

ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

Tourists and visitors: A Wisconsin export industry

In Wisconsin, the terms tourist and visitor typically elicit images of the North woods, Wisconsin Dells, and Door County. However, according to a recent study by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, visitor spending in Dane County ranked second in the state in 2004. Only Milwaukee County attracted more visitor dollars.

In 2004, visitors spent more than \$1 billion in Dane County (almost 9 cents of every dollar spent by visitors). Sauk County — with Wisconsin Dells/Lake Delton and Ho-Chunk Casino — finished third, only slightly below Dane County, with an estimated \$988 million in visitor spending.

What about the traditional tourism hot spots? In 2004, visitors spent \$398 million in Door County and \$233 million in Vilas County.

Visitor spending increases

County	1994	2004	Percent increase
Dane	\$460,405,404	\$1,028,437,939	123%
Door	180,305,750	397,627,137	121%
Milwaukee	1,010,517,239	1,550,162,625	53%
Sauk	285,350,880	988,558,995	246%
Vilas	115,732,849	233,119,713	101%
Wisconsin	5,762,412,960	11,781,228,510	104%

SOURCE: *The Economic Impact of Expenditures by Travelers on Wisconsin, Calendar Year 2004*
For similar data for all Wisconsin counties or for a copy of the report, go to:
<http://agency.travelwisconsin.com/Research/research.sh.htm>

Visitors include tourists, business travelers, people attending meetings or conventions, and people visiting friends and relatives in Wisconsin. In 2004, they spent an estimated \$11.8 billion in Wisconsin. Between 1994 and 2004, visitor spending in Wisconsin doubled, increasing by \$6 billion. Sauk County experienced the

greatest increase in visitor spending in the state between 1994 and 2004 — \$700 million, or 246 percent.

The increase in visitor spending is dramatic even with inflation considered. After adjusting for inflation, visitor spending still increased by 60 percent in Wisconsin and 75 percent in Dane County.

Part one of this month's series on Wisconsin tourism

Next week:
What seasons are the most popular times of the year to visit Wisconsin?

Economic Snapshot is a weekly feature provided by the Center for Community and Economic Development, University of Wisconsin Extension.

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