

Virginia Beach Tourism Generates an Impressive \$3.8B for Local Economy in 2023

Economic Impact Study Illuminates the Vital Role of Tourism for Virginia Beach

Virginia Beach, Va. – Visitors to Virginia Beach spent, on average, nearly \$7 million each day in 2023, a key finding announced today from the recent economic impact study by the Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau. Equally impressive, the destination welcomed 14.1 million visitors, including 13.7 million domestic travelers and 373,000 international guests. Total visitor expenditures reached an impressive \$2.5 billion, reflecting a \$100 million increase over the previous year. This influx generated substantial economic impact, with both indirect and induced effects contributing to an overall economic contribution of \$3.8 billion for 2023.

“Our recent economic impact study underscores the incredible appeal of Virginia Beach as a travel destination,” said Nancy Helman, Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau director. “Welcoming 14.1 million visitors and generating \$3.8 billion in economic impact is a testament to the diverse experiences we offer and the hard work of our tourism industry. This growth not only enhances our local economy, but also strengthens our community as a whole.”

The Virginia Beach tourism industry sustained 33,836 jobs, representing 19% of the city’s workforce. Moreover, visitor spending contributed \$336 million in state and local tax revenues, effectively reducing the annual tax burden by \$1,819 for each household in Virginia Beach.

In 2023, visitors poured \$2.5 billion into the local economy, with food and beverage leading the charge at over \$1.1 billion — 42% of total visitor spending. Lodging, which includes both traditional accommodations, second homes and short-term rentals, accounted for \$678 million, or 27% of the total. Transportation and recreational activities each captured an 11% share of expenditures, while retail spending reached \$224 million, comprising about 9% of the overall visitor contributions.

Fueled by rising demand, visitor spending increased by 4.1% in 2023, marking the third consecutive year of growth following a sharp decline during the pandemic in 2020. In terms of spending categories, recreation saw the most significant growth, rising by 6.8% year over year as visitors increasingly prioritized experiential activities. Additionally, spending on food and beverage grew robustly by 5.4%, reaching an impressive nearly \$1.1 billion.

Beyond the natural appeal of the city’s oceanfront and outdoor amenities that served as key factors in travelers’ interest to visit (66%), the destination's intentional investment in sports and festivals is also yielding positive results. Traveling for entertainment (65%) plus sports (26%) and cultural (35%) themes provided desirable reasons to visit the coastal city in 2023, surpassing U.S. national averages of 54%, 20% and 28%, respectively.

Visitor numbers for both day and overnight trips showed impressive growth, with day visits finally surpassing 2019 figures for the first time. The key driver behind this trend was VFR (visiting friends and relatives), which increased by a combined 5% year over year, fueling the gains across both traveler segments.

Helman added, “These findings illustrate not just the vitality of our tourism sector, but also the deep connections our visitors have with Virginia Beach. As more people choose to visit our beloved city and for those lucky enough to call Virginia Beach home, we’re seeing a direct impact on our local economy. This growth reinforces our commitment to enhancing the visitor experience and supporting our community’s prosperity.”

The study, centered on the expenditures of Virginia Beach tourists in 2023, was undertaken by Tourism Economics, a subsidiary of Oxford Economics, utilizing an array of local and nationwide data resources and survey instruments.

About Virginia Beach

Virginia Beach, one of Virginia’s most populous cities, resides where the Chesapeake Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean. The city is home to 38 miles of sandy beaches, a flourishing culinary and craft beer scene, rich history, a variety of arts and entertainment, and family-friendly attractions that keep visitors entertained year-round. For more Virginia Beach information, including new attractions and experiences, or to plan your next trip, visit www.visitvirginiabeach.com.

###