



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

Presented By :

Ross-Chillicothe Convention
& Visitors Bureau

Introduction

The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau is a 501(c)(6) organization dedicated to promoting Chillicothe and Ross County, Ohio, as a prime tourism destination. Its operations are entirely funded by lodging tax revenue collected from overnight visitors staying in local hotels, cabins, and short-term rental properties. Ross County imposes a 3% lodging tax on these room nights, which is allocated to the Bureau for marketing and operational purposes. Similarly, the City of Chillicothe also collects a 3% lodging tax on properties that offer 5 rooms or more. The city contributes an annual investment to support the Bureau's initiatives.

Tourism in Ross County bolsters various industries that benefit directly from visitors, including lodging, food and beverage, and entertainment, among others. The broader community also reaps indirect benefits, as these sectors generate demand for suppliers and create job opportunities. Furthermore, residents enjoy an annual tax savings of \$608 per household due to the economic impact of tourism.

Memberships & Affiliations

Local Memberships & Affiliations

Adena Mansion & Gardens
Chillicothe Kiwanis Club
Chillicothe Paints
Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce
Convention Facilities Authority
Feast of the Flowering Moon
Friends of Hopewell
Friends of Lucy Hayes Heritage Center
Greater Chillicothe & Ross County Development
Majestic Theatre
Pump House Center for the Arts
Ross County Genealogical Society
Ross County Historical Society
Ross County Port Authority
"Tecumseh!" Outdoor Drama

Mission

The mission of the Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau is the growth and prosperity of area economic development through tourism. The Bureau's primary focus is to assist, attract, and educate residents, travelers, and partners. It will function as an economic driver of the hospitality industry in general through promotion of extended or overnight visits to the areas of Chillicothe and Ross County, Ohio.

Board of Directors 2025

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President: Curt McAllister (CP Management)
Vice-President: Patti Cavender (Frankfort Sunflower Festival)
Treasurer: Nancy Ames (Community, At-Large)
Past-President: Brandon Smith (The Scioto Society)
Eric Woodworth (Hampton Inn & Suites)
Nancy Schaffer (Hillside Haven)

DIRECTORS

Chris Alford (Hopewell Culture NHP)
Mike Throne (Chamber of Commerce)
Bryan Wickline (Chillicothe Paints)
Steph Moore (Willis-James B&B)
David Glass (Ross County Commissioner)
Andrew Hall (Ross County Historical Society)
Kathy Payne (City of Chillicothe)
Jen Aultman (Ohio History Connection - Adena Mansion & Gardens)

CVB Staff

Melody Young, *Executive Director*
Gene Betts, *Communication Assistant*
Christy Simmons, *Office Manager*

State & Regional Memberships & Affiliations

Tourism Ohio - *Ohio, The Heart of it All*
Ohio Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus
Ohio Travel Association
Ohio History Connection
Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia
Ohio Traveler
Appalachian Ohio
Ohio Has It

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW



MELODY YOUNG
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

During this past year, the Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau strengthened its role as a key economic driver for Ross County by expanding its marketing reach to a broader and more diverse audiences. Strategic marketing initiatives increased awareness of the destination across regional and national markets, while enhanced outreach to group tour organizers helped position Ross County as a compelling option for organized travel and overnight stays.

While these efforts generated strong interest and visitation, weather conditions continued to present challenges. Periods of extreme heat and rainfall impacted outdoor attractions and seasonal experiences, influencing visitor patterns throughout the year. Despite these factors, Ross County tourism remained resilient, with continued visitor spending supporting local businesses, attractions, and the broader community economy.

4%

Increase in lodging tax collected in 2025.

28%

Increase in new users to the Bureau's website.

6.1%

Increase in trips originating from outside of Ohio.

4.9%

Increase in total visitor spend.

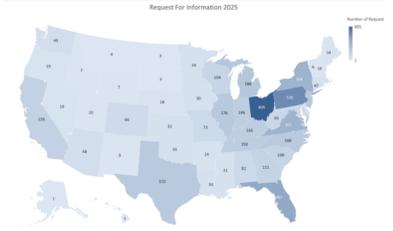
Lodging Tax

In 2025, lodging tax revenues increased by 4%, reinforcing lodging tax growth as a key performance indicator of the Bureau's marketing effectiveness and tourism's return on investment. The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau received \$523,075.41 from Ross County's portion of the lodging tax, while the City of Chillicothe maintained its annual investment of \$50,000. These funds provided a total operating budget of \$573,075.41, supporting continued destination marketing efforts throughout the year.

Marketing Results

The Bureau expanded its marketing efforts across both traditional and digital platforms to reach audiences well beyond the region. Print advertising appeared in such publications as *Ohio Magazine*, *Woman's Day*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Compass*, supported by integrated digital placements through these publications, as well as National Geographic. Additional digital efforts included targeted Google Ads and social media advertising, extending the Bureau's marketing reach to more than 450 miles from Ross County.

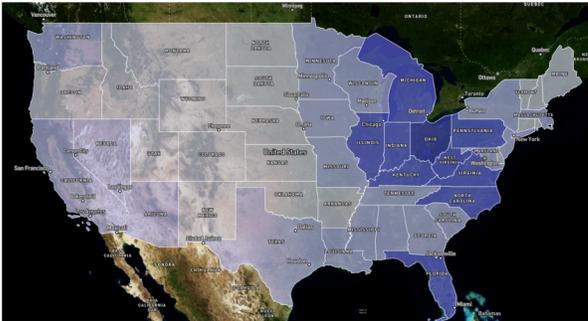
These combined efforts generated a substantial increase in requests for visitor information. More than 5,000 visitor packets were requested and distributed to interested individuals with a reach to all 50 states. The top five states outside of Ohio requesting information included Pennsylvania, Florida, New York, Virginia, and Illinois, with notable growth in interest from western markets, led by Texas, California, Colorado, Arizona, and Washington.



