



CITY OF  
**GRAND RAPIDS**  
IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE

**CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION AGENDA**

**Monday, June 08, 2026**

**4:30 PM**

CALL TO ORDER: Pursuant to due notice and call thereof, a Worksession meeting of the Grand Rapids City Council will be held on Monday, June 8, 2026 at 4:30 PM in the City Hall Council Chambers, 420 North Pokegama Avenue, Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

ROLL CALL:

BUSINESS:

1. Tourism Annual Report - Megan Christianson, Visit Grand Rapids

REVIEW OF REGULAR AGENDA:

ADJOURN:

Attest: Kimberly Gibeau, City Clerk



# Tourism Is Essential in Grand Rapids & Itasca County, Minnesota

Megan Christianson  
Executive Director  
Visit Grand Rapids





# U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION®

## *National Travel & Tourism Week May 3-9, 2026*

In 2026, the theme "**Postmarked: Essential**" highlights a simple truth: travel is not optional—it is fundamental to America's economy, workforce and way of life.

Travel in U.S. generates \$3 trillion in economic output and supports 15 million jobs, representing a significant 2.4% of America's GDP.

**Travel drives opportunity, fuels growth  
keeps America connected.**

[LEARN MORE](#)



**In 2024, visitor spending saved each Minnesota household \$1,031 in state and local taxes.\***

Sources: \*Tourism Economics 2024; SMARI Advertising Effectiveness Study, 2025



**<https://mn.gov/tourism-industry>**

**mi**  
EXPLORE  
MINNESOTA™

**mi**  
EMPLOYMENT AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 86.1 Million Visitors
- \$14.7 Billion Gross Sales
- \$2.4 Billion Sales Tax
- 182,435 Employed

Explore Minnesota has developed a comprehensive model to quantify Minnesota's visitor economy and better detail the far-reaching impacts of visitor spending.

## NE MINNESOTA TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT

County	Economic Impact (millions)	Total jobs	State & local taxes (millions)
Carlton	\$128.9	783	\$11.3
Cook	\$227.7	1,789	\$27.8
Itasca	\$208.7	1,409	\$19.2
Kanabec	\$22.2	155	\$2.2
Koochiching	\$88.2	749	\$8.5
Lake	\$152.0	1,146	\$13.7
Pine	\$163.8	868	\$12.8
St. Louis	\$1,049.5	5,188	\$103.0
Region Total	\$2,053.1	12,086	\$188.4



Item 1.

***Tourism is Essential in Grand Rapids & Itasca County, Minnesota.***





- **Started in 1983 as 501 (c) 6 non-profit**
- **Destination Marketing Organization**
- **Marketing agreement with the City of Grand Rapids in accordance of MN State Statue 469.10**
- **Market and promote to attract visitors to vacation here in the greater Grand Rapids/Itasca Co area.**
- **Funded by 3% lodging tax**
- **50 lodging properties collect lodging tax and are a part of a destination marketing collaborative.**



# 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Adam Lambrecht, President (Rising Eagle Resort)
- Sara Thompson, Past President (Itasca County Land Department)
- Sherrie Porth, Secretary/Treasurer (Loon Point Resort)
- Kris Ives (Timberlake Lodge Hotel & Event Center)
- Pete Malsted (Forest History Center)
- Tara Bender-Paulson (Benders)
- Kim Jamtgaard (Wildwood Resort)
- Matt Holmes (Trout Lake Campground)

## STAFF

- Megan Christianson, Executive Director
- Amanda Templin, Group Marketing & Community Engagement Manager

### ***Mission Statement:***

***“To generate a positive economic impact through destination marketing, and tourism and hospitality advocacy in the greater Grand Rapids, Minnesota area.”***



