

— VISIT —
HAYWOOD
WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS

Marketing Committee Meeting

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

11AM



Public Relations Recap

January – December 2024



Media Coverage Totals

82

MEDIA PLACEMENTS

241,033,236

MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

\$5,253,885

ADVERTISING EQUIVALENCY VALUE

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

The Country's Most-visited National Park Has Year-round Wildflowers, Stunning Mountain Views, and Diverse Wildlife

Here's everything you need to know about visiting Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

By [Evie Carrick](#)

Published on March 5, 2024



PHOTO: INHASKER/GETTY IMAGES

MEET THE EXPERT

Emily Davis is a public affairs specialist at Great Smoky Mountains National Park who previously worked in public affairs and as a park ranger at other parks around the country.

Amie Newsome is the social media and content manager for the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority in North Carolina.

Travel + Leisure

Total Audience: 15,298,774

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

I've Lived in North Carolina My Whole Life, and These Are the Most Underrated Destinations in the State

A North Carolina

By [Trudy Haywood](#)

Compared to me, but it is deceptive Manteo" — extreme something state car.)

One of the top b geographic feat in less than three waterfall trail in t Uwharrie Mount don't have to lea

If you're ready to Greensboro, the a different side c recommended b little lost.

Maggie Valley



VISIT NC

When I was a child, my family went to the [Great Smoky Mountains](#) for a few days every August. [Maggie Valley](#) was always our home base because the small mountain town, situated along Jonathan Creek, was quiet and reminded my dad of home. Today, it's still a perfect jumping-off point for exploring. Within 30 minutes, you can explore Native American culture at the [Museum of the Cherokee People](#) as well as the "Unto These Hills" outdoor drama in Cherokee, or [Judaculla Rock](#) near Sylva. You can also ride the [Great Smoky Mountain Railroad](#) in Dillsboro and Bryson City.

Start your day with breakfast at [Jocoy's Pancake House](#), a classic breakfast spot, then explore the [hiking trails](#) that lead to stunning waterfalls and visit the [Wheels Through Time](#) museum, which houses a collection of more than 350 American motorcycles, vehicles, and rare memorabilia.

Some of my favorite memories include driving the [Blue Ridge Parkway](#), horseback riding, and our annual visits to Mings Mill and the Mountain Farm Museum. Stellar photo opportunities can be found at Waterrock Knob, [Clingmans Dome](#) — the highest point along the [Appalachian Trail](#), at 6,643

Travel + Leisure

Total Audience: 15,298,774

Forbes

'Secret' Places In The U.S. To See The Perseids, Northern Lights And The Comet

Jamie Carter Senior Contributor

Jamie Carter is an award-winning reporter who covers the night sky.



Blue Ridge Mountains, North Carolina

The 5,000-6,000-foot elevation of the Blue Ridge Mountains in western North Carolina makes them a great place to experience exceptionally clear and dark night skies in the U.S. Stargazing on the Blue Ridge Parkway includes locations like Richland Balsam Overlook, Graveyard Fields and Frying Pan Lookout Tower. All are in Haywood County, which includes many other places to go stargazing.

Forbes

Total Audience: 87,519,063



MATADOR network

The 13 Best Places for Leaf Peeping in United States in 2024

by KATIE SCOTT AITON MORGANE CROISSANT AUG 29, 2024

Spring may have the majority of the flowers, but the changing leaves in the fall bring a different kind of beauty to the landscape. In small towns, and rural areas, leaf peeping varies from a simple walk in a spot of colorful foliage to a more adventurous excursion. If you're looking for a spot where the leaves are changing, there's a great place to go.

Peak leaf peeping months: Mid-October to November

Many have sung praises of the Great Smoky Mountains. This chunk of the Appalachians is picture perfect, especially in mid to late October when the fall foliage is in full swing. Haywood County is in the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains, and is home to no less than 46 miles of the extremely scenic [Blue Ridge Parkway](#). There are other ways to enjoy the fall colors from the maples, basswoods, mountain ash, birch, and beeches besides driving along one of the most beautiful roads in the US, however. A trip to the Waterrock Knob overlook, the highest point on the parkway, is one stop you can't pass on if you want to take in some of the best autumnal views in the area. It is easily accessible from the road and only requires a steep 0.6-mile walk from the visitor center. Less than 30 minutes away by car from the overlook is Lake Junaluska, where you can kayak or SUP on calm waters surrounded by the changing leaves.

