

Headlines

LAUREL HIGHLANDS NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2019

HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE:

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Coming Soon – the LHV B Backyard Tour

Planning is underway to host the highly-popular Backyard Tour, April 18, 2019. This full-day event is a fun-filled, informative immersion to help you and your staff experience a taste of the region's tourism offerings so you can answer the question "What is there to do in the Laurel Highlands?" Stay tuned to the bi-weekly LHV B e-newsletter for more information!

Tourism Grant Reporting Deadlines Approaching

If your organization or business received a 2018 tourism grant, don't forget your final reports are due by March 31, 2019. Please visit www.laurelhighlands.org/grants to access your county's final reporting form and requirements.

▶ LHV B NEWS

New Event – LHV B's Spring Thaw | April 16, 2019

Join us for a Special Event

Spring Thaw

Tuesday, April 16, 2019

Shake off winter's chill & warm up to new marketing ideas with the LHV B!

Ramada Greensburg
8:30am – Registration
9am-1:30pm – Presentations/Breakout Sessions/Lunch
\$25 per person | \$20 per person for two or more from your team

Register online: laurelhighlands.org/springthaw

2019 Photo Contest Now Open

A picture is worth a thousand words, and maybe even up to \$500! The LHV B's 15th annual photo contest is now open. We are in search of the region's best photos featuring people, nature, places and special events and festivals. Top images will be published in the 2020 Destination Guide and displayed in special exhibits at high-profile locations in the Laurel Highlands. Winning photos may also be featured on the bureau's website, billboards and more.

First place in each of the four primary categories will receive \$500, second place, \$200 and third place, \$100. Only photos taken in the Laurel Highlands (Pennsylvania's Fayette, Somerset, or Westmoreland counties) will be eligible. Deadline for submissions is July 31, 2019. For complete details and to upload photos for consideration, please visit www.laurelhighlands.org/photo-contest or call (724) 238-5661.



LAUREL HIGHLANDS VISITORS BUREAU
120 E. Main Street, Ligonier, PA 15658
800.333.5661 | laurelhighlands.org





► EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Ann Nemanic, Executive Director

Consistency. It's a word I firmly believe is important in our tourism industry. That realization became crystalized flying 27,000 miles above the landscape on my way home from the New York Times Travel Show in late January.

The bureau has remained consistent and constant in our messaging and our markets. Yes, we've tweaked things a bit (our awesome new destination guide) and expanded what we do, but we're proud that we continue progressing in our marketing efforts. I was reminded that other destination marketing organizations across the Commonwealth made decisions to no longer produce a "travel guide" or invest money in the group tour market. They have seen the error of their ways and are now putting those back into their

marketing mix. Our consistency has put us ahead of the game. Remember the adage "out of sight, out of mind?" No need to worry, the Laurel Highlands has never lost a beat. (Check out our 2018 group tour stats on page 4!)

As we enter into yet another season for our region, it may be a good time to reflect on your marketing efforts. Have you taken time to revisit your content on our website? Have you taken fresh photographs, created new overnight package ideas or made an effort to partner with someone new? Remember, we are your messenger and we are here to be an extension of your efforts.

I encourage you to join us for our Spring Thaw event Tuesday, April 16. Come see what we have planned for 2019 and take part in our



breakout sessions. Come learn about group tours, press visits, the simplicity of Facebook and Twitter advertising and much more. We promise the soup will be hot, the discussion lively and the atmosphere a wonderful way to kick off the chill and warm up to being an engaged and consistent partner with the LHVB.



► MARKETING NEWS

Kristin Ecker, Senior Director of Marketing and Project Management

2019 Laurel Highlands Destination Guide

The 2019 destination guides are hot off the press and ready for visitors! We are excited to present a fresh new layout for the guide, with the piece taking on a magazine-like format, look and feel. Visitors who pick up the guide will be instantly drawn to the inviting, eye-catching photography used throughout, the editorial features detailing the stories of the region's tourism community and the slim, sleek size that adds visual interest and uniqueness. This new twist on our signature piece still allows visitors to easily find travel information, browse the events calendar, find coupons and map their trip, while being immersed in the region's flare. The 2019 destination guide is sure to show our potential visitors our unique personality!

