

Visitor Economic Impact

\$159.8 **MILLION**
Visitor Spending

Spending Breakdown

\$73.7 **MILLION**
Lodging

\$35.3 **MILLION**
Food & Beverage

\$21.8 **MILLION**
Retail & Shopping

\$17.3 **MILLION**
Transportation

\$11.6 **MILLION**
Recreation

VISITORS GENERATED
\$9.6 MILLION
IN STATE & LOCAL TAXES
WHICH IS EQUIVALENT TO
\$700 IN TAX
SAVINGS PER
HOUSEHOLD

Overall visitor spending was up in all categories in 2023 with Recreation seeing the most significant upturn at 7.3% year over year.

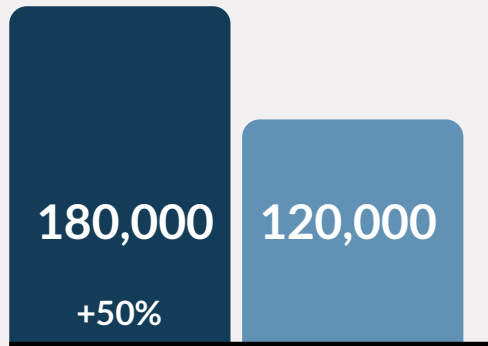
Source: Explore Georgia 2023 Economic Impact Report by Tourism Economics

*This data is made available at the end of the current year for the prior year.

2024 Marketing Report

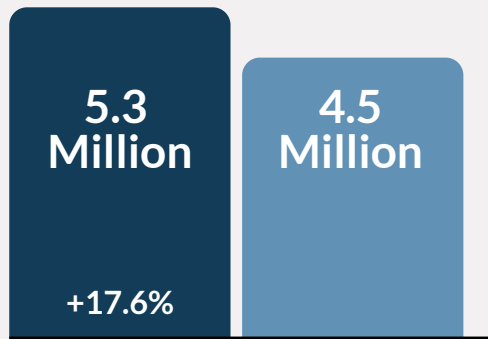


PickEllijay.com



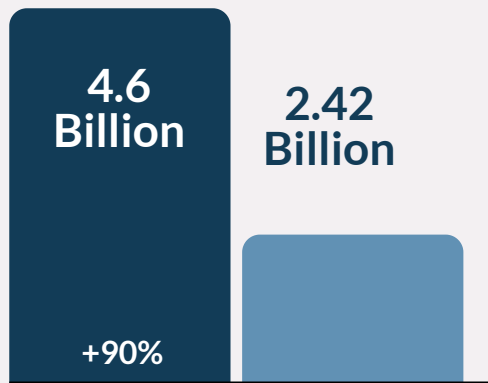
Active Website Users

Social Media



Total Impressions/Reach

Public Relations

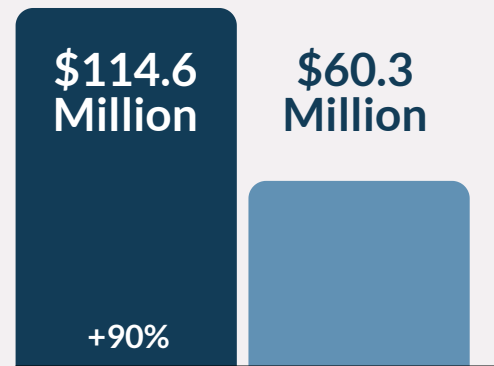
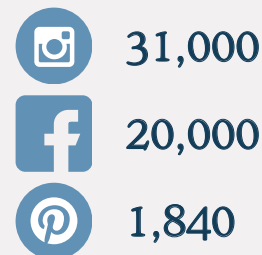


Total Impressions

Top Website Pages

1. Homepage
2. Apple Festival Preview
3. October Event Guide
4. Favorite Family Hiking Trails
5. 2024 Event Preview
6. Apple Arts Festival
7. Sip
8. Apple Orchards
9. Holiday Getaway in Ellijay
10. 4th of July Guide

Total Followers



Advertising Equivalency

Marketing Highlights

Video Campaign Refresh

With so much growth and expansion to Ellijay's tourism offerings since our last video campaign in 2021 and 2022, we contracted Sozo Bear Films from Dahlonega, GA to capture three new adventures in Ellijay. These new videos included a girls' food and wine getaway, a family cabin and farm store adventure, a friends' fall getaway and were each made available in a variety of lengths and formats for optimization across advertising platforms.



