



FIERCELY
FRIENDLY

REFRESHINGLY

HISTORICALLY
NEW

LOW-KEY
LOUD

^{VISIT}
Buffalo

2025 ANNUAL BUSINESS

REVIEW

DEAR FRIENDS IN TOURISM,

The story of Buffalo is everywhere these days, and that's no accident. After decades of transformation, **our destination finally has the tourism megaphone it has long deserved** thanks to additional bed tax funding provided to us by Erie County. Buffalo's advertising now appears on billboards in cities like Chicago and Boston, and digitally in key markets across the country, as part of our new "That's Buffalo For You" advertising campaign and rebrand. And national media outlets including *Bloomberg*, *Forbes* and *Lonely Planet* buzzed about our destination, contributing to more than 300 earned media placements secured by our public relations team. *Travel + Leisure* even named us "The Most Festive Place to Celebrate Christmas in the U.S." **Simply put, the world is listening.**

What a thrilling year 2025 has been for our region and for all of us at Visit Buffalo. With a stronger voice and an unprecedented reach, we shared Buffalo's remarkable story with prospective visitors across the country and beyond.

The results are clear: **Buffalo is no longer an insider's secret, but a destination confidently stepping onto the global stage with energy, pride, and momentum.**

Over the last year, our team also reinvested in our community, creating a new countywide neighborhood mural program, publishing a refreshed African American Heritage Guide to Buffalo, and debuting a new food trail celebrating our culinary classics. We also introduced the region's first Certified Tourism Ambassador™

initiative, gave our visitor van "Seymour" a refresh, and opened the new Buffalo Visitor Center at Canalside, all designed to connect, welcome and wow.

Meetings, tours, conventions, and sports events also soared: we hosted major gatherings, attracted new business to the Buffalo Convention Center and leveraged high-impact events like the USA Hockey IPC Sled World Championship to raise our global profile.

When I reflect on this year, what stands out is the people: the entrepreneurs, artists, neighbors and visionaries who helped inform our new messaging and make Buffalo a city of welcome and momentum. We're not just welcoming travelers; we're inviting them into a story we're writing together.

Thank you for your partnership, your optimism, and your faith in what's possible here. It's been one incredible ride, and it's only the beginning. Let's keep the momentum going into the next chapter in 2026.

WE'RE NOT JUST
WELCOMING TRAVELERS:
WE'RE INVITING THEM
INTO A STORY WE'RE
WRITING TOGETHER.

Very truly yours,



PATRICK J. KALER
President and CEO
Visit Buffalo

JUST THE NUMBERS: 2025 AT A GLANCE

TAKE A LOOK BACK AT ALL WE ACCOMPLISHED

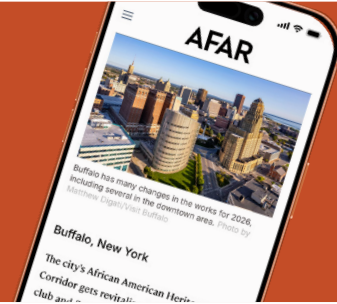
155,419

Hotel room nights booked



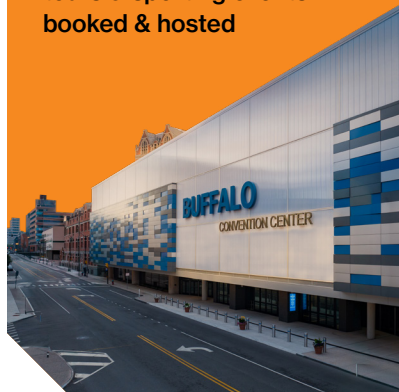
308

Out-of-town earned media placements



269

Meetings, conventions, tours & sporting events booked & hosted



1,074,353

Engaged website sessions*



13,204

Newsletter subscribers



\$129M

In calculated economic impact



150,000

Visitor guides distributed



31,965

Social followers gained



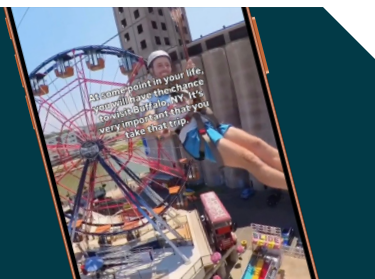
37

Press visits



32,207,162

Video views across platforms



*Defined as a user interaction with a website that lasts at least 10 seconds.



