

Rowan County Tourism Board Report 2025 Year End Report

This report provides a comprehensive overview of Rowan County's tourism performance metrics, partnerships, and upcoming initiatives as of year end 2025.

Summary

In 2025, Rowan County Tourism continued its focus on driving overnight visitation while strategically refining marketing efforts to strengthen destination awareness and partner collaboration. Signature Stay & Play packages remained a core initiative, generating sustained room-night production tied to major attractions and seasonal events, while non-event-specific travel promotions supported year-round visitation. The online booking platform continued to deliver seamless user experience and remained a key conversion tool.

Digital influencers played an expanded role as a modern public relations channel, leveraging compelling, authentic storytelling to showcase Rowan County's unique experiences and connect with new audiences. Seasonal campaigns, destination features, guide-style content, planning resources and targeted promotions filled the marketing calendar, supported by ongoing search engine optimization (SEO) efforts to enhance website performance and user engagement.

Strengthening relationships with tourism and hospitality partners remained a top priority. In-person outreach efforts evolved to include mini familiarization (FAM) experiences during partner visits, encouraging cross-promotion and deeper awareness of the destination's diverse offerings while reinforcing consistent use of the Be an Original message. Collectively, these efforts positioned Rowan County Tourism for continued momentum, collaboration, and growth moving into 2026.



Hotel Performance Metrics

| | October | November | December | YTD as of 12/31 |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Occupancy (This Year) | 75.9% | 69.6% | 56.5% | 69.6% |
| Occupancy (Last Year) | 85.0% | 70.4% | 57.2% | 69.4% |
| ADR (This Year) | \$127.14 | \$120.15 | \$109.01 | \$113.70 |
| ADR (Last Year) | \$123.35 | \$112.88 | \$105.64 | \$111.44 |
| RevPar (This Year) | \$96.45 | \$83.65 | \$61.62 | \$79.16 |
| RevPar (Last Year) | \$104.82 | \$79.50 | \$60.42 | \$77.30 |
| Revenue (This Year) | \$2,371,107 | \$1,990,052 | \$1,514,739 | \$22,912,090 |
| Revenue (Last Year) | \$2,576,823 | \$1,891,375 | \$1,485,351 | \$22,375,403 |

Hotel performance metrics show positive year-over-year growth in occupancy, ADR, RevPar, and overall revenue.

Tourism Support Investments

In 2025, Rowan County Tourism expanded its support of local events through strategic marketing sponsorships and targeted investments that drove measurable results. Rowan County Tourism exceeded its room nights benchmark, highlighting the success of focused partnerships that generated stronger tourism outcomes. Continued collaboration with municipalities provided financial support for locally based tourism events, strengthening community engagement, increasing visitation, and contributing to sustainable tourism growth across the county.



Tourism Support Investments

- 1** February/March: Wine About Winter Package & NC Interscholastic Cycling League

Lodging & package support: \$3,880 | 58 room nights | Economic impact: \$93,289
- 2** April/May: Earth Day Jam, Sculpture Show, Cheerwine Festival & Spring in Rowan County Package

Lodging & package support: \$11,500 | 83 room nights | Economic impact: \$5,968,717
- 3** June/July: Salisbury Pride, Dragon Boat Festival, Piedmont Players Theater & Three Rivers Land Trust

Lodging support: \$10,000 | 60 room nights | Economic impact: \$125,563
- 4** August: Balloon Glow & Laser Show Package

Package support: \$0 | 4 room nights | Economic impact: \$5,703
- 5** September/October: Cherry Treesort Microwrestling, Day Out with Thomas Package, Autumn Adventures Package, YMCA Kickball Tournament, Bell Tower BREWFEST Package & OctoberTour Package

Lodging & package support: \$14,863 | 202 room nights | Economic impact: \$802,006
- 6** November/December: Polar Express & Christmas in Rowan County Packages

Package support: \$23,138 | 292 room nights | Economic impact: \$4,305 (TBD)
- 7** YTD: NCTM-Yearly Lodging, VISA Package & \$100 VISA Package

Lodging support: \$19,454 | 199 room nights | Economic impact: \$63,094

YTD 2025: 22 Fulfilled Requests / 898 Room Nights (2025 Benchmarks: 25 Fulfilled Requests / 880 Room Nights) | Total investment: \$82,835 | Total economic impact: \$7,062,677.

