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# Discover Cheatham County

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Tennessee Certified Economic Developer  
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## ***Introduction***

Tourism has emerged as a cornerstone of economic and cultural vitality, for Cheatham County tourism plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth, fostering cultural exchange, and promoting community development. Cheatham County, Tennessee, is home to four municipalities: Ashland City, Pleasant View, Kingston Springs, and Pegram. Ashland City serves as the county seat and is the largest town, providing a range of administrative and community services. Pleasant View is known for its small-town charm and growing residential community. Kingston Springs offers a picturesque setting along the Cumberland River and is renowned for its natural beauty. Pegram, a quaint and close-knit community, completes the county's municipal landscape. Each of these municipalities contributes to the county's diverse character and provides unique opportunities for residents and visitors alike. By attracting visitors and encouraging them to explore the county's attractions, tourism helps to build a robust economic framework and a vibrant, interconnected community.

## ***Allocation of Hotel-Motel Tax Revenue***

The State and counties have developed a plan to grow tourism in Tennessee using the hotel-motel tax the hotel-motel tax is designed to generate revenue that benefits both the state and the county in several ways. First, it helps fund local infrastructure projects, such as road maintenance and improvements to public spaces, enhancing the overall quality of life for residents. Additionally, the revenue can be used to support tourism-related initiatives, like marketing campaigns and the development of attractions, which can further boost local economic growth by attracting more visitors. This influx of tourists often translates into increased business for local shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues, thereby creating job opportunities and fostering economic development within the community. The tax revenue might also contribute to

funding essential services like emergency response units or cultural events that enhance the community's appeal and functionality. Overall, while the primary goal is to generate additional funds from visitors, the benefits extend to residents through improved public services, enhanced infrastructure, and a vibrant local economy.

Under T.C.A. revenue generated from the county's hotel-motel tax must be allocated exclusively for tourism purposes. Nevertheless, for taxes levied prior to July 1, 2021, funds can continue to be used according to the provisions outlined in the original private act or resolution. In Cheatham County, a resolution was enacted that grandfathered a portion of the hotel-motel tax revenue, stipulating its distribution among four distinct sections of the County Government. The four sections of the County Government are the Industrial development Board, Cheatham County Economic & Community Development, Cheatham County Tourism and Cheatham County General Fund. The Industrial Development board is allocated \$25,000 from the hotel-motel tax and is typically used for economic development purposes. This can include supporting projects that attract new businesses, retain existing businesses, or improve infrastructure that benefits economic growth. The funds might be directed towards things like site development, marketing efforts, or incentives to encourage investment in the county. The Economic and Community Development office receives \$25,000 from the hotel-motel tax, which is used to support various local initiatives aimed at boosting economic growth and improving community facilities. The Tourism Department which now falls under Cheatham County Economic and Community Development receives \$25,000 from the hotel-motel tax and is used to promote the county as a travel destination. This can include funding for marketing, campaigns, tourism-related events, and activities designed to attract visitors to the area. The goal is to enhance the county's visibility, increase tourist visits, and ultimately support the local economy through

increased tourism revenue. The County General Fund receives the remaining to help with various essential services and functions. The money for essential services goes toward public safety, infrastructure maintenance, general government operations, and other community services. The revenue helps support the overall budget of the county, enabling it to provide necessary services and maintain public facilities.

### ***Revisions and Utilization of Hotel-Motel Tax Revenue***

Since the initial resolution in 2018, Cheatham County has made several revisions to the allocation of its hotel-motel tax revenue. Currently, the allocation for tourism purposes is capped at \$25,000. For the fiscal year 2023-2024, the county generated a total of \$561,979 from the hotel-motel tax. This substantial revenue underscores the significance of the tourism sector in the county, even as the allocation framework has evolved over time. With the full amount of \$561,979 from the hotel-motel tax, Cheatham County could significantly enhance its tourism sector by investing in several key areas. First, the funds could be used to develop and improve local attractions, such as enhancing existing parks, creating new recreational facilities, or upgrading historical sites to make them more appealing to visitors. Second, the county could allocate resources to robust marketing and promotional campaigns, including targeted digital advertising, engaging social media content, and professional photography and videography to showcase its unique features. Investing in local events and festivals could draw more visitors and stimulate economic activity within the community. Additionally, the funds could support infrastructure improvements, such as better signage, visitor centers, and transportation options, making it easier for tourists to explore the area. Finally, the county could invest in training and development programs for local businesses and tourism staff to ensure a high-quality visitor

experience. By strategically using these funds, Cheatham County could substantially boost its tourism appeal and drive economic growth.