## 2026 Goals & Priorities

**Goal 1:** Aligning brand strategies to strengthen and enhance destination marketing tactics.

**Goals 2:** Expanding organization growth capacity through additional resources.

**Goal 3:** Deepen community stakeholder engagement.

**Goal 4:** Strategic Visioning focus on growth opportunities in Itasca County.

**Goal 5:** Grow small to medium group tourism that helps fill shoulder seasons (September to May).



# GET OUTDOORS

## INTO MINNESOTA'S NATURE

VISIT GRAND RAPIDS, MN

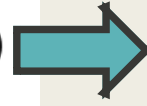
## 2026 Marketing Strategy

- Fulfill the mission of the Visit Grand Rapids
  - 1. conduct destination marketing to market and promote the greater Grand Rapids, MN area, and
  - 2. to advocate on behalf of tourism and hospitality.
- Promote Vacations (not day trips) of one+ nights.
- Book Groups for bus tours, meetings, conferences, events and trainings. Has their own strategy guide.
- Continue to priority focus on: Family Leisure, Outdoor Recreation & Groups

# NEW Website

Hosted & Built By: SandPieper Design

LEARN MORE



<https://visitgrandrapids.com> Item 1.

### Get Inspired

Trip Ideas Outdoor Adventures Eat & Drink State Parks, Forests & Beaches Area Attractions

### Adventurous Spring 3 Day Getaway | Grand Rapids, MN

Spring 3 Day Getaway Are you looking for the perfect adventurous spring 3 day getaway? Then, this blog is for you! Located in Northern Minnesota, Grand Rapids is a going to the...

[Read More](#) [See all Stories](#)

• **NEW** Travel Itinerary Section

### Find Accommodations

[See all Accommodations →](#)

[Book Now](#) Check-In: 05/01/2026 Check-Out: 05/08/2026 All Lodging [SEARCH](#)

• **NEW** Accommodations Design & AI Search Section For Lodging

## Fresh Season. Fresh Start.

Hiking Trails Eat & Drink Places to Stay Golf Courses

The Grand Rapids, Minnesota area has hundreds of thousands of acres that you can hike through mixed hardwood and pine forests to enjoy nature.

• **NEW** Interactive Headers 10

# Advertising Tactics & Media Companies

Item 1.

## MEDIA COMPANIES

- Adams MultiMedia
- AAA Living
- Explore Minnesota Magazine
- Facebook
- Google
- Lake Time Magazine
- MN DNR
- Minnesota Meetings + Events
- MN Monthly
- MN Snowmobiler
- MN USA
- Offroad Magazine
- Outfront Media
- Pride Journeys
- Snowgoer Magazine
- Star Tribune
- Strike Social
- YouTube

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA ADS

- Print Ads
- Radio Ads
- Newspaper Ads
- Billboard Ads

## DIGITAL ADS

- E-blasts
- GeoFence & Heat Map
- Google Search
- Google Performance Max
- Paid Social Ads
- Pre-Roll Video
- Programmatic
- Retargeting Mobile
- Search Engine Optimization
- Streaming Radio Ads
- Streaming TV Ads



# 2025 Website

Source: SandPieper Design

## Stats

*Web Visits*  
162,554

*AVG Session Duration*  
2:15

*New Users*  
132,363

*AVG Page Views*  
1.78

*Users By Type*

69.9% Mobile • 23.8 Desktop  
55.7% Women • 44.3% Male

*Total Ad Impressions*  
3,743,321

*Total Google Ad Clicks*  
76,218

*AVG Cost Per Click*  
\$.27

- YouTube Video Views=429,185
- Watch Time=1,800 hours

*Facebook*  
24,064 FOLLOWERS

*Instagram*  
2,757 FOLLOWERS



# Visitor Profile Data

Item 1.

Source: Zartico & PlacierAI

41%  
Visitors

59%  
Residents

18%  
Visitor Spend of  
Overall Spend

\$86  
Avg Spend at  
Restaurants

\$117  
Avg Visitor  
Spend

\$48  
Avg Spend at  
Attractions

*\*Spend is Per Person*

55%  
are 25-54 years old

52%  
Have an average of  
\$100k+ household  
income

36%  
Do not have children  
in the household

# Visitor Profile

Source: Zartico & PlacierAI

- ### Top Cities
- Minneapolis/St Paul, MN
  - Duluth, MN/Superior, WI
  - Fargo, ND
  - Rochester, MN
  - Mankato, MN
  - LaCrosse, WI
  - Chicago, IL Suburbs
  - DesMoines, IA

