QUARTER 3: JULY-SEPTEMBER FY2026



Cortland County Convention & Visitors Bureau

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FY 2026 Quarter 3

The third quarter brought a busy summer travel season, with stronger overnight visitation, solid lodging performance, and continued growth across several of our marketing channels. Nearly 64% of visitors stayed overnight, July was the strongest lodging month of the year so far, and Instagram and Cortland Curiosities both saw significant year-over-year growth.

Our summer programming also wrapped up, including the Cortland County Ice Cream Trail, which distributed 5,000 maps this year, the most since the program launched. Along with our ongoing Travel Guide and brochure distribution, these efforts help introduce visitors to local businesses and encourage them to explore more of Cortland County.

Marketing efforts began shifting toward fall, with new digital advertising campaigns and expanded promotion of the Cortland Curiosities Trail. Behind the scenes, the Curiosities website went through a full audit ahead of the fall campaign, while we continued reviewing and updating ExperienceCortland.com, including how we approach SEO and AI-powered search.

Planning for 2027 is also underway. We submitted a grant application to the Central New York Community Foundation for *Made of Cortland*, a storytelling project that would highlight the people behind our local businesses, traditions, and communities through a series of short videos. Grant decisions are expected in November or December. We also began conversations with Seven Valleys Health Coalition about a potential agritourism project for 2027 and started work on our I LOVE NY Matching Funds application and upcoming projects as part of the budget process.

As we head into the final quarter, our focus is on fall and winter travel, wrapping up seasonal programs, and continuing to develop projects and partnerships for 2027.

Cheers,

Michelle Enright

Michelle Enright
Executive Director

Tourism Insights & Trends

Q3 Visitor Profile

July 1 - September 19, 2026 (Rove Marketing)

Q3 visitor data shows stronger overnight travel during the busy summer season, with nearly 64% of visitors staying overnight and an average stay of 45.3 hours. Visitors also traveled farther to reach Cortland County, with an average travel distance of 354 miles, while New York remained the largest origin market. The mix of top visitor locations also reflects the importance of sports, events, and recreation in bringing people into the county.

Visitor Snapshot

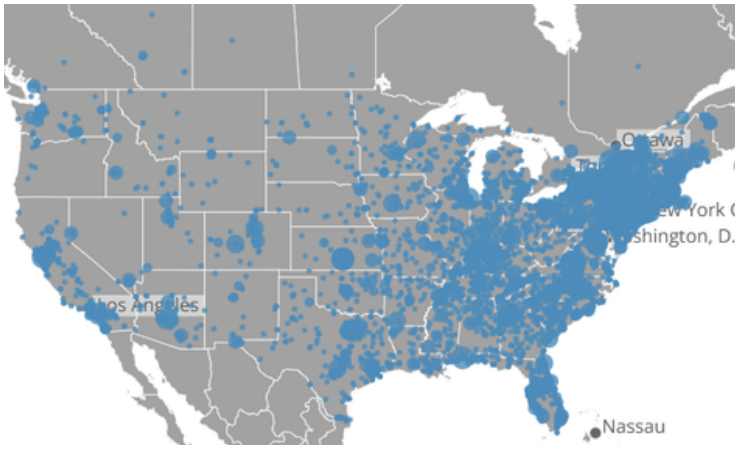
- 63.9% overnight visitors
- 45.3 hours average length of stay (overnight visitors)
- 354 miles average travel distance
- 38.5% repeat visitors

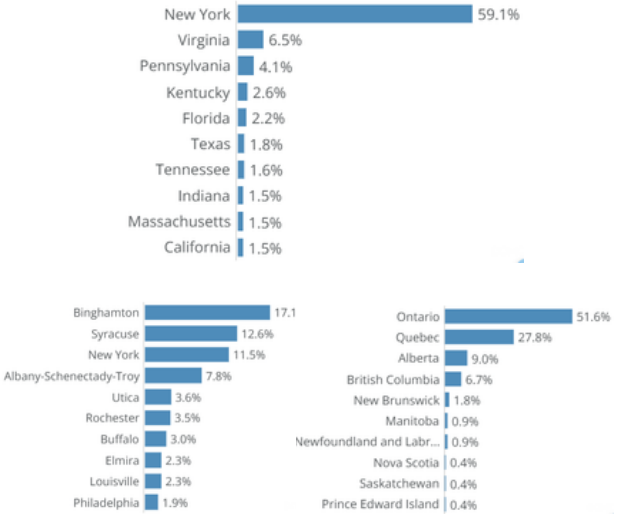
Who is Visiting

Average visitor age: 41.8
Average household income: $85,388

Origin Markets

- Majority of visitors from New York State (59.1%), followed by Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Florida.
- Travel patterns show regional drive market, with most visitors traveling between 101–200+ miles.