### ***Transition to Economic Development Department***

Since July 1, 2024, tourism responsibilities in Cheatham County have transitioned from the Chamber of Commerce to the Cheatham County Economic and Community Development department. Despite its lack of prior experience in tourism, the Economic Development team can achieve success by adopting a strategic approach grounded in community engagement and resource optimization. Initially, the department should focus on building strong relationships with local stakeholders, including businesses, event organizers, and residents, to understand their perspectives and needs. Collaborating closely with these stakeholders will help tailor tourism initiatives that reflect the county's unique attributes and strengths. Leveraging existing digital platforms and enhancing the county's online presence through an engaging website and active social media channels can effectively promote local attractions. Hosting community meetings and workshops can foster support and gather valuable input for developing tourism strategies. Additionally, the department should prioritize cost-effective marketing efforts, such as creating compelling content and utilizing free or low-cost public relation opportunities. By focusing on these collaborative and resourceful approaches, the Economic and Community Development team can successfully manage and grow Cheatham County's tourism sector.

### ***State Incentives for Tourism***

Tennessee offers various incentives to boost tourism and support related development projects. The Tennessee Tourism Development Act is a key program that provides tax incentives for investing in tourism-related ventures such as new attractions, hotels, and other infrastructure that draws visitors. This initiative aims to stimulate significant investments that contribute to the

state's tourism economy. The Tennessee Arts Commission plays a role by offering grants to support cultural tourism projects. These grants help fund arts-related events, festivals, and public art installations that enhance the state's cultural appeal and attract tourists interested in the arts. Regional tourism efforts are also supported through specific programs designed to promote distinct areas within the state. These initiatives can include marketing support and event funding, helping to highlight local attractions and boost regional visitor numbers, Tennessee offers historic preservation tax credits to encourage the rehabilitation of historic properties. By preserving and repurposing historic buildings, these credits help attract tourists with an interest in history and heritage. Local Convention and Visitors Bureaus also benefit from state resources and support, which helps them promote their destinations, organize events, and attract conventions and meetings. These incentives are designed to stimulate investment in tourism infrastructure, support cultural and historical preservation, and enhance the state's appeal as a travel destination.

### ***Utilization of American Rescue Plan Act Funds***

Since the Cheatham County Economic and Community Development (ECD) department took over tourism responsibilities, it has been awarded \$95,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. This significant funding boost provides a valuable opportunity to further enhance the county's tourism sector. With these funds, the ECD could focus on several key initiatives, such as developing new tourist attractions, improving infrastructure, and launching targeted marketing campaigns to attract more visitors. Additionally, investing in community events and festivals could help promote local culture and create memorable experiences for tourists. By strategically deploying these ARPA funds, the department can effectively support and grow

Cheatham County's tourism industry, driving economic development and enriching the visitor experience.

### ***Sustainable Tourism***

Sustainable tourism development in Cheatham County focuses on preserving its natural beauty and cultural heritage while fostering economic growth and community well-being. Efforts are directed towards promoting responsible travel practices that minimize environmental impact, such as supporting eco-friendly accommodations and activities that highlight the county's rich history and outdoor recreation opportunities. Conservation initiatives aim to protect local ecosystems, including the scenic Cumberland River and its tributaries, while enhancing access for visitors through sustainable infrastructure development. By engaging local communities in tourism planning and development, Cheatham County ensures that benefits are equitably distributed, contributing to a vibrant and resilient tourism industry that respects and enhances the county's unique identity and resources for future generations.

