

# NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



## Visitor Spending in Rockford and Winnebago County Reaches an All-Time High of \$384 Million in 2017 Growth lands Rockford Region in the top spot among competitive set

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**August 16, 2018**

**ROCKFORD, IL** – Visitor spending in Rockford and Winnebago County reached an all-time high of \$383.7 million in 2017, an increase of 8.3 percent over 2016. The increase in visitor spending put an additional 196 people to work in new tourism industry jobs, with spending now supporting 3,084 jobs countywide (an increase of 6.9 percent) and \$93.8 million in payroll (up 9.6 percent).

An analysis of visitor spending since 2009 shows that tourism continues to grow faster in Winnebago County than all other metro areas in Illinois. From 2009 to 2017, visitor spending in Winnebago County grew 51 percent; with local growth outpacing 12 other large counties and much faster than the set average of 35 percent. Major metropolitan counties that were used for comparison are Cook, McLean, DuPage, Champaign, Lake, Peoria, Will, Sangamon, St. Clair, Madison, Kane and Rock Island.

Winnebago County's share of its state competitive set (essentially counties that contain similar sized cities) has increased to 18.0% in 2017 from 16.3% in 2009 and 17.3 percent in 2016.

"The results are impressive and clearly indicate that tourism is a strong economic driver in Winnebago County," said David Anderson, RACVB's chairman of the board. "There have been several programs, events and initiatives that are bringing our community together to transform the Rockford region. Visitors from all around the globe have taken notice. Each year we meet new people who travel here to experience the many great people and places our dynamic destination has to offer."

In addition to spending and employment increases, visitors are also generating increased funds for local and state tax coffers. In 2017, visitors paid \$21.8 million in state and \$6.78 million in local tax receipts (up 14.3 percent and 8.5 percent). Visitor expenditure, tax revenue and employment data comes from the U.S. Travel Association and the Illinois Department of Commerce.

"I'm pleased with the positive impact tourism continues to have on our regional economy," says City of Rockford Mayor Tom McNamara. "The City and its partners have invested in our tourism infrastructure and that's helping us grow jobs and attract spending from those outside our region."

In addition to overall visitor spending and employment statistics, hotel sector-specific data demonstrates growth with all sector key performance indicators on the rise. In most cases, KPI growth outpaces competitive and comparative markets including Madison, suburban Chicago, Springfield, Dubuque, the Illinois/Iowa Quad Cities, Bloomington and Peoria.

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- Annual hotel rooms booked in Rockford (demand) grew to 723,641 in 2017 from 522,011 in 2009 and 674,025 in 2016.
- Revenue grew to \$64.6 million in 2017, up from \$37.2 million in 2009 and \$65.6 million in 2016.
- ADR (average daily rate) reached \$89.35 in 2017, up from \$71.29 in 2009 and \$84.07 in 2016.
- Revenue per available room reached \$63.61 in 2017, up from \$46.30 in 2009 and \$61.40 in 2016.
- Occupancy reached 71.2 percent in 2017, up from 46.3 percent in 2009 and 61.4 percent in 2016

RACVB attributes the strong growth to a variety of factors. “The retooling of Chrysler’s Belvidere Assembly Plant demonstrates the importance a robust manufacturing sector has on many sectors, including travel and tourism. The expansion of our sports facilities has helped drive increases in visitation especially in what has traditionally been our off season, and a positive general business climate and increases in leisure visitation to our sites and attractions all contributed to the growth in 2017 and since 2009,” said John Groh, RACVB president/CEO.

“Winnebago County and the Rockford region is a great place to invest, visit and live,” said Winnebago County Chairman, Frank Haney. “Tourism numbers continue to impress as does primary job growth at our Chicago Rockford International Airport which added 1,000 jobs last year and is projected to add another 1,000 this year.”

In addition to growth in Winnebago County, the Illinois Office of Tourism reported both international and domestic travel expenditures grew to \$39.5 billion in 2017, which is a \$1.1 billion increase to the state’s economy over 2016.

Fast facts about Illinois Tourism in 2017:

- Every \$1 invested in Illinois tourism generates \$9 in economic impact for the state
- Illinois welcomed 111 million domestic visitors
- Of Illinois’ 111 million domestic visitors, 17% were for business and 83% for leisure
- In the past 10 years, domestic travel to Illinois has increased by 23 million visitors
- The visitor expenditures generated by domestic visitors supported 308,490 jobs in 2017 which is an increase of 6,040 jobs since 2016
- Domestic travelers spent \$36.3 billion in Illinois during 2017, a 3.3 percent increase from 2016

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**About RACVB:** 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](http://www.gorockford.com)

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