



A weekly newsletter on North Carolina General Assembly news relevant to the North Carolina tourism industry

NC Tourism Facts

- Domestic travelers spent a record \$28.6 billion in 2021. Spending was up 45.2% from \$19.7 billion in 2020.
- Visitors to North Carolina generated \$3.9 billion in federal, state and local taxes in 2021. The total represents a 29% increase from 2020.
- State tax receipts from visitor spending rose 34% to nearly \$1.2 billion in 2021.
- Local tax receipts grew 26% to \$1.1 billion.
- Direct tourism employment in North Carolina increased 10.5% to 197,500.
- Direct tourism payroll increased 18.9% to \$7.7 billion.
- Visitors spend more than \$79 million per day in North Carolina. That spending adds \$6.4 million per day to state and local tax revenues (about \$3.3 million in state taxes and \$3.1 million in local taxes).
- Each North Carolina household saved \$580 on average in state and local taxes as a direct result of visitor spending in the state. Savings per capita averaged \$222.
- North Carolina hosted nearly 45 million visitors in 2021.

NC Tourism Spending Near Recovery

The following article was excerpted from a press release by the NC Commerce Department published on May 3.

Gov. Roy Cooper announced today that the North Carolina tourism industry saw a major recovery in 2021 with \$28.9 billion in visitor spending. With domestic travel reaching new heights as international visitation lagged, the total falls just 1 percent below the record set in 2019 and represents a 45 percent increase from pandemic-stricken 2020.

“We know visitor spending helps fuel our economy in all 100 counties by sustaining local businesses, supporting thousands of jobs and bringing in tax revenue and that’s why we’ve been working to encourage tourism,” said Gov. Cooper. “After being hit hard in 2020, tourism has bounced back as people around the world are again getting to see and experience the greatest state in the country.”

Gov. Cooper’s announcement coincides with National Travel and Tourism Week (May 1-7), when travel and tourism professionals across the country unite to underscore the value of travel to the economy, businesses, communities and personal well-being. For the second year in a row, North Carolina ranks No. 5 in domestic visitation.

The state’s tourism-supported workforce increased 10.5 percent to 197,500 jobs in 2021. That figure reverses the more than 26 percent loss in employment suffered in 2020. The total remains 18 percent below the record 242,600 jobs from 2019. Tourism payroll increased 19 percent to \$7.7 billion. As a result of visitor spending, state and local governments saw rebounds in tax revenues to \$2.3 billion.

The figures are preliminary findings from research commissioned by Visit North Carolina, a unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, and conducted by Tourism Economics.

The research shows that domestic visitor spending has fully recovered in North Carolina while international spending still lags. In 2021, domestic visitors spent \$28.6 billion, a figure that tops the 2019 record by 2.4 percent. International visitor spending rose nearly 26 percent, but it’s still down more than 74 percent from 2019.

“We’re encouraged by the report on the recovery of our tourism industry, which is essential to the state’s economic well-being,” said North Carolina Department of Commerce Secretary Machel Baker Sanders. “More than 45,000 small businesses across North Carolina rely on what visitors spend – on everything from lodging and dining to transportation, recreation and retail.” (See NC Tourism Facts in sidebar)