

2025 TOURISM YEAR IN REVIEW



**JOHNSON
COUNTY** 
Tourism Association

 **BUFFALO**  **KAYCEE**

2025-26 JCTA Board Members:

Anita Peoples
Candice Christenson
Brian Whitlock
Laurel Foster
Katy Giles
Curtis Figler
Mike Callan
Clay Miller
Betsy Beach

JCTA Staff:
Toby Carrig
Angela Gray
Gina Doell

Chris Ehorn
Laura Harmon
Mara Abbott

Mission Statement:
Develop initiatives that increase and sustain year-round tourism revenue to improve the quality of life for our community.

Vision Statement:
To inspire diverse visitors to view Buffalo and Kaycee as the travel destination by creating authentic unique experiences in the West.

SHARED MEDIA SUCCESS

2025 was a year of great growth in social media for the Johnson County Tourism Association.

The organization hired a part-time social media person to create videos for Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Threads. JCTA also added a TikTok page in 2026 with all of them operating under the VisitBuffaloWY brand.

Facebook

As of January 1, 2025, the recently launched VisitBuffaloWY Facebook page had 587 followers. As of June 30, that number had steadily increased to 1,034.

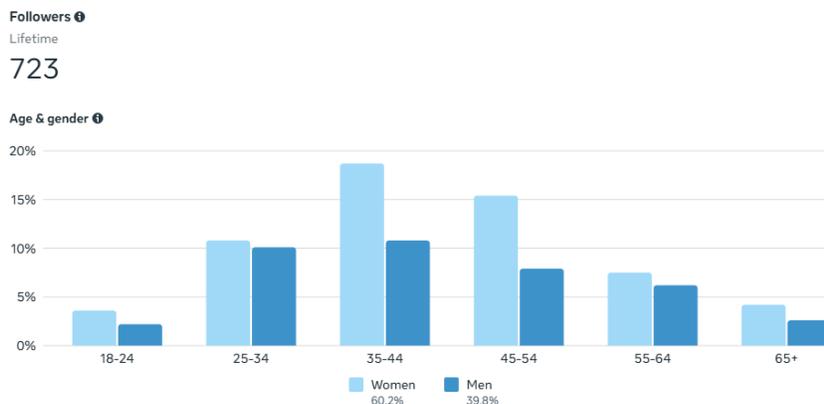
Around that time, Angela Gray joined the JCTA staff in her part-time role. By July 31, the number of followers had grown another 500 to 1,535. That pace accelerated to 5,648 followers by December 31.

More than 96 percent of the Facebook followers have opted to do so from watching a video Reel.



Instagram

The number of followers on Instagram has grown from 214 in June of 2025 to more than 600 by December of 2025 and currently 723 as of February 9, 2026. This audience is younger than the Facebook audience with more followers in the 35 to 54 age ranges.



Facebook Followers By Month

Jan. 1	587	
Feb. 1	658	+71
March 1	688	+30
April 1	758	+70
May 1	807	+49
June 1	927	+120
July 1	1,036	+109
Aug. 1	1,543	+507
Sept. 1	2,424	+881
Oct. 1	3,219	+795
Nov. 1	4,023	+804
Dec. 1	4,751	+728
Dec. 31	5,648	+897

SHARED MEDIA SUCCESS

YouTube

Through a mix of organic and paid campaigns, we have grown awareness of Johnson County through the VisitBuffaloWY YouTube channel in 2025 with 86,611 views of content. Viewers have watched 581.1 hours' worth of videos on the YouTube channel.

Organically, that included popular videos of Sherd Lake, Mosier Gulch, the Hitching Post, Must-Visit Mountain Towns, and more that each had more than 1,000 views.

Campaigns incorporating a 30-second Promotional Video yielded 70,789 views from August through the end of the year.



