

HAPPENINGS

Tourism industry newsletter from your friends at GO Laurel Highlands



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GO LAUREL HIGHLANDS
113 E. Main St. | Ligonier, PA
724-238-5661

GO LH NEWS

Laurel Highlands Selected as One of **USA Today's Top 10 Best Destinations for Fall Foliage**

In September, *USA Today* named Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands a Readers' Choice Winner for the Best Destination for Fall Foliage category in the 2021 *USA Today* 10Best Travel Award Contest.

The Laurel Highlands placed eighth overall in voting amid a field of 20 nominees that included Vermont's White Mountains, Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains, Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and the Ozark Mountain Region. Winners were selected by readers' choice via a month-long online contest that encouraged travelers to vote daily for their favorite place to explore for fall.

The Best Destination for Fall Foliage award is one of several *USA Today* 10Best honors recently won by the Laurel Highlands. The region previously won third overall for Best Fall Foliage in 2020, one of the top Best New Destinations in 2018 for Flight 93 National Memorial's Tower of Voices, and Best Pennsylvania Attractions for Chiopyle State Park.



USA TODAY
10Best



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Ann Nemanic, Executive Director

Forward momentum. Remember the anticipation as a kid when the first snowflakes were spotted outside the schoolroom window? Heaven help that teacher trying to bring the focus back to the blackboard and the lessons for the day! No one could wait to get home, change into warmer clothes, and build the first snowman of the season. Three balls of snow that start with a ball the size of your mitten that rolled and rolled and gathered momentum until you had enough for a big round base. Two more balls of snow, a scarf, a carrot, two sticks for arms, a few buttons, and a hat. Done. How long would he last?

Momentum is a word I like to use for our region. The recovery in the Laurel Highlands has been steady month after month. The momentum we began in mid-to-late 2020 kept building and sustained us through 2021. We were able to encourage and welcome visitors to our region, many for the first time. Realizing the Laurel Highlands offers four distinct seasons allowed for repeat and frequent returns. We kept that momentum and it has not stopped.

As we dig into our closets for scarves, mittens, and a coat that hopefully still fits, it's time to access the outerwear of our business too. How are you welcoming visitors for this new season? Have you winterized your website with images appropriate for the next three months? Do you have handy info on the Ice Festivals in January? Have you spruced up your window, added hot chocolate to your in-room offerings, familiarized yourself with the cross-country and snowshoe trails in the Laurel Highlands?

Momentum. It takes all of us getting behind that big ball of winter snow to make the Laurel Highlands shine in the eyes of a visitor. Use us to promote YOU. Share with our team what is happening with you over the winter months. Allow us to spread the word, upload 'cool' images, and share your story. We are blessed with the four seasons of nature, we must continue to work collaboratively and remember that in the world of tourism...white = green \$\$.

Stop by and visit us!

GO LAUREL HIGHLANDS | 113 E. MAIN STREET, LIGONIER, PA 15658

GO LH NEWS (CONTINUED FROM COVER)

Congratulations to the 2021 Champions of Tourism!

We were honored to recognize the three recipients at the GO Laurel Highlands Annual Dinner, Sept. 29, at the Aaron's Building in Connellsville.



Tourism Trailblazer of the Year - Maple Bottom Farm represented by Susan Ansell



Tourism Pathfinder of the Year - Tissue Farm represented by Suzanne Ragan Lentz and Jeff Pankey



Tourism Employee of the Year - Alyssa Lape, Assistant Manager, Betsy's of Ligonier

Congratulations to Our Tourism Scholarship Winners

Thanks to our incredibly generous supporting partners, GO LH has presented a \$1,500 scholarship to two very deserving local students majoring in hospitality and tourism. Congratulations to **Philisity Varndell**, Culinary Arts at WCCC, and **Joshua Castanedas**, Communications at Seton Hill University!



Philisity Varndell



Joshua Castanedas



MARKETING NEWS

Kristin Ecker, Senior Director of Marketing

Winter Marketing

Summer 2021 was a busy one for the Laurel Highlands region and that trend continued right through fall. The reemergence of many of the area's beloved fall festivals offered visitors plenty of things to do throughout the months of September and October. The late fall foliage also helped to keep our lodging booked and our locations bustling with the colors of fall well into November.