Group Sales Performance

In 2025, Rowan County Tourism focused on attracting high-impact group business that generated strong overnight visitation and economic return. While the Southeastern Little League Tournament was not retained, new and returning events - including The SmokeOut, Preservation North Carolina, the YMCA Conference, and YMCA tournaments, delivered impactful results.

These group sales efforts produced 795 room nights and an estimated \$675,367 in event-related economic impact. This outcome reflects a more targeted, strategic approach to group sales, prioritizing events that maximize overnight stays and deliver greater return on investment for Rowan County.



Group Sales Performance

| Date | Event Name | Support Type | Investment | Room Nights | Economic Impact |
|----------------------|---|----------------|------------|-------------|-----------------|
| February 27-28, 2025 | Rowan Salisbury School System - A Day in a District | Lodging | \$0 | 10 | \$5,000 |
| March 21, 2025 | Salisbury Youth Council | Lodging | \$0 | 42 | \$14,504 |
| March 19-22, 2025 | Statewide Succession Planning Workshop | Lodging | \$169 | 1 | \$331 |
| June 2025 | Preservation North Carolina | Lodging | \$0 | 30 | \$9,900 |
| July 2025 | Dragon Boat | Lodging | \$3,000 | 15 | \$18,200 |
| September 2025 | The SmokeOut | Lodging | \$22,262 | 564 | \$487,644 |
| September 2025 | Cherry Treesort - Micro Wrestling | Lodging | \$1,350 | 12 | \$9,737 |
| October 7-8, 2025 | Cycle NC | Administrative | \$0 | 0 | \$61,298 |
| October 8-9, 2025 | YMCA Conference | Lodging | \$3,000 | 100 | \$61,800 |
| October 2025 | YMCA - Kickball Tournament | Lodging | \$2,084 | 11 | \$3,642 |
| October 16-17, 2025 | Rowan Salisbury School System - A Day in a District | Lodging | \$0 | 10 | \$3,311 |
| January 2026 | Coon Hunters Association | Lodging | \$20,000 | TBD | TBD |
| August 6-7, 2026 | Three Rivers Land Trust | Lodging | TBD | TBD | TBD |
| February 27-28, 2026 | Rowan Salisbury School System - A Day in a District | Lodging | \$0 | TBD | TBD |

YTD 2025: 13 Groups / 795 Room Nights (2025 Benchmarks: 13 Groups / 750 Room Nights) | Total investment: \$51,865 | Total economic impact: \$675,367.

Influencer Partnerships

Rowan County Tourism's influencer marketing program continued to be a strategic component of destination promotion in 2025, leveraging authentic storytelling and social reach to highlight the county's attractions, events, and experiences. During the year, the program engaged 7 influencers who produced 33 paid placements across key social platforms.

Influencers visited and promoted a wide range of signature events and attractions, including multiple experiences at the NC Transportation Museum, Patterson Farm, Dan Nicholas Park, downtown Salisbury events, theatrical performances, festivals, and seasonal experiences such as Cheerwine Festival, Autumn Jubilee, Celebration of Lights, and Scrooge's Christmas Trolley Tour. Content showcased Rowan County as a year-round destination with family-friendly, cultural, and experiential offerings.

Collectively, the 2025 influencer placements generated 1,003,342 total views and 39,813 engagements, reinforcing the value of influencer partnerships as a modern public relations and awareness-building tool. The program continues to evolve with a focus on targeted content, meaningful engagement, and alignment with priority events and partners across the county.



