

FY 2024/2025 Annual Review of Tourism Programs

VisitMercerCountyPA is the designated Tourist Promotion Agency (TPA) for Mercer County, PA. With a dedicated board of directors, staff, membership base, community, and regional and state partnerships, we implement an extensive marketing campaign to increase tourist traffic to Mercer County. Our goal is to enhance the overall economy of Mercer County by expanding and strengthening the travel and tourism industry through programs and partnerships.

President/CEO Message

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the incredible strides we have made in advancing tourism throughout Mercer County. This annual review highlights not only the measurable outcomes of our efforts but also the spirit of collaboration and innovation that fuels our work every day.

Tourism is more than an industry, it is a powerful economic engine, a catalyst for community pride, and a gateway to unforgettable experiences. For the 4th year in a row, we have seen record engagement in our marketing campaigns, growth in room excise tax, and continued interest in our outdoor recreation assets, cultural landmarks, and attractions. These accomplishments would not have been possible without the strong partnerships we share with local leaders, hospitality partners, stakeholders, and our determined team.

We are committed to the continual implementation of programs that benefit the tourism economy. In October of 2024, our agency awarded our first round of grants from our new Beautification Grant Program. We continue to invest in Mercer County through our well-established programs: Tourism Attraction Development Grant Program (TAG); Festivals, Fairs and Large Event direct marketing grants; Co-op Advertising Matching Funds; Local Billboard Program, and Tourism Cash Giveaway. Our work to elevate year-round tourism, especially in areas like heritage travel and foodie experience travel, has helped lay a solid foundation for new county and statewide partnerships for an improved Underground Railroad tour and food and beverage tours through the Great American Getaway grant through the PA Tourism Office.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to promoting a welcoming and vibrant destination for all. Our focus will be on a more cohesive outdoor recreation focus, strategic brand development, and continued investment in our communities and visitor experience. Together, we will build on this momentum to ensure Mercer County continues to thrive as a place where people come to explore, connect, and return again and again.

Thank you for your continued support and shared vision. I invite you to review the achievements detailed in this report and join us as we look forward to a promising year ahead.

Sincerely,

Carmen J. Aiello II

President & CEO, VisitMercerCountyPA

Visit **Mercer**
County PA



Visit Mercer County PA

FISCAL YEAR 2024-25 DIGITAL MARKETING OVERVIEW

- ❖ Saw our 4th consecutive year of growth with over 129,000 visits to the visitmercercountypa.com website. This was an increase of 11.9% year over year.
- ❖ Organic Search was particularly strong this year with over 73,000 users arriving organically from July-April. This is 18.1% up from 2023-24.
- ❖ Between July – April, 3026 forms submitted: including 259 Wine and Brew forms and 286 Outdoor Adventure Guides requested.
- ❖ 9.3M display impressions that resulted in over 13K visitors and 6K actions.
- ❖ Over 18,000 outbound page views to Member Websites.
- ❖ Paid Search Delivered 1883 Forms and Calls in the last fiscal year, with wine and brew leading the way with 980.

BLOGS

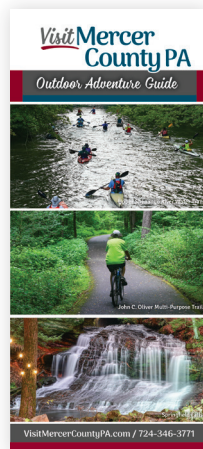
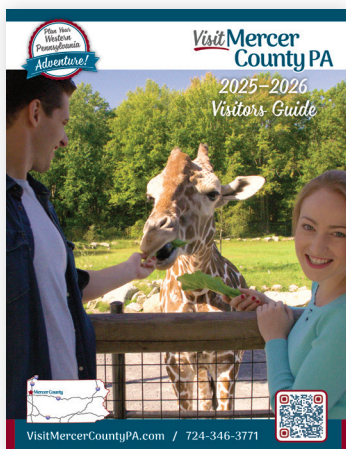
- ❖ Native Content with the PG: 1.4M impressions 1086 page views, over 1,500 minutes of time on content.



TOP 10 PAGES BY VISITORS: APRIL 15 – MAY 15, 2025

PAGE TITLE	VISITORS
(not set)	1,034
Outdoor recreation in Mercer County	587
Western PA Events Calendar – Mercer County, PA	567
Mercer County, PA Coupon Book – western Pennsylvania travel discounts	483
Golfing in Mercer County, PA	355
Places to Stay in Western PA's Mercer County – Hotels, Bed and Breakfasts, Places to Stay	348
Mercer County, PA – Hotels, Events, Restaurants, Golf & Things to Do	347
Attractions	204
Wineries & Breweries – Mercer County, PA	189
GROVE CITY STRAWBERRY DAYS FESTIVAL	166

PUBLICATIONS PRINTED



2025-2026 Visitors Guide

2025 Coupon Book Outdoor Adventure Guide

Wine~Brew~Spirits Guide

Golf Guide

Program Results

GOLF

This year we attended the Toronto, Cleveland and Pittsburgh Golf Shows promoting Stay & Play Golf packages, our membership courses, and things to do while in Mercer County. This fiscal year we received 48 golf package requests through our online request form. Those 48 golf groups represented 389 golfers.