2024 Visitors Guide

In the third edition of our magazine-style Visitors Guide, Pick Ellijay continued telling stories that inspire potential visitors to come make unforgettable memories in Ellijay. This year's guide featured the staple Apple Orchard, Vineyard, Dining, and Outdoor articles that have been

the backbone of our travel guide while also adding thoughtful expansions like the "Offbeat Ellijay" feature focusing on destinations like Poole's BBQ and Expedition:BIGFOOT which appeal to visitors looking for less common adventures. From March 2024 through the end of the year, the Pick Ellijay team mailed out 4,634 visitors' guides to interested travelers and distributed 35,126 guides to local businesses and regional visitors centers across the state of Georgia.



"Happily Ever Ellijay" Campaign

In 2024, we launched the "Happily Ever Ellijay" campaign which features travelers having storybook-quality experiences in some of Ellijay's most scenic spots. Deploying both in print and digitally, this campaign aims to connect travelers looking for meaningful experiences with vacation plans that are closer to home than they might think.



"Fall for Ellijay" Guide

As a successor to our seasonal "Orchards & Apple Houses" Guide, the "Fall for Ellijay" guide encompassed all the orchard fun, events, and agritourism opportunities that are available in the Fall. This guide was distributed to Regional Visitors Centers around the state, distributed locally, and available online.

New Initiatives

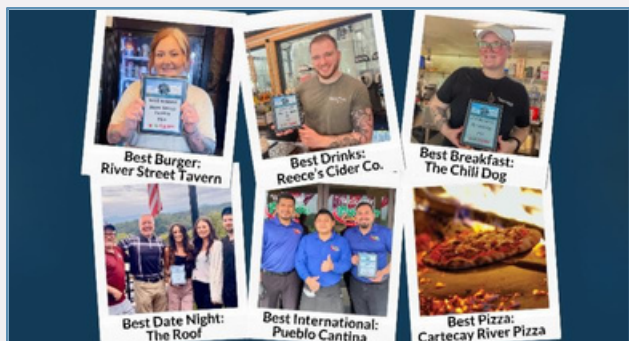


Offbeat Ellijay Campaign

In an effort to increase awareness around some of the area's most unique low-cost and all-season activities, we launched the "Offbeat Traveler" commercial in April. This vlog-style commercial follows an aspiring influencer on his Bigfoot hunting journey and is the first step in our multi-year "Offbeat Ellijay" campaign.

Pick Ellijay Pollinator Garden

In the early summer, the landscaping around the Downtown Welcome Center was replaced with pollinator-friendly flowers, grasses, and milkweed. In the late summer, signage was added around the garden to educate children visiting the Downtown Welcome Center on the lifecycle of monarch butterflies, the importance of pollinators, and fun farm experiences like flower picking that are located around Gilmer County. The signage was made available in both English and Spanish so that all young families residing in and around Downtown Ellijay would be able to benefit from the signage. In 2025, we hope to add a digital pass focused on the garden.



Ellijay Restaurant Week

In mid-May, our all-new restaurant week gave visitors and locals alike a chance to vote on their favorite local dining establishments across six categories. Over 4,400 votes were cast over the three week voting period. In 2025, we look forward to adding more voting categories.