### ***Balancing Conservation and Tourism***

Community involvement is essential for preserving and promoting local cultural heritage. In Cheatham County, conservation is a top priority, with approximately 20,810 acres dedicated to wildlife areas. These lands are crucial for maintaining local ecosystems, protecting wildlife habitats, and offering outdoor recreational opportunities. By managing such extensive wildlife areas, Cheatham County supports biodiversity, provides activities like hunting and bird-watching, and ensures that natural landscapes are preserved for future generations. This dedication to conservation helps maintain ecological balance and strengthens the community's bond with its natural environment.

Tourism development also plays a role in protecting cultural assets from exploitation or misrepresentation while serving as a platform to celebrate and share heritage with visitors. When communities are actively involved in planning and decision-making, tourism can be managed in a way that protects natural resources, reduces waste, and aligns with the community's capacity for sustainable growth. Engaged communities can significantly enhance the visitor experience.

In Cheatham County, it is vital to prioritize tourism practices that minimize environmental and cultural impacts while generating economic benefits, fostering sustainable development. Balancing conservation with economic growth ensures that natural wonders and cultural treasures remain vibrant and accessible for future generations.

### ***Highlighting Local Attractions***

Cheatham County boasts several hidden gems that highlight its natural beauty and local charm. The Cheatham Dam and Lake offer stunning views and recreational opportunities, including fishing, boating, and picnicking in a tranquil setting. Nearby, Montgomery Bell State Park provides hiking trails, camping sites, and a picturesque lake, appealing to nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike. The Cheatham County Historical Museum in Ashland City captures the area's rich heritage through intriguing exhibits and artifacts. Just a short drive away, Old Hickory Lake expands recreational options with its boating and fishing opportunities, as well as scenic hiking trails. Ashland City's historic downtown presents a charming blend of local shops, restaurants, and historic buildings, reflecting the county's small-town character, together, these attractions showcase the unique appeal of Cheatham County and offer visitors a chance to explore beyond the usual tourist spots. The historical Cheatham County Courthouse is a notable landmark located in Ashland City, Tennessee. The courthouse, originally constructed in 1886, is



an example of 19th-century architecture and has been a central part of the county's history and governance, television shows like “Nashville” and Chonda Pierce’s movie “Laughing in the Dark” have been filmed at our historic courthouse. Cheatham County offers a rich array of events throughout the year that reflect its vibrant community spirit and local culture. The Cheatham County Fair is a beloved annual tradition featuring carnival rides, live entertainment, agricultural exhibits, and a variety of local food vendors, celebrating the county’s agricultural roots and providing fun for all ages. The Ashland City, Pleasant View, Kingston Springs and Pegram’s Christmas Parade brings holiday cheer to the communities with festive floats, local marching bands, and spirited performances. The Cheatham County Music on Main Festival showcases the talents of local artists and musicians, offering live music, art exhibits, and craft vendors in a lively, family-friendly setting. Seasonal farmers' markets in Ashland City and other areas feature fresh produce, homemade goods, and crafts from local vendors, highlighting the region’s agricultural bounty. Historical tours and reenactments offer educational experiences, immersing visitors in the county’s rich past. Additionally, community fun runs, charity events, summer concerts, and outdoor movie screenings provide opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with the community, support local causes, and enjoy entertainment in the county’s picturesque settings. These events collectively showcase Cheatham County’s unique charm and commitment to fostering a lively and inclusive community atmosphere.

Cheatham County, a picturesque rural community nestled in Tennessee, is experiencing a burgeoning interest in local tourism that highlights its natural beauty and small-town charm. Cheatham County, is home to several notable outdoor attractions, each offering unique experiences for nature enthusiasts and recreational visitors. The Cumberland River Bicentennial Trail winds along the scenic Cumberland River, providing a picturesque setting for hiking and

