

JEFFERSON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

2025/2026 - Q1 REPORT
JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER

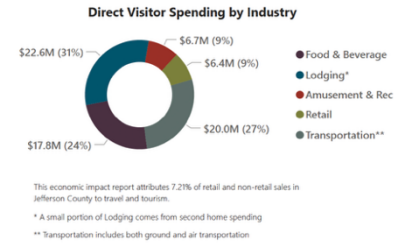
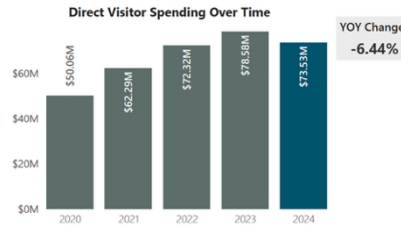
TOURISM INDUSTRY NEWS & UPDATES

Tourism Advocacy and Legislative Update: Staff collaborated with the Finance Department to complete the FY2025 Hotel/Motel Tax Report pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated §67-4-1403(c). Under this statute, all municipalities that levy a hotel/motel (occupancy) tax—whether authorized by statute, private act, ordinance, or resolution—are required to submit an annual written report to the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD) within ninety (90) days following the end of the fiscal year.

The purpose of this report is to fulfill the requirements of Tenn. Code Ann. §67-4-1403, specifically to document how collected funds have been designated and used for tourism promotion and development. Under §67-4-1403(d), if an audit finds that funds were expended for unauthorized purposes, the municipality must appropriate an equivalent amount from its general fund in the following fiscal year to be used exclusively for tourism promotion and development.

TN Dept. of Tourism (TDTD) 2024 Economic Impact of Travel:

- Jefferson County ranked 30th out of 95 counties statewide
- Direct tourism expenditures: \$73,525,600
- Employment: 473 hospitality positions
- Local tax generation: \$3.2 million
- Change from 2023: 6.6% decrease



Although Jefferson County experienced a decline in overall tourism expenditures according to the 2024 TDTD Economic Impact Report,

this decrease is primarily attributed to external factors, including the effects of Hurricane Helene on Douglas Lake and the temporary closure of Interstate 40 from North Carolina, which restricted access from one of the county's largest out-of-state visitor markets.

Preliminary FY2025 data indicates positive recovery trends, with occupancy tax receipts for the first two months tracking at or above FY2024 levels. While this early performance reflects strong local resilience, it remains important to exercise caution, as national travel trends and broader economic conditions suggest the potential for a slowdown in leisure travel later in the fiscal year. (Link to the Jefferson County Tourism Department: [Press Release Link](#), Full TDTD Report & Sources: [Report Link](#))

Hurricane Helene Cleanup: Jefferson County Tourism Department (JCTD) staff participated in a [Thank You Video](#) in partnership with the TVA, as well as a [Media Day](#) commemorating the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Helene. The EPA and TDEC have completed water quality testing and found that Douglas Lake's water quality remains at or below pre-hurricane contamination levels. [Link to EPA Press Release.](#)

TN Hospitality & Tourism Association (TNHTA): Staff attended the third-quarter TNHTA Board Meeting in Nashville on July 15, 2025, as well as the TNHTA Legal Symposium on July 16, where legal professionals provided key insights and best practices for the hospitality industry.

Middle East TN Tourism Council: Staff attended the first-quarter METTC Board Retreat in Clinton on August 27, 2025. The board discussed upcoming regional initiatives for the 16-county area, including lake map development and international travel marketing opportunities.

New Hire: JCTD hired Skylar Hamilton for the new part-time position of Operations Coordinator. Skylar has over 20 years' experience in the tournament fishing industry and is a local guide on Douglas, Cherokee and the South Holston River. Skylar manages all aspects of JCTD's fishing tournament logistics including communications, set up, parking, volunteer crew management, fish care.