**63%**  
**Visitors Are From Minnesota!**

- ### Top States
- Minnesota
  - North Dakota
  - Illinois
  - Iowa
  - Wisconsin
  - South Dakota

- The number one reason that people vacation in Itasca County is for **OUTDOOR RECREATION.**
- The number one location that they enjoy outdoor recreation is the

**CHIPPEWA NATIONAL FOREST.**

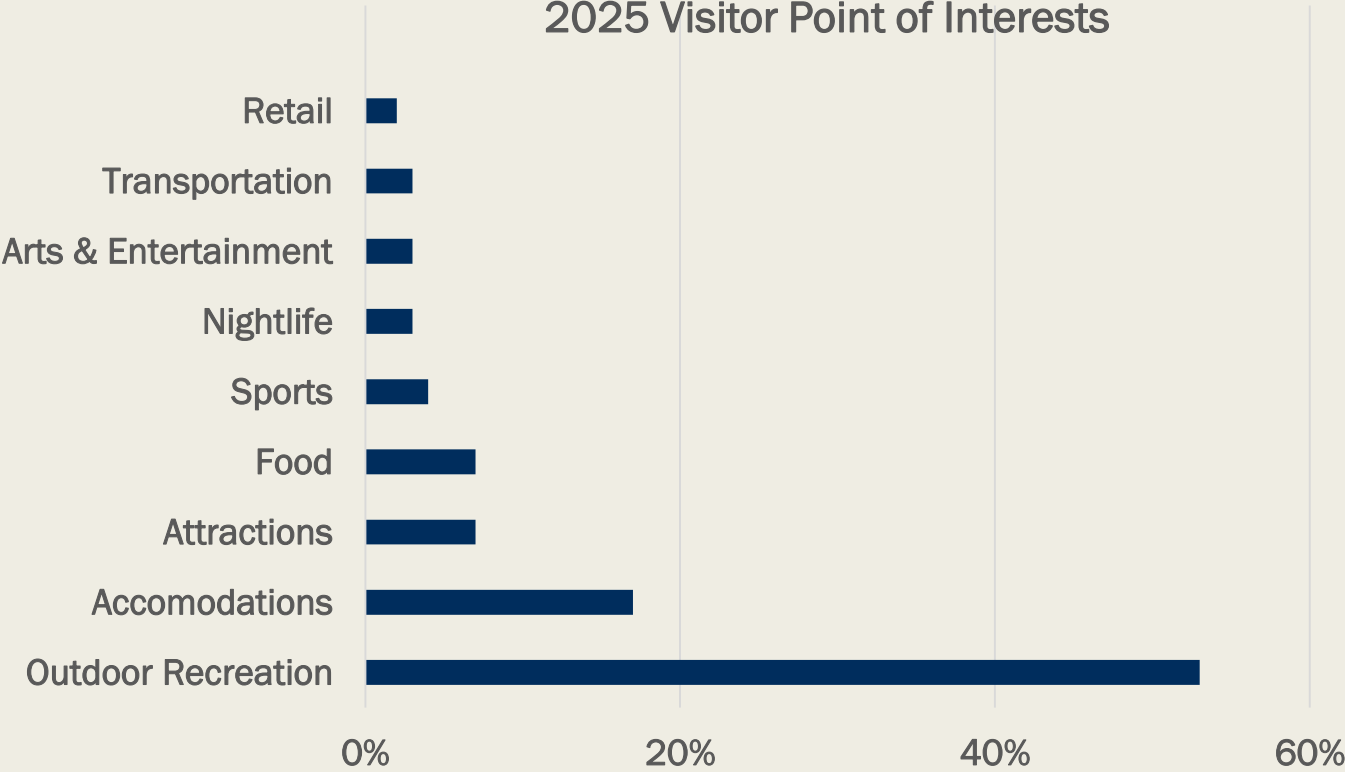


# Point of Interests

## Where Visitors Spend Their Time

Source: Zartico & PlacierAI

2025 Visitor Point of Interests





# THANK YOU!

Megan Christianson  
Executive Directors

Email: [megan@visitgrandrapids.com](mailto:megan@visitgrandrapids.com)

