

Case Study: Creating An Online Booking System for Rowan County Tourism's Overnight Stay & Play Packages

Introduction

In 2015, Rowan County Tourism launched an innovative overnight stay incentive program to increase tourism and drive economic impact by rewarding visitors who booked and stayed in local hotels and lodging properties with free event tickets and/or gift certificates. The program quickly gained momentum and set the stage for significant growth.

Program Origins and Evolution

Original Program Structure

The original process required visitors to:

- Book lodging directly with a Rowan County hotel, Airbnb, or other approved accommodation.
- Call Rowan County Tourism to validate their booking and reserve their special event tickets or gift certificates. Tickets would be booked over the phone and delivered to their lodging property to receive at check in.
- Tourism and event staff would run reports, print and assemble tickets, and deliver tickets and gift certificates to individual lodging properties for visitors to receive at check in.

This manual approach proved popular, but as demand soared, it became clear that call volume and limited staff would challenge program scalability.

Need for Digital Transformation

High Call Volumes

High call volumes led to waiting times and administrative strain.

Guest Expectations

Guests increasingly expected a quick and seamless, online booking experience.

Flexibility Requirements

Maintaining flexibility for a range of events and rewards required a digital solution adaptable for different ticketing and benefit structures.

With the program's mounting success, Rowan County Tourism recognized the necessity of modernizing the booking process.

Launch of the Online Booking Platform

After careful research and planning, Rowan County Tourism partnered with Ripe (formerly Root Rez) in 2021 to develop and launch a comprehensive online booking platform:

- The new system enables visitors to book lodging and package benefits simultaneously on VisitRowanCountyNC.com.
- Depending on event specifics, allocation and delivery are now automated by using Ripe's Traveler Services staff, streamlining the process for guests and staff alike.
- In some cases, guests receive a one-time code to redeem event tickets themselves, while in other cases, VISA e-gift cards are issued via email upon confirmation.
- All services come at no additional cost or fee to the visitor or the lodging property.

Manual Process (2015-2020)

Phone bookings, manual ticket delivery, high administrative burden

Digital Transition (2021)

Partnership with Ripe, development of online platform

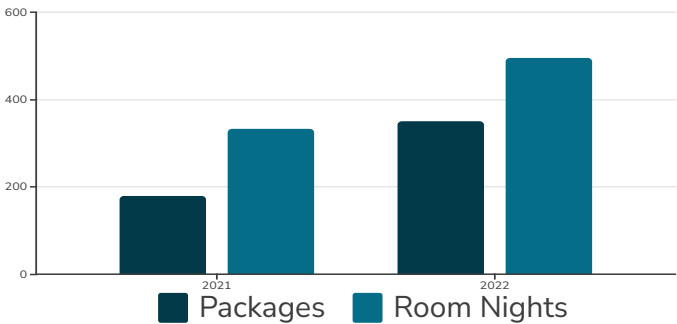
Automated System (2022+)

Seamless online booking, automated delivery, scalable operations

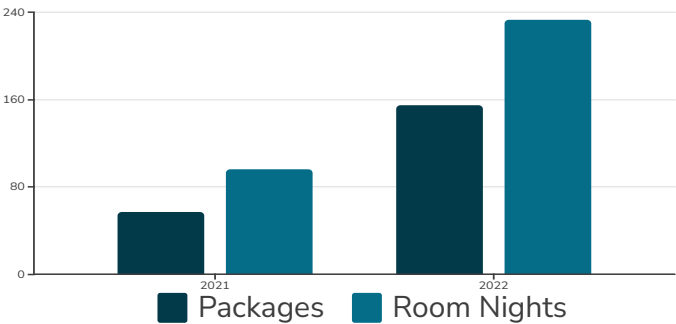
Measurable Impact

The program's digital transformation yielded notable results in the first year:

Polar Express Event



Day Out with Thomas Event



94.4%

Package Growth

Increase from 180 to 350 packages

49.1%

Room Night Growth

Increase from 332 to 495 room nights

171.9%

Package Growth

Increase from 57 to 155 packages

142.7%

Room Night Growth

Increase from 96 to 233 room nights

Creative Incentives

Free event tickets and gift certificates drive bookings

Economic Impact

Sustainable tourism growth for the county



Digital Platform

Seamless online booking experience

Measurable Growth

Significant increases in packages and room nights

Conclusion

Rowan County Tourism's overnight stay incentive program exemplifies how creative incentive strategies, combined with digital innovation, can deliver sustainable tourism growth. The collaboration with Ripe enabled a scalable, guest-centric platform, ensuring the program's continued success and economic contribution.

Plan Your Original Stay in Rowan County!


Start planning your adventure - see if your travel dates unlock exclusive rewards:

Nov 21 → Nov 23

Choose Deal

Guests 1

SEARCH



THINGS TO DO >

Visa e-Gift Card

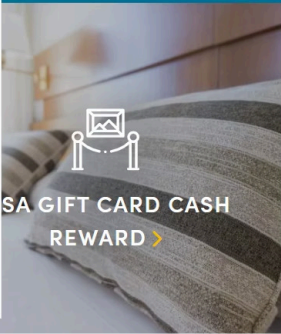
Autumn Adventures in Rowan County Stay & Play Package

THE POLAR EXPRESS™ 2 Tickets 2025

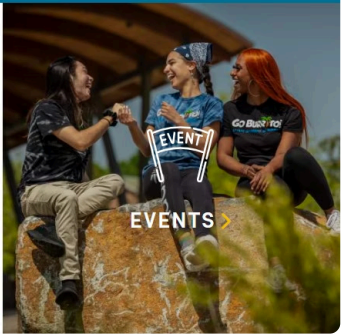
THE POLAR EXPRESS™ 4 Tickets 2025

\$50 - \$125 THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Visa Gift Card 2025

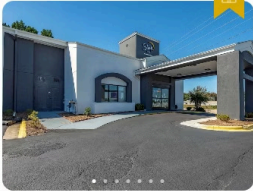
None



SA GIFT CARD CASH REWARD >




EVENTS >



Sleep Inn
SALISBURY
Hotel


\$86 per night
\$205 total for 2 nights with taxes and fees




Courtyard by Marriott
Salisbury
Hotel

4.3  694 reviews

\$233 per night
\$525 total for 2 nights with taxes and fees



Economy Inn
SALISBURY
Motel

3.2  217 reviews

\$76 per night
\$170 total for 2 nights with taxes and fees

Swimming Pool

Pet Friendly

Meeting Rooms

Free Breakfast

Close to NC Transportation

Close to Downtown Salisbury

Search in this area

\$76

8 properties