

DESTINATION DOOR COUNTY

September 2026

COMMUNITY & WORKFORCE PILLAR

Tourism News & Insights Publication - We distributed our latest [Tourism News & Insights](#) publication in the September 11, 2026 issue of the Peninsula Pulse newspaper as part of our ongoing community outreach strategy. The publication was also shared through our partner social media channels. ⇨

Workforce Collaboration - We provided assistance with Door County Economic Development Corporation's Talent Attraction & Retention Employer Forum on Tuesday, Sept. 22 at Stone Harbor Resort, which focused on helping Door County employers strengthen workforce attraction and retention.



⇨ **DDC Partner Mixer Event** - We hosted a fun community networking event for our partners on Tuesday September 29 at Drömhuis in Sturgeon Bay. Complimentary appetizers and a cash bar welcomed a number of local partners for a chance to mix and mingle with others in the community.



STEWARDSHIP & REGENERATION PILLAR

DDC Staff Giveback - DDC staff hosted a giveback session at [Write On, Door County](#) on Thursday September 10. To show appreciation and to say thank you for providing the DDC space for monthly board meetings in 2026, staff helped spruce up some of the wooden benches along the trails and around the grounds at Write On, Door County, near Juddville. ⇨



⇨ **Community Investment Fund Presentation** - DDC staff and Door County Community Foundation staff teamed up to offer a public presentation about the Community Investment Fund at the Gibraltar Town Center in Fish Creek on Wednesday September 23. The session provided an overview of the program, shared how to apply for funding, and explained the unique partnership between Destination Door County and the Door County Community Foundation through the program. Another free public presentation is scheduled for Tuesday November 17 at the Door County Maritime Museum in Sturgeon Bay.



Community Investment Fund grant awards were seen in action at local festivals in September, as evidenced by road safety ⇨ barriers which were in use at Sturgeon Bay's Harvest Fest as shown here on September 19.



Water Stations - We continued our efforts to reduce single-use plastics through our compostable bamboo cup water station initiative. In September, we were at Autumfest in Baileys Harbor, Harvest Fest in Sturgeon Bay and Literary Fest on Washington Island.

⇨ Pictured here is recently retired Sue Schwartz, who's last day as a member of DDC's professional staff was working the water station booth on Washington Island September 21. Thanks to Sue for her time and dedication to DDC during her 2+ years with the organization!

ECONOMIC VITALITY PILLAR

PAID MEDIA

Both Paid Search campaigns continue to see consistent growth across nearly all metrics: clicks and CTR are both up MoM (with Leisure SEM surpassing 26%) while maintaining and improving the already-impressive engagement rates and session durations. On the Cross-Network front, Demand Gen traded a small amount of clicks and CTR for notable site engagement improvements, meanwhile Performance Max continued to shatter expectations by rising to a CTR above 17% (a new high for this tactic) while maintaining strong engagement metrics. On the Paid Social side, Instagram outperformed Facebook across the board this month, most notably IG Prospecting with a 4.27% CTR, though engagement remained strong across all Meta tactics.

EMAIL

Open rate held steady at 47.1% (vs. August's 48.0%), but click rate nearly doubled to 3.5% from 2.0%, with CTOR climbing to 7.4% from 4.1%. YoY, it's a clean win across the board: opens up 2.1 points, CTR up 0.8 points, total clicks up 11.1%.

Lead Gen Bandwango again led all segments, CTR nearly doubling to 6.6% from August's 3.4%, the strongest of any segment all year. The lift traces back to content: two broad anchors (Supper Clubs, Best Fall Color Drives) drove 64% of all clicks, a tighter, more concentrated mix than August's more fragmented spread.

SMS September shifted back to a mixed format (Full Audience + Drive Markets), after August ran drive-market-only. The Fall send hit 36.1% CTR, the best full-audience SMS performance all year. Apple Picking (Drive Markets) came in softer at 29.8% CTR.