WIELDING A NEW TOURISM MEGAPHONE



VISIT BUFFALO embarked on an unprecedented marketing effort to reach more prospective visitors than ever before in 2025. **Our team debuted a new national ad campaign and brand identity** – including a new name and logo – in partnership with MMGY Global, an agency specializing in destination marketing. We targeted new markets with a reach and frequency unrivaled in our organization's history. Hospitality partners from across the county joined us for a RiverWorks campaign launch event in September.



The “*That’s Buffalo For You*” advertising campaign features digital advertising, outdoor billboards and social media promotion in target markets like Boston, Washington, D.C., and Chicago. **The campaign shares Buffalo’s dynamic identity as a place of compelling contrasts.** In each ad, two-word phrases like “polished grit” and “historically new” accompany imagery of top attractions like the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Silo City, the Martin House and Buffalo RiverWorks. The new campaign also included paid editorial partnerships that **showcased Buffalo in national media outlets like Conde Nast Traveler, Atlas Obscura and Bon Appetit.**

This new campaign also extends to our Buffalo Sports Commission and meetings sales efforts, where an array of new messages touting our strengths as a convention and amateur sports destination – from “effortlessly walkable” to “rivalry ready” – headline ads geared towards those audiences. The concept emerged from a process that began in January with a series of local listening sessions, interviews and workshops. **About 25 artists, entrepreneurs and civic leaders participated, providing the input that helped shape the new campaign and brand.**

Thanks to additional funding from Erie County, **we were able to make a generational investment in our tourism economy,** finally wielding the larger tourism megaphone our community has long deserved to meaningfully increase visitation here in the years to come. **B**



MARKETING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

NATIONAL MEDIA BUZZ ABOUT BUFFALO

A record number of travel media outlets were buzzing about Buffalo in 2025 thanks to Visit Buffalo's increased investment in public relations. In the year since Visit Buffalo began working with the Lou Hammond Group's public relations team, **more than 300 travel stories about Buffalo have been published nationally** – up from 2024's 152.

Highlights included Conde Nast Traveler and AFAR magazine each **naming Buffalo one of their top places to go in 2026**, and Travel and Leisure Magazine dubbing our city as the “Most Festive Place to Celebrate Christmas” in the U.S. Through hosting media on press trips and proactive pitching to national outlets, our team continues to share Buffalo's compelling story with the world.



NEIGHBORHOOD MURAL PROGRAM TURNS STORIES INTO ART

Visit Buffalo launched a new mural initiative in September to celebrate communities across Erie County. The first installation, created by artist James “Yames” Moffitt and shaped by local resident input, debuted in Williamsville and featured village landmarks like Glen Falls. Our team is working with municipalities countywide to identify future sites and expand this storytelling-through-art initiative.

CULINARY ROADMAP: THE ULTIMATE BUFFALO FOOD TRAIL

We introduced the Ultimate Buffalo Food Trail in June to guide visitors through the region's most iconic dishes. The online trail features more than two dozen stops offering wings, beef on weck, sponge candy, frozen custard and other signature foods. **Visit Buffalo created the trail to highlight the region's culinary identity and strengthen Buffalo's reputation as one of America's great food cities.**



SALES & SERVICES

SEEING IS BELIEVING: THE POWER OF FAM TOURS

Visit Buffalo hosted seven FAM, or “familiarization,” tours in 2025, **welcoming 99 tour operators and meeting planners to experience Buffalo firsthand.** Another 50 scout visits helped planners find locations for sporting events, tours and meetings. Immersive experiences like these drive bookings by showcasing the region’s hospitality, meeting venues, and other attractions like breweries, Highmark Stadium, the waterfront and the city’s architectural landmarks. Hosting visitors this way plays a crucial role in our sales efforts, positioning Buffalo as a welcoming and dynamic destination.