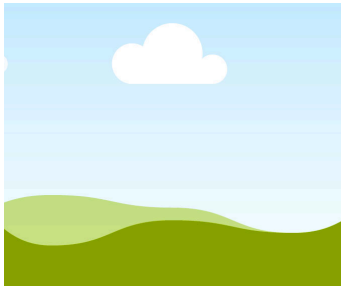


Top Visitor Attractions/Locations


SUNY Cortland


Greek Peak


The Lumber Yard


Homer High School

**Sept 20-30 data not available as of 10/1*

Tourism Insights & Trends

Lodging Performance Snapshot

January - August 2026; September data not yet available (CoStar Data)

Lodging performance stayed strong through the summer, with occupancy and hotel revenue generally ahead of last year. July was the strongest month of 2026 so far, with occupancy reaching nearly 60% and RevPAR around $95. August also held steady, with occupancy around 56%.

Year-to-date numbers are also moving in the right direction. Through August, occupancy reached 46.1%, Average Daily Rate was $148.11, and RevPAR was $68.32, all up over last year. Month-to-month performance will always vary, but the summer numbers line up with a busy season of tournaments, events, and leisure travel across the county.

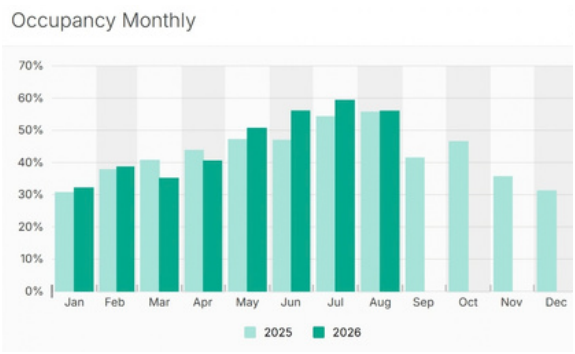
Performance Trend			
Occupancy Rate	56.0% ▲	3 Mo Occupancy Rate	57.1% ▲
Average Daily Rate	$156.28 ▼	3 Mo Average Daily Rate	$154.00 ▲
Revenue Per Available Room	$87.50 ▲	3 Mo RevPAR	$88.00 ▲
YTD Occupancy Rate	46.1% ▲	12 Mo Occupancy Rate	43.6% ▼
YTD Average Daily Rate	$148.11 ▲	12 Mo Average Daily Rate	$144.19 ▲
YTD RevPAR	$68.32 ▲	12 Mo RevPAR	$62.93 ▲

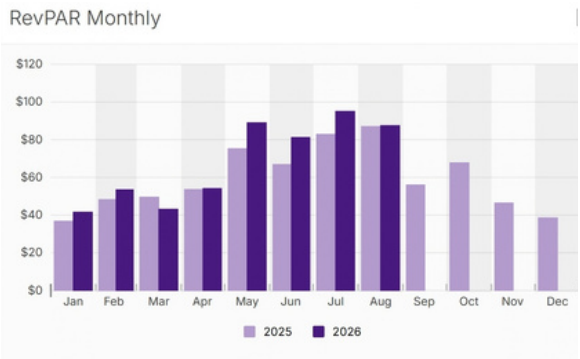
What We're Seeing

Summer lodging demand strengthened.
Occupancy climbed through the spring, reaching nearly 59% in July and holding around 56% in August. June and July both outpaced the same months in 2025.

Hotel revenue is performing well.
RevPAR was higher year over year in most months through August, with July reaching approximately $95, the strongest month so far in 2026.

Room rates remain strong, even with some recent moderation.
While August's rate dipped slightly, the three-month ADR reached $154.00 and YTD ADR reached $148.11, both up year over year.





