

COVID CRUNCHES PARK COUNTY TRAVEL

But Outlook is Positive for 2021 and Beyond

Oh, what might have been!

The 2020 forecast for Park County tourism was promising.

The beautifully renovated Mammoth Hotel in Yellowstone National Park opened its doors last August. Fall saw travelers exploring Cody Yellowstone with fewer crowds, and advanced reservations at our lodging properties showed we might have one of our best years ever. The 2020 tourism season looked bright.

Then came COVID-19.

Cody Yellowstone weathered the fires of 1988, the fallout from September 11, 2001, and the financial crisis of 2008-09, but how could we survive something that brought the world and most travel to a standstill?

The U.S. Travel Association and other national and international travel organizations had no idea the magnitude of this global pandemic. Destination management organizations such as Park County Travel Council were left asking the question: Why spend a lot of money marketing a destination when people either can't or won't travel? The Wyoming Office of Tourism paused its

normal marketing and public relations campaigns. We did the same.

However, we stayed active on social media, created new content, and promoted Cody Yellowstone's wide-open spaces, roaming wildlife, and natural social distancing.

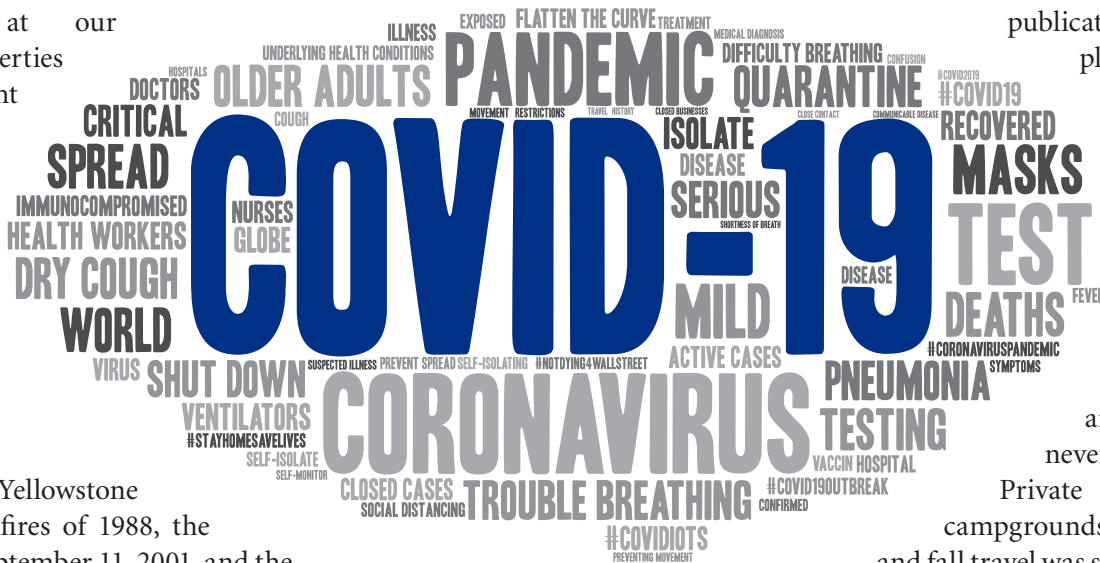
Gradually, after Yellowstone National Park opened and as cities and states loosened restrictions, the Wyoming Office of Tourism started its promotions again, and so did we.

Cody Yellowstone increased its messaging with targeted print ads and advertorials in high-end travel publications. We also placed substantial digital and Connected TV spots. When travel resumed heading into summer 2020, camping and RV's had never been so popular.

Private and public campgrounds were at capacity, and fall travel was strong with record numbers in Yellowstone National Park.

Hospitality businesses are keeping health and safety practices and precautions in place, and the forecast for 2021 is bright. Travelers want to get away from home and enjoy outdoor experiences while feeling safe, and the home of the Great American Adventure is still the best destination for that.

If 2020 was the year potential travelers dreamed of coming to Cody Yellowstone, 2021 will hopefully be the year those dreams come true.



We added a Travel Updates page to CodyYellowstone.org with statewide and local COVID information. As Governor Mark Gordon eased restrictions, we updated the page to reflect current conditions.