GROUP TOUR REPORT

As motor coach travel continues to rebound from the pandemic, our agency has seen an uptick in motor coaches choosing Mercer County as a destination or as a stop on to another destination. Our office directly assists motor coach operators and group leaders with information on group attractions, suggested sample itineraries, tour logistics, and step-on guide services. We directly assisted with the following motor coach tours in 2024-2025:

- ❖ Custom Holiday Tours
- ❖ Passport Pittsburgh
- ❖ Great Canadian Holidays – 5 Tours to Mercer County
- ❖ Christian Tours North Carolina – 7 Tours to Mercer County
- ❖ Ridgeview Tours – 5 Tours to Mercer County
- ❖ Coach USA Pittsburgh
- ❖ AAA Western New York
- ❖ Butler Grange Fair – Charter tour of PA Agriculture
- ❖ IRL Slippery Rock – 3 Visits to Mercer County
- ❖ Perkiomen
- ❖ Bus America
- ❖ Akron University
- ❖ CB&C Tours
- ❖ Star Bus Charter – 2 Tours to Mercer County
- ❖ Butler Buttercup Garden Association
- ❖ AAA Akron

HOTEL EXCISE TAX

Mercer County is set to experience continued growth in the travel and tourism sector through the remainder of 2025 and into 2026. The development of a new extended stay hotel in West Middlesex will further expand accommodation options for visitors. Additionally, two Mercer County hotels have undergone complete renovations in recent years, while others continue to implement upgrades that enhance the overall guest experience. These improvements encourage increased stays for weddings, bus groups, college and youth sport teams, and group corporate stays.

A significant infrastructure initiative began in April 2025—the \$115.7 million reconstruction of the first five miles of Interstate 80 in Mercer County. This project aims to improve both eastbound and westbound traffic flow, reinforcing I-80's role as a key gateway into Pennsylvania. These enhancements are expected to improve accessibility and attract increased visitor traffic to the region.

With ongoing reinvestment in hospitality, a substantial commitment to transportation improvements, and VisitMercerCountyPA's ongoing efforts to promote member attractions and support tourism through grant and marketing programs, Mercer County is well-positioned for sustained growth in its tourism industry.

The room tax revenue increased 7.36% from fiscal year 2023/24.

- ❖ FY 2024/25 \$1,279,852.94
- ❖ FY 2023/24 \$1,192,080.20

SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

Facebook Followers: 26,000

Short video content continues to drive significant traffic, views, reach and interaction on social media.

A few high performing posts in the last 90 days through May 7, 2025

- ❖ “Hop into the Easter Spirit @ Kraynak’s”: 190,505 Views; 174,268 Reach; 2,630 Interactions.
- ❖ “Snowy night in April @Iron Bridge Inn”: 102,797 Views; 97,917 Reach; 1,183 Interactions.
- ❖ “All the Easter feels at Daffin’s Candies”: 72,616 Views; 64,883 Reach; 1,095 Interactions.
- ❖ “It’s Opening Day at DJ’s Greenhouse”: 46,519 Views; 43,761 Reach; 589 Interactions.
- ❖ “Registration Now Open 2025 Lake to Lake”: 40,161 Views; 26,688 Reach; 112 Interactions.

Instagram

With 1,618 Instagram followers, we focused heavily on short video content this year, leveraging the popularity of reels to build strong engagement. Our top-performing reels reached between 500 and 1,100 views, featuring highlights like Allie’s Sweet Tooth, Buhl Park, Big Dog RC, Kaynak’s, Philadelphia Candies, Gifted at Applegate, Buhl Mansion, Small Business Saturday, and Fresh Grounds Coffee House.

TikTok

With 182 TikTok followers, our Lake to Lake Paddle Challenge video has reached 1,724 views, and our Cheese House video has garnered 1,687 views. Moving into the new fiscal year, we are prioritizing TikTok as a key growth platform, focusing on strategic efforts to expand our audience after previous uncertainty about its longevity.