TikTok

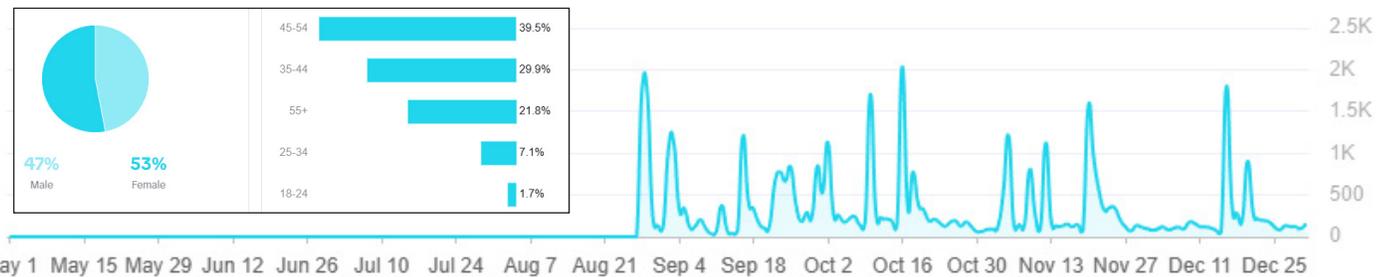
VisitBuffaloWY joined the platform in August of 2025 and has had more than 44,000 video views by 39,621 accounts.

Reach



Video views

May 1, 2025 - Dec 31, 2025



Engagement



Followers



STRATEGY | OWNED MEDIA

While the landscape continues to change from traditional digital media platforms to AI, 2025 was a strong year for the VisitBuffaloWY.com website.

In addition, the printed 20-page Adventure Guide was distributed through various means with nearly 20,000 copies ending up in the hands of visitors and potential visitors.

VISITBUFFALOWY.COM WEBSITE

The JCTA website, which was rebranded as VisitBuffaloWY.com in 2023 and relaunched with a new look in April of 2024, surpassed more than 174,000 visitors in 2025, showing 70.28 percent growth over the previous year. Much of that traffic took place in the first half of the year, utilizing various campaigns through the Wyoming Office of Tourism co-ops to help increase traffic.

Traffic slowed in the second half of the year, as many destination marketing organizations are seeing the effects of search engines such as Google Gemini offering more information aggregated from authoritative websites and discouraging links to the actual source websites.

While we continue to build out the website with new, authoritative content that will help both with web searches and Language Learning Models (AI), this also illustrates the importance of developing an audience through social media channels in addition to having a website.

Google users who encounter an AI summary are less likely to click on links to other websites than users who do not see one. **Users who encountered an AI summary clicked on a traditional search result link in 8% of all visits. Those who did not encounter an AI summary clicked on a search result nearly twice as often (15% of visits).**

Google users who encountered an AI summary also rarely clicked on a link in the summary itself. This occurred in just 1% of all visits to pages with such a summary.

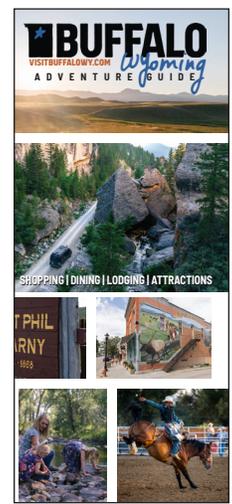
WEBSITE VISITORS					WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS					
JCTA Website/VisitBuffaloWY.com					VisitBuffaloWY.com					
MONTH	Google Analytics				Google A4	Google A4	Google A4	Google A4	Google A4	Google A4
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
January	-	3,321	254	213	-	7,976	19,369	-	10,670	28,986
February	-	1,165	999	239	-	16,358	13,951	-	20,844	16,873
March	-	1,217	3,144	2,516	-	1,224	12,789	-	2,781	29,146
April	-	352	4,243	6,303	-	3,804	17,124	-	10,102	34,002
May	-	295	3,466	7,499	-	12,465	22,030	-	28,112	42,368
June	-	1,306	352	8,452	-	9,171	24,929	-	19,312	46,864
July	-	1,245	461	9,866	-	9,681	11,483	-	20,598	24,672
August	-	1,616	297	10,266	9,124	7,781	9,927	12,743	15,413	21,182
September	-	1,112	246	5,243	5,011	4,943	10,635	6,523	9,422	21,352
October	-	117	198	181	479	9,954	10,922	1,048	19,932	17,461
November	-	92	160	0	423	9,157	9,757	839	15,513	14,349
December	20,110	116	222	0	541	9,669	11,085	1,209	14,855	16,465
TOTAL	20,110	11,954	14,042	50,778	15,578	102,183	174,001	22,362	187,554	313,720

ADVENTURE GUIDE BROCHURES

The 20-page booklet promoting Johnson County was distributed via mail, Wyoming visitors centers, and Certified Folder routes in Northern Colorado and the Rapid City area. More than 20,000 copies were printed.