We produced videos of Yellowstone's iconic features and wildlife across our sprawling landscapes with the theme: "When You're Ready, We'll be Ready." Future travelers could dream now, but travel later.

Media and Travel Trade Highlights

The PCTC office provides information and helps coordinate individual visits from national and international travel writers and influencers, photographers, tour operators and travel industry representatives. These visits to Cody and the area resulted in published and online articles as well as travel brochures and catalogs. The Wyoming Office of Tourism, the PCTC public relations team - Mesereau Travel Public Relations and the office of Rocky Mountain International rely on support from the PCTC office to host and escort these important guests.

- Articles about Cody Yellowstone were published in 11 magazines, five metropolitan newspapers and 23 additional online sites.
- 16 travel industry representatives from eight tour companies or travel agencies from five different countries were hosted.
- Cody and Park County were featured in several travel guides: Brand U.S.A. Inspiration Guide, AAA TourBook, and Billings, Jackson, Rapid City and Salt Lake City guides.
- In cooperation with the Wyoming Office of Tourism, Rocky Mountain International (RMI) and other marketing organizations, 22 travel writers/social influencers from the U.S., Canada and Europe were hosted. Writers represented a variety of newspapers, magazines and online publications.

Local Partners

The Park County Travel Council could not host and assist with as many media groups as we do without the continued support of local businesses. This support – donated lodging, meals and admissions – allows the Travel Council to spend more on advertising, partnerships and transportation for travel writers and television crews. Members of the council understand that these donations cost businesses and truly appreciate our local partners' cooperation.

Special thanks to Yellowstone National Park Lodges /Xanterra, the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody Nite Rodeo, Cody Stampede Board, Cody Firearms Experience, Cody Trolley Tours, Dan Miller's Cowboy Music Revue, Old Trail Town, Heart Mountain Interpretive Center, Wyoming River Trips, The Cody Cattle Company, Blair Hotels, The Cody, Best Western Ivy Inn & Suites, Best Western Sunset Inn, Shoshone Lodge & Guest Ranch, The Irma Hotel and Restaurant and The Chamberlin Inn – a few of our 2019/20 partners.

PCTC Helps Communities Promote Themselves

The Park County Travel Council promotes Park County in its entirety under the name "Cody Yellowstone," which includes the communities of Cody, Powell, Meeteetse, and East Yellowstone Valley.

In addition to this marketing, individual communities and non-profit organizations within Park County are awarded matching grants to purchase their own advertising.

PCTC Grants can only be used for advertising and promotion outside Park County. Most Chamber of Commerce grants also include partial funding for visitor/information centers.

Because Yellowstone National Park Lodges/Xanterra is not eligible for grant money, their collections are used to enhance the grants awarded to each community and to fund the countywide marketing plan. Usually, the PCTC helps fund from the marketing budget cooperative promotion for Yellowstone National Park Lodges/Xanterra to reinforce the partnership with Cody. In September 2019 a post-conference tour for Travel Bloggers Exchange (TBEX) participants was hosted by Cody Yellowstone. The bloggers entered Yellowstone Park through Cody's east entrance, explored most of the park and overnights at Mammoth Hotel and then went to Lamar Valley before they exited Yellowstone Park through the northeast entrance to return to Cody. This tour allowed Cody Yellowstone to



Bloggers/Influencers Jen Ruiz and Victoria Hart in Yellowstone with Rick Hoeninghausen, Director of Sales & Marketing and Travis Manchester, driver/guide, Xanterra Travel Collection.

tout our county attractions and activities as well as our easy access to two Yellowstone gateways. PCTC and Yellowstone National Park Lodges/Xanterra shared ground transportation costs. Activities, meals and lodging were donated by Park County partners.

Many Park County conventions, events and sport tournaments received sponsorships from the Park County Travel Council. Over \$5,000.00 was awarded in sponsorships to events such as the Powell Soroptimist Craft Fair, Powell Wrestling Club 3-Style Tournament, Buffalo Bill Cody Half Marathon and 10K, Park County Youth Girls State Hockey and Cody Concerts in the Park.