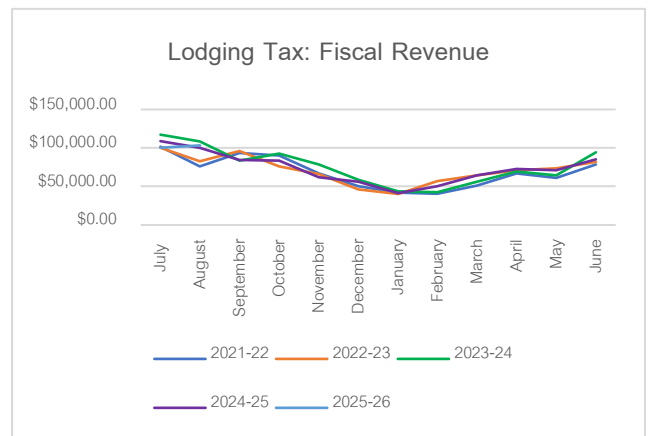
Local Tourism Industry Partner News:

- [Maiken From Scratch Bakery:](#) Maiken From Scratch Bakery – Now open in downtown Jefferson City, offering in-house baked goods, locally made items, and more.
- [Timber Stone RV Resort:](#) Jefferson County's newest luxury RV destination located in New Market. Opening October 2025, it will feature 113 sites, a pool with a water slide, lazy river, and outdoor fireplaces.

LOCAL HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX

(July 2024 – June 2025)

- 2024/25 YE Total: \$880.3K
- 3.3% decrease over Fiscal YE Total 2023/24
- FY26 YTD (July-August Reporting): \$203.7K



PUBLIC RELATIONS & MARKETING

Spring Photoshoot: JCTD partnered with PR Angler Photography for a two-day photoshoot in August highlighting lake cabins, camping, fishing, and boating on Cherokee Lake.

New Visitor Brochure & Expanded Distribution - JCTD produced a new visitor brochure now available in more than 300 locations across the Tri-Cities/Southern Virginia region, Knoxville, and Sevierville. Distribution also includes five Tennessee Welcome Centers and McGhee Tyson Airport.

WSSC Intern: JCTD contracted a Walters State Community College student intern to assist with capturing video and photography content for social media use.