Downtown Light Nights

From Light Up Ellijay through the end of the Christmas season, Downtown Light Nights was an all-new walking tour of business displays around Downtown Ellijay. This event was aimed at increasing offerings for holiday fun seekers and giving businesses a chance to receive recognition for their decorating efforts. In all, 873 votes were cast for Best Business Display and Best Window Display. In 2025, we are hoping to add a Best Residential Display category.



Top Media Mentions of 2024

Yahoo! US

“Fall & Holiday in Metro Atlanta”

“The Holiday’s Cozy English Cottage Crosses the Pond”

AOL

“The Best Winter Weekend Getaways Across the US that are Actually Affordable”

“Giant Camera Gunning to be North Georgia’s Picture-Perfect Getaway”

Trip Advisor

“12 Incredible Fall Weekend Getaways Across the US”

The Atlantic

“Photos: Remembering Jimmy Carter’s Life of Service”

Tasting Table

“11 Dishes from the State of Georgia You Have to Try At Least Once”

News Break

“East Ellijay: A Haven for Outdoor Enthusiasts and Cultural Festivities”

World Atlas

“6 Most Scenic Drives in Georgia”

“10 Unforgettable Fall Getaways from Atlanta”

“9 Top Places to Visit in Georgia this Fall”

“7 Most Bike-Friendly Towns in Georgia”

AJC

“Where to Pick--and Celebrate-- Fresh Apples in North Georgia this Fall”

“40 Must-Visit Waterfalls in North Georgia”

“Drink the Best Wine and Visit the Best Waterfalls Georgia Has to Offer”

Only in Your State

“Your Ultimate Guide to Winter Attractions and Activities in Georgia”

“The Best Apple Cider Donuts in Georgia Come from This Remote Orchard”

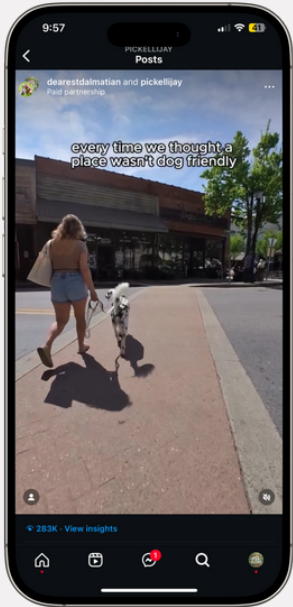
The Travel

“7 Best Mountain Towns in Georgia to Visit in Fall 2024”

Influencer Collaborations

In 2024, Pick Ellijay partnered with 4 influencers

with the strategic purpose of increasing brand recognition within key markets. Each influencer was chosen for their unique appeal to audiences interested in art, food and wine, outdoor activities, unique lodging, and pet-friendly travel.



Lelani Trueting @dearestdalmatian

Located in Nashville (a rapidly emerging visitor market for Ellijay), Lelani Trueting shares relatable content for pet owners. Her April visit to Ellijay focused on beyond pet-friendly offerings in Ellijay and Gilmer County.



Romie Robertson @roamingwithromie

An Atlanta native, Romie built a platform around luxury travel and unforgettable experiences. With more Atlanta travelers looking for trips closer to home, Romie approached us with an opportunity to collaborate on visits showcasing the year-round beauty of Ellijay. Her visits covered local art, restaurants, pet-friendly lodging, and Christmas activities.

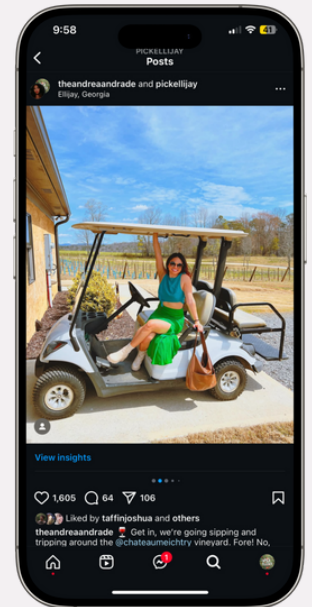
Darley Newman @darleynewman

While filming an episode of her PBS series "Travels with Darley" Darley live-shared her adventures in Ellijay. Over the week of filming and throughout the month of August, Darley shared posts, reels, and stories featuring over a dozen local businesses and attractions in Gilmer County.