nature observation. Another family-friendly option is the Storybook Trail, where pages from a children's book are posted along the path, blending the joy of reading with outdoor exploration. For those seeking a more immersive natural experience, the Jackson Webb Nature Trail allows hikers to explore diverse habitats and observe local wildlife. The Challenge Trail caters to more experienced hikers with its demanding terrain, offering a rewarding adventure for those looking for a physical challenge with 10 exercise stations throughout the course. Additionally, the Narrows of the Harpeth is a stunning area known for its dramatic rock formations and waterways, ideal for hiking, kayaking, and picnicking. Together, these trails and sites highlight the natural beauty and recreational opportunities available in Cheatham County. Visitors are drawn to the county's scenic landscapes, including serene lakes and lush forests, which offer ample opportunities for outdoor activities such as hunting, hiking, fishing, and wildlife observation. Mound Bottom is a significant archaeological and historical site known for its extensive Native American mound complex. This ancient site, which dates back to the Mississippian period (approximately 1000 to 1500 AD), features a series of large earthen mounds that were constructed by early indigenous peoples for ceremonial and burial purposes. Visitors to Mound Bottom can explore the well-preserved mounds and surrounding landscape. The site is an important cultural resource. Cheatham County is becoming an increasingly appealing destination for those seeking an authentic and tranquil rural escape. Cheatham County can effectively boost tourism despite limited funds by leveraging cost-effective strategies, local assets and famous people. Cheatham County is known for its connection to several notable country music stars who have called the area home. Among them are Jake Owen, Louise Mandrell, Mel Tillis, Mo Pitney, Randy Travis, Don Williams and The

Picard Family. Cheatham County emphasizes the unique natural beauty, historic sites, and cultural heritage, one of the reasons people choose to live here.

The Riverbluff Triathlon is an annual event held in Ashland City, Tennessee. This triathlon, which typically features a swim, bike, and run segment, takes advantage of the scenic natural surroundings of Cheatham County. The race attracts participants of various skill levels, from seasoned triathletes to enthusiastic beginners. The event not only provides a competitive platform but also promotes fitness and community engagement. The Riverbluff Triathlon has become a local tradition, drawing athletes and spectators to Ashland City each year, highlighting the area's commitment to promoting an active and healthy lifestyle. The triathlon brings in about 500 registered attendees. The community comes together preparing goody bags with local information, local coffee shops like Street Coffee and Sheyegirl Coffee pitch in to keep the attendees awake in the early morning.

### ***Tourism and Economic Benefits***

Tourism has evolved into a global phenomenon, driving economic growth, cultural exchange, and social development across many destinations. As a multifaceted industry, tourism offers significant economic, social, and cultural benefits. Visitor spending on accommodations, dining, entertainment, and services generates substantial revenue for local economies, stimulating growth and creating jobs in sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and retail. Additionally, tourism can spur the development of new businesses and infrastructure, including hotels, restaurants, and recreational facilities, further enhancing economic diversification.

Despite these advantages, tourism can also present challenges. Heavy reliance on tourism may make local economies vulnerable to fluctuations in visitor numbers due to global economic shifts or unforeseen events like pandemics or natural disasters. Increased demand from tourists

can also raise prices for goods and services, leading to higher living costs for residents and contributing to inflation.

The successful realization of tourism's benefits hinges on active community involvement. Engaging local communities is crucial for ensuring that tourism is sustainable, equitable, and advantageous for everyone involved. By involving residents in tourism development, communities can better leverage and direct the economic opportunities that tourism provides. Local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and shops, are more likely to benefit from increased tourist traffic. Community-driven tourism initiatives help ensure that the economic rewards from tourism are distributed more fairly among residents, contributing to overall regional development.

Tourism can have a profound effect on social dynamics within a destination. Positive social impacts include enhanced cultural exchange and understanding between visitors and locals. Tourism provides opportunities for residents to interact with people from diverse backgrounds, fostering cross-cultural communication and mutual respect. Development of tourism infrastructure, such as improved transportation and healthcare facilities, benefits both tourists and local communities.

Tourism can also lead to social disruptions. Increased visitor numbers can cause overcrowding and congestion, straining public services and affecting residents' quality of life. Additionally, the presence of tourists can lead to social changes, such as shifts in local lifestyles and values, which may result in tension between traditional practices and modern influences.

The cultural impacts of tourism are complex, encompassing both preservation and commodification of local traditions. On the positive side, tourism can encourage the preservation

and promotion of cultural heritage. Financial incentives from tourism can support the maintenance of historical sites, traditional crafts, and cultural festivals, contributing to the conservation of local heritage.