Haywood County



Where to stay in Haywood County, North Carolina

The [Lambuth Inn](#), located along the shore of Lake Junaluska, was built in 1921 and fully renovated in 2018 to allow guests to enjoy modern amenities within a grand, historic building. Book a lakeview room on the highest floor to enjoy the beauty of the surroundings from a privileged vantage point. At the end of a day of being dazzled by the foliage, take a quick five-minute walk from the inn to Inspiration Point, where the sunset over the lake and mountains is spectacular.

Matador Network

Total Audience: 813,268

AFAR

The 18 Best Places to See Fall Foliage in the USA

From national and state parks to small towns, these destinations are the best places to see autumn foliage.

By Chloe Arrojado • August 14, 2024

With the glowing golds of aspens and hickories, the burnt orange of sumac, and the vermillions and plums of oaks and maples, the colors of autumn are some of nature's most spectacular displays. Fortunately, if you live in the United States, you won't have to travel too far to find a spectacular view of fall foliage.

18. Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee and North Carolina

When to see fall foliage: Mid-October to early November

With more than 100 species of trees, most of them deciduous, Great Smoky Mountains National Park has an impressive variety of fall colors—and one of the longest fall foliage seasons as well. Yellow birches, beeches, and hobblebushes show flashes of color as early as mid-September in higher elevations—like those along the Sugarland Mountain and Appalachian Trails—and autumn wildflowers like coreopsis, goldenrods, asters, and black-eyed Susans add layers of other colors.

But the most spectacular show comes in October, with the deep plum and gamut hues of the hickories, sweet gums, and red and sugar maples. To escape the crush of fall color fans at popular spots like Cades Cove, head east to drive the Roaring Fork nature loop and walk along little-visited Big Creek, or take in the sweeping panoramas from Balsam Mountain and the Blue Ridge Parkway on the park's southeastern edge.

Where to stay: Cataloochee Ranch

• Book now: [cataloocheeranch.com](#)

There are a number of appealing hotel, camping, and glamping choices in the Great Smoky Mountains area. One of the best is Cataloochee Ranch in Maggie Valley, North Carolina—the dude ranch sits in the foothills of the Smokies, ideal for a fall foliage experience without the need to leave your hotel.



AFAR

Total Audience: 997,100

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

10 Best Places to See Fall Foliage in North Carolina

Few states do autumn as well as North Carolina. Here's where to go to see the best fall foliage this season.

By [Lydia Mansel](#) Published on September 7, 2024



Blue Ridge Parkway

Fall foliage along the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina. COURTESY OF VISIT NC

New England may have a reputation for being the best place to see fall foliage, but North Carolina isn't far behind. North Carolina

Both Turchin and Reinhold agree that the [Blue Ridge Parkway](#) is ideal for checking out the vibrant fall colors. "This go-to road is touted as one of America's most scenic drives, and the highest and wildest sections of it are located in Haywood County. Essentially every overlook features a world-class view, so pack a picnic and explore at will," says Reinhold. Or, you could embark on a half-day drive from [Brevard](#) to Grandfather Mountain. "I've been driving this stretch of the parkway since I was a little boy with my family and am still in awe every year by the majesty and hues of Mother Nature," says Turchin.

Travel + Leisure

Total Audience: 13,940,394

Southern Living

10 Southern Destinations Our Editors Visited For The First Time This Year And Loved

By [Tara Massouleh McCay](#) | Published on November 23, 2024

07 of 10

Waynesville, North Carolina



PHOTO: ROBBIE

As the holiday season approaches, I'm looking for new destinations to visit and looking for editor and list entries to read over my



I couldn't make this list without spotlighting a few of my own travel finds from 2024, so the last few are places I visited and couldn't stop talking about. Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge get a lot of attention as Great Smoky Mountain towns, but the Western North Carolina community of [Waynesville](#), on the "other side of the Smokies" really blew me away. The downtown is super walkable, with lots of quaint shops and great restaurants, but for me, the real draw was the easy access to jump on Blue Ridge Parkway and hike in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. During my fall visit, I even had a chance to see the famous [elk that were reintroduced](#) to the area in 2001.

