

Garvin County

Tourism Development Plan



2021 Garvin County Tourism Assessment

INTRODUCTION

The Garvin County Tourism Assessment is a roadmap to help move Garvin County forward over the next five years and to harness its true tourism potential. The Chickasaw Country team was tasked with evaluating the current state of tourism assets, the untapped tourism resources and what tourism resources are needed to increase visitation within the county. This was accomplished by working with the major stakeholders of the county. The list of stakeholders includes cities, Chambers, CVB's, DMO's and local businesses.

Chickasaw Country is a destination marketing organization, within the Chickasaw Nation Department of Commerce, promoting both Chickasaw-owned and non-Chickasaw tourism assets within the 13 counties in south-central Oklahoma known as the Chickasaw Nation. Chickasaw Country promotes tourism to local, regional, national and international visitors in hopes of generating exposure, garnering interest and driving visits to the region.

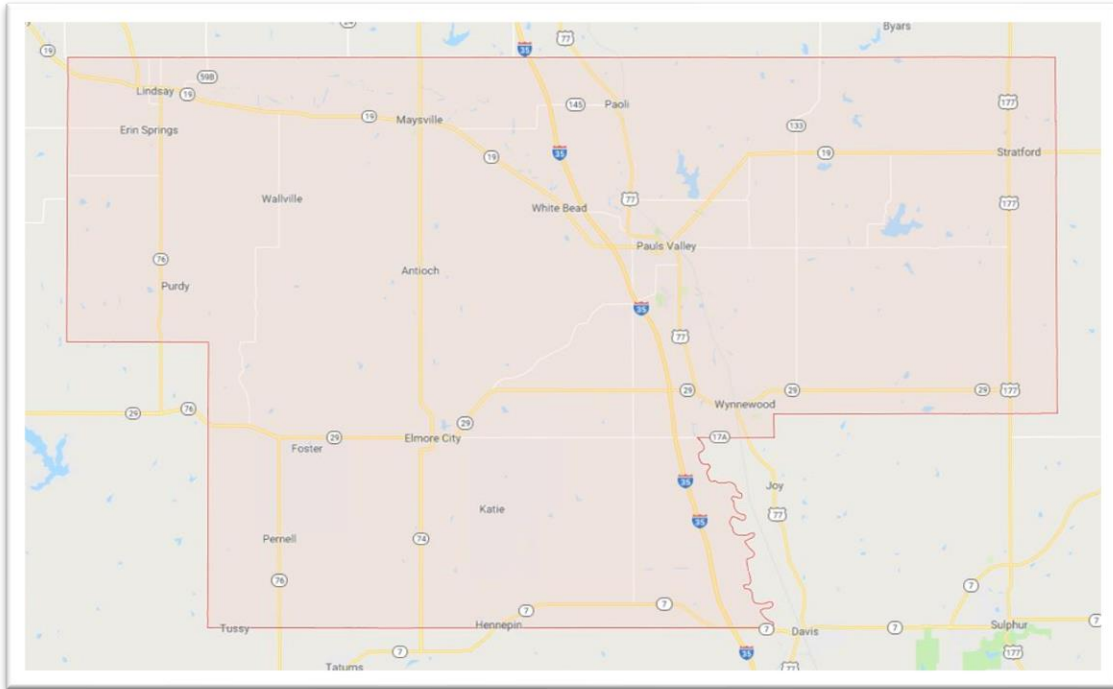
This assessment – and the related goals and strategies – is the result of the Chickasaw Country team's extensive conversation with stakeholders and Garvin County leadership. The planning process used to develop this final document was open and transparent, with stakeholders encouraged to provide both positive and negative feedback about the current state of tourism within their region.

It is important to highlight that the plan was developed during an economically challenging time, for Garvin County and stakeholders within both the public and private sectors. To help anticipate financial and time commitments required in implementation, the plan includes recommended phasing. Strategies in the early years are intended to ensure a smooth transition towards the fulfillment of this newly focused tourism strategy.

The factors outlined below are important in context to the plan and its strategic direction. These factors include a snapshot of the current Garvin County tourism industry, prioritization of overnight visitors versus day trippers, the role of tourism in economic development, the characteristics of a highly functioning tourism system and the value of diverse assets.

