

# IN-MARKET VISIT

FAM Tour, 1-on-1's/FG's

**CHANDLER**THINKS

DESTINATION BRANDING SPECIALISTS

# In-Market Trip - Main Observations

## 1. Nature Is the Primary Draw, Downtown Is the Primary Experience

Blowing Rock's mountains, views, trails, and Blue Ridge Parkway access are the **top reasons people choose to visit**, but the **walkable downtown—anchored by Main Street and Memorial Park—is where visitors spend time and money**. Nature attracts; downtown converts.

Source: In-Market



# In-Market Trip - Main Observations

## 2. A Park-Centered, Walkable Downtown Is a Rare Competitive Advantage

Memorial Park's location **in the heart of downtown** is consistently cited as a defining and differentiating feature. It creates a park-once, walk-everywhere environment that blends scenery, family activity, shopping, and dining in a way few North Carolina mountain towns can replicate.

Source: In-Market



# In-Market Trip - Main Observations

## 3. Blowing Rock Delivers an Upscale, Calm Alternative to Peer Destinations

Blowing Rock stands apart by **not** being a college town, nightlife hub, or high-energy resort. Instead, it offers a **refined, slower-paced, "refuge" experience**—appealing to visitors seeking charm, beauty, and ease rather than intensity or crowds.

Source: In-Market



# In-Market Trip - Main Observations

## 4. The Destination's Strength Is the Total Package, Not a Single Attraction

Respondents consistently describe Blowing Rock's appeal as **the full experience**: scenery, climate, landscaping, hospitality, cultural depth (BRAHM), outdoor access, dining, and walkability working together. No single attraction carries the brand—the **combination does**.

Source: In-Market



# In-Market Trip - Main Observations

## 5. Investment in Beauty, Amenities, and Hospitality Pays Back Economically

Landscaping, downtown maintenance, parks, and overall aesthetics are widely recognized as intentional investments that **directly support visitor spending, property values, and repeat visitation**. Stakeholders see a clear connection between quality, beauty, and economic return.

Source: In-Market



# DESCRIPTORS

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*Q: What words or phrases would you use to describe tourism in Blowing Rock to a friend or colleague who was considering visiting?*

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# DESCRIPTORS

## Charming & Quaint

A storybook, “Norman Rockwell”-style mountain town that feels timeless, cute, and authentically small-town.

## Elegant & Upscale

Refined and tasteful with an understated affluence—perceived as more upscale than nearby towns without feeling flashy or exclusive.

## Iconic, Walkable Main Street

The heart of the experience—an iconic, highly walkable Main Street with shops, dining, parks, and gathering spaces.

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: What words or phrases would you use to describe tourism in Blowing Rock to a friend or colleague who was considering visiting?*



# DESCRIPTORS

## Scenic & Outdoor-Integrated

Beautiful mountain setting with hiking trails, views, and Blue Ridge Parkway access woven directly into town life.

## Relaxing & Multi-Generational

A low-stress mountain escape that attracts older couples, families, and nostalgic visitors, shifting naturally by season.

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: What words or phrases would you use to describe tourism in Blowing Rock to a friend or colleague who was considering visiting?*



# PROMINENT ASSETS

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Q: What are Blowing Rock's *most prominent Tourism Asset(s)*?

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# BLOWING ROCK'S ASSETS

## PRIMARY ASSETS

### Downtown & Main Street

Walkable • Historic • Independent Shops & Dining • Memorial Park • Trail Access

### Blue Ridge Parkway

Iconic Scenic Drive • Overlooks • Hiking • National Recognition

### Grandfather Mountain

Awe-Inspiring Scenery • Conservation • Elevation & Views

### Outdoor Recreation

Hiking • Fly Fishing • Nature Integrated into Downtown

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: What are Blowing Rock's most prominent Tourism Asset(s)?*



# BLOWING ROCK'S ASSETS

## SUPPORTING ASSETS

### **Tweetsie Railroad**

Family & Multi-Generational Anchor • Nostalgia

### **The Blowing Rock**

Iconic Namesake • Sense of Place

### **Moses H. Cone Memorial Park**

Trails • Historic Estate • Scenic Complement

### **Dining, Shopping & Local Businesses**

Local Flavor • Independent Retail • Restaurants

### **Ambience & Lifestyle**

Calm • Walkable • Safe • "Mountain Time" Feel

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: What are Blowing Rock's most prominent Tourism Asset(s)?*



Q: What is Blowing Rock's *most prominent* **Cultural Asset**?

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# CULTURAL ASSETS

## Shining Star

- Blowing Rock Art & History Museum

## Nostalgic Attractions

- Tweetsie Railroad (NC's first theme park)
- The Blowing Rock (NC's first attraction)

SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: What is Blowing Rock's most prominent Cultural Asset?



Q: What is Blowing Rock's *most prominent* **Natural Asset**?