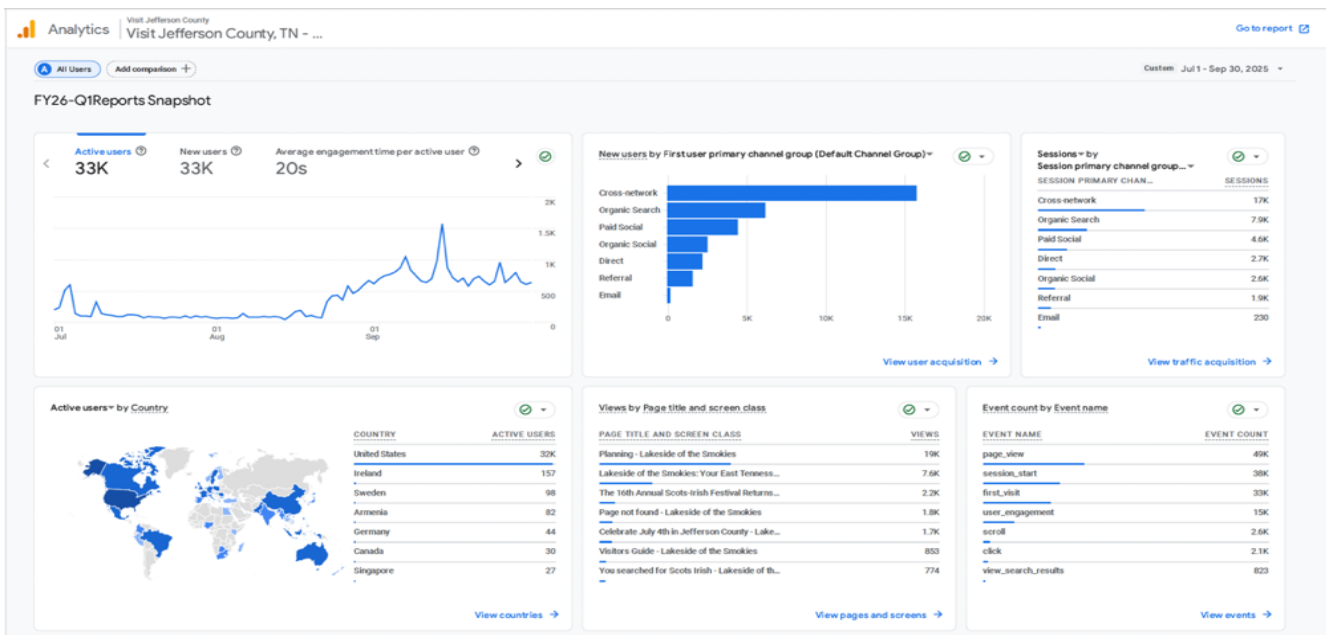


Blogs and Articles Published:

- [Experience the Magic of Music on the Town 2025 Concert Series in Historic Dandridge, TN!](#)
- [Soaking Up Summer: End-of-Summer Lake Vacation Rentals on Douglas Lake and Cherokee Lake](#)
- [Plan the Perfect Fall Vacation in Jefferson County, TN](#)
- [A BBQ Lover's Guide to Jefferson County, TN](#)
- [Fall Fishing Report: Cherokee Lake & Douglas Lake, TN](#)
- [The 16th Annual Scots-Irish Festival Returns to Historic Dandridge, Tennessee](#)

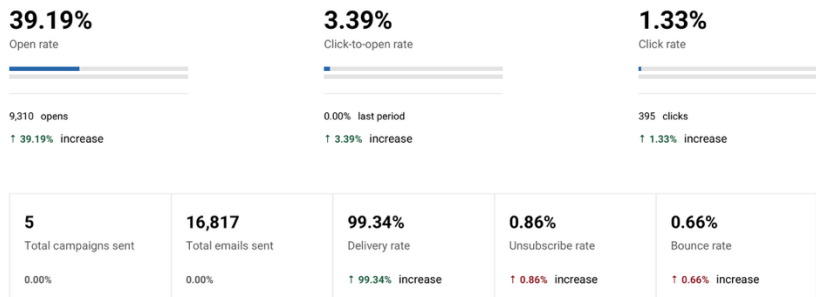
Website Analytics: VisitJeffersonCountyTN.com: [Report Link](#)

The website recorded over 33,000 active users and 49,000 page views during the first quarter of FY2026. Site traffic increased significantly following the launch of fall advertising campaigns in mid-August. The most visited section was the "Planning" page, featuring blogs, itineraries, and trip inspiration.



Email Marketing and Newsletters: JCTD transitioned to a new email marketing platform on July 1, 2025. The tourism newsletter now has 5,600+ subscribers, with 199 new subscribers added in the first quarter.