MARKETING & PROMOTION

ExperienceCortland.com

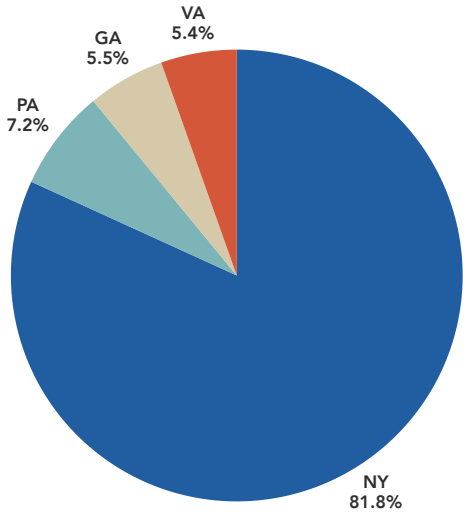
Overall traffic was down compared to the same period last year, although active users remained relatively steady, down just 3.4%.

Events continued to be a major driver of website activity, with the Events Calendar remaining the most visited page and several seasonal events among the top-performing listings. 162 Travel Guide requests were also submitted during the quarter, showing that visitors are taking the next step from online research to actively planning a trip.

We are continuing to keep an eye on how search is changing as more people use AI and other tools to find travel information without necessarily visiting a website. As we review and update ExperienceCortland.com, we are looking at both traditional SEO and newer AEO strategies to make sure Cortland County continues to show up wherever travelers are searching.

Quarter Highlights

- 67,056 total views **(↓ 9.3%)**
- 25,928 active users **(↓ 3.4%)**; 18,816 new users
- 7,756 Events Calendar views **(↓ 14%)**
- 162 Travel Guide requests



Most Visited Pages

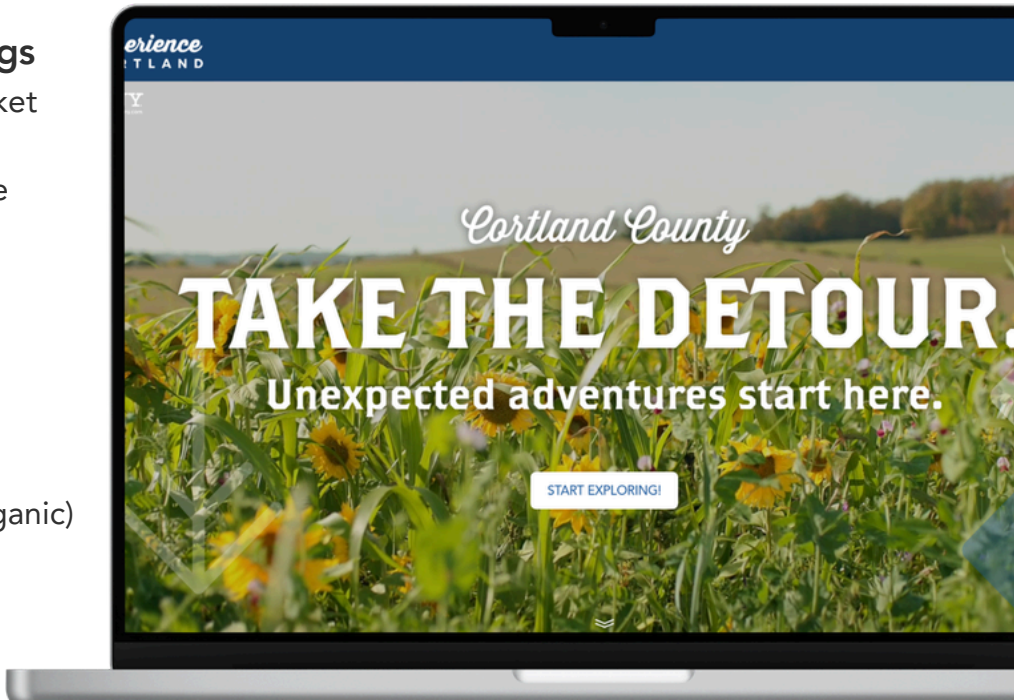
- Events Calendar
- Things To Do
- Request Travel Guide
- Cortland County Fireworks

Top Performing Partner Listings

- Little York Car Show & Flee Market
- The Lumber Yard
- Bill Knowlton's Bluegrass Ramble
- Greek Peak Adventure Center
- Rt. 90 Garage Sale

Top Referral Sources

- Google/Bing (Organic)
- SUNY Cortland
- Facebook/Instagram (Paid + Organic)



MARKETING & PROMOTION

Social Media (Experience Cortland)

Social media continued to keep Cortland County visible throughout the busy summer season. Facebook views increased nearly 25%, reaching more than 661K views for the quarter. Interactions and link clicks were slightly lower compared to last year, when two high-performing posts, including a National Geographic mention, helped boost those numbers.