Southern Living

Total Audience: 13,944,473

Southern Living

The 6 Top Travel Trends In 2025

By [Tara Massouleh McCay](#) | Published on December 26, 2024



Catch an unforgettable Area. Photo: Wynn

Cowboy Culture

We travel for a learn about different matter your real their normal road planning are s [Travelers Fall](#) plan to take a

It seems we still haven't quite gotten over our [Yellowstone obsession](#)—and how could we with new [Taylor Sheridan spin-offs](#) coming out seemingly every other month? Lots of folks will attempt to live out their cowboy and cowgirl dreams on vacation this year. Ranch stays across Montana and Wyoming will book up fast, but us Southerners can just pop over to Texas for an authentic taste of true cowboy culture. On the east coast? No problem. [Cataloochee Ranch](#), a longstanding ranch in the Great Smoky Mountains that was recently renovated and reopened as a Relais & Chateaux property, has you covered with horseback riding, cozy cabins, and more.

Southern Living

Total Audience: 13,944,473

Southern Living

The 22 Best Christmas Tree Farms In North Carolina

Searching for the best tree to celebrate the holidays? If you happen to be looking in North Carolina, we've got some input.

By [Tara Massouleh McCay](#) | Updated on November 4, 2024



Photo: Cavan Images/Getty Images
When it's time to [get in the here!](#) like a live evergreen fake Christmas tree debate

Boyd Mountain Christmas Tree Farm



Sara Jane Quinnett

Waynesville

While picking the perfect Christmas tree is an all-day event for some, the folks at Boyd Mountain Christmas Tree Farm take the tradition to the next level. Visitors can spend the night on the farm in one of eight hand-hewed log cabins that date back 150 to 200 years. In addition to choosing and cutting your own Fraser Fir, you can also hike the property's many trails and fish its stocked trout stream.

[boydmountainchristmastreefarm.com](#); 445 Boyd Farm Rd, Waynesville, NC 28785; 828-926-6886

Southern Living

Total Audience: 13,944,473

Southern Living

16 Best Lakes In North Carolina For A Waterfront Getaway

These are the best lakes waiting for you in The Tar Heel State.

By [Jennifer Prince](#) Updated on June 5, 2024



PHOTO: ROBBIE CAFONETTO

It's no secret that [lakes](#) have lifetime of memories. Perhaps camp, or your family vacation

Lake Junaluska



TANYA STUKALOVA / 500PX / GETTY

Lake Junaluska

Situated in the western North Carolina mountains, Lake Junaluska is well known for being a retreat center and the ideal place for a [summer vacation](#) rental. There are also plenty of water-centric activities to fill your time, such as canoeing, fishing, golfing, and hiking. However, the lake is also close to many area attractions, so you should plan to go offsite to explore. Spend a day at the Pisgah National Forest or head to the overlooks along the [Blue Ridge Parkway](#). Because of its proximity to notable tourist sites, many plan to spend their whole vacation exploring the lake and beyond.

[lakejunaluska.com](#), 91 North Lakeshore Drive, Lake Junaluska, NC 28745

Southern Living

Total Audience: 15,823,211

Southern Living

The 11 Best Things To Do In Maggie Valley, North Carolina, A Smoky Mountain Gem

By [Lydia Mansel](#) Published on July 19, 2024



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

There's no question that North Carolina's roster of mountain towns is stacked. As you make your way down the westernmost region of the Tar Heel

Southern Living

Total Audience: 14,483,139

**Note: UVMs differ based on site visitors from month to month*

CARDINAL & PINE

Steer clear of wild spring breakers by visiting these NC gems



PHOTO COURTESY OF NC SMOOKIES

By Vanessa Infanzon | March 1, 2024

Spring break conjures up images of wet t-shirt contests, empty beer cans strewn along the beach, and loud music until the wee hours of the night. Been there. Done that. Over it.

Whether you've been to several places or just one, we know no

[Lake Junaluska](#)
[Haywood County](#)

Walk along the lake's pathways (with 2.3 and 3.8-mile options) for views of sculptures and specialty gardens. The Prayer Labyrinth offers a place for peaceful meditation.

Cardinal & Pine

Total Audience: 31,876

📍 ONLY IN YOUR STATE

Pick Your Way Through Haywood County in North Carolina At These Smoky Mountain Pick-Your-Own Farms And Produce Markets

By Carolyn Harmon | Published June 17, 2024

Fruits and veggies taste best when you pick your way through North Carolina at U-pick farms, fresh produce stands, and markets. In Haywood County several options exist, but what makes this place so special is the loving embrace of the Great Smoky Mountains. Where else can you find farm-fresh ingredients for a favorite recipe and pretty flowers for the table in such a breathtaking setting?