Influencer Partnerships

INFLUENCERS: 7

PLACEMENTS: 33

ATTRACTIONS/EVENTS VISITED: NCTM's Easter Bunny Express, NCTM's Polar Express, NCTM's Day Out with Thomas, Patterson Farm's Fall Fun on the Farm, Downtown Salisbury's Wine About Winter, Cheerwine Festival, Pottery 101, NCTM's Polar Express, Piedmont Player's The Little Mermaid Jr., NCTM's Easter Bunny Express, Patterson Farm's Egg-Cellent Adventure, NCTM's Polar Express, Dan Nicholas Park, Patterson Farm's Fall Fun on the Farm, Autumn Jubilee, Celebration of Lights, Cherry Treesort, Cheerwine Festival, Time Warp Trolley Tour, Cheerwine Festival, OctoberTour, Dan Nicholas Park & Scrooge's Christmas Trolley Tour

TOTAL VIEWS: 1,003,342

TOTAL ENGAGEMENT: 39,813

TOP POSTS



@HouseOfHensen

87,823 Views



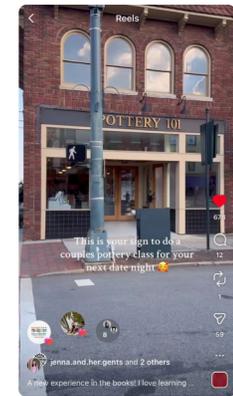
@KidsTakeCharlotte

76,537 Views



@KidsTakeCharlotte

50,922 Views



@Jenna.And.Her.Gents

45,460 Views

Cannon Ballers Partnership

Rowan County Tourism continued its partnership with the Kannapolis Cannon Ballers for the 2025 season, building on the success of previous years with strong visibility and expanded fan engagement throughout the season. The sponsorship included concourse signage, Upper Club season tickets and Home Plate Premium tickets for promotional giveaways and visitor packages, Where's Boomer videos, program advertisement, static ribbon board signage on the first-base side of home plate, and on-field activations between innings highlighting Rowan County destinations.

New for the 2025 season, the partnership expanded to include coordinated Cannon Ballers player appearances at tourism sites and partner locations across Rowan County. These community-facing appearances increased public exposure to the team, strengthened collaboration with tourism partners, and reinforced the shared commitment to promoting Rowan County experiences beyond the ballpark.

Rowan County Tourism also hosted its 4th Annual Tourism & Hospitality Celebration Night at a Cannon Ballers home game, welcoming more than 900 registered industry partners for an evening recognizing the people and businesses that drive Rowan County's visitor economy, complete with baseball, food, giveaways, and on-field engagement. The evening was cut short due to a storm, but a good time was still had by all.



Blog Performance

2025

BLOG VIEWS: 76,470

BLOG POSTS: 115

In 2025, Rowan County Tourism continued to expand its blog content to strengthen SEO performance, support visitor trip planning, and highlight experiences across the county. Content included a strategic mix of destination features, event guides, seasonal planning resources, and editorial storytelling - such as the *In & Around* community series, dining and farmers market guides, pet-friendly itineraries, and major event preparation blogs - designed to provide practical planning details while promoting partners and communities. This diversified approach resulted in strong year-over-year growth, with blog views increasing by **47%** and total posts increasing by **28%**. Overall performance exceeded established benchmarks, with blog views surpassing goals by **25%** and post volume exceeding targets by **21%**, reinforcing the blog's role as a key driver of website traffic, SEO strength, and visitor engagement.





In and Around China Grove, N.C.

Nov. 24, 2025

Located in southern Rowan County, China Grove is a welcoming small town where rich history, local...

[Read More >](#)



How to Prepare for your Polar Express Train Ride at the N.C. Transportation Museum

Oct. 24, 2025

The holiday season is a magical time in Rowan County, and there's no better way to experience it...

[Read More >](#)



In and Around Spencer, N.C.

Oct. 08, 2025

Nestled in the heart of Rowan County, Spencer, North Carolina, is a charming town where history...

[Read More >](#)



Halloween Thrills for Adults in Rowan County

Sep. 19, 2025

Halloween in Rowan County isn't just for the kids - it's a season filled with spooky tours...

[Read More >](#)



In and Around Granite Quarry, N.C.

Sep. 17, 2025

Tucked away in the heart of Rowan County, the town of Granite Quarry, North Carolina, is a charming...