County Snapshot

As part of the Garvin County Tourism Assessment, the Chickasaw Nation Tourism team considered the current state of the tourism market within Garvin County. The Dean Runyan Associates data indicates that Garvin County employed 730 tourism workers in 2018 and attracted \$39.5 million in visitor spending ^[1]. This assessment seeks to continue the growth of the county's tourism industry by building upon its current strengths and potential tourism assets.



This image represents a map of Garvin County [4]

Current County Population: 27,711 (2019) [3]

- Age 0-5 6.6%
- Age 6-18 24.6%
- Age 19-64 50.6%
- Ages 65+ 18.2%

- Female 50.6%
- Male 49.4%

Current Economic Resources: [1-7]

- Agribusiness
- Refinery
- Toy & Action Figure Museum
- Unique Festivals
- Equine Industry
- Jet Stream Casino
- Washita Casino
- Main Street Shopping

Current County Unemployment Rate: [5]

- April 2021 4.3%
- April 2020 11.5%
- April 2019 2.4%

Current Tourism Related Organizations: [6-7]

- Pauls Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Pauls Valley City Tourism
- Chickasaw Country Marketing Association
- Lindsay Chamber of Commerce
- Wynnewood Chamber of Commerce
- Stratford Chamber of Commerce

Cities with Tourism Product:

- Elmore City
- Hennepin
- Lindsay
- Maysville
- Paoli
- Pauls Valley
- Stratford
- Wynnewood

Overnight Spending

This assessment addresses leisure, business and event-based visitors who come from outside of the county. Visitors may come from a nearby county, surrounding states or internationally. Their stay may range from a few hours to a few days per visit. According to 2018 Dean Runyan Associates data, the average overnight spend per person in Garvin County is \$70 and the average spend per person for a multiple night stay is \$153.

Because of this significant difference in the economic value of overnight and day visitors, the ultimate focus of this plan is to generate additional overnight stays, and encourage travelers to stay longer, experience more and return to Garvin County.

Much of the plan focuses on cross-promotion between experiences. It creates compelling, yet convenient, ways for visitors to see more than the main attractions that inspired their visit. This portion of the plan also serves to strengthen attractions for day travelers visiting Garvin County.

Tourism is Economic Development

Tourism is the third economic driver for the state of Oklahoma creating more than 103,600 jobs in 2018. Domestic and international travelers to Oklahoma spent \$9.6 billion in 2018 and generated \$1.1 billion to federal, state and local governments. The tourism industry in Garvin County represented approximately 4.5% of the county's total employment in 2018 and paid \$13.64 million in total wages in 2018^[1]. Tourism jobs are valuable because they provide employment opportunities for a multitude of people. Some will advance up the career ladder in tourism, moving from entry-level service positions to higher-paying jobs while others will build on the skills and experience they gain in the tourism sector to branch out into other sectors.

Tourism brings in monetary funds that would otherwise never enter the local economy. In Garvin County, visitors who spend money at tourist attractions, restaurants, overnight accommodations, gas stations and other related suppliers of tourism-related goods or services bring new currency to the area. Many of these funds get circulated within Garvin County's economy, leading to additional jobs and income for residents. Many tourism investments work to attract and serve visitors while contributing to the quality of life for Garvin County residents.

Highly Functioning Tourism System

The assessment builds on the successes of previous tourism efforts put forth by the stakeholders within Garvin County, Chickasaw Country and the Chickasaw Nation. Strategies will be established to build on the strengths and weaknesses of Garvin County. As a result of this planned approach, Garvin County is expected to grow as a highly functioning tourism system. At the end of 2021 or five years (2026) the tourism system should include:

- Strong assets that attract visitors to Garvin County and encourage them to stay longer, explore more, and return often.
- Create/Update/Maintain the County's brand or image that builds on its strengths in a genuine and powerful way.
- Effectively market and promote the county's tourism efforts by cross-promotion.
- Strong supporting infrastructure and services, including overnight accommodations, restaurants and signage.

- A collaborative and coordinated network of partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors working together to strengthen the County's tourism market for the benefit of all.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

The strategic approach and foundational direction for this county's assessment is to focus visitor attention toward the anchor clusters and anchor attractions while simultaneously working to enhance and extend the visitor experience through sustaining clusters and sustaining assets.