SEO

September clicks and impressions continued to trend below 2025 numbers, with a 22.9% decrease in sitewide clicks and a 16% decrease in Site Impressions. At the same time, average position increased 3pts from 11 to 8, and Generative AI impression remained stable compared to August, trending at 342k, mostly led by the homepage, fall, and the 80th Annual Sister Bay Fall Fest.

Despite this variability, Places to Stay and Lodging keywords saw upward momentum for visibility, with “places to stay” keywords increasing 8.1% year-over-year, and lodging-based terms benefiting from single-entity optimizations. Site Engagement also continues to increase year-over-year, with users spending more time on the website compared to 2025 as AI qualifies traffic and leads.

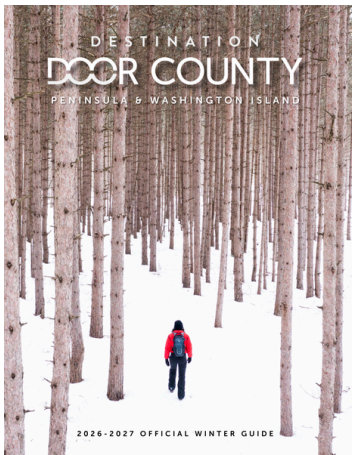
Heritage Trail Trolley Tour and Award Recognition

DDC shared the Door County Heritage Trail with historical leaders and government officials during a trolley tour held between ceremonies honoring the Door County Historical Society with the Historic Rehabilitation Award for Eagle Bluff Lighthouse Museum and the Reuben Gold Thwaites Trophy for preserving and sharing history.



2026-2027 Official Winter Guide

DDC's 2026-2027 Official Winter Guide is now available, highlighting seasonal activities, events and businesses open November through March. Features include “Pick Your Park” and local shop owner recommendations in “What’s In Store.” A total of 20,000 copies were printed for countywide distribution, with a digital version also available.



Midwest Travel Journalist Association Conference - We attended MTJA's annual conference in Eau Claire . We had appointments with 15 journalists and shared Door County stories.

Content Creator Visit

We worked with content creators Subpar Parks- Amber Share and Jessica Hair on a trip to Door County highlighting our state parks and shoulder season travel. Their content will be shared in the coming weeks.

We worked with Travel WI for a content creator visit for German based content creator- Thomas Lotter (@lotter_live)



Organic Social

While views are down on both Instagram and Facebook, organic engagement remains strong, with engagement rates around 4% on both platforms, a very positive rate for each channel.

Follower growth also remains strong, with Instagram adding 740 net followers and Facebook adding 619. Chicago continues to be our largest Instagram audience, followed by Milwaukee, while Milwaukee leads our Facebook audience, followed by Green Bay.

Media Highlights from the work of the Destination Door County Team

"25 Most Scenic Fall Drives in the Midwest," *Midwest Living Online*, September 2026

"Wisconsin Wine is Better Than you Think: Here's Where to Taste It," *Wander Worthy*, Syndicated 113 articles, September 2026

"The Midwest's Coziest Escapes for a Fall Weekend Away," *Midwest Living Online*, September 2026

"Nearly Half of Americans Plan Fall Travel, and Small Towns are Winning them Over," *The Seattle Times*, Syndicated 93 articles, September 2026

PARTNERSHIP & WELCOME CENTER

September Partnership Highlights

- **Partner Outreach:** Sent 105 partnership invitations to prospective businesses, including 18 newly identified contacts.
- **Workforce Support:** JobsInDoorCounty.com reached approximately 6,900 jobseeker profiles, with 946 active jobseekers and 81 new employer accounts identified in 2026.
- **International Workforce:** Preliminary BridgeUSA data showed 557 Summer Work Travel participants, with continued employer support and J-1 resource development.
- **Partner Engagement:** Supported the Sept. 29 Partner Mixer at Drömmhus and continued planning for the October Fall Gathering.
- **Business Resources:** Partnered with Focus on Energy on business energy efficiency education and no cost energy walkthroughs.
- **Community Outreach:** Represented DDC at the Cobblestone Hotel groundbreaking and continued targeted recruitment of underrepresented business categories.
- **Seasonal Worker Support:** Continued development of 500 reflective bags to improve safety for international seasonal workers.