[Read More >](#)

Blog Performance

BLOG POSTS ADDED IN 2025

In & Around Salisbury, N.C.

Discover Impressionist Beauty: Pissarro's La ferme du friche à Osny at Waterworks Visual Art Center

In & Around Cleveland, N.C.

15 Must-Dine Restaurants In and Around Rowan County

In & Around Landis, N.C.

In & Around Mount Ulla, N.C.

In & Around Kannapolis, N.C.

Museum Experiences in Rowan County, N.C.

Halloween Thrills for Adults in Rowan County, N.C.

In & Around Spencer, N.C.

Where to Eat in Rowan County This Thanksgiving

Guide: The Swanee Theatre

Juneteenth in Rowan County, N.C.

In & Around Faith, N.C.

Guide: China Grove's Farmers Day Festival

Guide: Dragon Boat Festival 2025

Pet-Friendly Things to Do in Rowan County, N.C.

Rowan County Farmers Markets Guide

Guide: Rowan County Fair

Patterson Farm's Sunflower Season: Fun on the Farm

In & Around Gold Hill, N.C.

In & Around Granite Quarry, N.C.

How to Prepare for your Polar Express Train Ride at the N.C. Transportation Museum

Guide: Wine & Dine on the Rails at the N.C. Transportation Museum 2026

Visit Rowan County, NC App Launch

In 2025, Rowan County Tourism partnered with STQRY to launch the Visit Rowan County, NC app, a branded mobile platform designed to serve as a centralized hub for all county tours and trails. The app launched on Apple App Store & Google Play Store with Rowan County's largest and most in-depth experience, the Salisbury Heritage Walking Tour, requiring the collection and organization of photos and content for 143 individual stops. The app allows users to explore tours either in person or virtually, with stops activating through geolocation or manual navigation, providing a flexible, self-guided experience that enhances accessibility, storytelling, and visitor engagement across the destination.

EXPLORE HISTORIC SALISBURY

*One Step
at a Time*



- Self-guided Walking Tours
- Discover Historic Salisbury & Surrounding Communities
- Learn the Stories that Shaped Rowan County

Be an Original.
Experience Rowan County.



Scan to download the Visit
Rowan County, NC App



Stay & Play Packages

Visit Rowan expanded and refined Stay & Play package offerings in 2025 to drive overnight visitation throughout the year. The online booking platform, in its fourth year, continued to provide seamless and efficient experience for visitors. In 2025 year-to-date, Stay & Play packages generated 536 bookings and 730 room nights, with strong performance tied to signature attractions and seasonal events, including The Polar Express™, Day Out with Thomas™, and Wine About Winter. Overall room-night production reflects sustained demand and highlights opportunities to further optimize offerings. With evolving partnerships and targeted refinements, the Stay & Play program remains well-positioned for continued growth and expanded experiential opportunities in 2026.



Stay & Play Packages

VISA: 82 Packages / 117 Room Nights

Wine About Winter '25: 41 Packages / 52 Room Nights

Spring in Rowan County: 7 Packages / 12 Room Nights

Cheerwine Festival: 20 Packages / 29 Room Nights

Summer Fun in Rowan County: 0 Packages / 0 Room Nights

Brew & Choo: 0 Packages / 0 Room Nights

Balloon Glow & Laser Show: 4 Packages / 4 Room Nights

Day Out with Thomas: 117 Packages / 164 Room Nights

Bell Tower BREWFEST: 4 Packages / 5 Room Nights

OctoberTour: 2 Package / 4 Room Nights

Autumn Adventures in Rowan County: 4 Package / 6 Room Nights

Polar Express: 219 Packages / 297 Room Nights

Christmas in Rowan County: 9 Packages / 13 Room Nights

Wine About Winter '26: 11 Packages / 11 Room Nights

\$100 Holiday VISA: 16 Packages / 16 Room Nights

2025 YTD: 536 Packages / 730 Room Nights

**YTD Package data includes both Ripe and short-term rental packages.*



Historic Salisbury Trolley

2025

REVENUE: \$80,384.87

RENTALS: 106

The F&M Bank Trolley program remained a highly utilized asset in 2025, supporting private rentals, special events, and experiential programming throughout the year. The program recorded 107 year-to-date rentals and generated \$80,385 in revenue, reflecting continued demand and community value.

