



PRESS RELEASE

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VISITORS SPENT \$157.8 MILLION IN MANISTEE COUNTY IN 2019, UP 2.9 PERCENT FROM 2018 AND 11.3 PERCENT FROM FIVE YEARS AGO

Manistee County also Saw Tourism Successes in 2020 Despite Pandemic, Including Increases in Year-Over-Year Lodging Sales in September and October and only 11 Percent Drop Overall

MANISTEE, Mich., Feb. 10, 2021 – While the full economic impact of COVID-19 on tourism is still being calculated for 2020 in Manistee County, a new [2019 Tourism Economics Report](#) issued by the [Michigan Economic Development Corporation \(MEDC\)](#) shows that Manistee County had a banner tourism year in 2019, with visitors spending \$157.8 million in Manistee County in 2019 – up 2.9 percent from 2018 and representing an additional \$4.4 million spent in the county in 2019 from the year prior.

Manistee County also experienced some tourism economic bright spots in 2020 tracked by the [Manistee County Visitors Bureau](#), with just an 11 percent reduction in annual lodging sales from 2019 despite the state being closed to tourism for more than two months due to stay-at-home orders. It also saw increased year-over-year lodging sales in September and October.

“Despite 2020 being a tumultuous year, the travel and tourism economy in the region did much better than expected,” said Kathryn Kenny, executive director of the Manistee County Visitors Bureau (MCVB). “Thanks to our abundant outdoor recreation and natural resources, Manistee County became a hotspot destination, especially in late summer and fall. And that comes on the heels of a very strong 2019, in which \$157.8 million came into our area and passed through the hands of our businesses and residents.”

2019 Tourism Economics Report – Manistee County Findings (*Michigan Economic Development Corp.*)

The MEDC’s [2019 Tourism Economic Impact - Region and County Report](#) lists Manistee County among 10 Michigan counties in the Northwest Region, coming in fourth in that subset in overall visitor spending in 2019 – only behind Grand Traverse, Emmet and Charlevoix Counties. Highlights for Manistee County include:

- **Visitor spending increased year-over-year and over five-year span** – Overall visitor spending in Manistee County in 2019 was \$157.83 million, increasing 2.9 percent from 2018 (\$153.38 million) and 11.3 percent compared to five years ago (\$141.71 million in 2014).
- **Visitor spending increased in all categories** – The five categories of visitor spending (listed below in order by percent increase): all experienced year-over-year increases, with the largest increase in lodging that brought in an additional \$1.24 million in 2019:
 - *Lodging* (includes second homes) – Increased 5.7 percent from 2018 to \$22.8 million in 2019
 - *Retail* – Increased 5.6 percent from 2018 to \$10.7 million in 2019
 - *Food & Beverage* – Increased 4.3 percent from 2018 to \$17.9 million in 2019
 - *Recreation* (includes casino gaming) – Increased 2.2 percent from 2018 to \$83.4 million in 2019
 - *Transportation* – Increased .17 percent from 2018 to \$22.8 million in 2019

- **Employment figures and labor income increased** – Visitor spending directly supported 706 county jobs and indirectly, 1,004 jobs, contributing \$20.39 million in direct annual wages – with a total of \$32.2 million in impact on working families. Total 2019 labor income increased by \$1.7 million from 2018 (a 5.6 percent increase).

2020 Lodging Sales Economic Impact (Manistee County Visitors Bureau)

While 2020 tourism economic figures from the MEDC won't be distributed until late 2021, the Manistee County Visitors Bureau calculated Manistee County's 2020 lodging economic impact.* Findings include:

- **Lodging generated \$9.6 million in sales in 2020, down only 11 percent** – Despite the pandemic interrupting vacation plans in 2020 through a stay-at-home order from late March to early June, Manistee County generated \$9.6 million in annual lodging sales – just 11 percent down from 2019 at \$10.9 million in sales. That included April and May that lost 81 percent and 69 percent in sales year over year, respectively, when the stay-at-home orders were in place. Going back further, 2020 lodging sales were only down 5.9 percent from 2018, and they were *higher* than 2017 sales by 2.2 percent.
- **Lodging sales increased in September and October, remained steady in August** – Once travel restrictions were lifted, travelers visited Manistee in fall 2020, with September experiencing an 8.3 percent increase in lodging sales over the same month in 2019 (\$1.5 million in 2020 from \$1.4 million in 2019), and October seeing a 4.9 percent increase (\$951,169 in 2020 from \$906,543 in 2019). August sales were almost the same, with just a .08 percent drop in 2020 at \$2.5 million – also netting the highest revenue of any month of 2020.
- **July, August and September generated the highest sales** – Similar to 2019, the three highest months for lodging sales in 2020 were August at \$2.5 million, July at \$2.3 million and September at \$1.5 million (in 2019, July led the same top three months in sales).

“We’re ecstatic about our 2020 lodging sales figures in such a challenging year,” said Kenny. “Coming off of a mild winter last year, coupled with non-existent travel in spring due to the pandemic, we were projecting a 50 percent decrease in lodging revenue in 2020. Along with our ‘Safe Travel’ messaging and ‘Free To Roam’ digital campaigns in the summer, we kicked off an aggressive fall color tour campaign. Promoting consistent messages and engaging with our audience brought up our 2020 numbers in late summer and fall despite COVID-19.”

**NOTE: MCVB lodging sales figures are based on sales from MCVB [assessing properties](#) only. Also, some lodging properties still have not reported fourth quarter sales. Thus, actual total lodging sales are higher than what is noted.*

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About the Manistee County Visitors Bureau

Incorporated in 1997, the Manistee County Visitors Bureau (known as Visit Manistee County) is the official destination marketing organization promoting Manistee County to grow the local travel economy. The visitors bureau is a member of the West Michigan Tourist Association, Michigan Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association, Tourism Industry Coalition of Michigan and the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce. Information is available at VisitManisteeCounty.com, facebook.com/ManisteePureMichigan, instagram.com/manisteepuremichigan and twitter.com/manisteePureMI.