Instagram saw significant growth across every major metric, with views up 190.5%, reach up 124.2%, interactions up 213.8%, and link clicks increasing more than 1,000%. A large share of monthly views also came from non-followers, reinforcing Instagram's role as one of our strongest tools for introducing Cortland County to new audiences and driving them to learn more.

Facebook Performance

- 661.5K views **(↑ 25.5%)**
- 8.2K interactions **(↓ 4%)**
- 2.2K link clicks **(↓ 7.7%)**

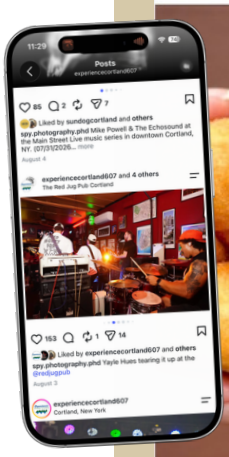
Instagram Highlights

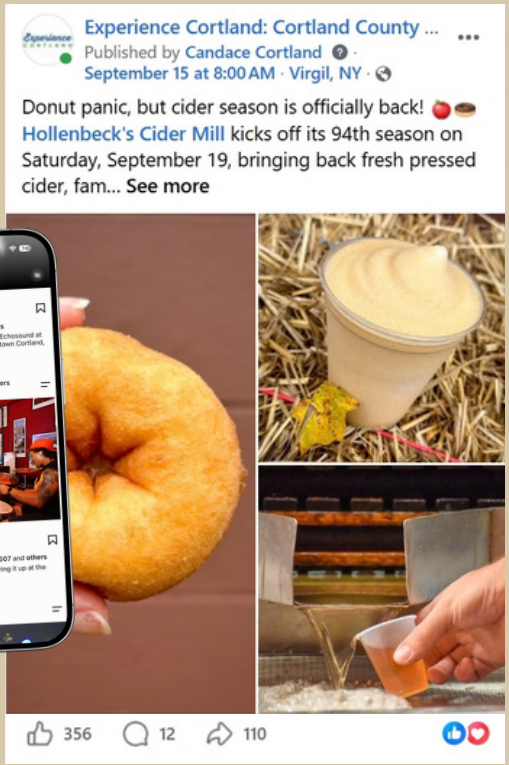
- 92.2K views **(↑ 190.5%)**
- 32.9K users reached **(↑ 124.2%)**
- 3.5K interactions **(↑ 213.8%)**
- 822 link clicks **(↑ 1.0K%)**

Instagram is the best social platform for reaching new audiences outside the county.

- July: 30K views, 38% from non-followers
- August: 41K views, 56% from non-followers
- September: 20Kviews, 44% from non-followers

Top Performing Posts





Facebook: Hollenbeck's Cider Mill
9.7K Views, 6.3K Viewers, 69 Interactions
Instagram: Yayle Hues at Red Jug (Collab)
10.3K Views, 3.6K Reach, 168Interactions

Social Media Website Traffic

3,321	551	27.1%
Website sessions from social media	Engaged sessions	Organic social engagement rate

Social media is also helping bring visitors to ExperienceCortland.com. Organic social brought in slightly fewer sessions than paid advertising, but generated more engaged visits, showing that people coming from our regular social content are more likely to spend time exploring the website.

**An engaged session means someone spent at least 10 seconds on the site, viewed two or more pages, or completed a key action.*

MARKETING & PROMOTION

Cortland Curiosities

Cortland Curiosities had a strong third quarter, with significant year-over-year growth across Facebook, Instagram, and the website. Short-form video continues to be one of the strongest ways to introduce people to the trail, with Facebook Reel views up 28.1% and Instagram views up more than 550%. That interest is also carrying over to the website, where active users increased 256% and visitors spent an average of 2m20s engaging with the content.