Key distribution channels for the guide include:

- 150,000 in Circulation
- Primary Fulfillment Piece to Potential Visitors and Residents
- PA Welcome Centers
- PA Visitors Centers (PA Turnpike)
- 80+ Regional Brochure Racks
- Arnold Palmer Regional Airport
- Visit Pittsburgh Welcome Centers
- Laurel Highlands Visitors Centers
- LHVB Partners



Order your supply of guides and maps today! A copy of the beautiful new guide, along with an order form has been mailed to you. Just fill out and send back to us. Or contact Rachel Roehrig at roehrig@laurelhighlands.org, 724-238-5661, ext. 101, to request a shipment of guides.

Media Campaigns

Spring is just around the corner, and the LHVB's marketing efforts are in full swing. Coming out of a vibrant winter, the marketing team will be continuing to implement targeted digital campaigns that include search, display, video, social, native and internet radio placements. Not to mention the bureau's web, blog and social initiatives. The Laurel Highlands can also be seen and heard on traditional outlets in Pittsburgh, such as Comcast cable TV stations, including HGTV, Freeform and Food Network, as well as radio underwriting on NPR stations, WYEP and WESA.

In accordance with the LHVB's integrated marketing plan, our messaging continues to be diverse with targeted messaging for all generations and interests. These ads are driving traffic to unique content on www.laurelhighlands.org, and ultimately to your property sites. Visitors to our site this winter, Nov.-Feb., topped 177,000 with visitors with more than 430,000 pageviews. The bureau's booking engine produced nearly 4,000 referral clicks to lodging partner booking engines, which creates business for our partners. As we look forward to our warmer months ahead, we're already reminding folks that the Laurel Highlands is the perfect place for a unique getaway close to home with countless attractions and activities for all interests.



2019 Interactive Marketing Summit | Nov. 8, 2019



MARKETING NEWS

Jared Bundy, Director of Digital Marketing

Social Media Audience

(as of Jan. 18, 2019)



Facebook Fans
63,000+



Twitter Followers
12,300+



Instagram Followers
5,500+



YouTube Video Views
350,000+



Pinterest Monthly Viewers
15,000+

Top Keywords

Laurel Highlands, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, Ohiopyle, Laurel Highlands Trail, Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail, Laurel Highlands Ski Resort, Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Snow Tubing Pittsburgh, Fallingwater, Laurel Highlands Cabin Rentals

Top Winter Pages

	pageviews
Winter Sports	83,500
Winter Festivals	17,473
Places to Stay	9,825
Homepage	8,811
Skiing & Snowboarding	6,502
Events	5,669
Resorts	5,434
Snow Tubing	4,837
Fire & Ice Festival	4,259
Things to Do	3,388

Notable Web Stats

(Nov. 2018-Jan. 18, 2019)
Compared to Nov. 2017-Jan. 18, 2018



Users
↑50%



Sessions
↑93%



Pageviews
↑50%



Direct Traffic
↑200%



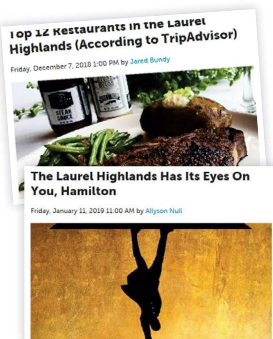
Display Traffic
↑78%



Social Traffic
↑58%



Blog Traffic
↑700%

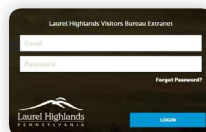


Top Blogs: Our top winter blogs have been about food and history. We discussed TripAdvisor's ranking of our top restaurants and the historical significance of Hamilton while the Broadway musical was touring nearby. Combined, these blogs accounted for 6,500 views on the website.

New Year, New Events and Deals

With the new year bringing a new start, now is the perfect time to update your listing on the Laurel Highlands extranet. Consider adding a new description, social media, links and photos to give your listing a fresh look.

Make the most out of your partnership by adding all of your events, deals, romantic packages and coupons for 2019! If you need assistance, please contact Kayleigh at kduas@laurelhighlands.org.