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# NATURAL ASSETS

## Primary Natural Assets

- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Mountains & Scenic Landscape
- Grandfather Mountain
- The Blowing Rock

## Supporting Natural Assets

- Moses H. Cone Memorial Park
- Hiking & Trail Network
- Lakes & Outdoor Spaces

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: What is Blowing Rock's most prominent Natural Asset?*



Q: What tourism asset generates the most revenue?

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



**Downtown Blowing Rock—anchored by Main Street shopping, lodging, dining, and Memorial Park—captures the most tourism revenue and functions as the town’s primary economic engine.**

## **Downtown Blowing Rock (Main Street + Lodging + Dining)**

**Why downtown leads on revenue:**

- **Shopping along Main Street** repeatedly cited as a direct revenue generator
- **Hotels/lodging** called out explicitly as tax generators that *expand spending* into dining and retail
- Visitors come for nature—but **they spend money downtown**
- Memorial Park in the middle of downtown pulls families, day-trippers, and walkers directly into shops and restaurants
- Downtown beauty, landscaping, and walkability are seen as **investments that pay back**

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: What tourism asset generates the most revenue?*



Q: What tourism asset draws the most visitors?

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# Blowing Rock's draw is mountain scenery, Blue Ridge Parkway access, and immediate trail network—reinforced by a walkable downtown and family anchors like Tweetsie Railroad.

## 1. Mountains, Views & Immediate Outdoor Access

- Mountain scenery and long-range views
- Hiking access within minutes of downtown

## 2. Blue Ridge Parkway

- Mentioned repeatedly and emphatically (“for sure”)
- Direct access into town
- Scenic overlooks + trail access + national recognition

## 3. Downtown Blowing Rock (Walkable Experience)

- Walkable Main Street
- Landscaping, beauty, and charm
- Shops, restaurants, and parks concentrated in one area

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: What tourism asset draws the most visitors?*



# Most Visitors Cont..

## 4. Trails & Outdoor Recreation Network

- Cone property's 40+ miles of trails
- Downtown-adjacent hiking

## 5. Grandfather Mountain

- Widely marketed and well known
- Strong regional and national draw

## 6. Tweetsie Railroad

- Strong family and multi-generational draw
- Repeat visitation across generations

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: What tourism asset draws the most visitors?*



*Q: How does Blowing Rock **stand out** versus other places in Western North Carolina?*

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



**Blowing Rock stands out in North Carolina as a charming mountain town - offering iconic walkability, refined amenities, and a calm refuge from faster-paced destinations.**

### **A Park-Centered Downtown (Rare in NC)**

- Memorial Park sits **in the middle of downtown**, not on the edge
- Visitors can park once, walk everywhere, and immediately enjoy green space
- Flowers, landscaping, and gathering space are part of the daily experience

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: How does Blowing Rock stand out versus other places in Western North Carolina?*



# What makes Blowing Rock stand out

## Iconic Charm Without a College or Nightlife Scene

- Frequently described as “the cute little town” or “pop-in town”
- Not a college town, not nightlife-driven, not fast-paced
- Slower, calmer, more refined feel

## Contrast:

- Boone = university energy
- Asheville = arts/nightlife/urban
- Banner Elk = resort-oriented
- **Blowing Rock = refuge**

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: How does Blowing Rock stand out versus other places in Western North Carolina?*



# What makes Blowing Rock stand out

## Elevated Setting — A “Town on Top,” Not in a Valley

- Blowing Rock sits **on top of the mountain**, not below it
- Different visual experience: expansive skies, overlooks, light
- Photo moments feel elevated and panoramic rather than framed by peaks

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: How does Blowing Rock stand out versus other places in Western North Carolina?*



# What makes Blowing Rock stand out

## **Walkable, Amenity-Rich, and Beautifully Landscaped**

- Repeated emphasis on **amenities and landscaping**
- Downtown beauty is intentional and well-funded
- Streets, parks, and plantings are part of the brand

*SOURCE: IN-MARKET Q: How does Blowing Rock stand out versus other places in Western North Carolina?*



# SENSORY BRANDING

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# MUST SEE

*(What is a must see when visiting Blowing Rock)*

**Blowing Rock is visually defined by its natural beauty and iconic landmarks.** The Blue Ridge Parkway, Grandfather Mountain, and Cone Park Manor were frequently noted as signature vistas, along with mountain views, stars at night, and clean air. Downtown Main Street, with its flowers, Memorial Park, and gardens, represents a welcoming, picturesque town center that blends history and charm.

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# TASTE/FLAVOR

*(What is the flavor or taste that best represents Blowing Rock)*

**Blowing Rock's flavors are rooted in Appalachian traditions and local favorites.**

Staples include trout, apples, apple cider, and ice cream (Kilwin's a standout), as well as local food, pizza, breweries, coffee, and wine. Together these flavors position **Blowing Rock as a destination for authentic mountain cuisine with nostalgic indulgences.**

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# MUST FEEL/TOUCH/EXPERIENCE

*(What is something that must be felt or touched or experienced in Blowing Rock)*

Participants emphasized the tactile connection to **nature and climate**: the sensation of wind, summer breezes, mossy rocks, waterfalls, creeks, and sunshine. **Social experiences** like shopping, music on the lawn, drinks on the porch, and park benches reinforce both outdoor activity and community warmth. Importantly, participants noted kindness and people as central to the “feel” of Blowing Rock.