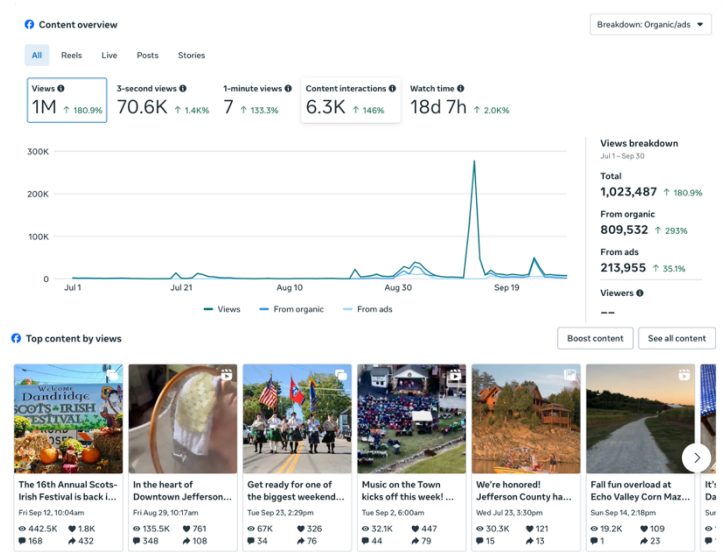
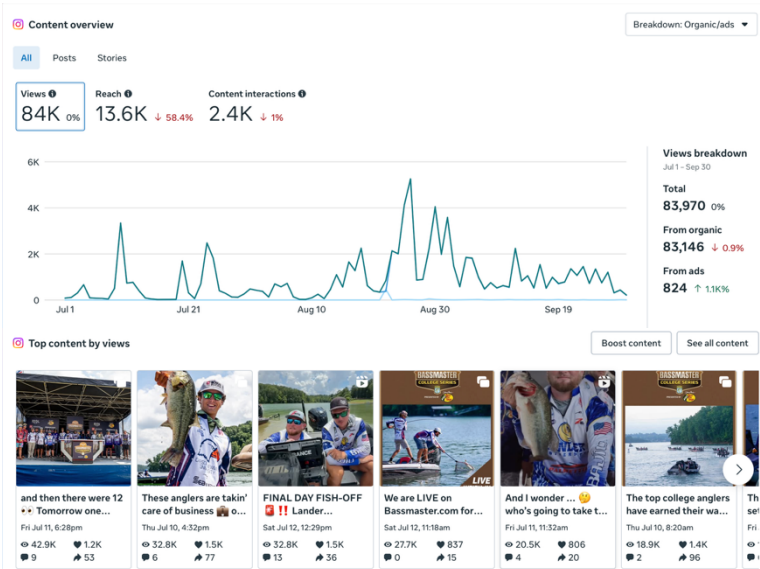
- [July](#)
- [August](#)
- [September](#)



Social Media Reach (Facebook & Instagram):

<https://www.facebook.com/visitjefferson>

https://www.instagram.com/visitjeffersonco_tn/



PAID MEDIA & ADVERTISING

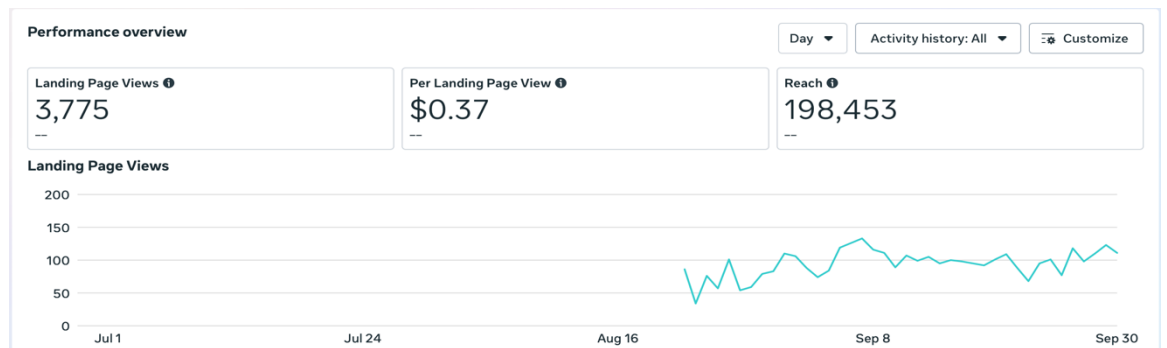
Traditional Media (Magazines, Travel Guides, Billboards, etc.)