[www.visitgrandrapids.com](http://www.visitgrandrapids.com)



WWW.VISITGRANDRAPIDS.COM

**NEW USERS**  
**132,363**  
**AVG PAGE VIEWS**  
**1.78**

**TOTAL SESSIONS**  
**162,554**  
**AVG SESSION DURATION**  
**2:15**

**USERS BY TYPE**  
**55.6%** female  
**44.4%** male

**USERS BY DEVICE**  
**71.8%** mobile  
**24.6%** desktop

### TOP 10 PAGES VIEWED

1. Sweepstakes
2. Home
3. Places to Stay
4. Event Directory
5. Things To Do
6. Monthly View Calendar
7. Summer
8. Spring
9. Winter
10. Event/RockFest

### TOP PAID SESSIONS

Google Organic Search:	71,252
Google CPC Ads:	38,752
Direct Search:	20,456
Bing Organic Search:	4,118
Facebook Mobile:	3,410
Explore MN Facebook Ad:	3,361
Outfront Mobile Retargeting:	2,539
Yanahoo Organic Search:	1,780
Star Tribune Paid E-blast:	1,412
DuckDuckGo Organic Search:	1,102

### TOP 10 CITIES

- Minneapolis
- NOT Set
- Grand Rapids
- Chicago
- St Paul
- Cohasset
- New York
- Duluth
- Maple Grove
- Hibbing

### TOP 10 STATES

- Minnesota
- Texas
- Illinois
- Wisconsin
- Iowa
- Missouri
- New York
- Kansas
- North Dakota
- California

