

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

Marketing Outlook Forum Award

GO Laurel Highlands Receives Marketing Excellence Award for Laurel Highlands Pour Tour

Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) awarded GO Laurel Highlands the Yesawich Award for Marketing Excellence at the organization's annual Marketing Outlook Forum in early February. TTRA selected GO Laurel Highlands for the continued overwhelming success of the Laurel Highlands Pour Tour, which launched in 2019.

TTRA describes the Yesawich Award as "recognition of excellence in either a Marketing Manager or Director or a Destination Marketing Organization, with excellence defined as having created an outstanding marketing strategy based on relevant data and research, resulting in a superior marketing effort with significant, measurable results." GO Laurel Highlands plans to launch an updated Pour Tour program later this year.





EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Ann Nemanic, Executive Director

When I was growing up, I always looked for signs of spring. In our yard, the white and purple crocus was the first to pop through the blanket of snow. I knew my mother's daffodil beds would soon follow. It was a time of color and fragrance when white snow gave way to soft green grass, buds on trees, and a sense of renewal.

The phrase "bloom where you are planted" crosses my mind this time of year. You see, I'm not a native of the Laurel Highlands, but a transplant from Maryland. For 30 years, my roots have grown strong and are firmly planted here in the soil I now call home. I'm inspired daily by our partners who may or may not be native to the Laurel Highlands, but are deeply dedicated to their business endeavor in serving our visitors. YOU blossom and bloom every day with hospitality and true professionalism at your core. We are proud to represent and share your story.

I hope you find inspiration within our Happenings newsletter. As you read cover to cover, you'll see our staff also digs deep using numerous marketing tools and just the right message to bring visitors to the Laurel Highlands. If you feel a slight disconnect from us, I encourage

you to call me to arrange for a personal visit and a re-orientation of what we can do for you. Remember, we all grow together. One daffodil is pretty, but when hundreds are in full bloom – that's when we make a definitive statement! Happy Spring, everyone.



Stop by and visit us!

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

GO LH NEWS (CONTINUED FROM COVER)

Three Cheers for Our Pour Tour Supporters!

In honor of the holiday season, Pour Tour participants could purchase limited edition ugly holiday sweatshirts and add on a special charity donation for Animal Friends of Westmoreland. Fifty-one sweatshirts were sold through the promotion, which brought in \$255 and an additional \$138 in giving. GO LH chipped in the balance to get the donation to round out to \$500. The team at Animal Friends was extremely grateful and can use all of the help they can get. Volunteerism and giving both have declined dramatically during the pandemic, as has the ability to host fundraisers.



Reminder for Tourism Grant Recipients

If your organization or business was the recipient of a 2020 tourism grant, your final reports are **due by June 30, 2022**.

Final reporting for grants received in 2019 and prior years are due immediately. Please visit golaurelhighlands.com/grants to access your county's final reporting form and requirements.



MARKETING NEWS

Kristin Ecker, Senior Director of Marketing

All Signs Point to a Booming Summer for Tourism!

According to a recent travel sentiment study by Destination Analysts, Americans are feeling an increasing sense of normalcy, which translates to rising optimism as it relates to travel. Nearly 82% of Americans reported feeling ready to travel and a greater likelihood to attend large gatherings with family or even conferences in the near future. These numbers have continued to increase in recent weeks and we're making sure the Laurel Highlands is top of mind to those looking to travel from our target markets.

The Laurel Highlands continues to thrive as an idyllic outdoor destination situated in the Mid-Atlantic, pulling guests and visitors

from the six states bordering Pennsylvania and the many major markets within each, plus Washington, D.C. GO Laurel Highlands worked with Red House Communications in late 2021 to update its long-term marketing plan, which initially launched in 2017. The effort included an analysis of our product pillars, markets, audiences, and vehicles we use to target each and with what portion of our budget.

In many cases, the plan confirmed that the tactics used to target visitors remain steady and spot on, showing that our product pillars of the outdoors, amusements, culture, and wellness remain largely unchanged. Visitors seek out these activities and attractions, looking for adventure, escape, and connection in their travel experiences. The plan outlines strategies for marketing to

audiences in our target markets year-round and across all mediums. Initiatives include traditional placements such as print, TV, and outdoor, but place the most emphasis on digital opportunities including search, display, video, and social.

The marketing team at GO Laurel Highlands is eager to put some of these new efforts in place and to continue making sure that the word is out about the Laurel Highlands. In addition to the revised marketing plan, there are many new and exciting endeavors underway for 2022. Stay tuned!

Destination Guides

The 2022 Destination Guides have officially arrived and hopefully you've received your copy and enjoyed reading it. The guide serves as the primary fulfillment piece for our region with distribution in the region's rack system, to AAA offices in the tristate area, to PA Welcome Centers and Turnpike Rest Areas, through online requests, at trade and travel shows, and more. Thousands of copies have already gone out the door and we encourage you to request copies now for your location!