- TWRA Hunt & Fish Guide: [Link Magazine](#) (pg. 13)
- Magazine Field & Stream Fall 2025 Magazine: [Link to Ad Creative](#)

Pay Per Click – Google & YouTube Ads: Fall campaigns launched in mid-August, targeting travelers searching for lodging and activities in and around the Smoky Mountains, Gatlinburg, and Pigeon Forge. Ads will run through mid-November, transitioning to winter-focused creative thereafter. [Link to YouTube Ad](#)



Meta Ads (Facebook & Instagram): Targeted ads launched mid-August promoting Jefferson County as a less crowded fall destination near the Smoky Mountains. Ads were served across Facebook and Instagram feeds, stories, reels, and display placements. [Ad Creatives](#)

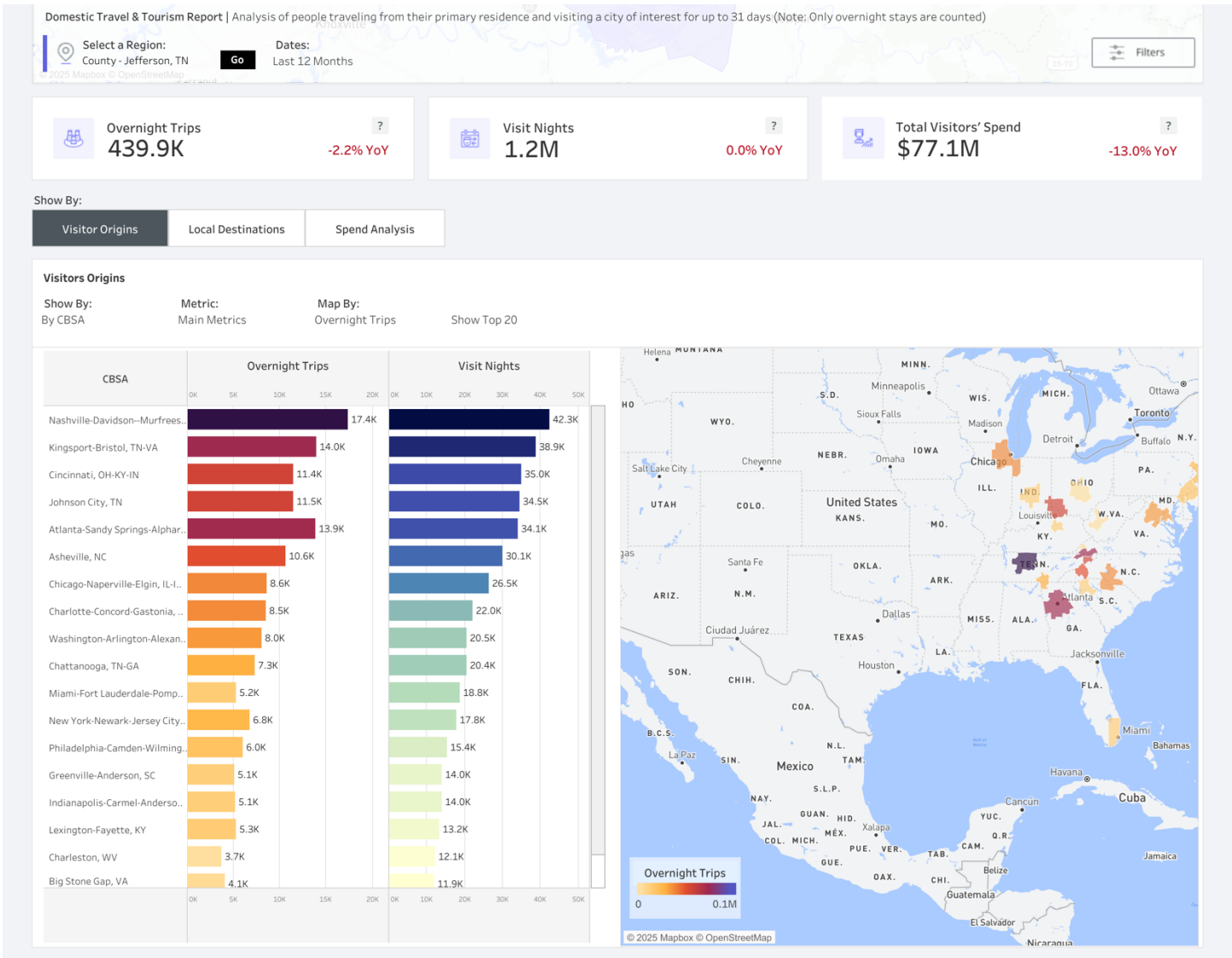


TRAVEL AND VISITOR DATA (PLACER.AI) Placer.AI is a location intelligence platform that provides insights into visitor traffic and consumer behavior using anonymized mobile location data. JCTD utilizes this data to evaluate event attendance, visitor length of stay, travel distance, spending patterns, and demographics for more effective marketing strategies.

During the first quarter, Jefferson County recorded 1.6 million out-of-market visitors and a total of 5.1 million visits. Visitation to date has already matched 2024 levels, indicating a strong recovery from the effects of Hurricane Helene on regional travel. [Link to Full Market Report](#)

Jefferson County, TN		Hebron Church Road, Grants Chapel, TN	
Visits	5.1M	Panel Visits	104.6K
Visitors	1.6M	Visits YoY	-0.9%
Visit Frequency	3.17	Visits Yo2Y	-6.7%
Avg. Dwell Time	266 Min	Visits Yo3Y	-7.4%

Last 12 Months Overnight Visitor/Trips Report



EVENTS & TOURNAMENTS - From July 1 – September 30, 2025, JCTD sponsored or hosted six major events and supported the Music on the Town concert series.

- July 9-12, 2025 – Bassmaster College Series 2025 National Championship, Cherokee Lake
 - 150+ teams, 201 boats, representing 50 universities across 20 states.
 - Schools participated from as far as Michigan, Texas, Nebraska, and Kansas.