The strategic approach begins with performing a SWOT Analysis of the county's current tourism climate. Garvin County focuses promotional efforts around current strengths and opportunities of the county and establish goals and strategies to overcome weaknesses and threats. By performing this analysis, we are able to identify anchor clusters and anchor attractions within the county. The promotion of anchor and sustaining clusters is aided by cooperative marketing, maps, tourism packages, promotions, signage and technology-guided tourism. To support this approach, the plan outlines the need for an improved tourism infrastructure and refined tourism funding.

SWOT Analysis

As a Destination Marketing Organization, Chickasaw Country does not own all of the tourism assets within Chickasaw Country. It is vital that Chickasaw Country portrays realistic expectations on what this region has to offer which is why it is important for us to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting our ability to attract visitors.

Strengths:

- Annual community events
- Developed Main Streets
- Proximity to educational opportunities
- Lodging opportunities increase transient traffic
- Strong community pride/involvement
- Gaming & Entertainment
- Proximity to I-35
- Museums and historical attractions

Weaknesses:

- Distance to major metropolitan areas are over an hour
- Limited night life
- Increasing elderly community
- Limited overnight accommodations in majority of county
- Limited dining establishments
- Limited tourism assets

Opportunities:

- Main streets for hosting events
- Undeveloped land for attractions and activities
- Undeveloped Main Streets
- Partnerships between communities within county
- Expo Center remodel

Threats:

- Weather becomes severe throughout year
- Continuous construction on roads and nearest highways
- Limited attractions
- Reliant on oil business and revenue

Anchor & Sustaining Descriptions

Anchor clusters and anchor attractions were identified by the Chickasaw Country team through stakeholder interviews. These meetings and interviews revealed assets for which Garvin County is best known as well as the most popular tourism draws. The Chickasaw Country team defines anchor clusters and attractions as those strong enough to attract large numbers of visitors from outside the county and those with built-in marketing infrastructure programs.

The list of anchor clusters includes:

- Tribal Assets:
 - Jet Stream Casino
 - Washita Casino
 - Adolescent Transitional Living Facility
- Non-Tribal Assets:
 - Pauls Valley Waterpark
 - Toy & Action Figure Museum
 - Lindsay Murray Mansion
 - Amtrak Heartland Flyer
 - Movie Theater

Accommodations	Number of Rooms	Average Weekend Occupancy %	Average Weekday Occupancy %	Average Cost
Hotels, Motels, & Inns	453	73%	62%	\$76.78
Cabins & Lodging	24	77%	53%	\$163.67
RV's & Campgrounds	0	0	0	\$0.00

**Data collected as of July 2021 [8-20]*

Sustaining clusters and sustaining assets constitute additional places to visit, experience and engage within the community. These clusters are the reason to stay longer, explore off the beaten path and experience local living. The sustaining assets can be even stronger than its anchor assets that do not currently have the drawing power to get visitors to Garvin County on their own. However, a few of the clusters and attractions listed as sustaining in this plan may evolve into future anchor attractions as they draw more attention and their marketing efforts grow.

The list of sustaining clusters includes:

- Tribal Assets:
 - Chickasaw Nation Area Office
- Non-Tribal Assets:
 - County Seat (Government)

- Regional medical hub
- Eskridge Hotel Museum
- Community parks & golf courses

Hidden Assets Identified

Hidden Assets were the third category of tourism assets identified in the strategic approach. Hidden assets are not well known and are closely connected with community life. The Chickasaw Country team identified places, people, culture and activities a tourist would consider ‘authentic’ and allow them the “live like a local.”

Through the hidden asset analysis, the Chickasaw Country team identified two (2) “new” assets. The analysis revealed a number of cultural, natural resources and sustainability events that would never surface through a conventional tourism assessment. The integration of these hidden assets with the more significant attractions and assets has many benefits. Beyond building respect for the communities where tourism occurs, these benefits include:

- Deepening and creating more authentic visitor experiences.
- Bridging business travel with leisure travel.
- Creating additional funding streams for tourism, such as Preserve America grants or Heritage Tourism funds.
- Improving the financial success of small towns and natural resource assets.
- Expanding the overall market for tourism by bringing in new visitors.
- Linking current and new residents to the history and culture of the area.
- Leveraging local residents as tourism ambassadors for visiting friends and relatives.

