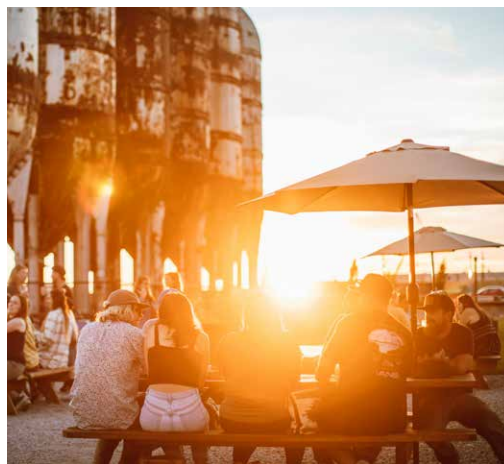




Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism **2021 BY THE NUMBERS**

View our 2021 Video Annual Report at [Bellingham.org/about-us](https://www.bellingham.org/about-us)



VISIT
Bellingham
WHATCOM COUNTY

one destination,
many adventures

Our Mission

Visit Bellingham | Whatcom County is a nonprofit, economic development and destination marketing agency who promotes Bellingham and Whatcom County as a premier, year-round travel destination.

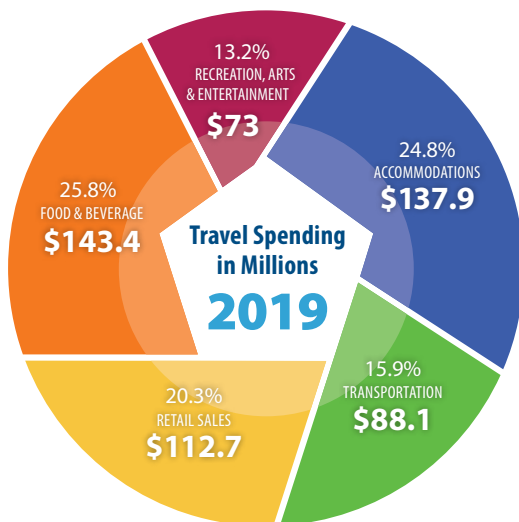
Direct visitor spending is over half a billion dollars of impact in a non-COVID year, and the tourism and hospitality sector employs thousands of people in Whatcom County (4,698 in 2021, down from 7,443 in 2019). Our work brings stakeholders together, educates, brings visitors to market, and supports appropriate destination management planning.



2021 Economic Impact Data

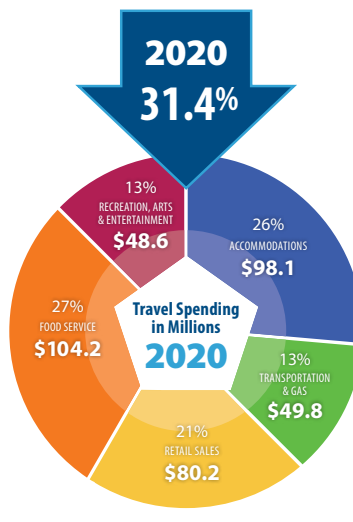
After a year of supporting local organizations in 2020, in 2021 we could resume some external outreach. In the big picture view, direct visitor spending increased 38.4% in 2021, back up to a level that was 95% of 2019.

We still have much work to do to make up for the loss in momentum in growth, and to support the much slower rebound in our vital tourism workforce.



