



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

128 – 10th Avenue SW • PO Box 42525 • Olympia, Washington 98504-2525 • (360) 725-4000

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Contact: Ian Jeffries, Edelman for Washington State Tourism
Ian.Jeffries@edelman.com, 206-268-2291

Marsha Massey, Washington State Tourism
Marsha.Massey@commerce.wa.gov, 360-725-4172

2009 Travel Impacts Report: Visitors Spent \$14.2 Billion in Washington State

Annual study showcases economic benefits of tourism industry in Washington

OLYMPIA, Wash. – In 2009, travelers to Washington spent an estimated \$14.2 billion in the state, according to the preliminary 2009 Travel Impacts Report, released today by the Department of Commerce and Washington State Tourism. The annual study shows that travel and tourism is Washington's fourth largest export industry. Fueled by visitor spending, tourism supports jobs for Washingtonians, bolsters local economies and small business and contributes tax revenue for state and local governments.

"This report shows that the travel industry in Washington is a significant contributor to our state's economy," said Marsha Massey, Executive Director for Washington State Tourism. "Once again, we see that tourism has tremendous potential to help Washington mitigate the current economic challenges, bring in new revenues and create jobs statewide."

Although the report shows a slight decrease in travel spending from peak year 2008, the decrease is reflective of national trends, with key contributing factors being drops in hotel room rates and gas prices in 2009. In fact, Washington has held its own in terms of national market share, despite a difficult economy and a very competitive landscape.

"Tourism is critical to bolstering our local economy in Snohomish County," said Amy Spain, Snohomish County Tourism Bureau. "In Snohomish County, visitor spending totaled an estimated \$924 million in 2008, provided nearly \$15 million in local taxes and employed 9,610 residents in travel-related jobs. In this difficult economy, we depend on the revenues and jobs created by the travel industry in Washington."

The annual Washington State Travel Impacts report studies the state's travel industry and its statewide economic effects. Prepared for the Department of Commerce by Dean Runyan Associates, the full Travel Impacts report is available on Washington State Tourism's industry Web site, www.experiencewa.com/Industry.

Key highlights from the 2009 report include:

- **Washington's Travel Industry Creates Jobs**

Total employment directly generated by travel spending in the state was 147,600 in 2009, which represents approximately 3.8 percent of all jobs in Washington. Additionally, travel spending directly generated \$4.2 billion in earnings (payroll), representing 2 percent of all earnings in the state. Tourism also supports small businesses in Washington: 85 percent of travel-related businesses have 50 or fewer employees.

- **Rural Washington Highly Dependent on Visitor Spending**

Many of Washington's less populated counties have a greater number of travel-generated jobs in relation to total employment, making those counties more dependent on the travel industry. The six counties with more than 10 percent travel-generated jobs were all non-urban. Further, the 14 counties with more than six percent travel-generated jobs were also non-urban. Travel spending generates more than 15 percent of local sales and lodging taxes in eight counties, all of which are non-urban.

- **Tourism Generates Tax Benefits that Fund Vital Government Programs**

In 2009, travel spending in Washington generated nearly \$1 billion (\$958 million) in local and state tax revenues. On a household level, visitors from outside Washington (residents of other states or countries) generated \$235 of tax revenue for each Washington household and resident travel within the state generated an additional \$140 of tax revenue per household.

Additional report findings include:

- There were an estimated 5.6 million domestic air passenger arrivals to Washington in 2009.
- International visitors accounted for \$1.3 billion in visitor spending in 2009.
- Residents from other states accounted for \$6.4 billion in visitor spending in Washington in 2009.
- Visitors who stayed overnight in commercial lodging (hotels, motels, resorts, and bed and breakfasts) spent \$6 billion in 2009.

Also today, hundreds of tourism professionals from across Washington State will convene in Olympia to encourage support of Washington's tourism industry as part of WSDMO's annual "Tourism Day."

To help its statewide industry network of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) convey the importance of tourism in their own communities, Washington State Tourism has updated their digital brochure, "Tourism Matters to Washington." The brochure includes highlights of the Visitor Impact report as well as key program highlights from Washington State Tourism Commission, and is available for download at www.experiencewa.com/Industry.

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For more information about traveling to Washington, visit www.experiencewa.com. Washington State Department of Commerce (www.commerce.wa.gov) is the lead state agency charged with enhancing and promoting sustainable community and economic vitality in Washington.

Source: Washington State Tourism