Ten-thousand were distributed on the Certified Folder Northern Colorado route around Fort Collins and Greeley, and another 1,500 for select Rapid City locations. More than 2,000 were distributed to Visitors Centers in Wyoming.

In 2024, when JCTA began coordinating with the Chamber of Commerce to handle requests, we sent 23 Visitors guides. In 2025, we mailed nearly 300 with 63 of those requests coming in December thanks to some tactics to boost awareness. We have sent 121 already this year.



STRATEGY | PAID MEDIA

The Johnson County Tourism Association continued to refine its media strategy in 2025 to pursue a more efficient use of funds in our marketing efforts.

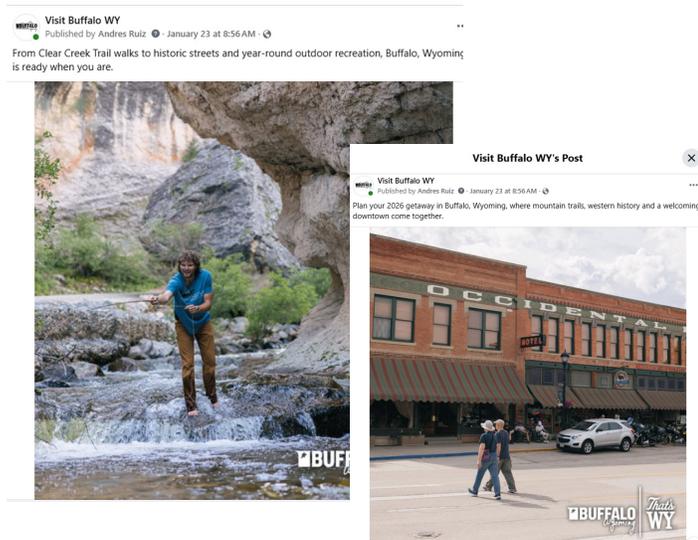
Digital

JCTA opts into multiple digital media campaigns as part of the Wyoming Office of Tourism co-op. That includes programs operated through Madden Media for search engine optimization, search engine marketing, Meta prospecting and remarketing.

With Miles Partnership, through another WOT coop program, JCTA advertises on the TravelWyoming.com website and in the e-newsletter.

Miles also operates a Leads program that generates hundreds of email addresses monthly of prospective travelers who ask for more information about Buffalo. We utilize a similar program with Yellowstone National Park Journal. Those combined efforts have given JCTA more than 3,000 email subscribers at the end of 2025 and more than 4,200 as of February 2026.

JCTA also manages some of its own social media posts with paid boosts to make sure the highest-performing content is seen by potential visitors.



Print/Hybrid

JCTA continues to emphasize print products with digital components.

JCTA will be winding down its campaign with RV Destinations magazine in 2025-26. The magazine has had great growth in subscriptions since our involvement with them (from 28,000 to 44,000 subscribers), and has picked up additional well-known advertisers such as Love's and Buc-ee's. Johnson County has been uniquely

positioned as a county where (in 2024) 44 percent of visitor spending was done by campground guests compared to 40 percent of spending done by hotel/motel guests, according to a report for the Wyoming Office of Tourism. Statewide, the ratio is 20 percent to 54 percent.

JCTA continues to publish a full-page advertisement in the Wyoming Travel Guide, and has received a prominent placement in the early pages of the magazine. We also publish a full-page ad in the Yellowstone National Park Journal, which targets travelers through Wyoming to the national parks.