Sweepstakes Sign-ups: 6,450

Newsletter Sends: 82,560

Newsletter Open Rate: 33%

Newsletter CTR: 3%

**LOGGING PROPERTY LEADS=10,583 AND ONLINE BOOKING LEADS=3,910**

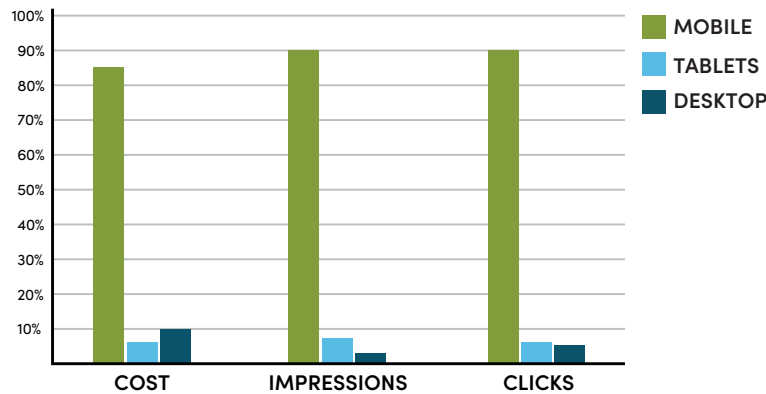
### 2025 GOOGLE AD DATA

Total Ad Impressions  
**3,743,321**

Total Google Ad Clicks  
**76,218**

Avg. Cost Per Click  
**.27**

### AD PERFORMANCE



**2025 VIDEO VIEWS**  
**429,185**

**WATCH TIME**  
**1.8k hours**



## 2025 MARKETING CAMPAIGNS & TACTICS:

**AAA Living:** Print, Programmatic Digital

**Adams MultiMedia:** Print, Programmatic Digital, Streaming Video

**Biking Minnesota:** Print, Programmatic Digital

**Explore Minnesota Magazine:** Print, Programmatic Digital, Lead Generation Program

**DSM Magazine:** Print

**Group Travel Magazine:** Native Article, Print, Programmatic Digital

**MN DNR Regulations Guides (ATV, Fishing & Snowmobiling):** Print

**MN Meetings & Events:** Native Article, Print, Programmatic Digital, E-blast

**MN Monthly:** Print, Programmatic Digital, E-blast

**MN Snowmobile Destinations:** Print, Programmatic Digital

**MN Snowmobile Magazine:** Print, Programmatic Digital

**MN Traditions/Mississippi Headwaters Board:** Paid Social, Travel Influencer, Paid Videos

**MSP/St Paul Magazine:** Print

**Offroad Magazine:** Print

**Outfront Media:** 18 Billboards, Mobile Retargeting through GeoFence & Heat Maps

**Pride Journeys Magazine:** Print, Programmatic Digital

**Rider Magazine:** Print

**Snowgoer Magazine:** Print, Programmatic Digital

**Star Tribune:** Programmatic Digital utilizing GeoFence, E-blast

**StrikeSocial:** Streaming Video

# TOURISM IS VITAL IN MINNESOTA Item 1.

In 2024, visitor spending saved each Minnesota household \$1,031 in state and local taxes.

Explore Minnesota has developed a comprehensive model to quantify Minnesota's visitor economy and better detail the far-reaching impacts of visitor spending.

Scan the QR code for a complete report by Tourism Economics.



## NE MINNESOTA TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT

County	Economic impact (millions)	Total jobs	State & local taxes (millions)
Carlton	\$129.9	783	\$11.3
Cook	\$227.7	1,769	\$27.8
<b>Itasca</b>	<b>\$208.7</b>	<b>1,409</b>	<b>\$19.2</b>
Kanabec	\$22.2	155	\$2.2
Koochiching	\$99.2	749	\$8.5
Lake	\$152.0	1,146	\$13.7
Pine	\$163.8	868	\$12.8
St. Louis	\$1,049.5	5,188	\$103.0
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>\$2,053.1</b>	<b>12,066</b>	<b>\$198.4</b>

## STATE OF MINNESOTA

- 81.6 Million Visitors
- \$14.7 Billion in Gross Sales
- \$2.4 Billion in Sales Tax
- 182,435 Employed

## 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

**PRESIDENT:** Sara Thompson, Itasca County Land Department  
**PAST PRESIDENT:** Lewis Kellin, Hotel Rapids & CoHaus  
**VICE PRESIDENT:** Grant Prokop, Thousand Lakes Sporting Goods  
**SECRETARY/TREASURER:** Adam Lambrecht, Rising Eagle Resort  
 Kris Ives, Timberlake Lodge Hotel & Event Center  
 Jeff Johns, MN Historical Society  
 Jim Mack, The Reif Center  
 Charlotte Jarrett, Best Western Plus  
**STAFF:** Megan Christianson, Executive Director

## TOURISM IS VITAL AND VIBRANT IN THE GRAND RAPIDS, MN AREA.

AmericInn by Wyndham  
 Balsam Lake Cabin  
 Bear's Den  
 Best Western Plus  
 Campfire Cottage  
 Birch Bay Resort  
 Bowstring Shores  
 Camp Hiwatha  
 Country Inn & Suites by Radisson  
 Doc House  
 Downtown Charmer  
 Dudley Cottage

Eagle Lake Retreat House  
 Eagle View Lodge  
 First Avenue Suite  
 Forest Lake Lodge  
 Forest Lake Motel  
 Hatch Lake Tiny Home  
 Historic Gilbert Mansion  
 Hideaway on Little Jay  
 Hotel Rapids  
 IM Hotel  
 Itasca Trails Campground  
 Itascan Motel  
 Jessie View Resort

Lake Loft  
 Little Buck Camp  
 Lone Star Lodge  
 Long Lake Dome  
 Long Lake Lookout  
 Loon Point Resort  
 Loon's Landing  
 Malbay Estates  
 Mallard Point  
 Mid Mod Lake House  
 Moose Point Look Out  
 My Place Hotel  
 Northland Wonderland

Pokegama Lake Resort  
 Rising Eagle Resort  
 Timberlake Lodge  
 Tioga Basecamp  
 Trout Lake Campground  
 Turtle Lake Beach House  
 Twin Lakes Retreat  
 Two Rivers RV Park & Campground  
 West Pines Motel  
 White Pine Lake Home  
 Wildwood Resort



# tourism matters for itasca county

2024 DATA

total visitor spending  
**\$130 million**

0.9% share of state  
tourism visitor spending



lodging\*  
**\$61.9 million**



food & beverage  
**\$24.2 million**



recreation  
**\$10.8 million**



retail  
**\$19.5 million**



transportation^  
**\$13.5 million**

Each Minnesota household would need to be taxed \$1,031 more annually to make up for visitor-generated dollars.†

\* Lodging spending includes second-home spending.