And just like that, winter is here and the downhill winter sports are just opening for the season. Did you know that the Laurel Highlands is home to the state's largest ski resort (Seven Springs) and highest elevation at Mount Davis? We make it our duty to inform our target markets that the best opportunity for enjoying winter snow sports in the entire mid-Atlantic exists right here. Visitors travel from near and far to utilize our trails, our terrain, and even to simply take in the sights and relax fireside in a cozy cabin rental.

Hopefully you're seeing the many campaigns we have in place in Pittsburgh and hearing our messaging. Efforts in Pittsburgh include traditional radio and TV, plus a robust billboard campaign around the city and on major entryways reminding the metro area that they can be on the slopes in an hour.



Our campaigns are making an even bigger splash in Washington, D.C., as we show off our resorts, ski slopes, winter festivals, sprawling landscape, and more on network and cable TV. You might catch our ads while streaming on Hulu or listening on Spotify. And to those browsing the web or scouring their social feeds, we're hitting them there too.

Visitors travel to the Laurel Highlands for our winter wonderland. We're working hard to make sure they have all of the information the need to plan their perfect getaway and to find the resources they need while here. Please remember to let us know of new and exciting things happening at your location so that we can share those stories too. We wish you all a wonderful, snow-filled season!



Give the Gift of the Laurel Highlands!

GO Laurel Highlands is stocked for the season with all of the perfect gear to keep you and your loved ones cozy in style. Check out our new hooded sweatshirts, insulated beverage mugs, fleece-lined beanies, and more!



2022 Destination Guide

The GO Laurel Highlands Destination Guide is arriving in December and will be available for distribution at the beginning of January! Don't forget to order a supply for distribution at your location. This gorgeous edition showcases the region and includes a calendar of events, coupons, a tear-out map, tons of robust content on all of the things to do here, and more! Scan the code below to submit your order today.





WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

Jared Bundy, Director of Digital Marketing

Social Media Audience

(as of Oct. 25, 2021)

68,000+
Likes

25,000+
Followers

2,200,000+
Monthly Video Views

13,000+
Followers

Top Organic Keywords

Laurel Highlands, Ligonier Days, Ligonier Days 2021, Fort Ligonier Days 2021, Fort Ligonier Days, Flight 93 Memorial, Pennsylvania Arts and Crafts Westmoreland, Laurel Highlands Cabin Rental, Laurel Highlands Festival, Laurel Highlands Pour Tour, Ohiopyle

Top Pages (March 19-August 3, 2021)

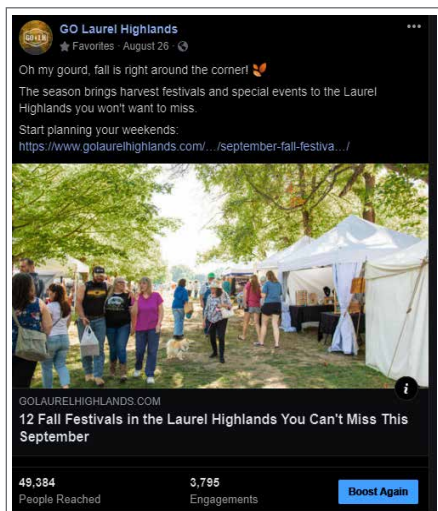
	PAGEVIEWS
Fort Ligonier Days	28,834
Homepage	17,061
Events	13,799
Ohiopyle	11,617
Fall	9,065
Arts & Crafts Labor Day Festival	5,960
Things to Do	5,749
Vacation Rentals	5,259
Cabins & Campgrounds	5,170
Places to Stay	5,073

Notable Web Stats

(August 4-Oct. 24, 2021) Compared to August 4-October 24, 2020



Top Facebook Posts



This blog post about upcoming September festivals in the Laurel Highlands reached 49,000 people, was clicked 2,900 times, and shared 240 times!



This user-generated photo of The Peak at Nemaacolin organically reached 15,000 people.

Top Instagram Post



We've had multiple photos get 1,000+ likes as Instagram continues to grow, including this roadside fall shot that reached 1,114 likes.

Use #LaurelHighlands when you post: Remember to use #laurelhighlands when you post to Instagram so we can add your photos to golaurelhighlands.com. All photos will include a call-to-action to help drive traffic to your listing.