Theatrical programming expanded through a partnership with Lee Street Theatre, which produced two themed trolley experiences, Scrooge's Christmas Trolley Tour and The Rocky Horror Picture Show, reinforcing the trolley's role as a unique and creative platform for storytelling and placemaking.

A significant and unexpected challenge occurred in 2025 with the theft of the program's second trolley during the busiest time of the year, impacting capacity and altering long-term planning. Despite this setback, operations adapted to maintain service and support continued use of the trolley program. Strategic next steps are continuing to be evaluated to position future recovery and growth.



Digital Marketing Focus

In 2025, Rowan County Tourism continued to prioritize digital marketing as a primary tool for inspiring travel and driving overnight visitation. Efforts expanded beyond individual promotions to include the launch of a cohesive suite of **seasonal Stay & Play Packages**, including *Spring in Rowan County*, *Summer Fun in Rowan County*, *Autumn Adventures in Rowan County*, and *Christmas in Rowan County*, providing visitors with timely, experience-driven reasons to plan trips throughout the year. These new seasonal offerings complemented the continuation of previously successful Stay & Play packages, allowing the destination to build on proven demand while introducing fresh incentives. Additional blog content played a key role in this strategy, spotlighting seasonal experiences, itineraries, and local attractions to support search visibility, trip planning, and package promotion, while reinforcing Rowan County's position as a year-round travel destination.



Visit Rowan County, NC Website

262,576

Users Year-End

543,847

Pageviews Year-End

0:57

Average Time on Site

In 2025, [VisitRowanCountyNC.com](https://www.visitrowancountync.com) experienced continued growth in both traffic and engagement, reflecting the impact of expanded content, SEO efforts, and digital marketing initiatives. Total users increased by nearly 17% year-over-year, while pageviews grew by almost 6%. Both metrics exceeded annual benchmarks, with users finishing **11% above goal** and pageviews **44% above target**. Average time on site remained consistent at 57 seconds, indicating sustained visitor engagement as overall traffic increased. These results reinforce the website's role as a primary planning resource for visitors and a strong-performing platform for promoting Rowan County experiences, partners, and events.

MediaOne Partnership

2025

AD ENGAGEMENT: 27,315

AD IMPRESSIONS: 1,508,599

In 2025, Visit Rowan County, NC's partnership with Media One played a key role in expanding the destination's digital reach, strengthening website performance, and supporting year-round tourism promotion through an integrated SEO and paid media strategy. Across the year, targeted Meta and paid search campaigns delivered **1,508,599 ad impressions** and generated **27,315 ad engagements**, driving consistent awareness and qualified traffic to core trip-planning content, events, and partner listings. Ongoing SEO optimization and content strategy improvements supported sustained visibility in search, increased overall site impressions, and improved engagement across high-intent pages, even amid expected seasonal shifts in travel demand. Together, these efforts enhanced brand discovery, informed campaign optimization, and established a strong foundation for continued digital growth and emerging AI-driven discovery in 2026.



RIPE Online Booking Platform Performance

2025

- **RESERVATIONS:** 463
- **ROOM NIGHTS:** 599
- **ADR:** \$151
- **REVENUE:** \$90,257
- **PACKAGE BOOKINGS:** 443

The RIPE online booking platform continued to support Visit Rowan County's Stay & Play package strategy in 2025, providing a seamless experience for booking event and experience-driven packages. Year-over-year, reservations fell short by 15%, room nights fell short by 17%, and revenue fell short by 13%. Compared to established benchmarks, reservations finished approximately 23% under goal, while room nights were 24% below target. Despite these declines, package-driven bookings accounted for the majority of reservations, and a strong average daily rate helped maintain meaningful revenue. Overall, RIPE remains a targeted tool that supports partner hotels, promotes event-based travel, and complements broader marketing initiatives rather than functioning as a high-volume booking platform.