JCTA also supports the Buffalo Bulletin with a full-page ad in the Vista magazine distributed throughout the region.

JCTA published advertisements in each of the four editions of Iowa Snowmobiler magazine again this winter. These ads traditionally perform well with QR code scans.

In 2025-26, JCTA added a program with Minnesota Monthly magazine that includes both print and digital components.

Radio

Radio campaigns, which had been conducted regionally primarily through public radio sponsorships, were discontinued in 2025. Return on investment in those campaigns had been difficult to measure. JCTA believes there was success in picking a proper campaign with the flagship station for Nebraska football in 2024, but did not believe the same results were likely in 2025.

Billboards

JCTA owns three billboards along I-90 in the region, having transferred one in Sheridan County to the Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association. That organization removed the vinyl – which will be given to the Longmire Foundation for auction in 2026 – and the sign now promotes stops at the fort.

JCTA also is attempting to reduce its number of leased billboards. JCTA leases two from Yesco (Douglas, promoting Chris LeDoux Park and Kaycee; and Beulah) and five with Lamar (two in Gillette, one in Spearfish, one in Greybull and one in Cody). We have asked Lamar to preempt JCTA from the eastern-most billboard in Gillette and one in Cody when possible.

We also plan to change the vinyl of some billboards when our rebrand is completed.

HOLE IN THE WALL

After about than two years of work, the Johnson County Tourism Association's project with Bighorn Films to document the history and recreational opportunities of the Hole in the Wall and Outlaw Canyon was completed in the summer of 2025.

The main component – a 70-minute documentary – tells the story of Butch Cassidy and the Outlaws, Nate Champion and the Johnson County War, and the Hole in the Wall Fight. It also covers the important archaeology finds in the region, the unique geological features, and how to responsibly enjoy the recreational public lands.

An invitation-only screening took place on September 11 to keep the film eligible for film festivals. The feedback from the local audience was positive, and we look forward to showings

While the film was not selected for any of the major early film festivals of 2026, such as Sundance in Utah or South by Southwest in Texas, it has received interest from smaller regional film festivals to be part of their programs.

The film project also received media attention chronicled below in Earned Media Placements for the Johnson County Tourism Association.

Most importantly for marketing purposes, Bighorn Films produced short versions from the material to promote history tourism to the Hole in the Wall (preferably through the Hoofprints of the Past Museum in Kaycee) and recreational tourism (Outlaw Canyon Campground, fishing access areas on the Middle Fork of the Powder River and Blue Creek, and the Hole in the Wall hiking trail). Those assets have been published on the VisitBuffaloWY YouTube channel and will be incorporated into the website with complementary content. They also will be utilized in 2026 in a Google video sequencing campaign with a goal of 276,000 views among people interested in visiting the area.

EARNED MEDIA PLACEMENTS

The Hole in the Wall project and the Johnson County Tourism Association have earned regional attention from a number of outlets in 2025:

– A feature by Georgia Lodewyk of the Sheridan Press was published in August and also is available online through the Wyoming News Exchange in outlets such as the Wyoming Tribune Eagle, Gillette News Record, and Casper Star-Tribune.

– Cowboy State Daily, September 21, 2025. (Stephen Tucker of Bighorn Films also was interviewed on their online podcast.)

– Wyoming Public Media, September 5, 2025.

