

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Rockford Region Sites & Attractions See Increase in 2016 Attendance Numbers

More than 7.6 million guests experienced the Rockford region in 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 9, 2017

ROCKFORD, IL – Rockford area sites and attractions saw an upswing in overall guest attendance in 2016. An additional 76,930 guests experienced the region’s great museums, sports facilities and entertainment venues for a total of 6,789,077 (up from 6,712,147 in 2015). When combined with event attendance numbers, **the region totaled 7,646,375 guests.**

“These numbers show just how popular our museums and facilities are, not just for visitors but for our local residents, as well,” said RACVB President/CEO John Groh. “This growth is aided by the opening of the UW Health Sports Factory, yet we are seeing increases at many of our museums which is a sign that leisure travel in the region is up.”

Increases at Discovery Center Museum (195,302 visitors), Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens (67,561 visitors) and Anderson Japanese Gardens (60,922 visitors) are all key indicators of the rise of Rockford as a destination for travelers.

Top 10 Sites & Attractions in 2016	2016	2015
Mercyhealth Sportscore Complexes & Indoor Sports Center	2,884,713	2,878,847
Rock Cut State Park	1,095,539	1,076,346
Ice Facilities - Carlson & Riverview	468,371	491,815
BMO Harris Bank Center (includes IceHogs)	308,854	289,837
Rockford Park District Golf Courses (Aldeen, Elliot, Ingersoll, Sandy Hollow, Sinnissippi)	210,641	187,006
Discovery Center Museum	195,302	181,961
Rockford IceHogs	193,929	190,018
Forest Hills Baseball Diamonds	180,000	200,000
Magic Waters Waterpark	172,687	186,334

While overall sites and attractions numbers increased, overall event attendance had a slight reduction of 92,760 guests compared to the prior year with the biggest loss being from the discontinuing of Rockford AirFest which alone accounted for 150,000 guests in 2015.

-MORE-

“We knew that without Rockford AirFest, one of our region’s signature events, overall event attendance numbers would see a drop,” said Groh. “However, there is much to be happy about considering the strength of new and emerging events that have helped to fill that gap.”

Events such as the Rock River Anything that Floats Race (20,000 guests), Rockford Town Fair (22,000 guests) and Tough Mudder (15,000 guests) have helped to sustain the overall events numbers year over year.

Top 10 Events in 2016	2016	2015
Fourth of July Celebration	125,000	125,000
Winnebago County Fair	98,000	95,000
Stroll on State	75,000	66,000
Festival of Lights	58,000	58,000
Old Settlers Days	30,164	29,500
Illinois Snow Sculpting Competition	28,597	24,000
Pec Thing - Spring and Fall	25,000	28,000
Young at Heart Festival	25,000	30,000
Rockford Town Fair	22,000	N/A

From an economic development perspective, these attendance numbers take on even greater meaning. Based on the impact numbers released by the Illinois Office of Tourism in 2016, the tourism industry in Rockford accounted for more than \$350 million in spending and supported more than 2,800 jobs.

“We know tourism in our region is strong and vibrant and continues to see growth,” said Groh. “The exciting part is that we haven’t peaked yet. With new events and programs continually being developed and with new developments and expansions at key sites and attractions – such as the expansion at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two and the development of downtown hotel projects – we are poised for growth in the coming years.”

To download the full attendance report, go online to www.gorockford.com/media/news-releases/

The mission of the RACVB is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development. www.gorockford.com

###

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Josh Albrecht, RACVB Director of Marketing, 815.489.1655, jalbrecht@gorockford.com