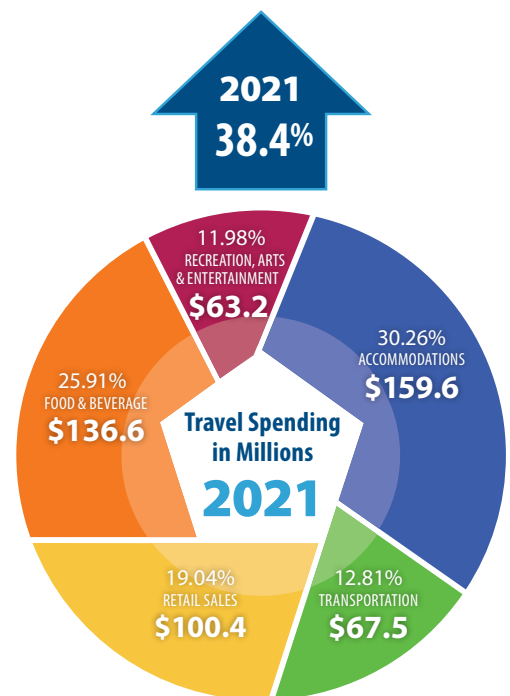
TOTAL TRAVEL SPENDING – 2019 – IN WHATCOM COUNTY

\$555,000,000



TOTAL TRAVEL SPENDING – 2020 – IN WHATCOM COUNTY

\$380,900,000

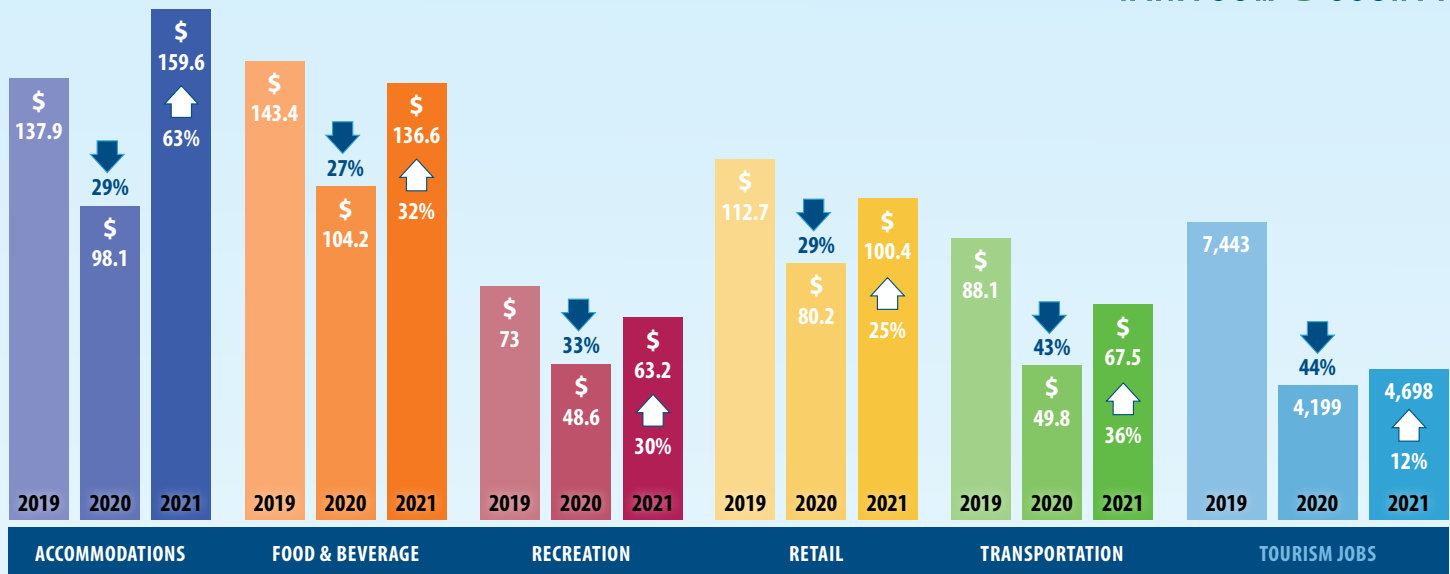


TOTAL TRAVEL SPENDING – 2021 – IN WHATCOM COUNTY

\$527,400,000

TRAVEL SPENDING IN 2021 WAS AT 95% OF PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS (2019).

Sector Impacts & Economic Recovery, 2019-2021



* Dollar amounts in millions; percentages rounded to nearest whole number.

Local Support and Partnerships

Our Partners

To bring visitors to the region with the desired impact, we work with many, many partners. Our small staff stays connected.

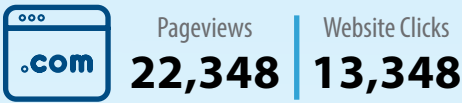
- Adventure Travel Trade Association
- Bellingham International Airport Advisory Committee
- Bellingham Tourism Commission
- Blaine Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
- Cascade Loop Association
- Chambers in Birch Bay, Mt. Baker Foothills, Ferndale, Blaine, Lynden and Bellingham
- Cities of Bellingham, Blaine, Ferndale, Lynden, Sumas, Nooksack, Everson
- City of Bellingham Parks Department
- Destinations International
- DMA West
- Downtown Bellingham Partnership
- Fairhaven Association
- International Food, Wine, and Travel Writers Association
- International Travel Blogger Exchange
- Lummi Nation Office of Economic Policy
- National Association of Sports Commissions
- National Tour Association NTA
- North American Travel Journalists Association
- NW PR Council
- Port of Bellingham
- Public Relations Society of America
- Small Cities Partnership
- Society of American Travel Writers
- Sports Events & Tourism Association
- State of Washington Tourism
- Sustainable Connections
- Team Whatcom
- Tour Operatorland
- Travel Media Association of Canada
- US Travel Association
- Washington Association of Sports Commissions
- Washington Festivals & Events Association
- Washington Filmworks
- Washington Interscholastic Activities
- Washington Outdoor Business Alliance
- Washington State Destination Marketing Organizations
- Washington State Parks
- Washington Trust for Historic Preservation
- Whatcom County
- Whatcom County Health Department
- Whatcom County Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
- Whatcom County Parks Department
- Whatcom Maritime Association
- Whatcom Working Waterfront Coalition

