

Gov. Walker: Wisconsin's tourism economy tops \$20.6 billion

Posted on Friday, May 4, 2018

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Contact: Amy Hasenberg, (608) 266-2839

MADISON – Governor Scott Walker joins Tourism Secretary Stephanie Klett today in traveling throughout the state to highlight Wisconsin's tourism economy, which reached \$20.6 billion in 2017. This marks a \$631 million boost from \$20 billion in 2016. The announcement comes as Governor Walker and Secretary Klett kick-off this year's National Travel and Tourism Week, which runs May 6-May 12.

Throughout the day, they will visit Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau, Titletown District in Green Bay, the Milwaukee County Zoo in Milwaukee, and the 53rd Annual Governor's Fishing Opener in Chetek.

"Wisconsin's travel and hospitality industry is booming," said Governor Walker.

"Our tourism industry continues to be crucial to our state and is consistently a top performing sector of our economy. Investing in tourism promotion and marketing at the national, state, and local level is not only an effective way to attract visitors and grow the economy, it also enhances the image of Wisconsin as a great place to live, work, and do business."

The tourism industry continues to show stable, long-term growth according to Tourism Economics' recently-released economic impact figures. Last year's visitor volumes topped 110 million visits, an increase of 17.5 million, compared to 92.5 million in 2011. Tourism supported a total of 195,255 jobs in 2017, up from 172,000 in 2011, a 13.5% increase.

"For seven years in a row, Wisconsin's tourism industry has had a positive impact on the economy and job growth," said Secretary Klett. "Research shows us that the increased investment in marketing the brand of fun positively influences the way people think about Wisconsin as a top place to vacation, work, live, attend

college, and own a second home.”

Visitation to the state and tourism marketing positively influence people’s perceptions of Wisconsin. According to surveys conducted by Longwoods International, 57 percent of those surveyed who saw Wisconsin’s tourism ad campaign and visited the state strongly agree that the state is a good place to live versus 21 percent of those who had not seen the advertising and had never visited the state.

Key Results

The total seven-year growth of tourism activity in the state is \$5.8 billion, a nearly 40 percent increase according to Tourism Economics, the research firm for the Department of Tourism.

Visitor volumes topped 110 million visits, an increase of 17.5 million, compared to 92.5 million seven years ago. This is a 19 percent increase since 2011.

Traveler spending on recreation, which includes all activities travelers choose to do on vacation, had the fastest growth at 5.5 percent in 2017.

Tourism directly and indirectly supported 195,255 jobs in Wisconsin’s labor market in 2016.

The growth of tourism over the last seven years has helped add 23,255 jobs, a 13.5 percent increase.

Visitors generated \$1.5 billion in state and local revenue and \$1.2 billion in federal taxes, saving Wisconsin taxpayers \$660 per household. Individual county information figures are also available.

The Power of Tourism Advertising

Compared to other Midwest states, Wisconsin ranks #1 in fun, family-friendliness, affordability, and a welcoming, worry-free atmosphere – key features for travelers choosing a vacation destination (Longwoods International). Wisconsin also ranks #1 compared to its Midwest competitors for beautiful scenery, fall colors, agritourism, great microbreweries, wineries and Native American culture according to Longwoods International.

The Department of Tourism continues to market the Wisconsin brand of “fun” and authentic travel experiences in its marketing campaigns. The Department’s advertising campaign had a return on investment of 7:1, meaning for every \$1 spent on advertising, \$7 was returned to the state in additional tax revenue.

This year's two new unique TV spots feature wheelchair basketball star and Paralympic gold medalist Matt Scott enjoying some of his favorite things to do in Wisconsin. The other puts the spotlight on Gemütlichkeit, a German word that describes the spirit of Wisconsin and the state's innate ability to give travelers a sense of friendship, warmth and good cheer.

Tourism Economics is an Oxford Economics company providing analyses of the tourism sector. Longwoods International a globally-recognized leader in travel research, with over four decades of experience.

The mission of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism is to market the state as the Midwest's premier travel destination for fun. To date, the Department of Tourism has earned 106 awards for marketing and public relations excellence since 2011. For more information, visit www.travelwisconsin.com.