### ***Tourism Marketing and Promotion***

Marketing and promotion are essential for boosting tourism in a county for several compelling reasons. Cheatham County over the years has done a remarkable job with tourism, in 2019 the Cheatham County Chamber published their first Visitors Guide with Pat Head Summit at the front page. Pat Head grew up in Cheatham County and played basketball for the Cheatham County High School, she was a legend and the county was proud to say she was from Cheatham. The visitors guide continued till 2023 with topics of Entertainment, Art, Tourism and all the 501c's in the County. These books along with billboards along the highway significantly enhanced the county's visibility, ensuring it reaches potential visitors who might otherwise overlook it. The county was increasing awareness, effective marketing helped the county distinguish itself from other destinations, drawing in tourists who are looking for unique experiences, like small town parades, local events and southern hospitality. A strong marketing strategy builds a distinctive brand identity for the county, making it memorable and attractive to travelers. Additionally, targeted promotions can balance visitor traffic throughout the year, highlight seasonal attractions, and boost attendance at local events and festivals.

When a county invests in marketing its attractions, events, and unique features, it helps create awareness and generate interest among potential travelers. Cheatham County ECD has started to create rack cards for surrounding welcome centers to promote events happening each quarter in every municipality that is in our county. This increased visibility can lead to higher visitor numbers, which in turn stimulates local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and shops.

## *Adapting to Natural Disasters and Pandemics*

The pandemic that happened in 2020 along with several floods and tornados have set new protocols and planning in place when it comes to tourism. To ensure that tourism remains robust and beneficial for a county like Cheatham in the face of natural disasters and pandemics, several key strategies can be adopted. When Cheatham County was impacted by covid, small businesses suffered, mom and pop shops were hanging on by a thread, new ideas had to be developed to help the locals stay afloat and maintain social distance. The Cheatham County Chamber would feed all the essential workers every week to help the local restaurants, partnering with the local distillery to distribute hand sanitizer that was made in house by Leatherwood Distillery. The Cheatham County Emergency department has a well-developed and regularly updated plan that addresses potential crises, such as natural disasters or health emergencies. It states clearly protocols for communication, visitor safety, and strategies to quickly restore tourism activities when conditions allow. Strengthening partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and emergency services can create a more resilient support network. By clearly articulating the steps taken to protect visitors, such as enhanced sanitation and social distancing protocols, the county can build trust and encourage tourism even during challenging times. By implementing these approaches, Cheatham County can keep tourism alive and continue to benefit from its economic and community contributions, even in the face of adversity.

## *Conclusion*

Tourism is essential to both the state and county as it drives economic growth, creates jobs, and supports local businesses. For a county like Cheatham, as well as its neighboring areas, tourism generates revenue that can be invested in public services, infrastructure, and community

development. It also fosters cultural exchange and promotes local heritage, enriching the community's overall experience and attractiveness. To enhance tourism across Cheatham County and its surrounding areas, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. Collaboration among counties can lead to the creation of a cohesive regional tourism strategy that highlights unique local attractions while promoting the broader appeal of the area. The tourism department with Economic Development joined a regional alliance with surrounding counties to discuss opportunities and best practices for each county. The alliance meets quarterly to share ideas and promote each other's events.

By focusing on these strategies, Cheatham County and its neighboring areas can not only sustain but also significantly boost their tourism sectors, contributing to economic prosperity and creating vibrant, attractive destinations for travelers.

## *Resource Page*

Website: Ashland City ([ashlandcitytn.gov](http://ashlandcitytn.gov))

Website: Cheatham County, TN ([cheathamcountytn.gov](http://cheathamcountytn.gov))

Website: Town of Kingston Springs, TN ([Kingstonsprings.net](http://Kingstonsprings.net))

Website: [www.discovercheathamcounty.org](http://www.discovercheathamcounty.org)

Website: <https://townofpleasantview.com/>

Discover Cheatham Tourism Guide: Year 2019,2020,2021,2022,2023