Welcome Center Visitors: 2,512 vs. 2,872 (2025) -12.5%

- Average daily visitors: 83.7
- Busiest day: Monday, Sept. 21 (146 visitors)
- Lowest traffic day: Saturday, Sept. 19 (33 visitors)

Phone Calls: 704 vs. 664 (2025) +6.0%

Kiosk Usage: Sessions: 110

- Average session duration: 4:00
 - Most Viewed Categories:
 - Things to Do (43)
 - Food & Drink (23)
 - Where to Stay (8)
- Time of Day Usage:
 - 6-9 am (0)
 - 9 am-12 pm (57)
 - 12-3 pm (37)
 - 3-6 pm (15)
 - 6-10 pm (1)

Gift Certificates

Sales: \$22,275 vs. \$35,535 (2025) -37.3%

Redemptions: \$47,260 vs. \$57,680 (2025) -18.1%

SAVE THE DATE

OCTOBER 27 DESTINATION DOOR COUNTY ANNUAL GATHERING EVENT, 5:30 PM, LANDMARK RESORT IN EGG HARBOR

NOVEMBER 17 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION, 10 AM, DOOR COUNTY MARITIME MUSEUM IN STURGEON BAY

MONTHLY DEEP DIVE | SEPTEMBER 2026

Destination Door County Welcome Center Highlights

Connecting Visitors with Door County

The Welcome Center has been welcoming guests and giving them a personal connection to Door County at 1015 Green Bay Road in Sturgeon Bay since 1961. Our Destination Specialists help guests navigate the county, discover local businesses, and make the most of their time here through in-person conversations, phone assistance, email and other online correspondence.

Personal Service with Local Knowledge

From first-time visitors planning a weekend, to returning guests looking for something new, our team helps with lodging questions, dining recommendations, attractions, events, and seasonal activities. These conversations create opportunities to introduce visitors to new businesses and experiences county-wide.

Supporting Spending at Local Businesses

The Door County gift certificate program provides another direct connection between DDC and participating businesses. In 2025, gift certificate sales totaled \$497,335, including \$183,000 in December, demonstrating the program's strong role in holiday gift giving. Gift certificates are sold exclusively in person at the Welcome Center, as well as by phone with Welcome Center staff and online at DoorCounty.com.

Investing in the Visitor Experience

Our ongoing focus is on a welcoming space, accessible information, and knowledgeable staff. Lobby improvements and interactive visitor tools provide opportunities to strengthen the experience while keeping personal assistance at the center of our service.

Taking Door County Beyond the Welcome Center

Destination Guide distribution extends our reach well beyond the front desk. Individual request fulfillment and bulk distribution put trip-planning information into the hands of prospective visitors and support our partners in welcoming guests that are either still in the trip planning process or are already here.