Events Calendars

Visitors are always looking for information on special events and festivals in the area and we are happy to share that as of winter 2022, the printed events calendars have returned! We are currently working on the spring and summer calendars and encourage you to submit your special event listings to us or through the partner extranet to ensure that they are included in the printed edition. These calendars are distributed across the region through the rack system and are available for distribution at your own properties as well.



WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

Jared Bundy, Director of Digital Marketing

Social Media Audience

(as of Jan. 28, 2022)

68,000+
Likes

25,000+
Followers

230,000+
Monthly Video Views

13,000+
Followers

Top Organic Keywords

Laurel Highlands, Ski Packages Pennsylvania,
Snow Tubing Pennsylvania, Fun Winter
Things to do in PA, Cabin Near Me,
Ohiopyle, Laurel Mountain Ski Resort, Laurel
Highlands Cabin Rentals

Top Pages (Oct 25 – Jan 28)

	PAGEVIEWS
Ski Resorts	13,730
Events	8,579
Winter Festivals	6,235
Places to Stay	4,786
Vacation Rentals	3,897
Things to Do	3,770
Ohiopyle	3,580
Ice Fest	3,572
Destination Guide	2,946
Holiday Lights Extravaganza	2,943

Notable Web Stats

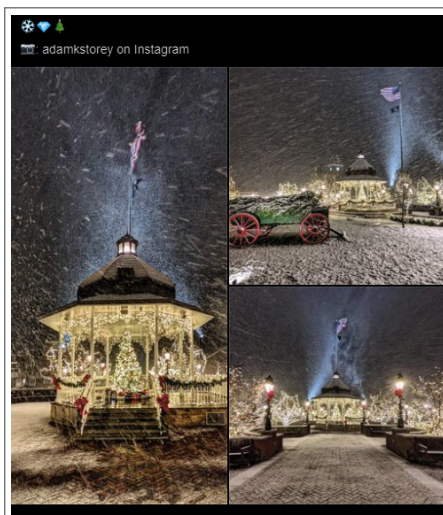
(Oct. 25, 2021 - Jan. 28, 2022) Compared to Oct. 25, 2020 - Jan. 28, 2021



Top Facebook Posts



This blog post about Overly's Country Christmas reached 29,000 people, was clicked 840 times, and shared 36 times.



This user-generated photo of Ligonier organically reached 28,000 people and was shared 83 times.

Top Instagram Post



This photo of a delicious Abigail's Coffeehouse creation received 900 likes when we shared it.

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

Shamrock Shuffle & Holiday Sweatshirt

The Pour Tour continues to diversify and evolve with the launch of new micro-tours throughout the year. The Shamrock Shuffle tour kicked off in December and ran through February, giving users the chance to earn an exclusive t-shirt in time for Saint Patrick's Day. Be on the lookout for Red, White, & Brews, a 4th of July themed-tour launching this spring. Each micro tour has recorded thousands of purchases, making for significant impacts on our local economies. Cheers!

Top Blogs

People were hungry for event information this fall, and our top blogs included Things to Do blogs, where to find Light Up Nights, and a Winter Bucket List guide.

LH Happenings Podcast

Subscribe to our podcast, Laurel Highlands Happenings. Each month, multiple episodes are released featuring local Laurel Highlands businesses, Laurel Highlands Pour Tour participants, and a deep dive into Westmoreland Heritage history. Subscribe on iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever you listen to podcasts.





PUBLIC RELATIONS UPDATE

Anna Weltz, Director of Public Relations

New Media Event – North American Travel Journalists Association

In early May, Anna Weltz, Director of Public Relations, will be representing the Laurel Highlands at the North American Travel Journalists Association annual meeting. The multi-day event includes professional development sessions and a media marketplace event where Anna can meet and greet writers and share information about our treasured region.

Is 2022, 2023, or 2024 slated to be a big year for your business? Are you working on some innovative new offering, event, or amenity? If so, please reach out to Anna to share your story so she can share your story with writers at this conference and more to come. Send Anna an email at aweltz@golaurelhighlands.com or call her at (724) 238-5661, ext. 108.



North American
Travel Journalists
Association

Laurel Highlands in the Spotlight

(November 1, 2021 - January 31, 2022)

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.



Digital Impressions:
8.6 MILLION



Print Impressions:
4.8 MILLION



Publicity Value
\$856,400

Laurel Highlands Featured on WUSA's Great Day Washington and KDKA TV's Evening News

Anna had two television interview opportunities in two important markets for our region. The first was on WUSA's "Great Day Washington," where she shared winter getaway inspiration with their audience on Christmas Eve morning.

Her second opportunity provided an opportunity to share romantic Valentine's Day getaways with Meghan Schiller and the KDKA-TV evening news audience. Shortly thereafter and for several days following the interview, the GO LH team was contacted by many potential visitors who loved the ideas and wanted additional information.





WELCOME, NEW GO LH MARKETING PARTNERS!