1. Ten Acre Garden: Canton



Only in Your State

Total Audience: 3,411,753

WHEREVER FAMILY



4 FESTIVALS TO ATTEND BEFORE THE SUMMER'S END

With summer coming to a close, there are still opportunities for family travelers to savor the season. Check out these festivals across the country before fall officially begins.



Canton Labor Day Festival

Labor Day weekend typically marks the unofficial end of summer. Canton, North Carolina's, annual end-of-summer bash is the oldest Labor Day festival in the south. On Sept. 1-2, celebrate with drinks from local breweries, live music, food vendors and goods from local artisans.

Wherever Family

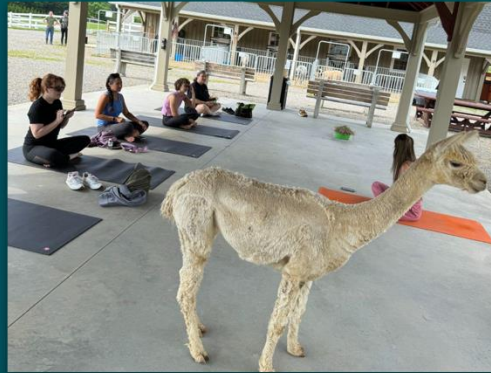
Total Audience: 3,184

Small Group Press Trip

MMGY coordinated the first small group press trip in Haywood County in June 2024. Four journalists that contribute to key regional and national publications attended the Appalachian culture-themed trip with itinerary highlights including a hike at Flat Laurel Creek, a critter creation class at Cold Mountain Art Collective, alpaca yoga at Winchester Creek Farm, an evening at the Waynesville Mountain Street Dance and seasonal dining opportunities. Resulting stories include a feature in **StyleBlueprint** and print and digital coverage in **Southern Lady Magazine**, with additional placements expected.

Attendees included:

- Brianna Goebel (StyleBlueprint)
- Ashley Shaw (Southern Lady Magazine)
- Jenny Willden (Outdoor Sports Guide Magazine)
- Karon Warren (Atlanta Journal-Constitution, North Georgia Living Magazine)



Small Group Press Trip Coverage



StyleBlueprint
Total Audience: 128,268



Southern Lady
Total Audience: 120,000

CARDINAL & PINE

Embrace the cold at the 2025
Visit Haywood Ice Fest Weekend



Photo courtesy of Visit Haywood.

By Vanessa Infanzon

December 5, 2024

Discover what's in store for the 2025 Visit Haywood Ice Fest Weekend, from the schedule of events to nearby local gems.

Three years ago, Maggie Valley in Haywood County hosted its first ice festival, drawing visitors from across the Southeast. Enthusiasm for celebrating winter activities and cold-weather sports led to the festival's expansion.

Cardinal & Pine

Total Audience: 29,424

Our State

CELEBRATING NORTH CAROLINA

Old-School Cool

Haywood on Ice

This mountain county produces some of the cleanest water in the United States. In January, people gather to celebrate the local resource and to enjoy the beauty of winter in the Smokies.

by Katie Kane

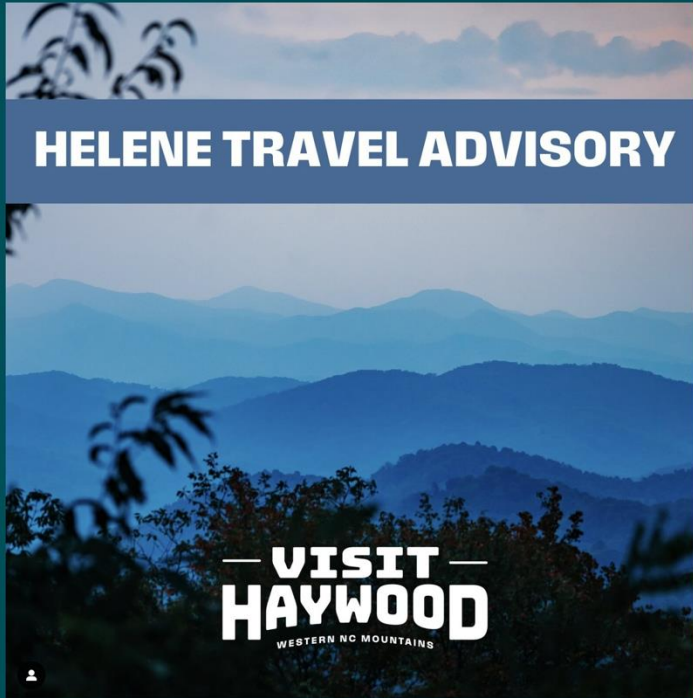


Not to fear: This sculpture of Bigfoot in downtown Waynesville is frozen midstep. In 2023, Bigfoot was one of 20 ice sculptures displayed on the first day of Visit Haywood Ice Fest. Photography courtesy of Visit Haywood

