

Local Tourism Revenues Rise Once Again

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TOURISM
Now

with Brett Stawar, *President & CEO*

ALTON - The tourism sector grew throughout Madison, Macoupin, Montgomery, Greene, Jersey, and Calhoun counties in 2018 mirroring growth across the State of Illinois, according to early reports from the Illinois Department of Commerce's Office of Tourism.

In 2018, visitors to the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau region which includes Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Macoupin, Montgomery and Greene counties, spent \$695.5 million, an increase of \$28.72 million over 2017, a 4.3 percent increase. The region received local tax receipts of \$18.64 million from visitor spending in 2018 compared to \$18.12 million in 2017. That is a 2.9 percent increase.

The State of Illinois reported domestic and international traveler spending at \$41.7 billion, an increase of \$2 billion over the same period in 2017. In addition, the Illinois tourism industry created over 5,200 new jobs in 2018. The state saw an overall jump in state and local tax revenue from visitor spending of 7.1 percent.

Job growth climbed slightly in the Great Rivers & Routes region, which celebrates a total of 5,050 full time jobs in the tourism sector.

“These numbers are encouraging and show how vital tourism is to the local economy,” Brett Stawar, President and CEO of the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau said. “Our tourism sector is key to the continued economic growth of our region. The growth also shows the razor sharp focus of the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau and how what we do helps drive in new visitors!”

Fast Facts about Illinois Tourism in 2018:

Illinois welcomed 114.6 million domestic visitors

In the past 10 years, domestic travel to Illinois has increased by 26 million visitors

State and local tax revenue from visitor spending was \$3.3 billion in Illinois during 2018. This created an additional \$220.8 million for state and local communities.

“Tourism is a critical part of our economy, helping to boost local and state tax revenue and create jobs,” said Jan Kemmerling, Acting Director of the Illinois Office of Tourism. “From scenic road trips, stunning state parks, amazing family-friendly attractions and spectacular nightlife, Illinois offers incredible experiences for visitors all year long.”

(The Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau is the destination marketing organization serving Madison, Macoupin, Montgomery, Jersey, Calhoun and Greene counties. The bureau is dedicated to educating visitors about the great things the region has to offer by providing information regarding the area’s history, unique landmarks, recreational opportunities, leisure attractions, special events and scenic marvels. The tourism bureau is certified by the Illinois Bureau of Tourism. It is also nationally accredited through Destinations International (DI).)