LAKE TO LAKE PADDLE CHALLENGE

The fourth annual Lake to Lake Paddle Challenge returns on August 23rd, 2025. The event features a 30-mile kayaking and canoeing competition from Pymatuning Lake to North Star Marina at Shenango Lake, and a 15-mile adventure race from Kidd’s Mill Covered Bridge to North Star Marina. This event promotes outdoor recreational opportunities on the waterways in Mercer County which include the dam outflow at Pymatuning State Park, Shenango River Water Trail, and the Shenango River Lake. These waters are the perfect natural setting for wildlife watching, fishing, boating, sailing, kayaking, canoeing, stand-up paddleboarding, tubing, skiing, sunbathing and more.



Strengthening & Expanding Tourism in Mercer County

COOPERATIVE ADVERTISING

In County members can participate in cooperative advertising which helps stretch their marketing dollars. Up to \$20,000.00 is available for each partnership. VisitMercerCountyPA provides a dollar-for-dollar match on advertising to promote overnight stays and a 50% match on advertising that promotes day trips. Two or more partners must work together and apply to access this program.

TOURISM ATTRACTION DEVELOPMENT GRANT

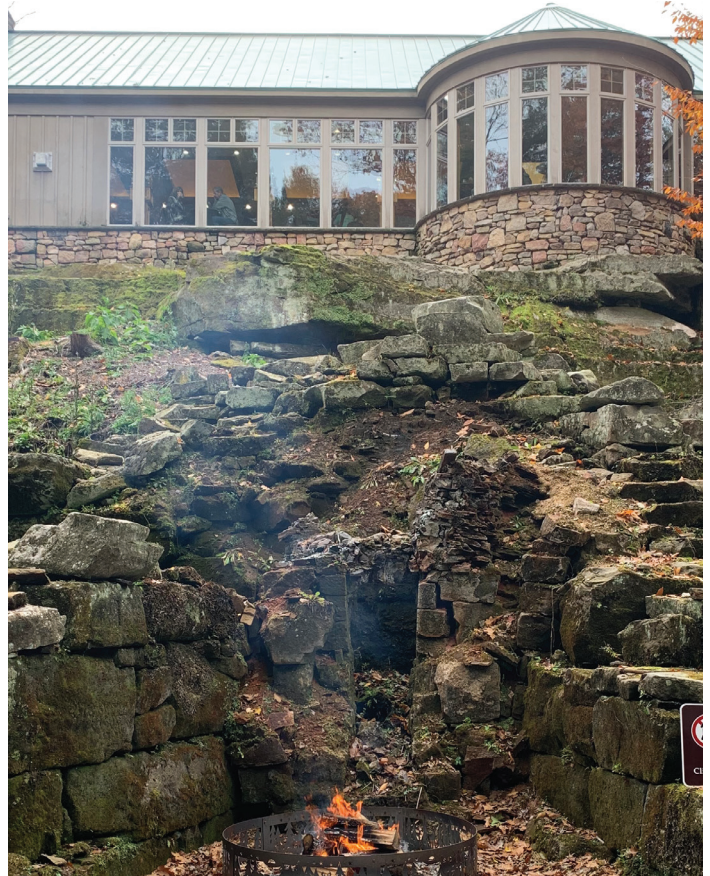
This grant provides funds for new developments, expansions, renovations, and improvements of tourism attractions in Mercer County, PA. The maximum amount available is determined each fiscal year and must be leveraged with at least 50% of eligible project expenditures from other sources.

FESTIVALS, FAIRS AND LARGE EVENT MARKETING GRANT

We provide direct marketing grants to non-profits and community-based organizations hosting festivals, fairs and large events to assist them in promoting their event. The amount available per event is determined each fiscal year and must be leveraged with a 25% match.

LOCAL BILLBOARD PROGRAM

The agency pays ½ of the cost of local billboards up to \$1,000.00. The billboard can be stationary or mobile (company vehicle wrap). A requirement to access the program, the VisitMercerCountyPA logo must be shown prominently on the billboard.



BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Beautification Grant seeks to help downtowns/city centers, main travel corridors, and public areas create what we call a “wow” experience for visitors and residents. \$100,000.00 has been earmarked to help in this effort. A 25% match is required with up to \$20,000.00 available per approved project.

TOURISM CASH GIVEAWAY

Over the St. Patrick's Day weekend, we conducted our 9th Annual Mercer County Tourism Cash Giveaway. For this promotion, through our Facebook page, we gave away \$100 in Tourism Cash to the first 200 Facebook followers who clicked on a link in a post and signed up to be a winner. Within 1 hour and 58 minutes we received 200 entries. Out of the 200 winners, 190 people came to our office to pick up their Tourism Cash. The excitement from our participating members and contest winners was amazing.

SOCIAL MEDIA: MEMBER CALL OUTS / WELCOMING OF NEW MEMBERS

Throughout the year we highlight member properties on our Social Media channels. For all new members we do a post welcoming them as new members, with videos and images of their business.

