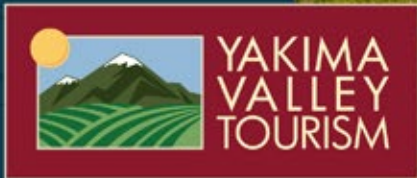


# ANNUAL REPORT 2025



# MOVING FORWARD

Together with our partners, communities and businesses, we advanced our mission to build a stronger tourism economy, support small businesses and serve our residents.

Tourism is a vital segment of the economy in Yakima County. It also enhances our quality of life by supporting small businesses and generating tax revenue that funds essential public services such as public safety, parks, roads and social programs. The most recent data shows:



More than 2.5 million visits to Yakima County



500,000+ room nights are attributed to visitors



Travelers spent \$411 million in the community



Generated \$52.6 million in state and local taxes



Visitors support 5,175 jobs for our residents



**KATHY MILLER PARRISH**  
*YVT Board Chair*



**JOHN COOPER**  
*President & CEO*

## HIGHLIGHT



### YAKIMA VALLEY CERTIFIED TOURISM AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

One highlight of 2025 was the development and testing of the **Yakima Valley Certified Tourism Ambassador Program**. This industry-recognized certification program boosts visitor spending through strong tourism knowledge among front-line hospitality staff, helping destinations compete while aligning stakeholders around a positive brand experience. Thirty-four staff, board members, community and industry representatives participated in the development and field test training to prepare the program for official launch early in 2026.

# YAKIMA CONVENTION & EVENT CENTER



The Yakima Convention & Event Center is the premier meeting and event facility in Yakima and Central Washington. The facility generates significant economic activity for Yakima while being a stunning showcase for the community.



In 2025 the Center hosted new conventions for the first time including the NW Meat Processors, Civil Air Patrol, Agricultural & Forestry Education, Association of NW Weavers Guild and Western Field Ornithologists. The Center received high accolades for service and the quality of the facility.



“It is such a blessing to have a facility like the convention and event center to hold these events and it’s an honor to work alongside people who really care. Our auction is a lot of work, but when we walk into the facility and meet so many helpful people it’s truly enjoyable.”

**PAUL AND SHERI SMITH**

Board Member (Sheri),  
Camp Prime Time

## CONVENTION CENTER 2025 NUMBERS



**344**  
EVENT DAYS  
HELD



**441**  
FUTURE DAYS  
BOOKED



**61K**  
CONVENTION  
ATTENDEES

# CONVENTION & GROUP SALES

Recruiting and serving the needs for conventions, tradeshow and other events in our community is a major charge for Yakima Valley Tourism.

“I have spent years working for and with destination marketing organizations and understand how valuable they are when selecting a destination and for support during the meeting. The team at Yakima Valley Tourism consists of true professionals and assist myself and my clients every step of the way. They really make the process of selecting their location and producing a meeting so easy!”

**MALLORY CAMPBELL, CMP**

Events & Program Manager,  
Association of Washington Business

## FORGING AHEAD

With the Center expansion continuing to appeal to new and larger groups, 2025 was a steady year for groups. Some cancellations occurred due to federal funding and budget cuts, which had an impact on conventions held, as well as those holding future dates. However, the Sales Department finished the year with strong lead generation.

**76**

FUTURE CONFERENCE  
TOTAL LEADS

**29**

FUTURE EVENTS  
CONFIRMED

In July, the Convention Sales team hosted the Customer Forum at the Yakima Convention & Event Center. Held every two years, this event invites planners who are new to Yakima or returning after several years to enjoy a day and a half of education led by industry experts, while discovering the offerings of the Yakima Valley. Eight clients participated this year.

# MEDIA & TRAVEL TRADE

Yakima Valley Tourism welcomes travel media, content creators, influencers and travel trade professionals for tours of Yakima and the Yakima Valley. This year, we hosted numerous individual travel writers, social media influencers and tour operators who had the chance to explore and experience the Valley.

**90** FEATURES  
IN MEDIA  
OUTLETS

**3.1 BILLION**  
POTENTIAL VIEWERS

## MEDIA COVERAGE

Our efforts brought extensive positive media coverage and resulted in **90 features** with **more than 3.1 billion in circulation and views** across numerous channels. By building strong relationships with social influencers, content creators, travel writers and editorial partners, we maintained top-of-mind visibility for future features and supplied media outlets with engaging content and imagery. Some of these efforts also contributed to multiple nominations in USA Today's 10best Readers' Choice awards, amplifying Yakima Valley's recognition as a premier destination for travel.

