



NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN TOWNS OF CASHIERS,
CHEROKEE, DILLSBORO AND SYLVA

To: TDA Board
From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Executive Director
Date: March 14, 2024
Subject: Monthly Director's Brief

Dear Board Members,

Please see below for updates.

1. The 2024-25 Visitor Guides are now available and look exceptional. The Chamber of Commerce teams is actively distributing these guides to hotels and various kiosks around the county.
2. Recently, I had the privilege of representing the TDA at numerous presentations, sharing insights into our work. These presentations were held at the Western Carolina University Town and College Club meeting, the Jackson County Early College career panel, and the WCU Hospitality and Tourism classes led by Dr. Ethan Cheng and Dr. Ali Iskender. For the last event, Kara accompanied me to discuss our strategies for promoting Jackson County on social media platforms.



3. February was down a bit in hotel demand from last year, and March has started strongly. Our visitation numbers surged last week, largely thanks to the Appalachian Studies Conference at WCU, which attracted 800 attendees and sold out our hotels in Sylva/Dillsboro.

Below are the latest hotel lodging statistics from STR for the past 28 days, ending on March 9:

- The Occupancy Rate has risen to 50.3% in 2024 from 47.3% in 2023, marking a 6.3% increase year over year.
 - The Average Daily Rate (ADR) has increased to \$100.43 in 2024 from \$99.11 in 2023, a 1.3% growth.
 - Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) is up to \$50.47 in 2024 from \$46.84 in 2023, reflecting a 7.8% increase.
 - In Airbnb and VRBO metrics, the Cashiers market is seeing a decline in occupancy for February, 24% decrease while the Sylva-area market saw a 7% increase.
5. Next week, we will start our Marketing and Communication planning, with representatives from LHG and BGRM joining us for an in-person session on March 22.
 6. For professional development, Kara and I are scheduled to attend the VisitNC Conference in Greenville, NC, from March 17-19. Additionally, Kara will participate in the e-Tourism Summit in Las Vegas, NV, from April 1-4, and Nick will be at the Destinations International CEO Summit in Boston, MA, from April 2-4.
 7. A new research study has been published, highlighting the significant economic impact of outdoor recreation in Western North Carolina. The study encompasses 25 counties, including Jackson County, and demonstrates that outdoor recreation activities have attracted numerous visitors, generating over \$3.4 billion in economic activity. This, in turn, leads to a total economic output of \$4.9 billion, supports nearly 48,000 full-time jobs, and produces \$1.48 billion in labor income and \$197.5 million in tax revenues at the regional level. The average expenditure per trip stands at \$479, directly benefiting the local economy. Furthermore, 94% of respondents reported satisfaction with their outdoor recreation experiences, emphasizing the region's ability to offer quality opportunities.

Click **here** to read the full report.

8. You may remember that last September, we provided grant funding to the Shepherd Center in Atlanta to support the Green Energy Park in creating a wheelchair-adaptive seat for glassblowing classes. This past weekend, the Shepherd Center organized its first visit to the Green Energy Park, where participants successfully used the adaptive seat. This seat will remain at the Green Energy Park for future participants to use, marking a significant achievement in improving accessibility options in Jackson County for visitors.

See next page



9. Thanks to our grant funding, we have collected a full year of visitor data for Sylva's Pinnacle Park. On average, 71 vehicles visit the park daily, and 21 people reach the summit. This data will assist the town in its future planning efforts with Equinox, providing a better understanding of the park's usage.

I hope you'll mark your calendars for the following upcoming events in Jackson County:

March

- 16 Assault on Blackrock Race, Sylva
- 28 Friends Night Out, Sylva
- 29-31 Easter on The Green, Cashiers
- 30 Easter Hat Parade, Dillsboro
- 30 Heritage Apple Day, Zachary Tolbert House, Cashiers