

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Tourism's Economic Impact Up in 2018

Visitor spending has grown every year since 2009, up 54 percent

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ROCKFORD, IL – In 2018, travel provided \$392 million in economic impact to Rockford and Winnebago County communities and supported the livelihood of 3,039 hardworking area residents. At that level, visitor spending reached an all-time high, up 2.1 percent from \$384 million in 2017. That spending generated visitor industry employment income of \$95 million and generated \$30 million in state and local taxes.

The ten-year period between 2009 and 2018 shows visitor-related economic impact in Winnebago County growing **54 percent**; faster than all other major counties except Cook (Chicago, at 58 percent) and much faster than the set average of 41 percent. Major metropolitan counties that were used for comparison are Cook, DuPage, Champaign, McLean, Lake, Will, Peoria, Madison, St. Clair, Sangamon, Kane and Rock Island.

In addition to spending, visitors also generated increased funds for local and state tax coffers to use for core services such as police, fire and public works. In 2018, visitors paid **\$23.2 million** in state and **\$6.8 million** in local tax receipts (up 6.2 percent and 0.7 percent). Visitor expenditure, tax revenue and employment data are provided by the U.S. Travel Association and the Illinois Department of Commerce.

"Tourism is a strong economic driver locally and has caused a ripple effect throughout our community. Based on reports and data analysis we can clearly see many businesses and organizations are thriving from successful tourism-related initiatives and events," said **Jennifer Furst, RACVB's board chair**. "I especially appreciate the correlation between visitor spending and how that helps put local people to work."

The economic impact of tourism has grown rapidly in recent years, and the recent and coming investments in the community – including a new downtown hotel and conference center and a future casino gaming complex in Rockford – will fuel additional impact.

"I am pleased to see all the ways tourism has been a key contributor to the overall success of our community. Rockford area attractions, businesses and organizations have seen increased attendance and spending as visitors participate in various leisure activities, business events and sports tournaments," says **City of Rockford Mayor Tom McNamara**. "The work of the RACVB helps to boost our economy which allows us to create new job opportunities and welcome more people."

"More and more as we share the story of our region with potential customers and visitors, they are experiencing what our friends and neighbors know to be true – our region is on the rise and has a bright future. Investments made in marketing and promoting the region are working and returning results. The year over year growth we are seeing demonstrates that folks continue to choose the Rockford region to visit. We know this success can spur on additional growth as every visitor is a potential new resident or investor," said **John Groh, RACVB president/CEO**.

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In addition to growth in Winnebago County, the Illinois Office of Tourism reported both international and domestic travel expenditures grew to \$41.7 billion in 2018, which is a \$2 billion increase to the state's economy over 2017. More than 117 million visitors came to Illinois in 2018 – the 8th consecutive year of record tourism growth in the state – contributing to an increase of visitor spending, tax revenue and local jobs.

Fast Facts about Illinois Tourism in 2018:

- Of Illinois' 114.6 million domestic visitors, 16% were for business and 84% for leisure.
- Illinois welcomed more than 2.3 million international visitors in 2018.
- In the past 10 years, domestic travel to Illinois has increased by 26 million visitors.
- The visitor expenditures generated by domestic visitors supported 342,300 jobs in 2018, which is an increase of 6,200 jobs since 2017.
- State and local tax revenue generated from visitor spending jumped 7.1 percent to \$3.3 billion, creating an additional \$220.8 million for the state and local communities.

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About RACVB: *RACVB is responsible for promoting the Rockford region as an attractive travel destination and enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Through the impact of travel, RACVB strengthens the economic position of the region and provide opportunities for people in our communities. www.gorockford.com*

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