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# FRAGRANCE/SMELL

*(What is the fragrance or smell of Blowing Rock)*

The fragrance of Blowing Rock is defined by fresh mountain air, flowers, trees, woods, and rain. A clean, crisp environment free of pollution reinforces its appeal as a refreshing escape. Food aromas—ice cream, chocolate, waffle cones, burgers, and local restaurants—add a layer of indulgence that complements its natural freshness.

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# SOUND

*(What sound is Blowing Rock known for)*

**Soundscapes in Blowing Rock balance serenity with joy.** Natural sounds include the rustling of trees, wind, birds, water, and crickets, underscoring tranquility. **Community sounds—children laughing, friends talking, music on the lawn, and the Tweetsie Railroad whistle—reflect a lively, welcoming spirit.** The absence of noise pollution (e.g., “no car horns”) enhances its peaceful appeal.

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# Key Sensory Takeaways

1. Nature is the brand foundation: mountains, Parkway views, waterfalls, clean air, and fresh scents define Blowing Rock as a mountain escape.
2. Downtown is a sensory hub: flowers, shops, food, and social activities tie together sight, taste, and touch.
3. Community warmth: the “kindness of people,” laughter of children, and music create emotional resonance.
4. Balance of peace and vibrancy: quiet natural beauty is complemented by joyful community sounds and flavors.

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# Sensory Takeaway

Blowing Rock's sensory identity is one of **fresh mountain air, iconic vistas, authentic Appalachian flavors, community warmth, and peaceful yet lively experiences.**

SOURCE: IN-MARKET



# P.L.A.C.E. EXERCISE

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# PROMINENT

*(What makes Blowing Rock famous)*

Participants identified **natural landscapes, climate, and accessibility** as defining features. The **Blue Ridge Parkway, Grandfather Mountain, and surrounding mountain scenery** dominate perceptions, while the weather, elevation, and four seasons make Blowing Rock distinctive. The town's **quaint downtown, history, and proximity to outdoor adventure** reinforce its prominence as a mountain village that is both scenic and accessible.

Q: PLACE Exercise - Prominent: What makes your destination famous?



# LOVE

*(What residents Love about Blowing Rock?)*

What people love most is **the blend of nature and community**. Respondents emphasized the mountains, fresh air, flowers, fall leaves, and outdoor lifestyle, paired with the arts, music, local food, and authentic small-town atmosphere. The town's walkability, welcoming people, and peaceful relaxation create lasting memories and a sense of belonging.

Q: PLACE Exercise - Love: What are you and your visitors most passionate about?



# A ACTIVITY

*(What do you absolutely have to do here)*

**Activities center on outdoor recreation and walkable charm.** Popular responses included hiking trails, parkway drives, visiting Grandfather Mountain, walking Main Street, shopping, dining, and relaxing in Memorial Park. The outdoors is consistently tied to experiences, whether hiking, sightseeing, or simply enjoying ice cream in the park. **Activities reflect Blowing Rock's identity as a place to explore nature and enjoy small-town leisure.**

Q: PLACE Exercise - Activity: What do you absolutely have to do here?



# C CHARACTER

*(What is Blowing Rock personality)*

**Blowing Rock's character was described as quaint, charming, friendly, family-oriented, and inviting.** Themes of community spirit, laid-back hospitality, and upscale-yet-approachable offerings emerged. It is perceived as both old-school and unique, balancing tradition with elevated experiences. Words like "fun resort town," "soul," and "down-home vibe" underscore its approachable yet refined personality.

Q: PLACE Exercise - Character: What is your destination's personality?



# E EXCEPTIONAL

*(What does Blowing Rock deliver better than anybody else)*

The most exceptional qualities identified were **hospitality, cleanliness, beauty, and atmosphere**. Customer service, seasonal decorations, flowers, safety, and total package appeal were cited as distinctive features. Participants felt **Blowing Rock delivers a quality mountain experience** in one place—combining scenery, activities, service, and charm into a memorable, complete destination.

Q: PLACE Exercise - Exceptional: What does your destination deliver better than anyone else?



# Sense of P.L.A.C.E. Takeaways

1. **Nature at the Core** – The Parkway, mountains, climate, and fresh air define the destination.
2. **Quaint Small-Town Appeal** – Walkable Main Street, gardens, and flowers reinforce charm and intimacy.
3. **Community & Hospitality** – Friendly people, welcoming spirit, and service excellence are standout values.
4. **Balance of Relaxation & Activity** – Visitors can enjoy both peaceful downtime and active outdoor adventure.
5. **Memorable Experiences** – Seasonal beauty, arts, food, and atmosphere make Blowing Rock exceptional year-round

*Q: PLACE Exercise - Exceptional: What does your destination deliver better than anyone else?*