 - Partnered with Carson-Newman University for the championship banquet.
 - The event featured a first-ever tie, resulting in a final fish-off between Carson-Newman University and Lander University (SC).
 - [Link to event media at Bassmaster.com](#)
- August 27-28, 2025 – Douglas Lake Pro/AM Bass Tournament, Douglas Lake
 - 70+ participants, including professional anglers and regional celebrities.
 - Included a pre-tournament concert at Field of Dreams featuring local artists, food vendors, and prizes.
- Thursdays in September – Music on the Town Concert Series, Dandridge
 - Four concerts held throughout September, featuring local and national performers.
 - Estimated total attendance: 2,300 over four weeks.
- September 20, 2025 – Pine Fest, White Pine
 - There were approximately 3K attendees, a 40% increase over 2024 attendance!
 - JCTD and the Town of White Pine partnered on a co-op media buy for a billboard in the Morristown market for 6 weeks prior to the event.
- September 20, 2025 - Senior Olympics Cycling Qualifier (incomplete data, not included in impact overview)
- September 27, 2025 – 16th Annual Scots Irish Festival
 - Approx. 3,400 attendees, with 20% traveling from 50+ miles away.
 - JCTD assisted with promotional materials, a [press release](#) and digital marketing.



2025 Event Economic Impact Overview (YTD)

NOTE: ROI and impact reports are based on event data including surveys, registration, Placer.ai, and ticket sales. These factors are adjusted using IRS Federal Daily Average Rates.

Total Number of Events	14
EST. Overall Attendance	17,448
EST. Overnight Stays	1,492
AVG. Number of Nights Stayed	1.54
Total Number of Boats	989
Total Food Expenditures	\$965,871.43
Total Misc. Expenditures	\$965,871.43
Total Gas Expenditures (boats only)	\$90,069.64
Total Lodging Revenue	\$161,136.00
Total Impact	\$2,182,948.50
ROI	6.79%

2025 Upcoming Events: [View All Upcoming Events](#)

VISIT: [HTTPS://VISITJEFFERSONCOUNTYTN.COM/JCTD-REPORTS/](https://visitjeffersoncountyttn.com/jctd-reports/) TO ACCESS LINKS TO ADDITIONAL REPORTS, INSIGHTS, AND INFORMATION.