BUFFALO'S GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT GROWS

Visit Buffalo strengthened the region’s international profile throughout 2025. In the fall, our team represented Buffalo at Brand USA Week in London, meeting with tour operators from key markets such as the United Kingdom and Germany. **September’s World Canals Conference in Buffalo brought more than 500 delegates from 10 countries and 22 states.** The gathering coincided with the Erie Canal

bicentennial and the Seneca Chief’s symbolic retracing of its 1825 route. And partners from the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Visions Hotels, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Graycliff and the National Comedy Center joined Visit Buffalo at the IPW Global Marketplace in Chicago. **Together the team met with about 100 tour operators from around the world.**

ART TRANSFORMS THE BUFFALO CONVENTION CENTER

The Buffalo Convention Center welcomed visitors in 2025 with a variety of new public art. A large-scale exterior mural by Buffalo artists Cassandra Ott and Chuck Tingley brought color to the center's Pearl Street façade. Inside, a new rotating exhibition of local artwork debuted, creating a more dynamic, welcoming experience for meetings, conventions, and community events.

LIMELIGHT FOR THE MEETINGS STAGE

Conventions booked and hosted by our team helped Buffalo stand out as a premier host city. Decision-makers from across the country convened here for Small Market Meetings, the Snow Symposium, the American Association of Aerosol Research and the Empire Baptist Missionary Convention. **These four conventions alone brought in an estimated \$4 million in economic impact.** They reaffirmed Buffalo's reputation for hospitality, innovation and year-round appeal.



CANALSIDE VISITOR CENTER DEBUTS



VISIT BUFFALO'S new visitor information center debuted at Canalside inside the Chandlery building, steps from Explore & More Children's Museum and the waterfront. **Designed as both a resource hub and welcoming storefront, the space enhances the visitor experience while showcasing Buffalo's story.** The center features locally made merchandise, including hats, T-shirts and pennants, along with printed guides and maps. Knowledgeable staff and volunteers provide personalized recommendations and trip-planning assistance. An interactive digital kiosk allows guests to build itineraries, explore neighborhoods and discover events, attractions and dining. The kiosk's dedicated photo feature with Buffalo-themed backdrops adds an engaging, shareable element, positioning the center as both an information source and a memorable gateway to the destination.



DESTINATION EXPERIENCE

BUFFALO TAKES FLIGHT

We premiered a new signature video, “Flight 716: Buffalo Architecture from Above” during National Travel and Tourism Week at a public screening at the North Park Theatre. The cinematic aerial film, which has garnered more than 11,000 views on Youtube, **showcases 18 architectural landmarks and positions Buffalo as a world-class architectural destination.** Visit Buffalo developed the project to inspire residents and visitors to see the city from a new perspective.



ELEVATING BUFFALO'S WARM WELCOME

Visit Buffalo launched the Certified Tourism Ambassador™ program in October to elevate regional hospitality. The inaugural 30-person cohort completed immersive training and earned CTA certification. Our team is planning additional sessions of this nationally recognized hospitality education program for the year ahead. By equipping frontline workers with local knowledge and customer service skills, **our team continues to boost Buffalo's reputation as a friendly and welcoming destination.**

FINDING SEYMOUR

Our team refreshed Seymour, Visit Buffalo's mobile visitor van, with a bright new wrap featuring updated brand colors. Seymour and our staff and volunteers continue to appear at major festivals – including Allentown and Borderland – offering maps, guides, and giveaways to help visitors see more of Buffalo.