Map depicting where informational packets were sent in 2025.

Trip Origination to Ross County

With expanded advertising as a key focus in 2025, trips from visitors outside of Ohio increased by 6% year-over-year. The accompanying map illustrates where these trips originated, with deeper blue shading indicating higher visitation rates. This growth aligns with an increase in informational packets being sent to interested individuals across the United States. As visitors traveled from greater distances to experience Chillicothe and Ross County, they contributed to a 4.9% rise in visitor spending - highlighting the critical role overnight visitors play in strengthening the local economy.



Data from Placer.ai depicting where visitation originated.

Community Support

In 2025, the Bureau's Promotional Grant Assistance Program (GAP) provided \$25,000 in financial assistance to ten organizations, supporting events and initiatives to increase tourism in Ross County. Recipients included: Atomic Speedway, Chillicothe Half Marathon, GusMacker, Paper City Mentoring - Pickleball Tournament, Pump House Center for the Arts - Juneteenth Program, Ross County Historical Society, Downtown Chillicothe - Sands in the Street Volleyball Tournament, Southern Ohio Forest Rally, The Buck Fifty, and The Scioto Society.

Top Three Demographic Categories for 2025

Families in Motion

This group primarily consists of married couples ages 25-45, many with two or more children. They live in quiet towns supported by employment in construction, manufacturing, and skilled trades. These households value outdoor recreation and family-oriented activities.

Power Elite

This market values sophisticated yet authentic experiences, with a strong appreciation for quality products and service. Many are empty nesters, with greater flexibility and curiosity, they dine out, enjoy evening events, and travel extensively both within the U.S. and internationally.

Autumn Years

This segment is made up primarily of older, retired couples - most over age 65. They prefer familiar, low-key activities and the occasional dinner out. They favor quiet, predictable leisure experiences. They engage in traditional media, like women's and housekeeping magazines.

Attractions

Attraction performance in 2025 reflected both growth and weather-related challenges. Hopeton Earthworks experienced the highest increase in visitation, followed by continued gains in Downtown Chillicothe, and the Majestic Theatre. Several outdoor attractions, however, saw slight declines or remained flat year over year, largely due to weather impacts including periods of extreme heat and heavy rainfall.

Visitor Center

Planning progressed for a new Visitor Center that will serve as a regional gateway for travelers exploring Chillicothe, Ross County, and southern Ohio, while supporting visitation to the World Heritage-inscribed earthworks. The center was designed to include interactive exhibits to engage visitors with attractions and experiences. Funding for this project was secured through state capital funds awarded to the Ross County Commissioners, and the Visitor Center is planned for North Mulberry Street in coordination with the City of Chillicothe. Its location aligns with improvements planned for Yoctangee Park. Upon completion, the center will become the new home of the Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau, with an anticipated completion date by the end of 2026.



Rendering by American Structure Point

In the Mix in '26: Plans & Goals

Marketing

Marketing priorities for 2026 build on the expanded reach achieved in 25, which resulted in increased requests for visitor information from states farther outside Ohio and growth in website traffic from travelers seeking to learn more about Chillicothe and Ross County. While the destination is widely recognized for its charm, many visitors continue to experience Ross County as a day trip rather than an overnight stay. The 2026 marketing plan focuses on converting this growing interest into longer stays by positioning Ross County as a premier heritage and outdoor destination. Key strategies include partnering with lodging providers to develop “Stay & Explore” packages tied to major attractions and events, pitching destination stories to regional travel outlets such as *Ohio Magazine*, *Midwest Living*, and *Only in Your State*, and strengthening promotion of existing annual events with messaging that encourages weekend travel. Additional efforts will support shoulder-season visitation, alongside the launch of a new Bureau website in 2026 designed to better serve interested travelers and convert inspiration into trip planning.

Foward Looking Overview

Additional initiatives in 2026 will focus on capitalizing on key opportunities that support visitation growth and partner engagement. America 250 presents a significant opportunity to showcase the heritage of Chillicothe and Ross County and highlight the area’s role in the nation’s story. New lodging options will further support overnight visitation, with the opening of TownePlace Suites by Marriott in spring providing an additional property for travelers. Several conferences and events are being planned that are expected to generate additional room nights in the community. Alongside these efforts, the Bureau will continue to strengthen communication with partners through quarterly updates and shared opportunities to collectively reach and engage target audiences.



TownePlace Suites by Marriott opening spring 2026, owned by Lucid Hotel Group.

Looking Ahead, Together

Building Momentum for What’s Next

As Ross County continues to gain attention as a destination, the progress made this year reflects the power of collaboration, strategic investment, and a shared commitment to growth. From expanded marketing reach and increased visitor spending to planning efforts that support future visitation, 2025 laid important groundwork for what comes next. None of this progress is possible without the support from partners, stakeholders, and community leaders. Looking ahead through 2026, the Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau remains focused on strengthening visitation, supporting overnight stays, and ensuring tourism continues to be a positive economic driver for the community.



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