Next Month's Deep Dive: 2027 Strategic Plan Presentation

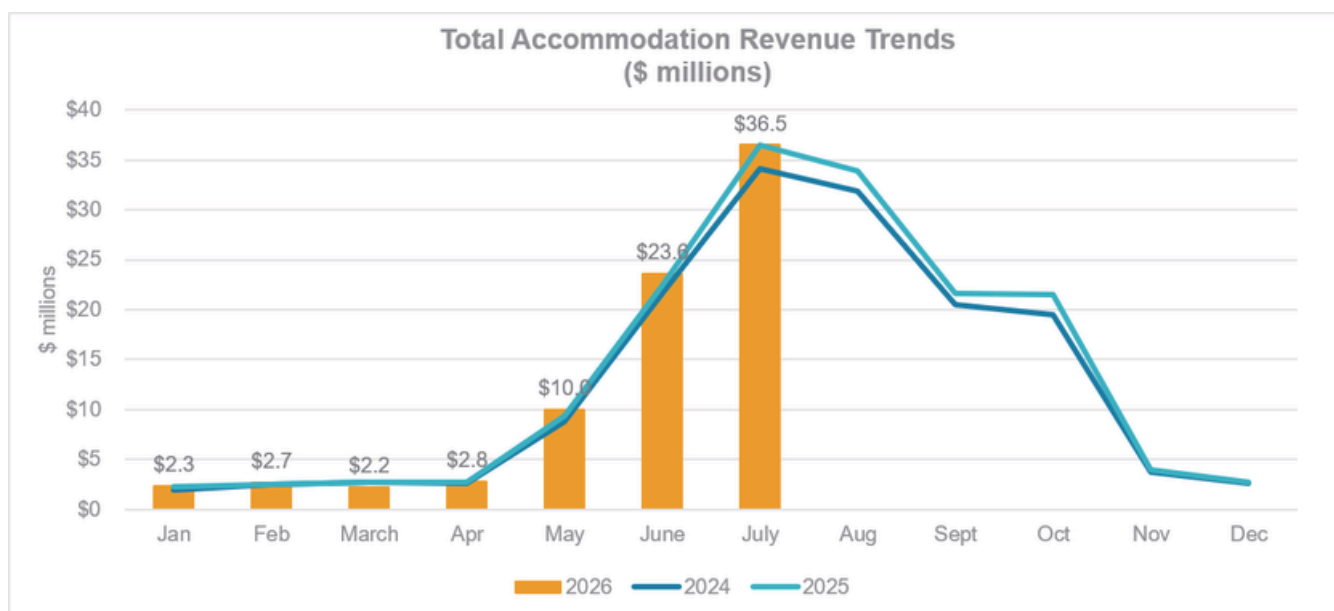
RESEARCH DATA SNAPSHOT - COUNTY-WIDE LODGING

Following a 6% increase in June, room revenue held steady year-over-year in July. Preliminary figures show available rooms declined 9% in July and 2% year to date, while occupied rooms fell 8% in July and 5% year to date. Late reports from accommodation partners may lift these figures once unreported data is submitted.

Average rates rose 6.9% year to date, supporting higher revenue despite lower occupancy. Through July, accommodation revenue was up 1.8%, while room tax collections reached \$6.4 million, 2.5% higher than in 2025.

Forward-looking short-term rental bookings for the next 60 days are up 8% compared with last year (see *next page*). Rates are also up 8%, driving a 16% increase in revenue. The average booking window is 81 days, similar to last year.

Door County Total Lodging* Jan - July					
Metric	2025		2026		YoY % Chg
Revenue (\$ millions)	\$	78.6	\$	80.0	1.8%
Average Daily Rate	\$	250	\$	267	6.9%
Available Rooms (000's)		792.1		775.5	-2.1%
Occupied Rooms (000's)		314.7		299.7	-4.8%
Percent Occupied		39.7%		38.6%	-2.7%



Sources

*Total lodging reported by Door County Tourism Zone Commission. Data reported monthly, latest data available is July 2026.