PUBLIC RELATIONS UPDATE

Anna Weltz, Director of Public Relations

AAA World Features Laurel Highlands in Newest Edition

The second press visit of 2021 brought a freelance writer on assignment for AAA World magazine to the Laurel Highlands. What was supposed to be a two-page assignment highlighting some of the region's attractions turned into a four-page spread showcasing a large collection of Laurel Highlands gems. "Resting on Pennsylvania's Laurels," by Deborah Huso, was published in the print edition November/December edition of AAA World magazine, which has a 2.66 million circulation in many of our region's target markets including Cleveland, Columbus, and Washington, D.C., and resulted in a publicity value of more than \$560,000. This story is not accessible online without an AAA subscription. Anna will be obtaining magazine copies soon, but if you would like to read a PDF version, please reach out to her.



Media Visits and Requests Continue to be Strong

It has been a busy year for media visits! More than 20 travel journalists from a wide variety of publications and outlets have visited the Laurel Highlands in 2021. Anna has hosted 13 media guests for multi-day tours of the region. From history buffs and girls' getaways to adrenaline-pumping adventures and laidback family getaways, there's no shortage of experiences to be shared or stories to be told. Stay tuned to your email inbox and voicemail, Anna may contact you looking to partner with you to showcase your location and the region.

Share Your News and Notables!

Do you have news to share? Is 2022 slated to be a big year for your business? Are you working on some innovative new offering, event, or amenity? Unsure where to start and looking for some support? If so, please reach out to Anna Weltz, Director of Public Relations, to share your story. Send Anna an email at aweltz@golaurelhighlands.com or call her at (724) 238-5661, ext. 108.

Be sure to add her to your press release list or email newsletters and stay in touch! She's contacted regularly by local, regional, and travel media outlets for news, ideas, and inspiration. In addition, she's created a monthly e-newsletter for her closest media contacts. It has a stunning average open rate of more than 70%!

Laurel Highlands in the Spotlight

(August 1-October 31, 2021)

A summary of press and media projects initiated and/or coordinated by GO LH. Circulation, digital impressions, and publicity value figures provided by Cision media monitoring service.



109

STORIES



Digital Impressions:

329.9 MILLION



Print Impressions:

989,900



Publicity Value

\$313,800



WELCOME, NEW GO LH MARKETING PARTNERS!

Louise Henry, Director of Partnership Development



512 Coffee & Ice Cream

Michael Ciotti

512 Ligonier Street | Latrobe, PA 15650

(808) 756-7451

512coffeeandicecream.cafe

We're thrilled to announce that a new coffee shop has opened in the heart of Latrobe! 512 Coffee & Ice Cream opened their doors this summer to welcome neighbors, families, and visitors. This cozy eatery, where freshly brewed coffee, tea, and other beverages are served alongside sandwiches, soups, and baked goods also offers an outstanding ice cream bar offering a great selection of ice cream flavors, sundaes, shakes, and, of course, the banana split! Now available - vacation rentals on the second floor.



Buffalo Bill's House

Chris Rowan, Dawn Rowan, & Deanna Rowan

8 Circle Street | Perryopolis, PA 15473

(833) 283-3245

buffalobillshouse.com

Did you know that the cinematic climax of the movie "The Silence of the Lambs," when Buffalo Bill first meets FBI agent character Clarice Starling was filmed in the Laurel Highlands? This iconic home is the actual site of the filming of Buffalo Bill's house and is now available for private rentals. The house has been lovingly and creatively restored to retain its original early 1900s period features and reflect the iconic movie and its characters. Enjoy the four bedroom house with fully-equipped kitchen, living room, dining room, wrap around porch, gazebo, rose garden, vintage train caboose, and in-ground pool. The piece de resistance is the basement, Buffalo Bill's workshop of horrors. Book your stay today!



Brimstone Building & Event Center

Rose John

101 N. Pittsburgh Street | Connellsville, PA 15425

(724) 603-0032

facebook.com/brimstonebuilding

Located in downtown Connellsville, the Brimstone Building first opened its doors in 1901 as a bank and offices serving the local community. This historic five-story building is currently being renovated and will be opening soon offering an events, training, and conference center available to rent for weddings, corporate training programs, and small conferences. The upgrades also include a state-of-the-art kids' party center with laser-tag, video arcade games, a colored dance floor, dance party, and more. Also coming soon - commercial offices and suites to provide a hub for entrepreneurs, small businesses, and commercial businesses.