Our Members

Around 180 local businesses and organizations choose to work with us as our members. Their stories build our presence. These visitor-ready partners are represented heavily in media tours, advertising, online content, social media, and on our website.

Total Members	182
Tourism Investor (\$1,000) members	7
Tourism Partner (\$500) members	28
Tourism Associate (\$300) members	147
New Members	13
\$1000 Investor level	1
\$500 Partner level	5
\$300 Associate level	11

MEMBER WEB LISTINGS:



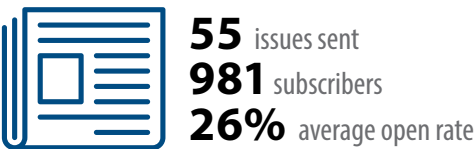
Tracked from July – December 2021.
New site was created in July 2021 and we began tracking Member pageviews and website clicks.



Information and Expertise

Whether a member or a partner, we take our role in sharing information and expertise seriously. Along with our local e-newsletter, we also hosted three Tourism Education Series events — free webinars that brought world-class training and ideas to our region. Topics were Cultural Heritage Tourism, Everyone Welcome (LGBTQ+ visitor-readiness), and Toward Zero Waste (how to host green events and participate in waste-reducing programs locally).

LOCAL E-NEWSLETTER AUDIENCE:



Visitor Outreach

Interest-Generating Activities

Press:

- In 2021, we fulfilled **73 media requests**
- Shared **284 local press releases**
- Whatcom County was featured in **153 published stories**
- In November, we **hosted the Travel + Words Conference**, bringing 30+ folks to market for a couple of overnight stays, including 13 travel writers who learned and wrote about the region for their audiences.

Awareness Activities

Advertising: We had over 100 different paid campaigns and placements in 2021, including:

- **Print ads** in magazines such as *Conde Nast*, *Sunset*, *USA Today Travel*, *Seattle Magazine*, etc.
- **Broadcast spots** on Seattle market stations and OTT distribution in national markets
- **Buys in email campaigns, partner social media, or even playbills of key target areas**
- **Listings and content in regional travel guides**
- **Sponsored content and digital advertising** nationwide and in Canada and Germany

Social Media: Across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and TikTok, we achieved:

- **3.9M impressions**, or **324k impressions per month**
- Reached **2.4M user accounts** just on FB and IG
- Grew video views from 11K to **212k**

SEO & Content Marketing:

Making sure we stay top of mind requires a lot of SEO work.

We migrated to a new, custom-built, tourism-specific website in July 2021 and we catch those folks seeking on the web by dynamically serving over 2,000 core website and article pages with helpful storytelling that we work to keep updated.

Investigation Activities

Website Use: Folks are exploring our website. Compared with 2020, users and sessions were both up 24% overall, and pageviews were up 33%.

Website Analytics bellingham.org

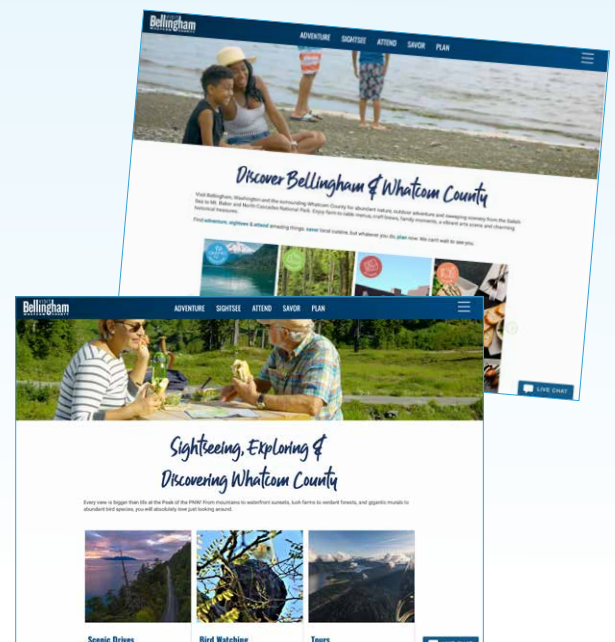
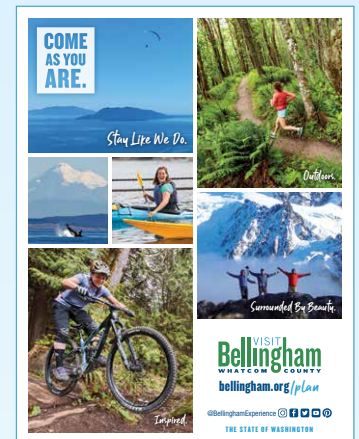
- Total Pageviews **1,140,731**
- Total Sessions **684,697**
- Total Users **517,789**



