



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New study reveals record visitation to Happy Valley and shifts in visitor trends, demographics**

STATE COLLEGE, PA, July 28, 2025 – On the heels of a record visitation year in 2024, Happy Valley is witnessing shifts in visitor demographics while continuing to cement its status as a popular outdoor recreation and sporting event destination.

“Visiting friends and relatives is still the top reason for visiting Happy Valley. However, the dynamics are shifting, both in terms of who is visiting, where they are coming from and what is driving their decision to visit,” said Fritz Smith, President and CEO of The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB), which commissioned the annual Longwoods International study. “Much of that is intentional, reflecting the focus of our marketing efforts, and our strategic emphasis on growing our sports and entertainment sector, along with elevating and stewarding our abundant outdoor recreation offerings.”

According to the 2024 report, Happy Valley witnessed 5.1 million person trips in 2024. Day-trippers accounted for 67 percent (3.3 million) of that number, an increase of 200,000 since 2022. The county welcomed 1.8 million overnight visitors, an increase of 100,000 over the past two years.

As reasons for visiting, outdoor recreation (hiking, visiting state parks, nature tours, fishing, camping and hunting) far exceeds the national average, as does sporting activities.

“With access to more than 750,000 acres of public land, Happy Valley truly is a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts,” Smith said.

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“We see this as an area of continued growth, as we have amazing community partners in the outdoor recreation space who are dedicated to improving opportunities and access while being equally committed to sustaining our natural resources for the future.”

Smith said a record year in visitation also enabled Happy Valley to reach new heights of visitor spending.

While the total economic impact of tourism to the county already tops \$1 billion, the latest report indicated that visitor spending alone has now reached that milestone. Smith said day-trip visitation spending increased \$50 million since 2022, with food and beverage realizing the biggest gains, jumping from \$81 million to \$96 million. Overnight visitors spent \$542 million last year, an increase of \$77 million over the past two years.

With regard to visitor demographics, Johnstown, Altoona and Harrisburg/Hershey/Lancaster/Lebanon/York were the biggest gainers for day-trip visitation, while New York state, New York City and Pittsburgh have grown as destinations of origin for overnight visitors. Return visitation saw a bump too. The number of overnight visitors who came back to Happy Valley within 12 months was up from 64 percent in 2024 versus 51 percent in 2022.

Smith said the results reflect the HVAB’s strategic decisions on where to target marketing campaigns.

The Longwoods’ study also revealed an interesting shift in visitor demographics. For both day-trippers and overnight visitors, the report showed growth in solo, couple, and friend-group travel, and a decline in those traveling with children and in travel party size. Visitors are trending a bit older as well.

In several key messaging metrics, Happy Valley is above the national average in how visitors choose the destination.

According to Longwoods, 27 percent of overnight visitors used Happyvalley.com and HVAB social media platforms to plan their trips, topping the national average of 20 percent. In addition, 68 percent of day-trippers were “marketed to.” The national average is 55 percent.

“The results are what we had hoped to see following the investment into a new destination website and continued refinements to the site,” Smith said, noting that 1.3 million people visited HappyValley.com in 2024, resulting in 2.3 million website sessions.

Smith said proof that visitors are responding to the HVAB’s marketing messaging in the crowded, competitive destination marketing space is another positive takeaway.

“Marketing Happy Valley as a premier mid-Atlantic destination for leisure, sports, group tour and business travel requires a constant drumbeat,” Smith said. “The tourism landscape is constantly changing and always presenting a mix of opportunities and challenges.

“The Longwoods report continues to show an upward trajectory for Happy Valley tourism,” he continued. “Working with our members, partners and community stakeholders, The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau is focused on capitalizing on this momentum for the benefit of our local economy, and those who live and do business here.”

The full report is available here:

<https://api.happyvalley.com/files/documents/Happy%20Valley%20Travel%20USA%202024%20Report.pdf>.

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