The Yakima Valley enjoyed features in the following media and many others in 2025:



## TRAVEL TRADE

In 2025, travel media and trade events were attended: IPW and International Media Marketplace (IMM). In total, staff met with 175 travel writers, content creators and tour operators to speak and pitch stories about our region.



# YAKIMA VALLEY SPORTS COMMISSION

Sports tourism is a driver of economic growth in the Yakima Valley. It generates financial benefits while raising the region's profile. The Yakima Valley Sports Commission is committed to improving existing sporting events, attracting new ones and establishing the Yakima Valley as the leading sports destination in the Pacific Northwest. The Sports Commission places an emphasis on promoting the Yakima Valley as a premier sports destination for tournament organizers, participants and spectators while providing exceptional customer service.



THE SPORTS MARKET CONTINUED TO GROW IN 2025.

492

SPORTING EVENTS HELD

*510 future events confirmed*

91K

ROOM NIGHTS FROM SPORTING EVENTS

*94k+ future room nights expected*

\$66.5

MILLION IN EST. ECONOMIC IMPACT

*\$67.8 million in future est. economic impact*

## WIAA PARTNERSHIP

The Yakima Valley hosted **31 WIAA State Championship** events in 2025. **The largest WIAA event for the Yakima Valley is the 1B, 2B and 1A Boys and Girls Track & Field Championships**, which was held in May at Zaepfel Stadium on the campus of Eisenhower High School, bringing in more than **1,700 athletes**. The Sports Commission has a strong relationship with the WIAA and continues its efforts to attract more WIAA State Championships.

## SIGNATURE EVENTS

The Sports Commission hosts several signature events to bring visitors to our community and serve local residents. They include the **Yakima Valley Fastpitch Fury**, **Yakima Valley Sports Awards**, **Dye Hard 5K**, **Hot Shots 3-On-3 Basketball Tourney** and the **SunDome Volleyball Festival**. In addition, staff partnered with a local lacrosse organization on the **Duel in The Desert Lacrosse Tourney**.

“The Yakima Valley Sports Commission is a fantastic organization that cares about sports and their community. They go above and beyond to help provide an outstanding experience to all involved.”

**LANCE DEN BOER**

Athletic Director, Zillah HS and  
Tournament Manager, WIAA 1A & 2A  
State Basketball Championships

# MARKETING & PROMOTION

2025 was a year to adapt and refine our marketing strategies as the travel industry, technology and consumer behaviors evolved rapidly. A growing partnership with TwoSix Digital has proven valuable in employing new digital advertising solutions and email marketing strategies. We applied for and received a grant from State of WA Tourism to produce video assets to support enhanced social media strategies.

**64%** WEBSITE ENGAGEMENT RATE  
Exceeds Industry Benchmarks

## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

- Awarded \$25,000 State Grant for Short-Form Video Production
- 8% Engagement Rate Increase for VisitYakima.com
- 31% Increase in Social Media Impressions
- 89% Open Rate Increase for Email Newsletter; 31% Engagement Rate Increase for Website Traffic from Email
- 70% Website Engagement Rate for Traffic from Paid Search Campaign; 101% Engagement Rate Increase for Traffic from Social Ad Campaign

## LOOKING FORWARD

In 2026 we'll identify opportunities for growth as technology evolves, focusing on AI advancements and the role of social media in travel inspiration and planning. We will focus on team skill advancement to adapt and thrive as marketing technologies evolve. Community partnerships and new strategies will allow us to thrive as consumer behaviors shift.

 **89%**

OPEN RATE INCREASE ON  
EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

## KEY PROJECTS

- Completed short-form video production project with a State of Washington Tourism grant; produced more than 500 video assets.
- Ongoing optimization and refresh of website content to facilitate citation of VisitYakima.com as a source in AI search.
- Enhanced strategies for extensive digital advertising campaign.
- Ongoing optimization of email marketing strategies and related content improvement.



# MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

At year-end, Yakima Valley Tourism proudly counted 293 businesses and organizations as members, including restaurants, hotels, attractions, wineries, breweries, community organizations and more. Together, we collaborated to enhance tourism across the Yakima Valley. By offering member benefits such as website features, inclusion in the travel guide and map, event promotion, brochure distribution and access to educational opportunities, we increased their visibility among potential visitors. With expanded travel guide distribution and promotions in new markets, we anticipate even greater returns on these investments in the coming year.



## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Members were kept informed about tourism news and opportunities through 20 e-newsletters. The popular Yakima Valley Official Travel Guide™ and Yakima Area Map will return in 2026 with new featured listings, updated text and refreshed photos. We continued developing the Yakima Valley Tourism Ambassador Program that will launch early 2026.

It's an industry-recognized certification program that drives visitor spending through in-depth knowledge of the tourism product, giving destinations a competitive advantage while aligning stakeholders to deliver a positive brand experience.



# VISITOR SERVICES

Visitor information centers (VICs) have a proven record of serving visitors and inspiring them to extend their stays. They are also a vital resource for residents.



The main visitor center on Fair Avenue operated year-round, Tuesday through Saturday, and we continued running the Valley Mall location. In addition, pop-up booths at special events helped us reach a broader audience of visitors and local residents. We also continued partnering with local arts and cultural attractions and organizations to staff the farmers market booth, providing them with valuable exposure to market visitors and residents.



# 12,474

PEOPLE SERVED

IN PERSON AND BY PHONE, EMAIL & MAIL  
An increase of 36% over 2024

# WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2026

Here are key highlights from our 2026 Business Plan focused on boosting tourism and enhancing our community:



**Yakima Valley Tourism**

10 North 8th St. • Yakima, WA 98901  
509-575-3010 • VisitYakima.com

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- Continue to implement DestinationNEXT strategic efforts, including the new Tourism Ambassador Program.
- Help develop tourism products, facilities and opportunities countywide.
- Keep the value of tourism top of mind with community leaders and the public.
- Utilize visitor services pop-ups to inform the community about our efforts.

## YAKIMA CONVENTION & EVENT CENTER

- Showcase the 18,300-square-foot expansion and new amenities, such as improved AV.
- Pursue projects for the Center including increased parking and a new headquarter hotel.
- Finish efforts to meet or exceed requirements of the Clean Building Law.
- Maximize Center use to meet and exceed budgeted income and expenses.

## YAKIMA VALLEY SPORTS COMMISSION

- Maintain a strong partnership with the WIAA.
- Build relationships with sporting organizations, venues and tournament directors.
- Raise awareness about the sports commission and the value of sporting events.
- Encourage good sportsmanship through the Know Your Role™ program.
- Highlight new and improved sports facilities to attract sporting events.

## VISITOR & COMMUNITY SERVICES

- Assess the long-term needs for funding, services, partners and locations.
- Continue to take the Mobile Info Center Kiosk (M.I.C.K.) to local events and attractions.
- Deliver exceptional customer service at Visitor Information Center locations and pop-up booths.
- Assist more than 10,000 visitors through in-person interactions, mail, email and phone inquiries.
- Find creative ways to attract new visitors and locals to the information center while encouraging travelers to stay longer.

## CONVENTION & GROUP SALES

- Highlight the community through targeted sales calls and events for meeting planners.
- Collaborate with the Yakima Convention & Event Center to attract conventions and events aligned with the facility's objectives.
- Encourage planners to visit the region for site tours and professional development.
- Generate 80-100 sales leads; book conventions and room nights.

## DESTINATION MARKETING & PROMOTION

- Implement data-driven marketing strategies and brand management practices.
- Elevate the destination by promoting the four core pillars to attract visitors year-round.
- Foster industry and community partnerships, building collaborations and promotions to support tourism industry stakeholders.
- Provide focused assistance to the craft beverage industry.
- Remain the Yakima Valley leader in tourism-related digital and social promotion.

## MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

- Provide support and services to members, helping to build their businesses.
- Meet and solicit 100 potential new members.
- Build membership to 325 members with a high retention rate.
- Update, sell and distribute the 2027 Yakima Valley Official Travel Guide.™
- Plan new programs to boost business for members and the community.

## MEDIA & TRADE RELATIONS

- Develop and distribute tailored pitches to travel media and content creators.
- Secure travel and lifestyle coverage of the Yakima Valley in diverse media outlets.
- Represent the Yakima Valley at industry trade and media events, highlighting key attractions and events to drive visitation.
- Enhance and oversee internal and external reporting on media activities and outcomes.
- Facilitate connections between film crews and local resources.