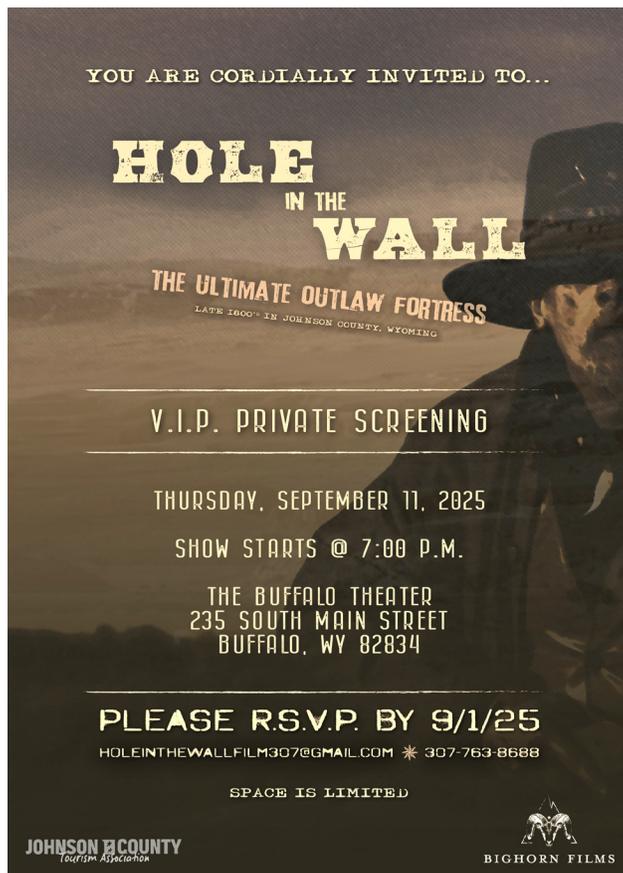
The Wyoming Office of Tourism showcased multiple examples of coverage that Johnson County received in 2025, including:

– PieZanos in a Forbes online listing of 13 great variations on classic pizza, published November 1, 2025 at the conclusion of National Pizza Month.

– Top 12 U.S. towns for a cowboy core getaway (Lonely Planet, July 2025).

– "Cultural Wyoming" on True West Magazine website, September 5, 2025.

– Paradise Guest Ranch in "The plusses and minuses of family reunions, July 3, 2025, on the Taking the Kids website.



CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Visitors centers operated by the Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce and the Kaycee Chamber of Commerce are supported by JCTA funds.

The JCTA in 2025 allocated \$15,000 to the Buffalo Chamber of Commerce and \$5,000 to the Kaycee Chamber of Commerce to help support staffing those centers through the summer months.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

The JCTA awarded more than \$30,000 in tourism promotion grants to community organizations in 2025 with the intent of helping them market events or programs of interest to potential visitors outside the immediate area. The goal for the program is to encourage overnight stays.

Award recipients in 2025 were:

- Arts Along the Bighorns (Cowboy Carousel Center): Native American Cultural Weekend
- Big Horn Bluegrass Camp: Summer Bluegrass Camp
- Big Horn Bluegrass Camp: January Jam
- Buffalo High School Trapshoot Club: Buffalo Stampede competition
- Forever West Productions: Lee Martinez Memorial Xtreme Bulls
- Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association
- Web Pros Media: Grit & Gather
- Grouse Mountain Archery Club: 3D Shoot
- Jim Gatchell Memorial Museum: Wyoming and World War II history conference
- Johnson County Arts & Humanities: Mother's Day Shopping Event
- Johnson County Arts & Humanities: Fall Art Festival
- Johnson County Fair Board
- Johnson County Family YMCA: Klondike Rush
- Lobban Street Music: Saturdays in the Square
- Museum of the Occidental Hotel: Flappers to Fringe Costume Gallery advertising
- Powder Pass Nordic Club: Pole Creek Challenge
- TA Ranch: Fire & Ice Festival 2025
- The Longmire Foundation: Longmire Days
- The Longmire Foundation: Big Horn Writers Conference
- Wyoming Wool Growers Association: The Wyoming Sheep and Wool Festival
- Hoofprints of the Past Museum

Some events did not take place and we have revised the program to include event support in 2026.

LODGING TAX

GROWTH AGAIN IN 2025

Local Lodging Tax receipts had fallen from a 2021-22 high in back-to-back years before showing some recovery in 2024-25.

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Vs. Previous
2015-16	\$205,792.99	.NA
2016-17	\$189,697.52	↓ 7.82
2017-18	\$184,077.79	↓ 2.96
2018-19	\$197,977.50	↑ 7.55
2019-20	\$185,553.39	↓ 6.28
2020-21	\$176,798.27	↓ 4.72
2021-22	\$270,020.03	↑ 52.73
2022-23	\$248,419.59	↓ 8.00
2023-24	\$243,154.54	↓ 2.12
2024-25 (actual)	\$272,236.43	↑ 11.96
2024-25 (comp.)	\$255,215.92	↑ 4.96

Actual collections for 2024-25 includes two months of increased collections because of the voter approved Lodging Tax increase. The comparable number adjusts to what that total would have been with the previous collection levels.