BUFFALO SPORTS COMMISSION

THE WORLD SKATES HERE

Visit Buffalo welcomed athletes and fans from eight nations for the USA Hockey International Paralympic Committee Sled World Championship in May. **The tournament generated an estimated \$1.85 million dollars in economic impact** and drew participants from Korea, Germany, Norway, Slovakia and Canada. Our team also helped bring elite players to Buffalo for the Premier Ice Prospects Fall Fest Showcase and the USA Hockey Rivalry Series.



NEW CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY IN BUFFALO

Our team strengthened Buffalo's sports portfolio by securing several first-time events in 2025. **The USCAA Basketball National Championships drove a 14.2 percent increase in hotel occupancy** and helped build future collegiate relationships. The Buffalo Sports Commission also brought the Major League Quadball Championships to the region, attracting athletes and fans from 10 states and adding a high-energy event to the city's lineup.



MULTI-DEPARTMENT

CELEBRATING BUFFALO'S BLACK COMMUNITY AND HERITAGE

Visit Buffalo introduced a new **African American Heritage Guide** to Buffalo in tandem with the national African American Traveler Conference. Our team highlighted cultural anchors such as the Michigan Street Baptist Church, the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor and Freedom Park.





Leah Mueller



Meredith Walsh Ingrao



Nicklaus Householder



Marisa Urbano



Benjamin DiStasio



Hailey Muscarella



Tala Harden



Kelly Rosenfeld

PROVEN LEADERS AND FRESH FACES ELEVATE VISIT BUFFALO

Visit Buffalo's growth continued in 2025 with key promotions and new hires. Leah Mueller was promoted to vice president of sales and services; Meredith Walsh Ingrao became travel trade manager; Nicklaus Householder was promoted to Visitor Information Center manager and Marisa Urbano advanced to national sales manager. New team members included Benjamin DiStasio, Hailey Muscarella, Tala Harden, and Kelly Rosenfeld, whose expertise strengthens our work in sales, marketing and visitor engagement.



2025 VISIT BUFFALO & BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ms. Cindy Abbott-Letro (Chair) Law Offices of Francis M. Letro

Mr. Terry Alford Michigan Street African American Corridor

Mr. Mark Alnutt University at Buffalo

Mr. Thomas Beauford, Jr. (Secretary) Buffalo Urban League

Ms. Melissa Brown Buffalo History Museum

Mr. Daniel Castle, AICP Erie County Department of Environment & Planning

Mr. Anthony J.W. Chase Erie County Executive Appointee

Mr. Matthew Chiazza Reikart House/Jazzboline Restaurant & Bar

Mr. Mark Glasgow Buffalo Urban League Young Professional Group

Mr. Patrick J. Kaler (President) Visit Buffalo

Mr. Bob Karmazyn Embassy Suites by Hilton

Ms. Kimberley Minkel (Vice Chair) Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority

Mr. Thomas M. Long (Treasurer) The Westin Buffalo

Mr. Grant Loomis Buffalo Niagara Partnership

Mr. William A. Paladino Ellicott Development Company

Ms. Shannon Patch Delaware North

Mr. Steven P. Ranalli, PE Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation

Ms. Mary F. Roberts (Immediate Past Chair) Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House

Mr. David Schutte Schutte Hospitality Group

Ms. Michelle Urbanczyk Explore and More Children's Museum

2025 BUFFALO NIAGARA SPORTS COMMISSION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Eric Guzdek (<i>Chair</i>)	Town of Amherst Youth & Recreation Department/Norhtown Center at Amherst	D'Ann Keller	University at Buffalo
Kate Braun	The Champion Project	Pete Kennedy	The Monsignor Martin High School Athletic Association
Mike Buczkowski	Buffalo Bisons	John Lambert	SUNY at Buffalo
Drew Cerza	National Buffalo Wing Festival	Kirk Lang	West Side Rowing
Rob Crean	Pegula Sports & Entertainment	Chuck Lawless	Sahlen's Sports Park
TJ Day	STAR Swimming	Bill Maher	Canisius University
Mark DiFilippo	Section VI NYSPHSAA	Lynn Marinelli	Empire State Development Corporation
Sean Green	Buffalo RiverWorks	Nick Mendola	FC Buffalo
Linda Groff	NYS Amateur Hockey Association	Norm Page	Greater Buffalo Adaptive Sports
Traci Murphy	Daemen University	Charles C. Swanekamp	Gross Shuman PC
Ona Halladay	D'Youville University	Brad Waltz	Town of Amherst
Peter Jerebko	Erie Community College	Zaque Evans	County of Erie

