

Bayfield County: Tourism posts record-breaking year in 2022

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Bayfield, Wis. (June 6, 2023) – The Wisconsin Department of Tourism released 2022 economic impact data, showing the tourism industry generated a record-breaking \$23.7 billion in total economic impact. The highest-ever overnight visitation helped fuel the growth, with Bayfield County playing a pivotal role by contributing \$89 million in total economic impact.

The 2022 total economic impact surpassed the previous statewide record of \$22.2 billion set in 2019. Locally, Bayfield County surpassed the 2019 record of \$72 million with a 24% increase.

The tourism industry in Bayfield County supported 706 part-time and full-time jobs across various sectors of the industry and generated \$7.6 million in state and local tax revenue. Statewide, tourism generated \$1.5 billion in state and local tax revenue. Without this revenue, each Wisconsin household would pay an additional \$620 to maintain the current level of government services.

“The City of Bayfield and Town of Bayfield once again saw an increase in lodging and sales tax revenue in 2022. Tourism allows us to showcase our heritage and cultural sites, and promote the creation of new community initiatives,” said Carol Fahrenkrog, executive director of the Bayfield Chamber and Visitor Bureau.

Bayfield also grew in 2022, with more than a dozen new businesses within the city. The Bayfield Chamber and Visitor Bureau launched a new art initiative in September of 2022 called Art Escape; a nine-day celebration of “all things art” across Bayfield County and Madeline Island. With the help of a \$30,000 Joint Effort Marketing Grant, Art Escape generated an additional \$700,000 economic impact county-wide. Art Escape will be held September 9-17, 2023.

Our partners and business community's dedication and hard work are why Bayfield and Bayfield County continue to be sought-after destinations for visitors.

Big Top Chautauqua also had a record-breaking 2022, generating \$2.5 million in revenue, a 6% increase over 2021. Big Top also moved its offices to Bayfield and opened The Backstage as an additional year-round entertainment venue, generating a \$3.7 million impact for the building project.

Additionally, 2022 marked the 75th anniversary of Mt. Ashwabay Ski and Recreation Area. About 900 season passes were issued, and nearly 5,000 alpine and snowboard day passes, and rentals were sold.

In 2022, the Apostle Islands Cruises sold 52,783 tickets, allowing people to experience the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

Bayfield will keep growing its visitor experience in 2023 with the addition of the St. James Social. This boutique hotel, opening in July, will add eight beautifully appointed suites and an indoor/outdoor lobby bar and social lounge to Bayfield's historic downtown experience.