Our State

Total Audience: 399,540

Hurricane Helene Recovery



MMGY provided crisis communications counsel to Visit Haywood in the lead up to Tropical Storm Helene and the days and months following. Our efforts have included, but were not limited to:

- Ongoing strategic counsel
- Media monitoring and sentiment tracking of local, regional and national media coverage
- Monitoring of local Facebook groups to assess sentiments and identify the spread of misinformation
- Drafting and editing of newsletters to consumers and stakeholders
- Creation of a Traveler Experience Recovery Roadmap; conferred with DCI and Haywood to complete
- Identified and reached out to media contacts most likely to write future stories on the area's recovery
- Planning for a spring recovery FAM is underway to showcase the positive news coming out of Haywood County in an effort to bring travelers back to the destination.

Haywood Strong



In an effort to support local recovery efforts and promote fundraising for the small business recovery fund, MMGY drafted press materials for the “Give the Gift of Haywood” initiative.

Materials included a local press release and a regional pitch centered around the “Haywood Strong” campaign, outlining ways to support local businesses and recovery efforts in Haywood County.

Coverage included an interview on **The Weather Channel**, and inclusions in **Asheville Citizen-Times**, **WLOS**, **Cardinal & Pine** and **WNHS**.



Advertising



Meta

- 705,532 impressions,
- 18,436 link clicks
- CTR 2.61% (Benchmark 1.57%)

Top Performing Ad Image

Most Engaged Markets:

- Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville
- Atlanta
- Greensboro-High Point-Winston Salem