The Confluence Café

Larry Simms

841 Oden St. | Confluence, PA 15424

(814) 704-0410

theconfluencecafe.com

Opened this summer, The Confluence Café offers customers delicious pizza, sandwiches, salads, and more. Located close to the Great Allegheny Passage in Confluence, the café is conveniently situated for GAP trail users and the community of Confluence. Gluten-free, vegetarian, and vegan options are included on the menu, and you can even pick up 'picnic kits' to enjoy your meal by the levee overlooking the Casselman River.

Eclectique & Raspberry Acres Winery at Eclectique

Laurie Corbett

215 Main Street | Latrobe, PA 15650

(724) 879-4977

shopeclectique.com



Come on in to Eclectique and browse more than 30 local artisan vendors including jewelry, candles, essential oils, repurposed furniture, home décor, and much more. Located in downtown Latrobe, Eclectique also serves as a tasting room for Raspberry Acres Winery. Sit a while and sip the 11 varieties of Pennsylvania award-winning wine. They're also a participant of the Laurel Highlands Pour Tour. Sip and shop during this fun shopping experience!



WELCOME, NEW GO LH MARKETING PARTNERS!

Louise Henry, Director of Partnership Development



Farm Town Productions, Inc.

Derek Victor

301 Stoneybrook Lane | Dawson, PA 15428

(724) 880-7385

farmtownproductions.com

Please welcome Farm Town Productions. Established this year, Farm Town Productions specializes in concert and event planning, consultation, production, and promotion, as well as talent buying. Located in Dawson, they are focused on bringing their clients the best in entertainment, concerts, and event planning to the Laurel Highlands.



Garden in the Woods

Glenda Gebert

181 Cottonwood Road | Acme, PA 15610

(412) 916-9651

gardeninthewoods.net

Tucked away on two acres in the Bear Rocks Community, you'll find Garden in the Woods, just a short drive from Acme and other Laurel Highlands attractions. This unique property offers the opportunity to take a garden tour, meander along the paths, enjoy the seasonal colors and plants, and soak in the peace and serenity. Glenda also offers demonstrations and classes for all ages and levels, a fun opportunity to create a plant-based or home décor project to take home.



The Lodge at Chalk Hill

Emily Humes and Bennett Phelps

2920 National Pike | Chalk Hill, PA 15421

(724) 438-8880

thelodgeatchalkhill.com

We are thrilled to share that The Lodge at Chalk Hill is under new ownership and management. Emily and Bennett took over the lodge this summer and they have been non-stop busy bees with renovations. The entire property is getting a makeover, with many new exciting additions! The Lodge at Chalk Hill is conveniently located on the National Historic Road and a close drive to many popular Laurel Highlands destinations.



Shabby Shack Boutique

Dorothy Knupp

620 W Main Street | Ligonier, PA 15658

(724) 640-4367

shabbyshackboutique.com

Ligonier welcomes a new antique and vintage shop to the town! Drop in and browse Shabby Shack Boutique's unique, hand selected treasures. From vintage household goods to jewelry, collectibles, glassware, and antiques, you never know what you might find.



Voodoo Brewing Co. – New Kensington Pub

Michelle Thom

956 5th Avenue | New Kensington, PA 15068

(724) 212-3339

voodooattheritz.com

Join us for a beer at Voodoo Brewing Company's New Kensington location! Uniquely decorated with colorful murals and artwork, the brewery serves up a great selection of beers, from light beers, seltzers, and IPAs to dark ales and stouts. They also serve food ranging from pizza and sandwiches to salads and appetizers. Live music and special events complete this cool hangout destination.



Lake & Slope Views at Hidden Valley

Nicole Mendicino

8 Lakeview Road | Hidden Valley, PA 15502

(724) 331-6778

vrbo.com/488556

Need to get away? Think about staying at this gorgeous vacation rental at Hidden Valley. This three story townhouse offers guests outstanding views of the lake and slopes. With three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a fully-equipped gourmet kitchen, cozy living room, and rustic log beds, this is the ideal place to kick back and enjoy all that Hidden Valley Resort offers.



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113 E. Main St. | Ligonier, PA

HAPPENINGS

Happenings is published quarterly. Please contact GO LH's Director of Public Relations, Anna Weltz, with questions or comments at aweltz@golaurelhighlands.com.
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