Park County Travel Council Administration and Budget

The role of the Park County Travel Council is to administer the 4% Park County lodging tax revenues with the exception of the 10% share returned to the Park County Treasurer. State statutes dictate the revenues be spent on tourism promotion only.

The Park County Travel Council is a Joint Powers Board comprised of ten volunteer board members. Four members are appointed by Park County Commissioners, two by the Cody City Council, two by the Powell City Council and one by the Meeteetse Town Council. A representative from the Wyoming Tourism Board or a designee, is also on the Travel Council.

Budgets created and approved are funded by the previous year's lodging tax revenue.

Claudia Wade, marketing director of the Park County Travel Council, is responsible for implementing and/or overseeing a variety of marketing strategies for Park County.

Wade assists in the selection of publications for advertising buys, coordinates visits and escorts media and travel industry representatives, assists in the development of display ads and brochures, coordinates all television promotions and features,

works closely with the public relations team generating press releases and monthly adventure logs. Claudia also represents Park County at trade and travel shows in the U.S. and Europe, acts in an advisory capacity regarding funding and administers all PCTC grants.

Amanda Coyle, administrative assistant, tracks and fulfills all visitor information requests including bulk mailing to visitor centers and AAA travel offices. She maintains printed and digital data for the Group Travel Planner, Press Guide, Facilities Inventory, and the PCTC website CodyYellowstone.org. Amanda is also responsible for the annual updating and printing of the insert in the Cody Yellowstone Adventure Vacation Guide insert and updating all PCTC printed brochures – Historical Attractions Guide, Scenic Drives, and the Guest & Dude Ranch Directory. Amanda makes sure all county visitor centers have PCTC materials for summer distribution. She is responsible for coordinating the PCTC rack card distribution for Park County non-profits and preparing materials for board meetings and work sessions.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FY20 ENDING 6/30/20

Cash in Bank 6/30/2020 \$2,750,507.07

REVENUES:

<i>FY20 Lodging Tax Gross Receipts</i>	\$3,055,179.52
<i>Less Revenues to Park Co./Cities</i>	<u>305,517.95</u>
Net FY20 Lodging Tax Collections	\$2,749,661.57 *
Co-Ops/Refunds	17,580.00
Interest Received	<u>32,975.80</u>
TOTAL REVENUE	\$2,800,217.37

EXPENSES:

Cody, Powell, Meeteetse	
East Yellowstone Specific 2020	\$278,754.01
Park County Marketing Plan 2020	1,595,438.74
Administration 2020	192,072.10
Attractions 2020	138,496.04
Special Events 2020	4,665.75
Advertising Co-Ops	<u>16,862.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,226,288.64**

* Reserved for FY2021 Budget

** Funded from FY2019 Lodging Tax Collections, Interest and Co-op Revenue

Communities, County Use Lodging Tax Dollars

Park County collected \$29.7 million in sales taxes in 2019. Nearly 36% of those taxes, \$10.6 million, was generated by travelers. These travel generated taxes relieved the tax burden on Park County residents.

Park County residents benefit from the lodging tax in another way. Park County and its municipalities receive 10% of the Park County lodging tax collected. The collections are distributed by the Park County Treasurer back to the communities and county at the same ratio they were collected. Example: City of Cody collected \$1,268,465.00 and received \$126,846.00 from the County Treasurer. There is no restriction on how this 10% can be spent.

In 2019, a total of \$310,060.00 was returned to Park County for distribution to the City of Powell, the City of Cody, the Town of Meeteetse and Park County.

The City of Powell received approximately \$5,394.00 that was earmarked to offset expenses for Powell's Country Christmas and other Powell special events.

The City of Cody received approximately \$126,846.00 that was spent mostly for City staff to assist with Cody special events such as the Stampede Rodeo, parades, Ice Cream Social and other community events where the city provides traffic control or other staffing. Funds were also awarded to Forward Cody Wyoming, Inc. and Cody/Yellowstone Air Improvement Resources.

Approximately \$506.00 was received by the town of Meeteetse. This was added to the town's general fund.

Park County is entitled to the portion of the funds that are collected outside Park County municipalities. These properties are guest and dude ranches and Yellowstone National Park lodging that is located within Park County. In 2019, over \$177,320.00 was added to Park County's general fund and used at the discretion of the county commissioners.

