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Governor Youngkin Announces Visitor Spending in Virginia Returns to 2019 Levels

Visitor spending in Virginia reached \$30.3 billion in 2022, exceeding pre-pandemic levels by 4.4%

RICHMOND, VA – Governor Glenn Youngkin and Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) announced today that Virginia’s tourism industry generated \$30.3 billion in visitor spending in 2022, an increase of 20.3% from 2021, exceeding 2019 levels by 4.4%.

The tourism industry in Virginia directly supported 210,721 jobs in 2022, an increase of more than 25,000 jobs relative to 2021, but still down about 30,000 jobs relative to 2019.

Travelers spent \$83 million per day in Virginia, up from \$69 million in 2021. Virginia visitors directly drove nearly \$2.2 billion in state and local tax revenues, an increase of 19.1% from \$1.8 billion in 2021. Overnight visitation to Virginia increased by 10% to 42.2 million visitors, up from 38.3 million in 2020.

“Travel and tourism play an essential role in Virginia’s economy,” **said Governor Glenn Youngkin**. “Reviving our tourism industry was a crucial goal to our economic recovery, and our focused efforts on employment and business growth has proven to be successful for the Commonwealth.”

The Commonwealth has recovered significantly from the pandemic, but the recovery has been uneven across geography and travel sectors. While the initial onset of the pandemic had a devastating impact on the travel industry in 2020, domestic leisure travel saw a robust return in 2021 as travelers sought outdoor experiences and drivable destinations. Virginia is uniquely positioned geographically and is within a day’s drive from nearly half of the U.S. population. As road trips boomed, many Virginia regions were able to reap the benefits of increased travel.

The leading tourism sectors in Virginia are recreation and food & beverage, which have exceeded 2019 levels by 10%. Transportation, specifically air travel, has had a slower rebound but grew the fastest in 2022, helping the Commonwealth’s regions that are more dependent on air travel.

“We are thrilled to see visitor spending in Virginia return to pre-pandemic numbers,” **said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Caren Merrick**. “The rate of spending recovery and growth proves how resilient Virginia’s tourism industry is. We look forward to seeing increased travel and a continued recovery in 2023.”

With the additional marketing dollars that came through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, Virginia and its localities continued to see growth in visitor spending. Virginia Tourism, specifically, utilized recovery grant funds to advertise in new markets and reached nearly 15 million more households in 2022 relative to 2021.

“By reaching more travelers in new markets, Virginia continues to raise awareness and consideration as a premier travel destination,” **said Rita McClenny, President and CEO of Virginia Tourism Corporation.** “This awareness results in increased bookings and arrivals, which, in turn, translates to increased visitor spending across the state.”

Virginia Tourism Corporation receives its annual economic impact data from Tourism Economics, in partnership with the U.S. Travel Association. The information is based on domestic visitor spending (travelers from within the United States) from per-person trips taken 50 miles or more away from home. Detailed economic impact data is available at vatc.org/research/economicimpact.

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About Virginia Tourism Corporation

Virginia is for Lovers is one of the most iconic and recognizable travel brands in the world. Using that powerful brand equity, Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) is charged with promoting the Commonwealth as a premier travel destination by showcasing all there is to love in a Virginia vacation. The dollars spent by travelers fuel the economy, provide jobs for Virginians, and improve communities across the state. For more information, visit virginia.org.

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