The list of hidden assets includes:

- Tribal Assets:
 - N/A
- Non-Tribal Assets:
 - Horse & Burrow Adoption Center
 - Dancing Rabbit Creek Winery

Overview of Goal & Strategies

Goal

- Goal 1: Increase dining establishments within the county outside of Pauls Valley.
 - Strategy: Identify stakeholders willing to invest in and integrate dining establishments within the communities.
- Goal 2: Increase/create tourism assets within the county (restaurants, museums, recreational activities, events, etc.).
 - Strategy: Identify possible resources and potential stakeholders willing to invest in the generation of new tourism assets.
- Goal 3: Create communication plan to assist in promoting current county-wide tourism assets and events.

- Strategy: Identify community stakeholder to create a tourism event or asset marketing strategy for the entire county.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION

Goals, Strategies & Tasks

Goal 1: Increase dining establishments within the county outside of Pauls Valley.

Strategy: Identify stakeholders willing to invest in and integrate dining establishments within the communities.

- Rationale – This goal and strategy is important in order to assist in driving tourism visitation to the area and encourage residents to invest in their communities.
- Approach – Determine current business owners and restaurant categories along with potential investors.
- Tasks – Identify and locate potential real estate opportunities and determine a plan of action or business model to execute strategy.
 - Timeline – Based on location availability and willing investors.
 - Resources – Community stakeholders, real estate brokers, individuals, businesses and organizations.

Goal 2: Increase/create tourism assets within the county (restaurants, museums, recreational activities, events, etc.).

Strategy: Identify possible resources and potential stakeholders willing to invest in the generation of new tourism assets.

- Rationale – This goal and strategy is important to generate revenue and job opportunities to residents within the communities and drive tourism visitation to the area.
- Approach – Determine potential tourism asset locations, investors and demographic the attraction would appeal to.
- Tasks – Identify ideal locations and investors willing to buy into the community.
 - Timeline – Based on location availability, attraction needs and willing investors.
 - Resources – Community stakeholders, individuals, businesses and organizations.

Goal 3: Create communication plan to assist in promoting current county-wide tourism assets and events.

Strategy: Identify community stakeholder(s) to create a tourism event or asset marketing strategy for the entire county.

- Rational – This goal and strategy is important in order to ensure all community entities (chambers, clerks, stakeholders, etc.) are able to assist visitors with helpful information within their county and drive tourism interest and revenue into these areas.
- Approach – Reach out to local chambers, city municipalities, stakeholders or individuals willing to create or assist in implementing a communication plan available to all communities within Garvin County.
- Tasks – Create a project plan outline and begin reaching out to community leaders for required information.

- Timeline – Two (2) to three (3) months depending on community feedback and involvement.
- Resources – Community stakeholders, leaders, individuals, businesses, organizations and DMO's.

TARGET MARKET

Introduction

Garvin County's target audience is determined by the following demographics, geographic markets and niche groups based on tourism offerings and resources.