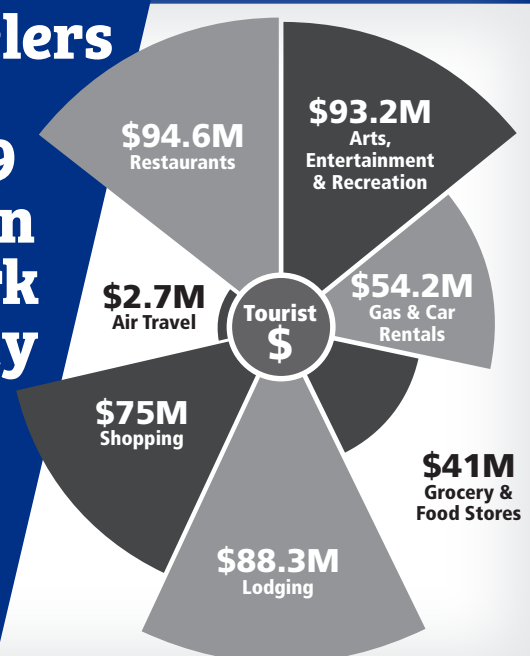
2019 GRANTS/PROGRAMS FUNDED BY 2018 LODGING TAX COLLECTIONS

	GRANTS	COLLECTIONS
CODY COLLECTED		\$1,260,246.99
Cody Country Chamber of Commerce	\$160,000.00	
<i>Visitor Center</i>	<i>\$146,267.00</i>	
<i>Visitor Center Advert.</i>	<i>\$7,733.00</i>	
<i>Visitor Kiosk</i>	<i>\$6,000.00</i>	
Buffalo Bill Center of the West	\$36,000.00	
Buffalo Bill Dam & Visitor Center	\$3,450.00	
Cody Stampede Board	\$36,000.00	
Cody Heritage Museum	\$2,650.00	
Museum of the Old West & Trail Town	\$2,650.00	
Yellowstone Quake	\$2,700.00	
TOTAL CODY GRANTS	\$243,450.00	
POWELL COLLECTED		\$89,013.93
Powell Valley Chamber of Commerce	\$63,000.00	
<i>Visitor Center</i>	<i>\$45,000.00</i>	
<i>Rack Cards/Bro/ Mail</i>	<i>\$2,345.00</i>	
Ag Tours & Mailings	\$5,950.00	
Event Marketing Grant	\$9,705.00	
Heart Mountain Interpretive Center	\$28,000.00	
TOTAL POWELL GRANTS	\$91,000.00	
MEETEETSE COLLECTED		\$3,716.98
Meeteetse Visitor Center	\$30,000.00	
<i>Visitor Center Staffing</i>	<i>\$16,000.00</i>	
<i>Event/Marketing Grant</i>	<i>\$8,650.00</i>	
<i>Website Design/Maint.</i>	<i>\$5,350.00</i>	
TOTAL MEETEETSE GRANTS	\$30,000.00	
PARK COUNTY COLLECTED		\$322,578.66
East Yellowstone Valley Chamber of Commerce	\$50,000.00	
Yellowstone Receptions Foundation	\$30,000.00	
Yellowstone Regional Airport	\$15,000.00	
Shoshone Back Country Horsemen	\$2,500.00	
TOTAL COUNTY GRANTS	\$97,500.00	
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK COLLECTED .		\$1,430,000.00
(YNP lodging located in Park County only)		
Yellowstone is not eligible for PCTC Grants		\$0.00
TOTAL GRANTS	\$461,950.00	
UNIFIED MARKETING	\$1,968,893.00	
ADMINISTRATION	\$188,855.00	
TOTAL GRANTS & PROGRAMS	\$2,619,698.00	



You may recognize this logo. In order for grantees to be reimbursed for their advertising expenses, it must appear on all printed ads, TV commercials and other promotional materials. This logo also appears in printed programs and at facilities that host sporting events which are funded in part by the Park County Travel Council.

