



Northern New York Travel and Tourism Research Center
in cooperation with the State University of New York at Potsdam

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Tourists Make a Billion-Dollar Impact on Northern New York

Tourists spent almost \$1.7 billion while visiting the 10 counties of Northern New York last year, according to an Economic Impact of Tourism Study just released by the Northern New York Travel and Tourism Research Center of SUNY Potsdam.

That translates into an economic impact of over \$187 million in local government revenues. An estimated 37,000 jobs are supported by both direct and indirect tourist dollars across Northern New York, and these tourist dollars generate \$147.7 million in total state revenue, according to the study results. Visitor expenditures throughout Northern New York also result in an estimated \$746 million in wages, salaries and income earned by business owners.

Without these visitor expenditures, overall unemployment in Northern New York in 2006 would have increased to 19 percent, and local residents' taxes would have increased an estimated \$737 per household in order to maintain government services at current levels, according to the calculations made by study consultants Davidson-Peterson Associates of Kennebunk, ME.

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This is a second time this particular study has been undertaken by the Northern New York Tourism Research Center. The current study provides comparison data to the baseline Economic Impact of Tourism Expenditures study conducted in 2003. The 2006 study was funded by an Empire State Development grant and by the counties.

The Adirondack Regional Tourism Council (ARTC) is part of the consortium that funded the study. ARTC's director, Ann Melious, said the results of the new data, when compared to the benchmark study of 2003, left her "ambivalent."

"On the one hand, the study shows only a 3 percent increase in visitor spending, 2006 over 2003 (in the Adirondack Region), when we know that the inflation rate for that same period was more than 9 percent," she pointed out. "On the other hand, 2006 was a terrible weather year, with a rainy summer and little snow most of the winter. Considering that the Adirondacks are a scenery and outdoor recreation destination, a 3 percent increase in visitation and visitor spending is pretty good."

For Northern New York as a whole, overnight person visits are up by 1.6 percent, but tourist expenditures are up by 7 percent when compared to the 2003 data. Other general trends seen in the data indicate that visitors are spending more on shopping, licenses and evening entertainment, but less on sightseeing and food.

More visitors staying in hotels, motels and resorts were from Canada in 2006 (12 percent vs. 8 percent in 2003). These are averages for the entire region; variations in the numbers occur seasonally and in the individual counties, as well as in the two regions: Adirondack (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Herkimer/Town of Webb, Lewis and Warren) and Thousand Islands/Seaway (Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence).

Other general trends include increased spending by visitors who stayed in a cabin, cottage or condominium, decreased spending by campers, and substantial increases in the economic impact of the visitors' expenditures. The estimated amount of local government revenues generated by tourism expenditures increased by 20 percent over 2003 and the amount of wages, salaries and proprietary income earned by local residents as a result of tourist dollars increased by 11 percent over 2003.

The bulk of the visitor expenditures last year (70 percent) occurred May through September, according to the study. Overall, visitors spent an average of 27 percent of their total expenditures on recreation, 23 percent on food, 23 percent on shopping, 18 percent on lodging and 9 percent on transportation.

The results of the study are expressed for Northern New York as a whole, for the Adirondack region, for the Thousand Islands region and for each county individually.

The number of overnight person visits to the seven-county Adirondack region increased by 3 percent and the visitors spent over \$1.25 billion, also an increase of 3 percent over 2003. The number of overnight person visits to the three-county Thousand Islands/Seaway region actually decreased by one percent, but visitor spending went up about 20 percent.

The data has been packaged into county profiles, which all also include the Northern New York, Adirondack region and Thousand Islands region data. The profiles are available on the Tourism Research Center's Web site at www.nnytourismresearch.org. In addition, brief reference sheets highlighting and comparing certain key data categories are available on the Web site for each county and region, as well as Northern New York as a whole.