^ Transportation spending includes both ground and air transportation.

† Minnesota household tax savings are based on state-level analysis.

# itasca county tourism impacts

Tourist activity benefits households, businesses and government entities across our state. Explore Minnesota partners with Tourism Economics to quantify the economic impact of Minnesota’s visitor economy, including the far-reaching impacts of visitor spending.

Employment, income, and state and local tax revenue estimates prove the value of tourism in Itasca County.

 **1,409 jobs**

 **\$208.7 million in economic impact**

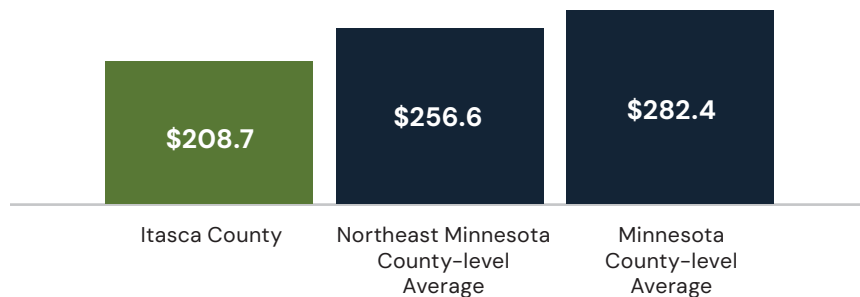
 **\$19.2 million in taxes**

Visitors include Minnesotans and non-Minnesotans who stayed overnight or traveled at least 50 miles to reach their destination.

Direct impacts are business sales, jobs, income and taxes created directly by visitor spending to tourism-related sectors (e.g., lodging, transportation, recreation).

Indirect and Induced impacts are included in estimated total economic impacts. Indirect refers to wider impacts (e.g., food wholesalers, utilities, business services) in the supply chain. Induced impacts are created from local spending by employees whose wages are generated by visitor spending.

**total economic impact comparison by geography (\$ millions)**



To learn more about Itasca County tourism trends, and how your metrics compare to other Minnesota counties, scan the below QR codes.



2024 minnesota report



2024 county-level report

# 2024 visitor economy impact

## MINNESOTA TOTAL

- 81.6 million visitors\*
- \$24.7 billion in total economic impact
- 182,435 jobs supported
- \$2.4 billion in state & local taxes

### Northwest region

County	Economic impact (millions)	Total jobs	State & local taxes (millions)
Becker	\$152.0	1,186	\$13.9
Beltrami	\$241.0	1,927	\$22.5
Cass	\$364.8	2,989	\$36.0
Clay	\$130.9	1,048	\$11.7
Clearwater	\$16.2	89	\$1.4
Hubbard	\$84.6	521	\$7.8
Kittson	\$8.9	38	\$0.7
Lake of the Woods	\$90.2	800	\$9.6
Mahnomen	\$60.3	316	\$5.8
Marshall	\$8.2	40	\$0.7
Norman	\$5.0	26	\$0.4
Pennington	\$94.5	858	\$7.7
Polk County	\$88.3	653	\$7.9
Red Lake	\$4.1	25	\$0.3
Roseau	\$81.8	676	\$7.5
Wilkin	\$8.2	42	\$0.6
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>\$1,439.1</b>	<b>11,235</b>	<b>\$134.5</b>

### Northeast region

County	Economic impact (millions)	Total jobs	State & local taxes (millions)
Carlton	\$129.9	783	\$11.3
Cook	\$227.7	1,769	\$27.8
Itasca	\$208.7	1,409	\$19.2
Kanabec	\$22.2	155	\$2.2
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Lake	\$152.0	1,146	\$13.7
Pine	\$163.8	868	\$12.8
Saint Louis	\$1,049.5	5,188	\$103.0
<b>Regional Total</b>	<b>\$2,053.1</b>	<b>12,066</b>	<b>\$198.4</b>