Travelers Spent \$448.9 Million in Park County in 2019



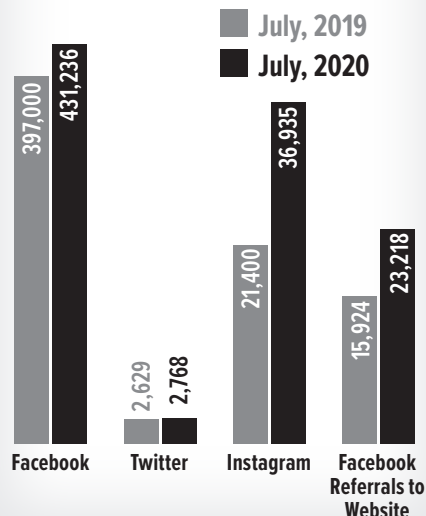
Source:
2019 Dean Runyan
Assoc. Report

The Park County Travel Council and Social Media

Social networking is a critical tool when it comes to raising awareness about the experiences of a vacation to Cody Yellowstone. The Park County Travel Council posts twice daily on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Most of our posts come from user-generated imagery. This type of authentic photography resonates with visitors and allows them to picture themselves in our backyard. Our followers find information on upcoming events, interact with questions related to this region, and share pictures and stories. Be sure to follow us – we're listed as *CodyYellowstone* on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Our YouTube channel is *yellowstonecountry*. CodyYellowstone.org features an "Adventure Log" that encourages readers to explore Cody Yellowstone.



Our Social Media Audience Has Grown!



Park County Travel Council
 FY2020 Annual Report
 P.O. Box 2454 – Cody, WY 82414
CodyYellowstone.org

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POSTAL PATRON

Year-Round Marketing

The Park County Travel Council has been implementing a marketing plan for seven years that includes some sort of Cody/Yellowstone promotion throughout the calendar year. The council's primary goal is to extend the traditional summer season into the fall and bolster winter visitation. We saw increases in December, January and February lodging tax collections and some admission numbers and we were well on our way to a strong 2020 tourism year.

Enter COVID-19. March, April and May numbers don't begin to compare to previous years. Yellowstone closed all gates and re-opened in phases for day use beginning mid-May. Many attractions closed to the public and did not reopen until May or June. Several lodging properties delayed summer opening and restaurants were restricted to curbside carryout. Adding to the already bleak situation, many businesses were unable to secure foreign workers for the summer.

Most of our marketing was put on hold with only social channels posting Park County imagery and touting our wide-open spaces luring visitors once travel is allowed. Our slogan, "When You're Ready, We'll be Ready."

A vacation guide is produced and mailed to people who request a printed Cody Yellowstone Adventure Guide. Marketing efforts direct inquiries to the website where users can download a vacation guide or plan their trip online. Providing CodyYellowstone.org as an information source better engages the user, is cost effective and offers more current information. Attractions and activities in Powell and Meeteetse are included in this the Park County promotion piece.

The Travel Council recognizes that events can be an easy way to increase visitation. Unfortunately, with COVID-19, most events in Park County have been cancelled in 2020.

JANUARY – JUNE STATISTICS COMPARISON

	2018	2019	2020	COVID-19 Related Closures
Inquiries	61,418	45,791	56,205	
PCTC Website Hits	300,237	213,618	127,762	
Buffalo Bill Center of the West	57,488	51,611	21,288	Closed March 18, Opened May 7
YNP East Entrance	150,932	143,954	85,436	Opened May 18
Cody Nite Rodeo	26,217	25,660	5,671	Started June 20
BB Dam & Visitor Center	28,857	24,024	10,424	Opened May 18
Heart Mtn. WWII Interpretive Center	6,069	5,782	1,849	Closed March 14, Opened June 15

2019/2020 PARK COUNTY TRAVEL COUNCIL

John Parsons, Chairman
 Park County Appointee

Sandy Newsome, Vice Chairman
 City of Cody Appointee

Mike Darby, Treasurer
 Park County Appointee

Sarah Bierschwale, Secretary
 Park County Appointee

Sherry Long | Town of Meeteetse Appointee

Diane Ballard | City of Cody Appointee

Dave Bonner | City of Powell Appointee

John Wetzel | City of Powell Appointee

Ruffin Prevost | Park County Appointee

Ted Blair | State Tourism Board Representative Appt.