2025 VISIT BUFFALO STAFF

Patrick Kaler	President/CEO	James Adler	Director of Sports Sales
David Marzo	Chief Financial Officer	Karen Fashana	Vice President of Marketing
Michele Butlak	Accounting and Benefits Manager	Brian Hayden	Senior Director of Marketing & Communications
Jennifer Bialek	Executive Assistant to President & CEO	Drew Brown	Senior Creative Director
Leah Mueller	Vice President of Sales & Services	Michelle Kearns	Director of Communications
Karen Cox	Director of Convention Services	Kate Scaduto	Marketing & Social Media Manager
Meaghan Zimmer	Senior National Sales Director	Tala Harden	Marketing Specialist
Temekia Powers	National Sales Director	Kelly Rosenfeld	Graphic Designer
Marisa Urbano	National Sales Manager	Renata Toney	Vice President of Destination Experience
Brooke Chavanne	Sales & Services Specialist	Nicklaus Householder	Destination Experience Specialist
Ben DiStasio	Convention Services Coordinator	Heather Nowakowski	Senior Director of Business Intelligence
Meredith Walsh Ingra	Travel Trade Manager	Hailey Muscarella	Destination Experience Specialist
Gregory Gelinas	Director of Sports Development	Samantha Wright	Destination Experience Assistant
Lauren Vargo	Sport Services Manager		

2025 BUFFALO NIAGARA CONVENTION CENTER STAFF

Jeff Calkins	General Manager	Craig Landseadel	Executive Chef
Danielle Winiarski	Assistant General Manager & Director of Convention and Event Services	Marlon Shallowhorn	Sous Chef
Lorna Cullen	Office Manager	Bud Redding	Director of Operations
Melissa Burke	Senior Director of Sales and Marketing	Marc Wittman	Director of Business Operations
Colleen Scozzafava	Convention Sales Manager	Jamie Flood	Controller
Jolani "Jo" Knoll	Convention & Event Service Manager	Maryann Martin	Accounting & Benefits Manager
Heather Petrino	Sales & Service Coordinator	Ken Sandford	Chief Engineer
Cory Watson	Food & Beverage Manager	Tony Barnwell	Operations Manager
		Keith Pitman	Electrician

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT *Buffalo*

CHECK OUT SOME OF BUFFALO'S ACCOLADES AND OUT-OF-TOWN MEDIA COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2025:



"This reenergized Rust Belt city is an **irrepressibly cheerful hub of open-arms hospitality with a much-evolved culinary scene.** Founded in 1832 on Lake Erie's far eastern shores, New York's second most-populous metro, the 'City of Good Neighbors' wined and dined me like I was family."

— Jeff Heilman, *Passport Magazine*



"Buffalonians have long rooted for their team as underdogs. Now, with good reason, they're embracing the spotlight. **I'm rooting for you, Buffalo.** And I'll be back."

— Malia Yoshioka, *Matador Network*



"**There's a lot to love** about a culinary getaway in New York State's second largest city."

— Melissa Yeager, *Lonely Planet*



"Buffalo didn't just surprise me – it ran up on me and kidnapped my whole perspective. Fed me soul with a side of sazón, introduced me to people who felt like family, and **told stories that hit like a history lesson and a homecoming all at once.**"

— Rafael Peña, *the McClatchy Newspaper*



403 Main Street, Suite 630, Buffalo, New York 14203
(716) 852-0511 | visitbuffalo.com | [@visitbuffalo](https://www.instagram.com/visitbuffalo)