Minneapolis–St. Paul area			
County	Economic impact (millions)	Total jobs	State & local taxes (millions)
Anoka	\$724.6	5,787	\$68.3
Carver	\$224.3	1,884	\$21.7
Chisago	\$85.5	642	\$7.9
Dakota	\$1,563.6	11,458	\$136.7
Hennepin	\$9,342.9	67,204	\$902.7
Isanti	\$67.5	470	\$5.9
Ramsey	\$2,147.6	17,595	\$219.6
Scott	\$516.6	3,764	\$50.0
Washington	\$743.1	6,125	\$73.0
Wright	\$269.4	2,125	\$24.7
<b>Regional Total</b>	<b>\$15,685.1</b>	<b>117,053</b>	<b>\$1,510.3</b>

Sources: \*Longwoods 2024; Tourism Economics Study of the 2024 Minnesota Visitor Economy



Southern region			
County	Economic impact (millions)	Total jobs	State & local taxes (millions)
Big Stone	\$9.4	48	\$0.9
Blue Earth	\$266.4	2,237	\$25.3
Brown	\$71.3	633	\$6.4
Chippewa	\$24.2	148	\$2.2
Cottonwood	\$20.8	127	\$1.8
Dodge	\$12.9	102	\$1.2
Faribault	\$19.5	132	\$1.7
Fillmore	\$27.9	237	\$3.0
Freeborn	\$121.1	873	\$10.4
Goodhue	\$195.9	1,448	\$17.2
Houston	\$26.7	210	\$2.4
Jackson	\$24.8	195	\$2.3
Lac qui Parle	\$5.1	31	\$0.5
Le Sueur	\$30.8	189	\$3.2
Lincoln	\$6.7	34	\$0.6
Lyon	\$91.8	711	\$8.3
Martin	\$60.4	360	\$5.6
Mower	\$91.4	674	\$8.6
Murray	\$13.0	90	\$1.1
Nicollet	\$55.8	476	\$5.4
Nobles	\$68.7	513	\$6.1
Olmsted	\$1,212.6	9,072	\$107.4
Pipestone	\$21.1	129	\$1.7
Redwood	\$62.9	364	\$6.0
Renville	\$20.4	106	\$1.7
Rice	\$154.1	1,271	\$14.5
Rock	\$20.7	134	\$1.9
Sibley	\$12.7	74	\$1.1

Steele	\$131.6	1,064	\$11.4
Swift	\$16.4	104	\$1.3
Traverse	\$4.4	20	\$0.3
Wabasha	\$42.3	340	\$3.8
Waseca	\$26.3	216	\$2.4
Watonwan	\$18.7	122	\$1.6
Winona	\$164.6	1,411	\$14.7
Yellow Medicine	\$35.0	203	\$2.6
Regional Total	\$3,188.2	24,101	\$286.9
Central region			
County	Economic impact (millions)	Total jobs	State & local taxes (millions)
Aitkin	\$75	388	\$6.2
Benton	\$66.8	532	\$6.3
Crow Wing	\$507.7	3,952	\$52.0
Douglas	\$234.3	1,812	\$21.0
Grant	\$9.5	42	\$0.7
Kandiyohi	\$140.6	1,142	\$15.5
McLeod	\$78.9	547	\$7.0
Meeker	\$32.1	224	\$2.8
Mille Lacs	\$115.5	689	\$10.1
Morrison	\$71.7	582	\$6.7
Otter Tail	\$211	1,448	\$18.8
Pope	\$42.5	264	\$3.7
Sherburne	\$130.9	1,144	\$12.2
Stearns	\$535.2	4,472	\$49.8
Stevens	\$33.1	282	\$3.0
Todd	\$43.8	267	\$3.9
Wadena	\$31.1	193	\$2.7
Regional Total	\$2,359.8	17,980	\$222.4