Visitor request support: Between our website requests and reader response replies, we answered the asks and mailed out **5,807 packets of information** to prospective visitors in 2021.

Print material distribution: Coming out of COVID we still managed to distribute **12,750 physical visitor guides**, and the **online version of the book received over 6K views**.

Visitor email: **3,778 information seekers** added themselves to our opt-in visitor email communications list, upping the groomed **total to around 13K**. When we send them campaigns, **32.2% of them open and read the emails**.



Action-Generating Activities

Visitation directly related to campaigns is something new for us to track starting in 2021. For targeted digital ads that were run Sept – Dec 2021 in Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Austin, Denver, Phoenix, and Portland, as of 5/15/2022 we have seen **4,032 ad-aware devices** come to market for an estimated **visitor revenue of \$2.6M**.

We launched a new gamified quest initiative, Bandwango, in late 2021, encouraging users to sign up for guided itineraries in arts and culture.

47 people signed up and checked in at 31 locations in November and December of 2021.

Our **events calendar is one of our top web resource pages**, letting people check for what is happening on the fly and keep engaging locally. As events came back, so did our listings.

Top Pageview Categories Bellingham.org

1. Articles/Blogs	261,072
2. Home Page	112,416
3. Event Calendar	81,931
4. Itineraries	57,449
5. Things To Do	55,026

We kept our materials stocked and had staff present when safe at locations such as the Ferry Terminal, Bellingham International Airport, our visitor support locations downtown and off the freeway, and via many, many hotel, restaurant and retail partners. Giving recommendations lets folks explore a little further.

Projects with Staying Power

Travel guru Rick Steves filmed three episodes that we produced with help from *Seattle Times* and we own, and he became an unofficial spokesperson for our brand in other outreach like print and even underwriting ads for his show on PBS. 15M folks were reached with the initial campaign, and we just keep serving the content. Rick's brand supports us directly on social media and *Travel + Leisure* also wrote a story about the series.

Loyalty Activities

The story doesn't end once folks visit, we have segmented emails and targeted messaging in digital ads for folks who have already been here to engage them to plan their next trip. Our photo contest and interactive posts on social media keep our visitors as the star of their own vacation story: a community of travelers that love the Peak of the Pacific NW.

Officers: Chair: **Teri Treat**, Inn at Lynden | Immediate Past Chair: **Keith Coleman**, Marriott SpringHill Suites | Vice Chair: **Mr. Dana Weber**, Best Western Plus Bellingham Airport | Secretary: **Scott Ward**, Fairhaven Association **Board Members:** **Janelle Abel**, Bellewood Farms | **Steve Beringer**, Anthony's Hearthfire Grill | **Jennifer Cavney**, Holiday Inn & Suites | **Sunil Harman & Emily Phillipe**, Bellingham International Airport | **Louise Mugar**, The Northern Light | **Chris Roselli**, Western Washington University **Ex-Officio Board Members:** **Don Goldberg**, Ex-Officio Port of Bellingham | **Hollie Huthman**, Ex-Officio Bellingham City Council | **Mike McFarlane**, Ex-Officio Whatcom County Parks Department | **Guy Occhiogrosso**, Ex-Officio Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Current Staff

President & CEO: **Sandy Ward**

Director of Marketing: **Amy Guerra**

Marketing Manager: **Amber Vinup**

Marketing & Social Media
Coordinator: **Lorin Lindell**

Visitor Experience Coordinator: **Justine Mallahan**

Sales & Special Projects
Manager: **Eric Rainaud-Hinds**

Bookkeeper: **Melody Myers**

For more information, contact:
sandy@bellingham.org