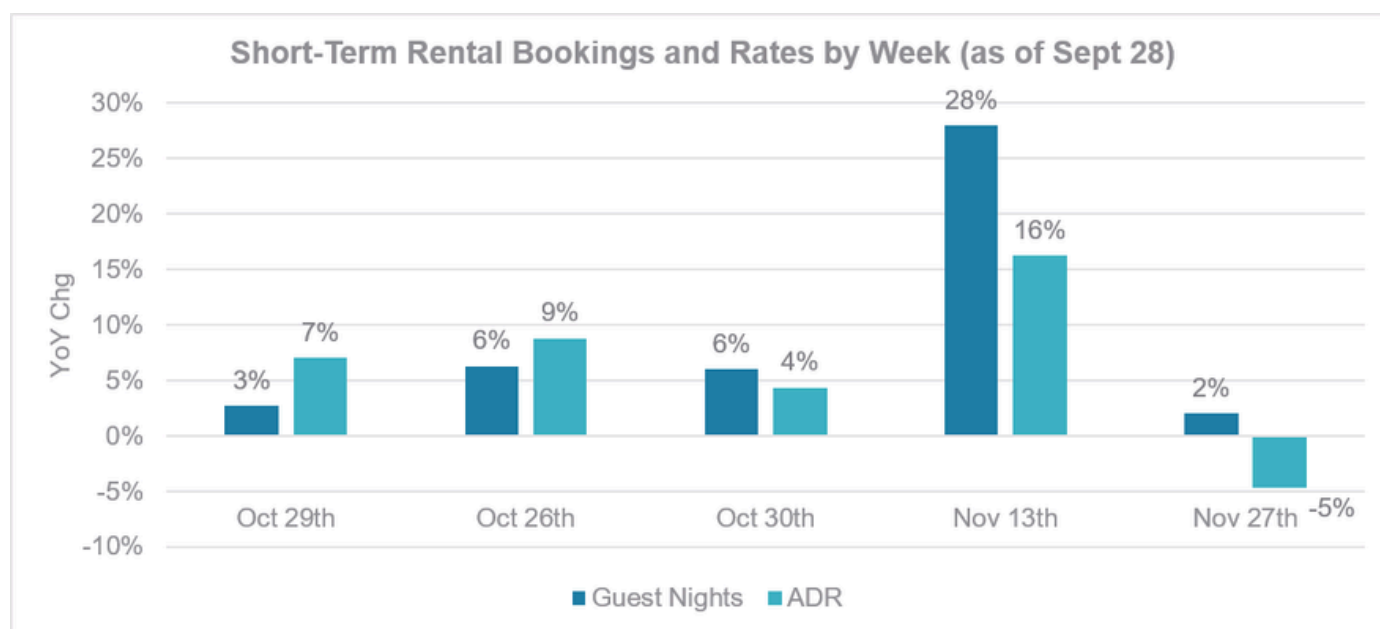
RESEARCH DATA SNAPSHOT - SHORT TERM RENTALS**

- Through September, short-term rental revenue improved to +8% year-to-date.
- Revenue growth was driven largely by a 10% increase in rates, while occupancy was essentially flat year over year at 30.5%.
- Average length of stay and booking windows are comparable to the same time frame last year.

Door County Short-Term Rentals** Jan - Sept					
Metric	2025		2026		YoY % Chg
Revenue (\$ millions)	\$	72.0	\$	77.7	7.9%
Average Daily Rate	\$	431	\$	474	10.0%
Percent Occupied		30.5%		30.5%	0.1%
Avg Active AirBNB Listings		1,157		1,183	2.2%
Avg Booking Window		74.1		75.9	2.5%
Avg Length of Stay		3.3		3.3	-1.2%

Short-Term Rental Outlook - Next 60 Days

- As of early October, short-term rental bookings for the next 60 days are up 8% compared with the same period in 2025.
- Heading into Q4, short-term rental occupancy is up 3.5% while rates continue to grow and were up 8% for the next 60-days.
- Bookings for the week of November 13 are up 28% compared with last year, while rates are up 16%. Both metrics soften considerably the following week.



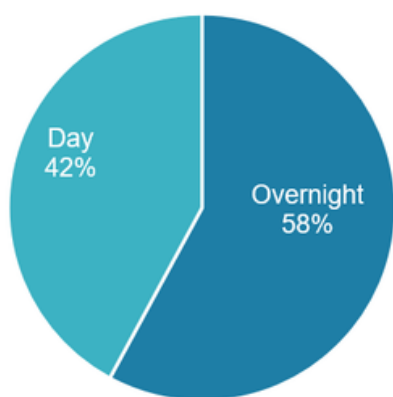
**Short-term rentals sourced to KeyData. Data reported monthly, latest data available is from September 28, 2026.