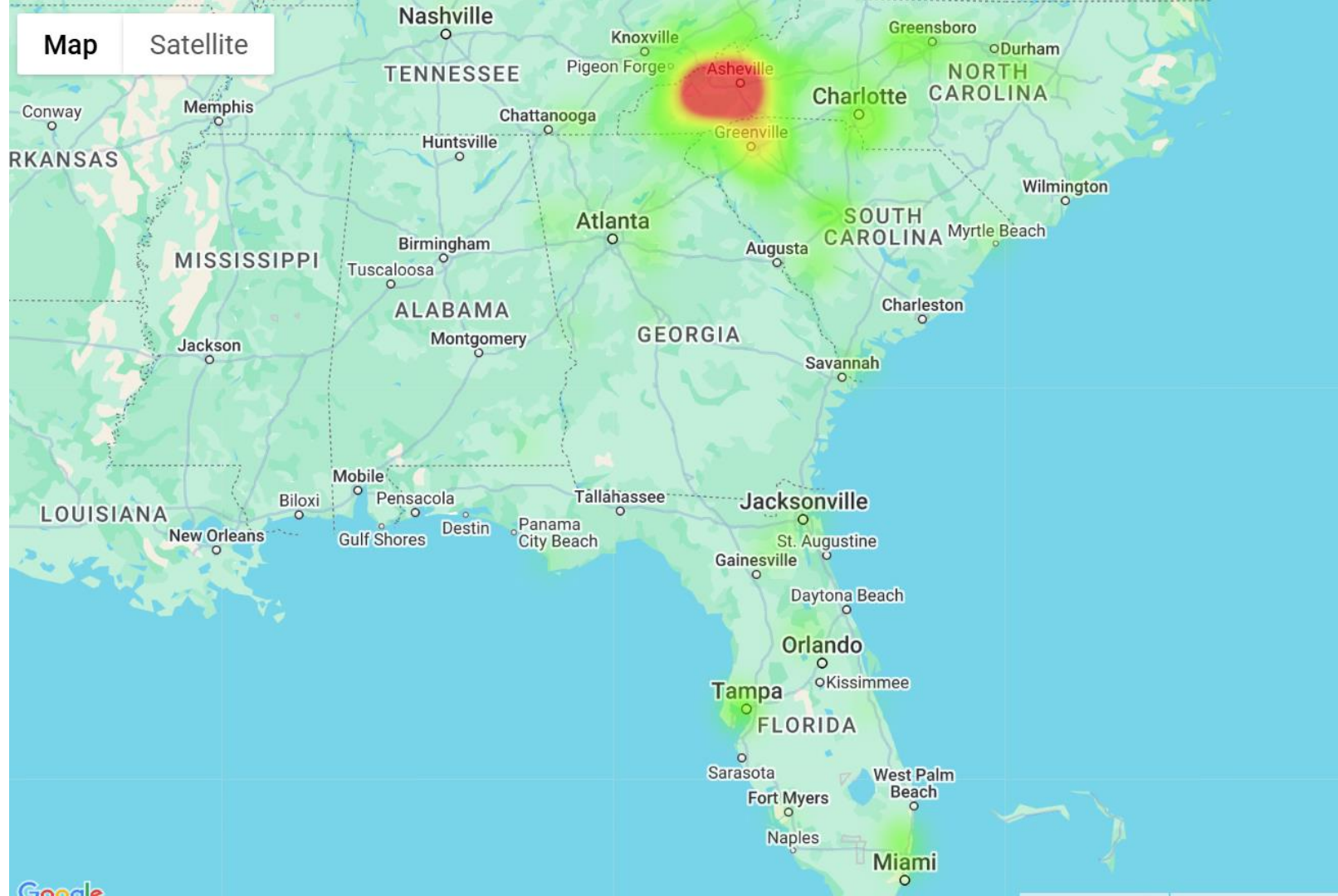


Number 1 Most-Visited page on our website
November 2024 – January 2025.
Over 36,000 unique viewers.

<https://visithaywood.com/things-to-do/visit-haywood-ice-fest-weekend>

Map

Satellite



Ice Fest Event Feedback

Ice Fest Partner Survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/68K3P7K>

Ice Fest Visitor Survey

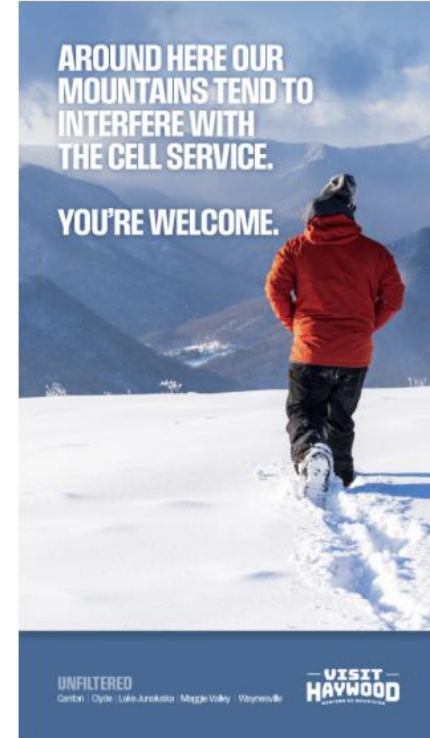
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3TZ5T56>



Marketing & Advertising

Winter Ads

Number 2 Most-Visited page on our website
November 2024 – January 2025.
Over 22,000 unique viewers.



<https://visithaywood.com/planning/seasonal-fun/winter/>



Evergreen - Google Search

Transitioned from "Know Before You Go"

General

- 59,867 Impressions
- 2,676 clicks
- 4.47% CTR (1.57% benchmark)

Things To Do

- 145,372 Impressions
- 2,676 clicks
- 2.01% CTR (1.57% benchmark)

Mountain Towns

- 40,138 Impressions
- 1,503 clicks
- 3.74% CTR (1.57% benchmark)

Places To Stay

- 14,889 Impressions
- 1,167 clicks
- 7.84% CTR (1.57% benchmark)

Traditional Advertising

Visit NC Travel Guide



Our State Magazine



Columbia I-26 Billboard



Video & Photography Shoot



- Scheduled for week of June 16, 2025
- Creative Director (Rob) has been meeting with New Union
- Music Discussion

Fat Burger Month

A new event designed to support our local restaurants during the winter shoulder season. Fat Burger Month invites local restaurants to feature a unique, mouth-watering burger.

Fat Burger Month 2025 will kick off on Saturday, March 15 and run alongside March Madness until Sunday, April 6.