Louise Henry, Director of Partnership Development



Be My Guest on Washington Street,

Nancy Hangeland
411 Washington Street
Ligonier, PA 15658
(724) 331-6905

airbnb.com/rooms/500447518226139565

Ligonier has a new vacation rental! Tucked away at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac, Be My Guest offers guests a cozy one-bedroom apartment, a fully-equipped kitchen with dining area, and living room space, including a sofa bed that sleeps two. Convenient free off-road parking, free Wi-Fi, and board games complete your stay. It's a perfect couple's retreat for exploring Ligonier and the Laurel Highlands, and only a 10 minute walk to historic downtown Ligonier.



C. Shoemaker Custom Clothier

Cindy Shoemaker
209 East Main Street
Ligonier, PA 15658
(412) 999-2481

Instagram: [c_shoemakercustomclothier](https://www.instagram.com/c_shoemakercustomclothier)

C. Shoemaker Custom Clothier opened their doors in November 2021. Located just a couple of blocks up from the Diamond, their passion lies with tailored men's apparel. C. Shoemaker Custom Clothier offers custom-made suits, tuxedos, sport coats, trousers, shirts, sweaters, and knits, as well as golf, equestrian and shooting jackets, and belts. Fabrics can be ordered from some of the most exclusive fabric houses in the world, including Dormeuil, Holland & Sherry, Scabal, Cerruti, Huddersfield, Ariston, and more. Off-the-rack items include unique hand-carved and painted cufflinks, ties, and socks made in Italy, seasonal knitwear, scarves from the infamous Zegna mill. C. Shoemaker Custom Clothier prefer to work by appointment, which can be scheduled through the contact details above.



Discover Ohiopyle

Jennifer Noah
3054 National Pike
Farmington, PA 15437
(724) 329-4973
discoverohiopyle.com

Welcome to Discover Ohiopyle – the go-to for all things Ohiopyle! Vacation rentals, dining, and adventures such as rafting trips, rafting rentals, and bicycle rentals. But let's start with vacation rentals! Discover Ohiopyle offers the most unique collection of vacation homes in the Laurel Highlands including a cozy couple's getaway and a sprawling 400-acre private retreat. Whether you're looking for a romantic retreat, a friends getaway, or a family reunion, they will have the perfect accommodation for your getaway.



Highlands Ventures

Alex Moser
231 County Line Road
Champion, PA 15622
highlands-ventures.com

Introducing the ownership of Highlands Resort Realty, Highlands Market, Highlands Golf Clubs at Seven Springs and Hidden Valley, and Highlands Sporting Clays. Continuing to provide outstanding service, and awesome facilities including on the green, out on the range, retail, or realty, Highlands Ventures embraces hospitality at its finest in the Laurel Highlands.



WELCOME, NEW GO LH MARKETING PARTNERS!

Louise Henry, Director of Partnership Development



Rusty Musket Distilling Co.

Noah Henson

267 Four Seasons Road

Boswell, PA 15531

(814) 279-9629

Facebook: Rusty Musket Distilling Co.

Join us in welcoming a new distillery to Somerset County! Family-owned and operated, Rusty Musket Distilling Co. opened their doors early in December 2021, offering customers a selection of flavored moonshine, vodka, and whiskey. Try their specialty, traditional mountain-style moonshine. Check their Facebook page for details on weekend entertainment and food trucks.

STOPWATCH GALLERY & STUDIO

StopWatch Gallery & Studio

Marc Snyder

323 South Main Street

Greensburg, PA 15601

(724) 708-2034

Facebook: StopWatch Gallery & Studio

We're super excited to welcome StopWatch Gallery & Studio to downtown Greensburg and the Laurel Highlands! The gallery offers a great selection of exhibits throughout the year, something to suit all artistic tastes. Check out their Facebook page for current exhibits, upcoming exhibits, and events.



Wandering Spirits

Emily and Ty Honhart

201 East Main Street

2nd Floor

Ligonier, PA 15658

(724) 995-8180

wanderingspiritspa.com

If you enjoy partaking in local wines, spirits, and ciders, then we heartily recommend taking a visit to Wandering Spirits in Ligonier. Located just a block up from the Diamond and above the Crumpets Tea Shop, you will discover a dazzling array of Pennsylvania wines, whiskeys, gins, moonshine, Tattiebogle Ciderworks on draft, and an assortment of other local food products. To complete your visit, there's a tasting room to sample, and decide on your chosen bottle of beverage. Don't miss out on this new destination in the Laurel Highlands!



Win's Wild Adventures

Darwin (DJ) Herring III and Moya Carrier

Murrysville, PA

(724) 366-8719

winswildadventures.com

Named after their son, Win's Wild Adventures has been offering adventures in the Laurel Highlands for five years. This family-owned and operated company offers guided rock climbing and hiking tours in Ohio State Park. Participants can pick from half-day and full-day tours. They also offer several rock climbing courses depending on experience and ability; with an Intro to Rock Climbing for beginners through to Traditional Lead Climbing for advanced/expert climbers.



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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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