Social Media Performance

In 2025, social media remained one of the most cost-effective and impactful digital marketing tools for Rowan County Tourism, providing timely, two-way communication directly to visitors' devices. Total social media following exceeded the annual benchmark by **more than 19%**, while total social media engagement surpassed expectations by **approximately 76%**, reflecting strong audience growth and increased interaction across platforms. Beyond social media, overall digital impact performance also exceeded benchmarks, with **total digital engagement surpassing goals by more than 5%** and overall reach exceeding its benchmark by **over 70%**, reinforcing the effectiveness of an integrated digital strategy spanning social media, website content, email marketing, paid advertising, and influencer campaigns.



Social Media Performance

In 2025, social media content generated:

| PLATFORM | FOLLOWERS | ENGAGEMENTS |
|-----------|---|--|
| Facebook | 43,598 (+21.74%) | 240,118 (+76.2%) |
| Instagram | 6,596 (+19.97%) | 6,932 (+7.29%) |
| TikTok | 2,985 (+238%) | 22,717 (+451%) |
| X | 2,321 (+1.2%) | 1,379 (+91%) |
| Pinterest | 539 (% increase unknown - 1st year tracked) | 38 (% increase unknown - 1st year tracked) |

PLATFORMS 2025 YTD: 56,039 Followers / 271,184 Engagements

TOTAL DIGITAL IMPACT 2025*: 960,463 Engagements / 8,852,139 Reach

*This metric encompasses email newsletter activity, website pageviews, blog views, social media performance, MediaOne ad performance and influencer campaign performance.

Top Stories on Social Media



FACEBOOK
 567,653 Views
 6,588 Engagements

TIKTOK
 290,846 Views
 14,399 Engagements

FACEBOOK
 133,932 Views
 954 Engagements

Email Newsletters

2025

AVERAGE OPEN RATE: 33.64%

SUBSCRIBERS: 5,453

Our email newsletters continued to deliver value and engagement in 2025. A monthly events email was sent at the beginning of each month, supplemented by additional communications highlighting Stay & Play packages, event updates, and special promotions throughout the year. The average open rate exceeded the benchmark by **5.8%**, and subscribers exceeded the benchmark by **3.2%**, increasing by **384** compared to 2024. These results reflect continued audience growth and strong engagement, reinforcing the newsletter's role as a key channel for sharing Rowan County experiences and promotions with potential visitors.



Public Relations

Partner Engagement 2025

2025 PR ENGAGEMENTS: 16

PARTNER RELATIONSHIP VISITS: 82

SITE/EVENT VISITS: 29

Rowan County Tourism continued to champion the "Be an Original" brand in 2025, emphasizing the county's unique attractions and fostering its appeal as a prime destination for visitors. Cohesive storytelling was harnessed through press releases aimed at amplifying the destination's visibility, highlighting events and unique partner qualities that would lure visitation. A stronger focus of strategic engagement with digital influencers as a more modern public relations tool elevated destination visibility through compelling storytelling that showcased Rowan County's unique experiences.

Strengthening relationships with key partners remained a top priority. Ongoing in-person visits ensured open communication, kept partners informed on the latest destination developments, and reinforced consistent use of the Be an Original message. These visits evolved to include a mini familiarization (FAM) tour component, with sharing curated items from other local partners, encouraging cross-promotion, increasing awareness of the broader destination offerings, and helping partners better understand and support one another.



What's Ahead

- Continue leveraging storytelling using influencers as a tool for modern public relations
- Ongoing and continuous updates to VisitRowanCountyNC.com based on SEO findings
- Website redesign, stemming from the best practice of a website lifecycle of two years
- Continue promotion of Stay & Play Packages
- Continue to attract and retain overnight group business
- Continue to work with local and statewide media
- Continue emphasis on incentivizing general travel
- Celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the “Be an Original” brand
- Celebrate the opening of the RailWalk project and the Salisbury Farmers Market
- Adding more tours to the Visit Rowan County, NC app

