

Tourism Spending Up 8 Percent Across the State

By Administrator

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Visitor spending has increased in all regions of North Carolina according to new data from Visit North Carolina, a unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, shows that domestic visitor spending has increased in 91 of the state's 100 counties. These figures come one week after data showing visitation at the state's natural and cultural sites for Fiscal Year 2015-16 that ended June 30, 2016 is up nearly 8 percent compared to the previous year.

"Tourism is a major force in North Carolina's economic development," said Governor Pat McCrory

. "The industry is fueling a continued growth in jobs and contributing substantial sums to the state budget and local economies in every corner of our great state."

Visitors spent a record \$21.9 billion statewide last year, an increase of nearly 3 percent from the previous year. In addition visitor expenditures directly supported 211,487 jobs and generated nearly \$5.3 billion in payroll income across North Carolina. State tax receipts as a result of visitor spending topped \$1.1 billion, and local tax revenues directly resulting from visitor spending totaled more than \$660 million.

"Nothing compares with our state's diverse natural beauty and rewarding experiences at every turn," said Secretary John Skvarla

. "We can take pride in North Carolina's position as the sixth most-visited state in the nation with nearly 55 million visitors last year."

The visitor spending figures come from an annual study commissioned by Visit North Carolina and conducted by the U.S. Travel Association. The study uses sales and tax revenue data, employment figures and other industry and economic data to determine the overall impact of visitor spending in North Carolina.

Full tables can be accessed [here](#). Highlights of the new county-based data include:

Mecklenburg County ranked first among North Carolina's 100 counties, receiving \$5 billion in domestic travelers' expenditures. Wake County ranked second with \$2.1 billion, followed by Guilford County with \$1.3 billion and Dare with \$1.1 billion. Buncombe County, for the first time, topped \$1 billion in visitor spending.

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The largest percent increases in visitor spending were seen in Polk (11.8 percent), Cherokee (7.8 percent), Vance (4.7 percent), Henderson (4.7 percent) and Union (4.6 percent) counties. Montgomery, Catawba and Cleveland counties followed with a 4.5 percent increase each. Rounding out the top 10 in largest increases were Richmond and Pasquotank counties (4.4 percent).

Positive spending growth was seen throughout the state's economic development regions. The Western (3.9 percent) and North Central (3.3 percent) regions experienced the strongest growth, yet all eight regions had spending growth of 2 percent or more.

Mecklenburg County had the largest number of direct tourism employees (49,870) and the largest payroll (\$1.7 billion). Four other counties had more than 10,000 direct tourism employees: Wake (21,897), Guilford (13,127), Dare (12,711) and Buncombe (10,637).

Ninety-two percent of the state's counties saw direct tourism employment growth in 2015. Counties with the largest year-over-year increases in direct tourism employment were Polk (12.1 percent), Cherokee (7.4 percent), Vance (5.0 percent), Union (4.9 percent), Montgomery (4.8 percent), Richmond (4.7 percent) and Pasquotank (4.7 percent).