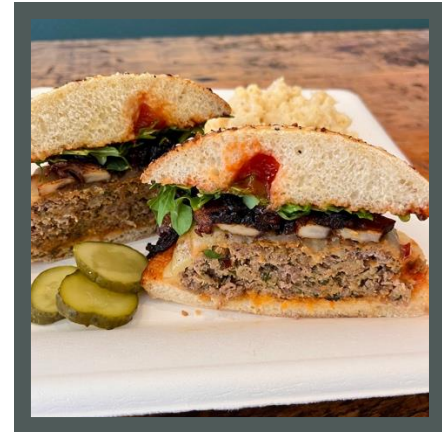
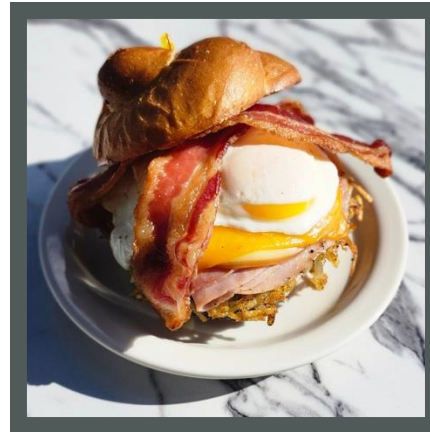
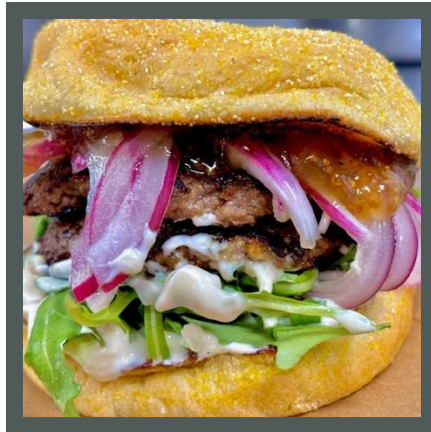
- Visit Haywood will push out a regionally and locally focused ad campaign.
- Customers will receive punch cards to guide them to Fat Burgers across the County. Those who try *x number* of burgers (TBD based on the number of participating restaurants) will receive a commemorative t-shirt.
- In 2026, we anticipate the event growing to include new features (e.g., voting brackets) and an expanded media push.



FatBurgerMonth.com



12
Participants



Website RFP

Option A

05.13.25	Draft RFP / RFP concepts discussed with marketing committee
05.19.25	Edits to RFP made, documents sent back to Mktg Committee for final review
05.28.25	RFP published
06.11.25	Questions due
06.25.25	Responses to questions published
07.23.25	Proposals due
07.25.25	Proposals distributed to Marketing Committee to review & score
08.08.25	Marketing Committee scores due by EOD
08.12.25	Marketing committee meets to discuss proposals, select finalists
Week of 08.25	Finalist Interviews (times TBD); determine best agency(s)
Week of 9.08	Contract negotiations and pricing finalized
9.24.25	Recommendation on agency(s) to hire made to full BOD
10.01.25	Contract begins

Website RFP

Option B

03.11.25	Draft RFP / RFP concepts discussed with marketing committee
03.18.25	Edits to RFP made, documents sent back to Mktg Committee for final review
04.03.25	RFP published
04.25.25	Questions due
05.13.25	Responses to questions published
06.02.25	Proposals due
06.03.25	Proposals distributed to Marketing Committee to review & score
06.20.25	Marketing Committee scores due by EOD
06.24.25	Marketing committee meets to discuss proposals, select finalists
Week of 07.28	Finalist Interviews (times TBD); determine best agency(s)
Week of 08.04 or 8.11	Contract negotiations and pricing finalized
08.27.25	Recommendation on agency(s) to hire made to full BOD
09.01.25	Contract begins



Join Us!

**MOUNTAIN
MORNINGS**

FEBRUARY 20, 2025 | 8-9AM



**Maggie Valley Pavilion
3987 Soco Rd, Maggie Valley, NC**

Join the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority over a cup of coffee at the next 'Mountain Mornings' meet-up: a space for tourism businesses to network, brainstorm, and shape Haywood County's future together.

Coffee provided by Organic Beans Coffee Co.

RSVP: AMIE@VISITHAYWOOD.COM

A person wearing a red jacket and dark pants is walking away from the camera on a snowy mountain slope. They are leaving a trail of footprints in the snow. In the background, there are rolling mountain ranges under a blue sky with some clouds. The overall scene is a winter landscape.

— VISIT —
HAYWOOD
WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS

Thank you!