In the chart below for the calendar year, the total again shows actual collections and adjusted to the previous Local Lodging Tax.

Calendar Year	Revenue	Vs. Previous
2016	\$192,410.28	.NA
2017	\$192,111.20	↓ 0.16
2018	\$184,455.00	↓ 3.99
2019	\$197,770.98	↑ 7.22
2020	\$161,663.99	↓ 18.26
2021	\$268,799.29	↑ 66.25
2022	\$246,224.13	↓ 8.39
2023	\$238,373.47	↓ 3.19
2024	\$250,990.92	↑ 5.29
2025 (actual)	\$537,933.98	↑ 114.32
2025 (comp.)	\$289,536.75	↑ 15.36

Data from JCTA financial reports based on monthly deposits and Wyoming Department of Revenue data.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

How did we do in 2025? With the JCTA approach to promoting the county building off recent momentum of the last few years, we have had success in awareness, website traffic, and Lodging Tax Collections.

STATE LODGING TAX

Johnson County closed out Fiscal Year 2024-25 with 6.6 percent growth in State Lodging Tax collections vs. 2023-24 led the state in year-over-year growth through the first six months of Fiscal Year 2025-26 at 16.9 percent.

WEBSITE

[User acquisition: First primary user channel; TC user]

Category	2024	2025
Total website users	115,336	178,023
Total users per month	9,611.3	14,835.3
Returning users	7,481	15,682
Returning users per month	623.4	1,306.8
Average engagement time	0:27	0:31
Engaged sessions per user	0.37	0.41
Page views	199,972	333,094
Page views per month	16,664.3	27,757.8
Paid Search	48,388	41,421
Paid Social	22,996	10,790
Display	9,484	29,865
Organic Social	12,865	41,821
Direct	7,603	15,879
Organic Search	11,550	29,983
Email	735	25
Referral	360	2,202
Unassigned/Other	1,835	3,178
Paid Video	41	255
Paid Other	9	3
Cross-Network	—	696
Organic Shopping	—	32
Organic Video	—	10

Data from Google Analytics 4 for VisitBuffaloWY.com.

STRATEGIC PLAN

In the fall of 2025, the JCTA Board met with Young Strategies and Rudloff Solutions to develop a Strategic Plan for 2026-30. We will work on a tactical plan to implement the plan and have begun taking some steps already.

This plan identifies three major initiatives:

- 1, Market the Destination — Implement a new brand, increase ad budget, and use research to make decisions.
- 2, Organizational Excellence — Work with partners and maintain “best practices,” including ethical and financial accountability. Continue to communicate accomplishments within the community.
- 3, Visitor Experience Development — Support and improve access to existing attractions, encourage new ones.

FULFILLMENT

Materials sent out to prospective visitors.

Acquisition	2024	2025	2026
Chamber/JCTA/JGMM	14	13	4
Website sign-up	11	272	117
Total	25	286	121
Newsletter subscribers	2024	2025	2026
Website	0	20	30
Yellowstone NP Journal Leads	618	—	2,287
Miles Partnership Leads	34	—	2,731

The most recent newsletter was sent to 4,229 subscribers and had an open rate of 52 percent (industry standard, 40 percent).

VISITORS (INTERNATIONAL)

The Great American West tracks the itineraries of partner **tour operators** and reports on estimated nights booked and visitor spending. With the Fiscal Year ending in June:

Statistic	2023	2024	2025
Operators offering overnights	90	102	103
Overnights offered	287	299	276
Estimated room nights booked	2,404	2,180	2,061
Estimated visitor spending (millions)	\$1.16	\$1.25	\$1.18

The report showed decreases of 8.97 percent in rooms booked and 5.65 percent in visitor spending.