Use #LaurelHighlands When You Post:

Laurelhighlands.org now features visitor and business photos from Instagram across the website. These photos can link directly to your listing, giving you even more ways to showcase your business and make the most of your partnership. Be sure to use #laurelhighlands and add your location when you post to Instagram so we can see your photos and feature them on the website!



Podcast: Subscribe to Laurel Highlands Happenings, our monthly podcast hosted by LHV's own Louise Bates that showcases partners, events

and our region with a different theme each episode. Subscribe on iTunes, GooglePlay, Stitcher or wherever you listen to podcasts.

Digital Marketing Tip: What to Watch in 2019:

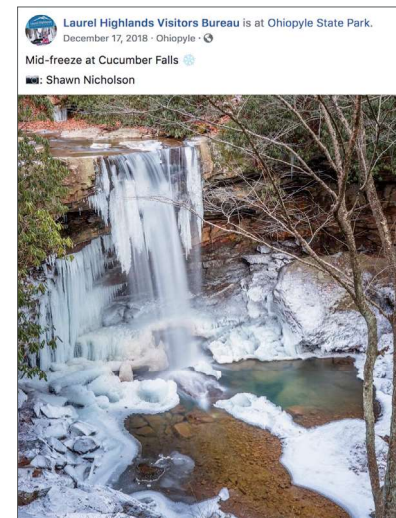
The trends and topics in digital marketing for 2019.

- **Artificial Intelligence:** Look for more digital marketing platforms like Google Adwords and Facebook to keep expanding their artificial intelligence to optimize campaigns.
- **Voice Search:** The rise of digital assistants and voice searching means search engine optimization and long-tail keywords are more important than ever.
- **Chatbots:** Businesses will increasingly turn to programmable chatbots to answer FAQs and provide instant, seamless customer service.
- **Personalization:** Campaigns and landing pages will continue to focus on more niche markets, which will deliver a personalized experience tailored to each individual consumer.
- **Influencers:** Use of influencer marketing will continue to rise, but so will the transparency and standards we hold influencers to, making this a more cost-effective strategy.

Top Facebook Posts:



This photo of Fallingwater reached 38,000 people, received 2,500 reactions, 414 comments and 284 shares, generated 1,952 clicks.



This post of a frozen Cucumber Falls reached 23,000 people, received 1,200 reactions, 73 comments and 143 shares, generated 671 clicks.

Top Instagram Post:



This outstanding shot from the lookout from the Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail was one of our most liked posts of all time, receiving 403 likes.



► PUBLIC RELATIONS NEWS

Anna Weltz, Director of Public Relations and Community Outreach

Laurel Highlands in the Spotlight

Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2018

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

More than
\$1.9 million
in added value


949 stories

More than
1.3 billion
in total reach 

Coming Soon – Media Mission to Toronto

Anna will be headed north in early April to meet with Toronto-based travel media, in partnership with the team from VisitPA. It's been a couple of years since a media mission was held in Toronto, so she will be meeting new media contacts and getting reacquainted with some familiar friends. If you have incredible news that may be of interest to the Canadian media, please contact Anna at aweltz@laurelhighlands.org.

PR Tip... Ever Heard of HARO?

Help a Reporter Out (HARO) is a free service sent out via email three times a day that helps source stories for reporters for stories. They are broken down by category and are usually for journalists in a time crunch or unable to obtain information through their regular channels. This means they are eager for relevant pitches and you know exactly what the reporter is looking for.



► GROUP TOUR NEWS

Stacey Magda, Director of Tourism Development

On the Road Again...

The first quarter of the year brings a busy time for the LHVB as we travel from show to show sharing the stories and experiences of the Laurel Highlands. We focus our efforts in outreach to consumer, bridal, group and small meetings markets. Take a look at where we've been in first few months of 2019!



