



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VISITOR SPENDING IN WATAUGA COUNTY REACHED \$517.51 MILLION IN 2023

BOONE, NC (August 28, 2024) – Domestic and international visitors to Watauga County spent \$517.51 million in 2023, according to an annual study commissioned by [Visit North Carolina](#), a unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina.

"The steady increase in visitor spending underscores the ongoing appeal of Watauga County as a premier destination in North Carolina," said Wright Tilley, Executive Director of [Explore Boone](#). "Tourism is not just an economic driver; it's a testament to the hospitality of our community, the allure of our natural and cultural assets, and the dedication of all who work tirelessly to welcome visitors to our area."

With a growth rate of 3.2 percent from 2022, Watauga County ranks 15th among the state's 100 counties in total visitor spending. This growth has also positively impacted the local economy, particularly in the areas of employment and income.

"Our vibrant tourism industry significantly contributes to the quality of life in Watauga County," said Matt Vincent, Chair of the Watauga County Tourism Development Authority (Explore Boone). "From outdoor adventures to cultural experiences, the offerings in our county create unforgettable memories for visitors and provide substantial benefits to our residents."

2023 Watauga County Tourism Impact Highlights:

- The travel and tourism industry employs more than 3,064 people in Watauga County.
- Total payroll generated by the tourism industry in Watauga County was \$127.7 million.
- State and local tax revenues totaled \$35.6 million from travel to Watauga County.
- Taxes generated by visitor spending represent a tax savings of \$649.11 per resident.

These statistics are from "The Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties," available at partners.visitnc.com/economic-impact-studies. This study was prepared for Visit North Carolina by Tourism Economics.

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About Explore Boone

Explore Boone is the Watauga County District U Tourism Development Authority (WCTDA), a local tourism development authority authorized by the state (North Carolina) and local government (Watauga County) to promote travel, tourism, and corporate travel, sponsor tourist-related events, and activities, and finance tourism-related capital projects in District U. District U is defined as the unincorporated areas of Watauga County, North Carolina. Boone is the seat of Watauga County, which also encompasses the towns of Blowing Rock and Seven Devils, and the communities of Deep Gap, Foscoe, Meat Camp, Sugar Grove, Valle Crucis, and Zionville, as well as portions of the Banner Elk and Beech Mountain communities. As a true business center and popular dining and shopping destination, Boone is known as “the Heart of the High Country.” The town is named for the explorer, Daniel Boone, who lived nearby during the mid-1700s before blazing the famous trail into Kentucky. For more information, visit www.exploreboone.com.