September kicked off our fall promotion with two paid social campaigns that will run into October. One is boosting some of our stronger Curiosity Trail reels to build awareness and grow the trail's social audience, while the second is driving people directly to the website to explore the full trail and begin planning a visit.

September was also spent preparing for the **4th Annual Cortland Curiosities Market**, returning Saturday, October 17 at The Vault.

Performance Highlights

Facebook

- 297.5K organic views **(↑ 25.2%)**; 48.3K paid views
- 300.4K reel views **(↑ 28.1%)**
- 118.2K viewers **(↑ 44%)**
- 8.9K interactions **(↑ 212.6%)**
- 6.7K visits **(↑ 111.4%)**
- 1.3K follows
- Strongest audience: Women, ages 35–55
- Top markets: Cortland County, Syracuse, and Ithaca

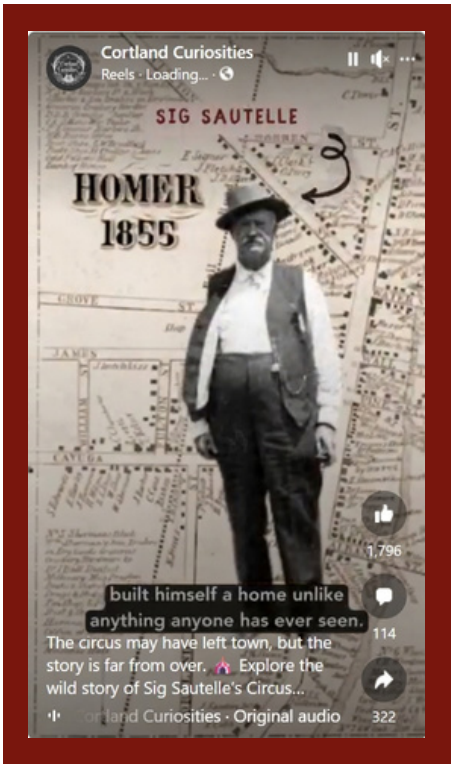
Instagram

- 39.6K views **(↑ 557.6%)**
- 21.6K reach **(↑ 168.2%)**
- 1.4K content interactions **(↑ 368.9%)**
- Strongest audience: Women, ages 35-44

Cortland Curiosities Website Traffic

- 7.5K views **(↑ 122.5%)**
- 3.6K active users **(↑ 256.2%)**; 3.6K new users
- 4.6K engaged sessions **(↑ 220.4%)**
- 1.63 views per active user **(↓ 32.6%)**
- Average engagement time: 2m20s (52 seconds is industry average)
- Top audience markets: New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Oregon

Top Performing Post - FB



54.7K Views, 88.8% Non-Followers
42.6K Interactions
322 Shares; 231 Saves

PUBLIC RELATIONS & PAID MEDIA

Media Mentions & Placements

The CVB uses media coverage to expand awareness of Cortland County beyond our own channels. Through ongoing outreach and collaboration with local, regional, and national media, we work to place our county in stories that highlight the area's experiences, seasonal travel appeal, and destination assets.

Media coverage this quarter helped keep Cortland County in front of travelers as fall trip planning began. County-specific placements highlighted seasonal events, fall foliage, outdoor recreation, and local businesses, giving potential visitors timely reasons to explore the area.

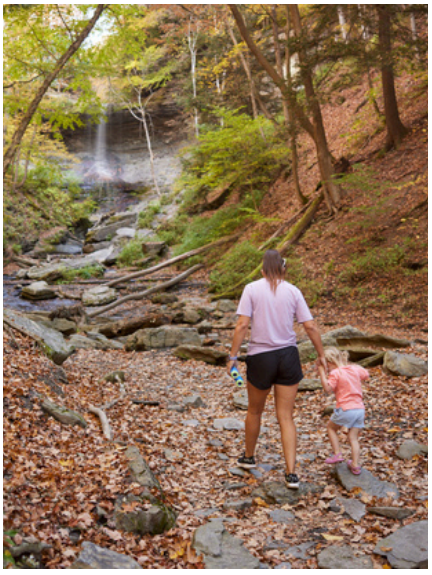


Notable Placements (County)

ILNY, 34 Things to Do in October 2026 in New York State

ILNY, 10 Ways to Experience New York's Fall Folliage from Above

WIVT WBGH NewsChannel 34, Popular Farm Opens Ice Cream Shop in Truxton



The News Journal, 13 Breathtaking Waterfalls to Visit Across New York

Notable Placements (Region)

Because Cortland County is part of the 14-county Finger Lakes region, this national recognition helps put our broader destination on travelers' radar and gives us another opportunity to connect visitors with our trails, small towns, local food, history and arts.