Consumer Shows

AAA Pittsburgh Travel Showcase | Pittsburgh, PA | Jan. 11-13, 2019

New York Times Travel Show | New York, NY | Jan. 25-27, 2019

AAA Great Vacations | Columbus, Ohio | Feb. 8-10, 2019

Toronto Outdoor Adventure Show | Toronto, ON | Feb. 22-24, 2019

Pittsburgh Home & Garden (DL Lawrence) | Pittsburgh, PA | March 1-10, 2019

Washington D.C. Travel and Adventure Show | Washington, D.C. | March 16-17, 2019

Bridal Shows

Cavanaugh's Westmoreland Bridal Show (Lakeview) – Greensburg, PA – Jan. 20, 2019

Tour and Travel Shows

American Bus Association Marketplace | Louisville, KY | Jan. 26-29, 2019

Pennsylvania Bus Association Marketplace | York, PA | March 27, 2019

Meetings/Association Market

PASAE Educational Summit and Expo | Gettysburg, PA | March 14-15, 2019

Top Media Opportunities

- "Winter Getaways in the Laurel Highlands," Pittsburgh Today Live on KDKA-TV
- "9 Top Rated Fly Fishing Destinations," Planetware
- "The Most Beautiful House of the 20th Century Visited," Morgunblaðið, Icelandic daily newspaper
- "Luxury, history and reverence in Laurel Highlands," Buffalo Magazine and Buffalo News
- "Laurel Highlands, PA Delights: Mountains, Waterfalls, and Sunsets!," Around the World L
- "Laurel Highlands Adventure in Southwestern Pennsylvania," Philadelphia Sunday Sun



FAM Tours and Site Visits

American Tour Guide Association is working to open the Pittsburgh and Laurel Highlands market to domestic and international clients. Paula Reynolds of ATG traveled from New York City to the region along with four tour guides for guide training and FAM visits. We visited Fallingwater, Ohiopyle State Park, Fort Necessity National Battlefield and Kentuck Knob on Jan. 17. We're excited to be on the ATG's radar for future tour consideration.



2018 GROUP TRAVEL IN REVIEW

 **9,672**
hotel rooms booked

 **\$1,199,328**
in hotel revenue

706 multi-day tours
& **539** day trips

 **1,245**
bus groups


 **50,220**
senior and adult visitors

 **21,676**
student visitors



Tom Harrold
642 Baltzer Meyer Pike
Greensburg, PA 15601
(724) 836-6915
baltzermeyer.pa-roots.com

James Bosco
108 W. Pittsburgh Street
Greensburg, PA 15601-2315
(724) 217-8609
majorstokes.com

A wooden sign for Camp Christian. The sign is dark brown with a light-colored roof. On the left is a circular emblem featuring a cross and the words "CAMP CHRISTIAN". To the right of the emblem, the words "CAMP" and "CHRISTIAN" are written in large, white, serif capital letters. Below the main text, in smaller white letters, is "1110 N. Riverside Street 1110". The sign is set against a backdrop of green trees and a grassy area.

Joel White
472 Killarney Road
Mill Run, PA 15464
(724) 455-2700
camp-christian.org



Thomas Baxter IV
P.O. Box 308
New Eagle, PA 15067
(412) 559-0806
911trail.org

A romantic scene featuring a man and a woman embracing in front of a large, ornate gazebo. The gazebo is illuminated with warm white lights, and its roof has a sign that reads "BEYOND THE STARS". The couple is in the foreground, with the man holding the woman. The background is dark, with some foliage and a small tree visible.

Matthew Hudock
400 Old Route 21 Road
McClellandtown, PA 15458
(724) 439-3111
lakesidevenues.com

Betty Tetteris
6 Oliver Road
Uniontown, PA 15401
(724) 970-2222
spunkymonkeyfuncenter.com

Jason Lacko
700 South Shore Trail
Central City, PA 15926
(412) 593-4888
thelodgeatindianlake.com

Joelyn Aukerman
1011 Old Salem Road
Greensburg, PA 15601
(724) 837-9540
blackburncenter.org

Calling ALL courageous men of Westmoreland County... (women and children are welcome too!) This is the 9th Annual Men's March in Westmoreland County to end all forms of gender-based violence. It is a call to action to our community, and a way to raise much-needed funds to support our mission. This year, we will be back at St. Clair Park in Greensburg on April 13, 2019!



Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau
120 East Main Street | Ligonier, PA 15658

Headlines



Headlines is published quarterly. Please contact LHVB's Director of Public Relations, Anna Weltz, with questions or comments at aweltz@laurelhighlands.org.

120 East Main Street, Ligonier, PA 15658 | RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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