Andrea Andrade @theandreaandrade

Each year, Atlanta actress and influencer Andrea Andrade completes the Georgia Wine Highway for her birthday. In 2024, we partnered with Andrea to bring her much-anticipated wine tour to Ellijay. This partnership allowed us to introduce travelers accustomed to visiting for day trips to vineyard-centric lodging options, local dining, and extend day trips into overnight visits.



Campaign Impact

Throughout the course of 2024, these partnerships garnered a collective **959,676 impressions** for our community and **146,816 interactions** which equates to **\$237,842 in advertising value** across the campaign. This campaign is proof that investing in quality influencer partnerships can meaningfully move the needle for locally-owned businesses looking to expand their reach on social media.

Grants, Tradeshows, Television, & More

Tourism Marketing Grants

Throughout 2024, Pick Ellijay was proud to award over \$66,000 to local nonprofits in event marketing grants. These funds were used to market events like Georgia Apple Festival, Trail Fest, Woofstock, BaconFest, and more. The grant program also received an overhaul aimed at optimizing the application and reporting process. The grant program revamp makes the jurying process easier and makes it easier for grant recipients to complete their report and receive their marketing reimbursement post-event.



Tradeshows

In May 2024, members of the Pick Ellijay team participated in IPW in Los Angeles. This event allowed Pick Ellijay to attract opportunities like “Travels with Darley” and to provide group tour operators and solo travel planners with itineraries focused on different adventures in Ellijay. Our team also received invaluable one-on-one time with the Explore Georgia team and other state partners that resulted in quality strategic partnerships throughout the remainder of 2024 and beyond.

Television Opportunities

In 2024, Pick Ellijay played host to 10 different TV show segments airing in both Atlanta and Chattanooga markets. In addition to these opportunities, Ellijay was also filmed in August for an episode of the PBS series “Travels with Darley” which will air nationally beginning in March of 2025. Ellijay was also well-represented through a robust Olympics marketing campaign in both Atlanta and Chattanooga.



Welcome Center Visitors

Throughout 2024, the Main Office received 2,358 visitors and the Downtown Welcome Center received 5,139 visitors.

2024 Staff & Board of Directors

Pick Ellijay Staff

Kyle Ray
President & CEO

Caitlin Neal
Marketing Director

Nohemi Reynoso
Communications Manager

Catherine Weis
Downtown Welcome
Center Manager

Joshua Taffin
Destination Impressions
Coordinator

Donna Bunch
Tourism Concierge

Gilmer Chamber Board of Directors

Rebecca Harrell
Board Chair
RLH Solutions

Doug Colburn
Chair Elect
Doug's Cabin Care

Tiffany Watson
Past Chair
Gilmer Family Connection

Andy Ashurst
Times Courier

Cat Benitez
Cat Benitez, RE/MAX
Town & Country

Donna Reece
Piedmont Mountainside
Hospital

Brad Simmons
River Street Tavern

David Simmons
Chattahoochee Technical
College

Nicole Jones-Tinker
Blue Sky Cabin Rentals

Brett Cantrell
Phoenix Roofing Systems

Dr. Katherine Hyatt
Dalton State College,
Mountain Campus

Mitchell Pack
ETC & ETC Security

Zach Henderson
United Community

Katie Vaughan
Engelheim Vineyards

Julie Johnson
Manor Lake

Hubert Parker
Ex-Officio
Gilmer County Board of
Commissioners

Kent Sanford
Ex-Officio
Greater Gilmer Joint
Development Authority

Ed Lacey
Ex-Officio
City of Ellijay

Larry Callahan
Ex-Officio
City of East Ellijay

Dr. Brian Ridley
Ex-Officio
Gilmer County Board of
Education