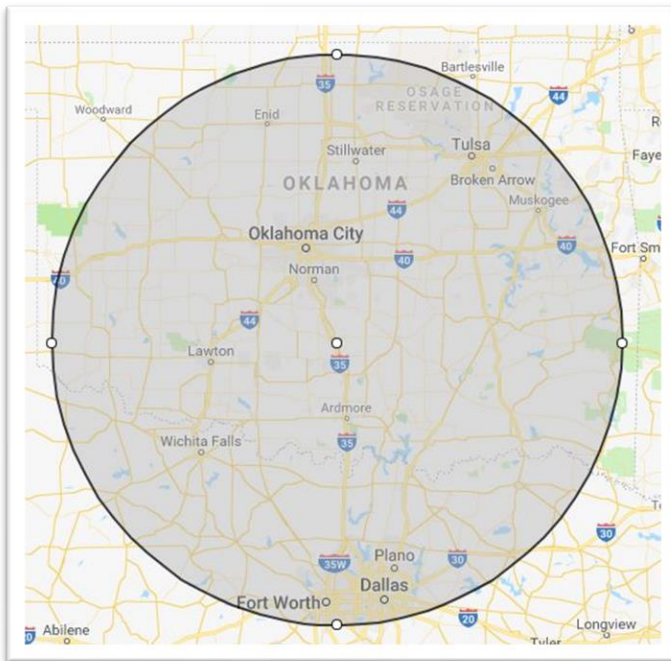
Demographics

In the travel industry over 70% of all family vacations are planned by the female of the household, according to US Travel Research data. Based on tourism assets and gaming product available as well as conversations with community stakeholders, the following age range was determined as Garvin County's target market. ^[3, 6-17]

- Female: 19 – 64
- Male: 25 – 64

Geographic Regions

Research shows that a traveler feels a 150-mile radius is a comfortable distance to travel for a vacation or getaway and we believe that North Texas and Oklahoma City metro areas are ripe markets for the unique experience Garvin County has to offer.



- **Oklahoma**
 - McAlester
 - Oklahoma City
 - Shawnee
 - Norman
 - Stillwater
 - Lawton
 - Atoka
 - Ardmore
 - Durant
- **Texas**
 - Plano
 - Wichita Falls
 - Gainesville
 - Denison
 - Sherman

Radius of 150 miles from Garvin County ^[2]

Other Customer Segments

Niche Markets: ^[6-17]

- Golf enthusiasts
- Unique event seekers
- Gaming entertainment seekers
- Group tour Market

EVENTS

Garvin County plans to continue hosting events in select communities. Events are planned to help drive tourist to the community and help local businesses generate revenue. Garvin County hosted the following annual events:

CITY / EVENT	TIME OF YEAR
Pauls Valley	
Valley Rally Bike Tour	May
Pauls Valley Round-Up Club Heritage Days Rodeo	June
Okie Noodling Festival	June
4 th of July Fireworks	July
Garvin County Fair	August
Brickfest & Police Car Show	September
Boo on the Bricks	October
Christmas Parade of Lights	December
Pauls Valley Opry Events	Throughout Year (1 st Saturday)
Toy & Action Figure Museum Events	Throughout Year
5 th Friday Art Walks	5 th Fridays of applicable months
Stratford	
Stratford Peach Festival	July
Wynnewood	
Wynnewood IPRA Rodeo	July
Pumpkinfest	October
Haunted Trail	October
Elmore City	
Footloose Festival	April
Lindsay	
Founders Day Celebration & Rodeo	May
Party in the Park	June-September
Show of Class Car Show	October
Christmas at the Mansion	December
Lindsay Christmas Parade	December
Maysville	
Wiley Post Festival	August

By supporting community events with local Chambers, businesses and cities, it gives Garvin County the opportunity to be seen as a destination attraction.

RESOURCES

- 1) Dean Runyan Associates (December 2019). Oklahoma Travel Impacts. Retrieved from <https://ds8hbldo2z4gr.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/OK-Travel-Impacts-Statewide-and-County-Impacts-2010-20181.pdf>
- 2) Radius Tool: <https://www.mapdevelopers.com/draw-circle-tool.php>
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- 5) Economic Research (2021). Unemployment Rate in Garvin County, Oklahoma. Retrieved from <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LAUCN400490000000003A>
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- 7) Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department website. Events gathered from this resource. (www.travelok.com)
- 8) Overnight Accommodations: Flyin D Ranch; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 9) Overnight Accommodations: Fossil Creek Ranch; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 10) Overnight Accommodations: Vista Del Sol Bunkhouse; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 11) Overnight Accommodations: America's Best Value Inn; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 12) Overnight Accommodations: Best Western Plus; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 13) Overnight Accommodations: Comfort Inn & Suites; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 14) Overnight Accommodations: Days Inn; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 15) Overnight Accommodations: Economy Inn; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 16) Overnight Accommodations: Hampton Inn & Suites; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 17) Overnight Accommodations: Holiday Inn Express; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 18) Overnight Accommodations: Judges Inn; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 19) Overnight Accommodations: Relax Inn; Personal Communication, July 2021
- 20) Overnight Accommodations: Rodeway Inn; Personal Communication, July 2021