, receive map-guides via mail through the Call Center as well as in the state's nine Welcome Centers. North Carolina has 238 sites in 72 counties in the program.

Cultural Heritage Trails Development

Visit NC assisted in the promotion of several cultural heritage trails that had a positive impact on communities across the state.

- Assisted with the Blue Ridge Music Trails, partnering with the NC Department of Natural & Cultural Resources, NC Arts Council, BRNHA and other communities in the region.
- Assisted in the promotion of the Blue Ridge Craft Trails.
- Worked with the NC Department of Natural & Cultural Resources in the development of the African American Music Trail in the counties of Onslow, Lenoir, Craven, Pitt, Edgecombe, Wilson, Wayne and Greene.

- Worked with the African American Heritage Commission in the development of “Freedom Roads” Underground Railroad Heritage Trail, NC Civil Rights Trail and also collaborated with the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor.
- Continued to work and develop the African American Experience of Northeast North Carolina (AAENENC).
- Continued to work with the NC Folklife Institute to promote the traditional arts of North Carolina.
- Worked with Travel South USA to promote the U.S. Civil Rights Trail and NC African American Heritage Commission on the NC Civil Rights Trail.

Certified Retirement Community Program

The N.C. General Assembly, during the 2008 short session, recognized the inherent panoply of quality living the state offers and established the N.C. Certified Retirement Community Program (S.L. 2008-188) as a vehicle to designate communities offering this unprecedented quality of living sought after by the mature community. The NC Department of Commerce operates a community development program for communities that are positioning for retiree attraction as an economic and community development strategy. Visit NC supports the program by marketing the communities under the brand of Retire NC.

To gain certification, a local government must submit an application for consideration. Initial evaluation of the community and technical assistance is provided by the Department of Commerce’s Community Development Division. The designation has a five-year life, after which communities will need to consider recertification at the sunset of the five-year period. Once a community has completed the certification process, Visit NC will help market and promote the community. Visit NC worked with the NC Department of Commerce Community Assistance office to administer and review applications.

Visit NC’s Partner & Industry Relations Manager continued to make presentations to local County Commissions and City Managers on the guidelines, requirements and benefits of the program to increase participation.

Visit NC continued to promote certified communities and areas of North Carolina during the Ideal Living Regional Expos in Long Island, NY; Parsippany, NJ: Greater DC area. Results were:

- More than 4800 leads generated.
- More than 250 packets downloads from RetireNC.com.
- More than 260 packets mailed through the Call Center.
- More than 340 tracked moves to North Carolina in 2024.

Visit North Carolina’s certified communities include:

1. Lumberton (pilot program)
2. Marion
3. Mt. Airy
4. Edenton
5. Tarboro
6. Winterville
7. New Bern
8. Lenoir
9. Laurinburg
10. Reidsville
11. Jamestown/High Point
12. Washington
13. Roanoke Rapids

14. Elizabeth City
15. Johnston County
16. Salisbury
17. Carteret County

Industry Relations

Visit NC Tourism Conference –held in Hickory

The 2024 Visit NC Tourism Conference was held in April in Hickory with enthusiastic reviews for the speakers, educational sessions and hospitality events. More than 550 attendees agreed it was wonderful to be able to gather again to discuss timely topics, network and also to welcome new faces to the industry. The conference's success is a credit to the Visit Hickory team for ensuring every attendee's experience in Hickory was memorable.

National Travel & Tourism Week

We celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week May 7-13. Our state welcome centers celebrated the week by having tourism partners set up at the centers to help thank visitors for traveling here. We had staff try to attend as many of these events as possible throughout the week.

As part of the Tourism Week celebration, we worked with the NC Department of Commerce and Governor Roy Cooper to announce our 2023 annual visitor spending numbers. In 2023, the North Carolina tourism economy reached its highest level to that point with travelers spending more than \$35.6 billion on trips to and within the state.

North Carolina Film Office (FilmNC)

Direct in-state spending by film productions topped \$300 million in 2024, marking a strong return following production slowdowns due to labor negotiations nationwide in the industry in 2023. All told, the in-state spending mark exceeded \$302,000,000, which marked the state's second highest year-end total since moving to the current "grant" program and was the third highest year-end total since the state began offering any type of incentive. All told, the NC Film Office assisted with 55 productions who filmed in the state in 2024, and whose activities created more than 97,000 job opportunities. Of the 55 productions, 12 were awarded funds from the North Carolina Film & Entertainment Grant (the key recruitment tool used by the state and the NC Film Office in attracting productions).

Here is a further breakdown of the projects:

2024 Total Production Estimates & Highlights* from N.C. Film Office:

- 55 projects.
- \$302,891,274 direct spend by productions.
- 1,775+ production days.
- 14,984 jobs opportunities created.
- 2,159 crew, 799 talent, 12,026 extras

**per information provided to FilmNC and/or one of the regional film commissions in the state*

Production highlights for 2024 include the following television, streaming, and feature film projects:

- Television/streaming series
 - “[The Hunting Wives](#)” (Season One) (grant recipient)
 - “[The Summer I Turned Pretty](#)” (Season Three) (grant recipient)
 - “[The Runarounds](#)” (Season One) (grant recipient)
 - “[The Waterfront](#)” (Season One) (grant recipient)
 - “[Blue Ridge](#)” (Season Two) (grant recipient)
 - “[Battle on the Beach](#)” (Season Four)
 - “[100 Day Hotel Challenge](#)” (Season One)
- Feature films and made-for-television movies
 - “[Roofman](#)” (grant recipient)
 - “[Capsized](#)” (grant recipient)
 - “[Christy](#)” (filmed as “[Apopka / Christy Martin Biopic](#)”) (grant recipient)
 - “[Merv](#)” (grant recipient)
 - “[The Shot](#)” (grant recipient)
 - “[The Double](#)” (grant recipient)
 - “[The Gardener](#)” (grant recipient)
 - “[Deadly Intentions](#)”
 - “[Henry's Ebb](#)”

Additionally, national commercials for Kia, Lufthansa Airlines, Home Depot, and Yamaha, among others, were filmed in the state.

2024 saw the NC Film Office continue to make regular desk visits to production executives in the Greater Los Angeles area and the continuation of the delivery of doughnuts to select industry decision makers on a monthly basis to keep North Carolina top of mind.

Locally, FilmNC continued its sponsorship with the Cucalorus Foundation’s “Filmed In NC” filmmakers fund, given out to North Carolina filmmakers to help highlight their works on a national and international stage, while continuing to use various online resources to promote more than 30 film festivals held across the state.

In addition to the individual productions taking place in the state, North Carolina’s film industry also welcomed 40,000 sq ft of new studio space with the expansion of [Dark Horse Stages](#) while significant enhancements have also been made at [Cinespace Studios-Wilmington](#). Additionally, workforce development efforts continued to move forward through a statewide apprenticeship program offered through the [Film Partnership of North Carolina](#) while the [UNC School of the Arts School of Filmmaking](#) celebrated its 30th anniversary.

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