Travel & Leisure, The Most Beautiful Place in Every State - From Arizona's Grand Canyon to Maine's Acadia National Park
Readership: 9.7 million



PUBLIC RELATIONS & PAID MEDIA

Digital Advertising

Digital advertising efforts moved into full campaign mode this quarter, with both the Times Union/Hearst Media and Advance Media campaigns reaching potential visitors in key drive markets. Summer placements focused on travel planning, golf, family-friendly activities, dog-friendly travel, and health and wellness, with additional fall and winter promotion still to come.

Times Union/Hearst Media

The summer portion of this campaign ran from June-August through the Travel & Tourism Newsletter, reaching an audience of approximately 200,000 subscribers.

Summer Campaign Results

- June - Travel Guide: 317 clicks; 7.39% CTR *(Full newsletter: 2.15% CTR)*
- July - Travel Guide: 327 clicks; 6.3% CTR *(Full newsletter: 2.57% CTR)*
- August - Golf: 633 clicks; 14.13% CTR *(Full newsletter: 2.24% CTR)*

The golf placement was the strongest performer, generating 633 clicks and a click-through rate more than six times that of the overall newsletter. Travel Guide placements also performed well above the newsletter average, showing strong interest in Cortland County travel content from the Capital Region audience.

Advance Media

The Advance Media sponsored content campaign promoted different ways to experience Cortland County to audiences in Greater Syracuse and Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley. Through September, the campaign generated 334.7K impressions and 541 clicks across family-friendly, dog-friendly, and health and wellness content.

Campaign Results

- Family Friendly: 84.6K impressions; 185 clicks; 0.22% CTR
- Dog Friendly: 148.4K impressions; 252 clicks, 0.17% CTR
- Health & Wellness: 101.7K impressions; 104 clicks; 0.10% CTR

The final sponsored content will focus on Cortland Curiosities, with results available after the fall campaign wraps up in October.



VISITOR EXPERIENCE & DISTRIBUTION

Travel Guide + Collateral Distribution

Getting visitor information into the right hands is just as important as creating it. Throughout Q3, Experience Cortland worked with local partners, events, SUNY Cortland, and statewide information centers to distribute Travel Guides and other materials where they can reach both visitors already in the area and potential travelers.

Q3 Distribution Highlights

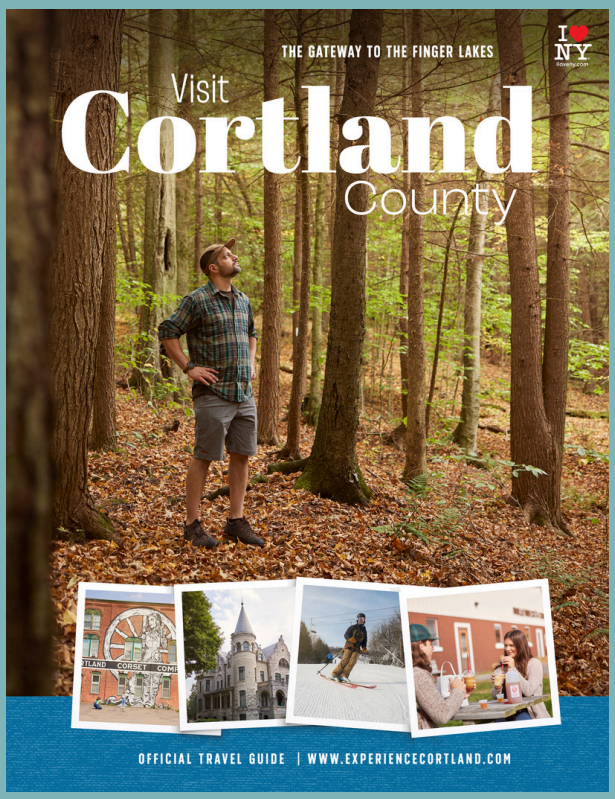
- 750 Travel Guides requested through the NYS Haunted History Trail website
- 800 Travel Guides provided for SUNY Cortland Fall Open Houses
- 1,500 Cortland Curiosities brochures sent to select NYS information centers, including Preble, Syracuse, I-90 and I-81/Central Finger Lakes locations
- 500 golf brochures sent to select New York State information centers
- 300+ Travel Guides distributed at Cortland County events including Route 90 Garage Sale, Holiday in Homer and Arts Off Main Festival
- 900 America250 Coloring Books distributed to local libraries, museums and events, including the Cortland County Independence Day Celebration

