

Gov. Evers: Announces Wisconsin monthly tourism spending tops record-setting year for first time since 2019

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers and Wisconsin Department of Tourism Secretary-designee Anne Sayers celebrated news in Wisconsin's tourism industry as national travel spending data for September reveals Wisconsin's first growth in monthly year-over-year tourism spending compared to 2019, while the national average continues to lag at a 9 percent drop. The growth signals a strong economic rebound for the industry as overtaking tourism spending in Wisconsin's record-setting 2019 has long been the Department of Tourism's goal for the industry's recovery, which was one of the industries hit first and hardest by the pandemic. Wisconsin was one of only 13 states to post positive growth over 2019, according to the United States Travel Association's monthly tourism spending data.

"The tourism industry is an essential part of our state and our economy. We've put more than \$200 million in federal recovery funds toward helping our tourism and hospitality industries get through this pandemic and bounce back, and I'm proud of our work to help support our economic recovery," said Gov. Evers.

According to the report, both Illinois and Minnesota lagged the national average at 21 percent and 20 percent spending declines while Iowa and Michigan exceeded the national average, losing five percent and three percent traveler spending compared to 2019. Wisconsin at one percent growth was the only state in our Midwest competitive set to exceed spending for any month compared to 2019 since the beginning of the pandemic.

"We expect to see more bumps in the long road to recovery, but we are on the right

path and we want to celebrate this moment for the tourism industry workers whose livelihoods depend on this rebound,” said Tourism Secretary-designee Anne Sayers. “While meetings and conventions and other large group gatherings are slow to return, leisure travelers are making up for it by spending their time and their dollars in Wisconsin to experience the unexpected and when that happens, Wisconsin wins.”

In 2020, Wisconsin tourism’s \$17.3 billion industry saw a 22 percent decline compared to 2019, the state’s best year on record. While September is just a snapshot of one month and the Department of Tourism anticipates 2021 to still be down compared to 2019, the shift to increased spending is another indicator of Wisconsin tourism’s strong recovery.