RESEARCH DATA SNAPSHOT - VISITOR BEHAVIOR

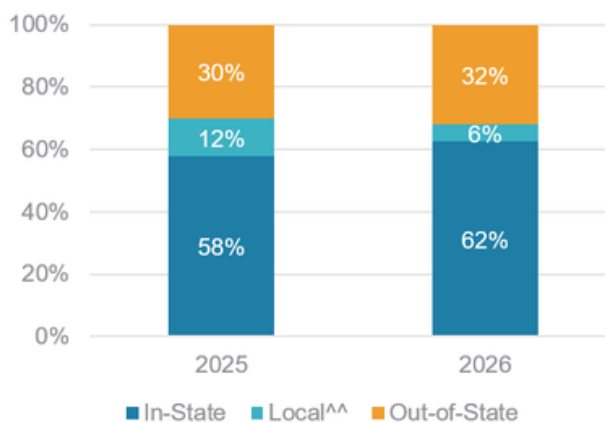
Visitor Behavior via Mobile Location Data[^]

- Compared to the first eight months of 2025, the share of in-state visitors increased while the share of locals declined. ⇒
- Year to date, 58% of visitors stayed overnight, up from 43% during the same period last year. ↓

Total Overnight Share
2026 YTD (Jan - Aug)



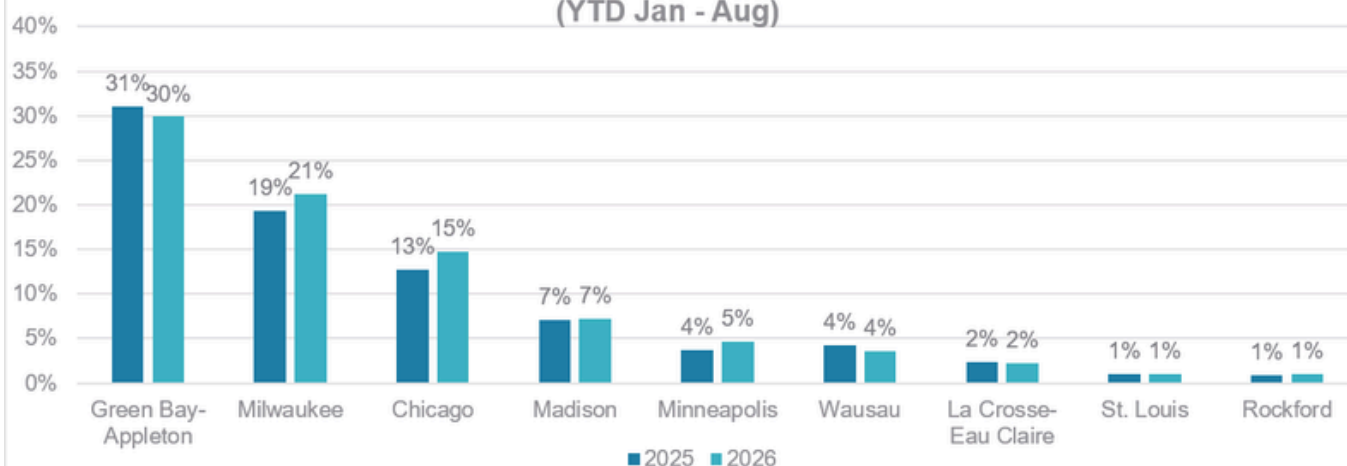
Share of Visitors
(YTD Jan - Aug)



Mobile Device Origin Markets

- Through August 2026, the share of visitors from Milwaukee, Chicago, and Minneapolis were slightly higher than during the same period last year. ↓

Mobile Device Origin Markets
(YTD Jan - Aug)



[^]Source: Azira mobile location data is collected through the usage of phone mobile apps. It is completely privacy compliant and allows tourism organizations to understand visitor behavior while in destination. Data is reported monthly, the latest data is from August 2026.

^{^^}Locals defined as Door County residents.