These materials help visitors discover more to do while they're here and give partners another tool to encourage visitors to explore beyond the reason that originally brought them to Cortland.

Distribution (as of 9/30)

- Washington, D.C. Travel & Adventure Show
- Pittsburgh Travel Showcase
- New York City Travel & Adventure Show
- AAA Northeast Travel Marketplace (Boston)
- Chicago Travel Adventure Show
- Lehigh Valley Vacation Expo
- Upstate Sports Summer Expo + Montreal Outdoor Adventure Show
- Montreal Outdoor Adventure Show
- Dream Destinations Spring Travel Show (Massachusetts)
- Ottawa Outdoor + Adventure Show
- Port Byron Old Erie Canal Heritage Park; New York State Thruway (6-month display)
- New York State Fair (13-Day Show)
- Association of Canadian Travel Agencies Toronto Summit
- Association of Canadian Travel Agencies Quebec Summit

**Three more travel shows scheduled for 2026*



MARKETING & PROMOTION

Cortland County Ice Cream Trail

The Cortland County Ice Cream Trail wrapped up its third season with 5,000 maps distributed and 238 completed maps returned. While completed maps give us one measure of participation, they only represent visitors who made it to every stop and turned in their map. The larger goal of the program is to encourage people to explore different parts of Cortland County and visit businesses and communities they may not otherwise have a reason to seek out.

Online interest remained strong throughout the season. The Ice Cream Trail landing page received 1,958 views from 1,252 active users, including 1,084 new users. Paid social media also helped introduce the trail to new audiences, generating nearly 40,000 impressions, 8,900 engagements, and 1,660 clicks.

The video creative performed especially well, with a 4.16% click-through rate and more than 8,000 three-second video plays, showing strong interest in the program and helping drive people to the website to learn more.

2026 Highlights

- 5,000 maps distributed
- 238 completed trails
- 1,252 website users, including **1,084 new users**
- 39,892 paid social media impressions
- 8,908 paid social media engagements
- 1,660 clicks to learn more
- 4.16% click-through rate

With the 2026 season complete, we will be surveying participating businesses to learn what worked, what could be improved, and put together ideas as we begin looking ahead to 2027.



Way2Go On the Move Sessions

This year, we partnered with the Cortland County Planning Department and Way2Go Cortland to promote 14 On the Move Sessions, bringing participants to seven Ice Cream Trail locations by bus.

These group outings helped people who may not have access to a vehicle explore more of the county while learning how to navigate local bus routes with greater confidence.







GRANTS

Tourism Marketing Grants

Tourism Marketing Grant recipients continued moving through the reimbursement process during Q3. As of September 30, $114,752.58 in 2026 grant funding had been vouchered, with Cortland Repertory Theatre and Holiday in Homer fully vouchered. The CVB continues to work with awardees as projects and marketing efforts are completed throughout the remainder of the year.

AWARD INFORMATION

Organization	2026 Award	2026 Voucher (as of 9/30)
1890 House Museum	$11,000	$2,450
Brockway Truck Association	$13,000	$0
Cortland County Historical Society	$16,500	$5,000.96
Center for the Arts	$85,000	$38,562.90
CNY Maple Festival	$3,000	$0
Cortland Arts Connect	$8,000	$2,418
Cortland Main Street Music Series	$2,000	$0
Cortland Repertory Theatre	$55,000	$55,000
Holiday in Homer	$3,500	$3,500
Homeville Museum	$3,000	$0
Lime Hollow Nature Center	$30,000	$7,820.72
	Total:	**$114,752.58**
	Remaining 2026:	**$148,247.42**