DESTINATION

COUNTY

September 2025

Community Outreach & Destination Alignment

We created and distributed a <u>Tourism News & Insights publication</u> in the September 12, 2025 issue of the Peninsula Pulse newspaper as part of our ongoing community outreach strategy with residents and stakeholders. It was also shared through our partner social media channels. View the <u>digital version</u>.

<u>Door County Trails</u> has received funding to complete a Strategic Master Plan in order to create a plan for a county-wide trail system. This plan will lay out the vision for a county-wide trail network that will be the basis for municipal funding moving forward.

Leave No Trace Signage was finalized for all 5 state parks and the Town of Washington Island. The signs are scheduled to be delivered Oct. 21, with the hope of getting them installed before the end of the year.



Sustainable Development

Accessibility Assessment

There are currently 30 sites signed up to participate in the Accessibility Assessment with Wheel The World. We have room for 70 sites, and if all 70 sites are not filled by the end of October, the remaining sites will be completed in the spring of 2026.



DDC Water Station Impact Report

COUNTY

COMMUNITYINVESTMENT FUND

Recently completed CIF projects:

Maple Wood Trail Greater Escarpment Interprative Park Sturgeon Bay Pedestrian/Bike Trail Birch Creek

Recently started CIF projects:

Public Restroom Facilities in Brussels Interpretive Trail at the Clearing Folk School

Celebratory CIF big checks were presented in September to:

Village of Ephraim
Washington Island School
Town of Washington Island
Sister Bay Historical Society
Village of Sister Bay

Learn more at **DoorCounty.com/CIF**



DDC staff collected four bags of garbage along the designated 2-mile stretch of State Highway 57 near Baileys Harbor.





Values Based Marketing

PAID MEDIA

Paid Search continues strong, maintaining CTRs around double the average benchmark again. Cross-network campaigns (Demand Generation and Google Performance Max) saw continued performance increases, with Demand Gen's CTR increasing and approaching our benchmark while GPMax is 280% above our average. **Paid Social** also had another very strong month as our Meta Prospecting campaign reached a new high with a remarkable 5.49% CTR along with an increase in clicks. The Mobilefuse Parks campaign continues to be a standout performer with another CTR increase this month, bringing it to 91% above average.

EMAIL

September engagement was fueled by seasonal pull, with supper clubs and fall color content leading the way. The Winter Guide announcement email landed strongly, pulling in thousands of clicks while the behavioral follow-up amplified results: planning content captured most clicks, and the chowder recipe played a large part in users returning to the email. Open Rate 45% | CTR 2.7%.

LEAD GENERATION

The Meta lead generation campaign is clearly delivering high-quality subscribers into the email ecosystem. Across five months of tracking, these leads consistently outperform the general list with open rates in the 30–40% range and CTR between 3–5%. Using the destination guide as the lead magnet, it is pulling in genuinely engaged prospects who want tripplanning content. Even months after sign-up, this audience sustains strong engagement, not just a one-time spike.

SEO

In early September, the Google August 2025 Spam Update finished rolling out. This update focused on increasing trust signals within search results, placing a greater emphasis on who is making a recommendation versus the what. While Door County saw a slight increase in impressions by 2.2%, the website still ranks toward the top and has strong visibility for many things to do, places to stay, and events keywords. Partner pages also saw a 13% increase in visibility year-over-year. Additionally, Google removed the num=100 parameter from search results, limiting the number of search results that can be displayed at a single time. This has resulted in a decrease in impressions overall, and is causing an artificial decrease in impressions within many SEO Tools and Google Reporting. Google reports that this move is resulting in a more accurate representation of web performance, indicating higher quality impressions than before.

SEPTEMBER TOTALS

Clicks

Impressions

EM - National	SEM - Geo-targeted	Google Demand Gen	Google Pmax	Meta Prospecting - Leisure	Meta Video	Meta Lead Gen	Meta Remarketing	AZIRA Remarketing Banners
Clicks 33,925	Clicks 10,441	Clicks 31,854	Clicks 9,080	Clicks 41,982	Views 48,308	Leads 759	Clicks 8,424	Clicks 1,628
Impressions 167,230	Impressions 53,704	Impressions 2,264,331	Impressions 87,583	Impressions 765,169	357,124	2,014	Impressions 580,504	Impressions 407,196
20.29%	19.44%	1.41%	10.37%	5.49%	5,011	Impressions 115,690	1.45%	0.40%
Avg. CPC \$0.32	Avg. CPC \$0.39	Avg. CPC \$0.10	Avg. CPC \$0.50	\$0.12	View Rate 13.53%	1.74%	\$0.43	\$1.56
Budget Remaining 27%	Budget Remaining 27%	Avg. CPM \$1.45	Budget Remaining 29%	Budget Remaining 20%	1.40%	\$0.57	Budget Remaining 21%	Budget Remai
		Budget Remaining 29%			Budget Remaining 20%	Budget Remaining 31%		

Values Based Marketing



Heritage Trail Pass

The trail had 762 signups, and an additional 169 active users, and 46 prizes redeemed. Passholders come from 33 states, with Wisconsin leading, followed by Illinois and Minnesota.



are coming from.*

Art in the Door

Destination Door County's Art in the Door program celebrates the creative spirit of our local arts community, highlighting original works inspired by Door County's five state parks.

This year's winners are:

- Rick Brawner, Early Morning Gulls at Whitefish Dunes State Park (Oil on canvas)
- Olivia Donato, Peninsula State Park (Oil)
- Tom Afflerbach, Eagle Tower Ramp (Acrylic)
- Kay McKinley, Liquid Gold Tennison Bay (Pastel)

Each artist received a \$2,000 award, and their pieces will be featured in Destination Door County's marketing and promotional materials. Videos by Bret Kosmider will highlight the artists and their work, with a teaser debuting at the Annual Meeting on October 28 and full videos released later this fall. An art auction featuring the four winning pieces will also be held during the meeting, with proceeds benefiting the Peninsula Arts and Humanities Alliance (PAHA) to support future arts programming.



through our API integration. We still count the passes but cannot determine which city and state they

Values Based Marketing

Media Highlights from the work of the Destination Door County Team

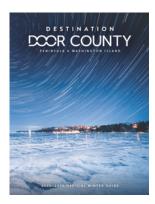
"'Ooh' and 'ah' at fall foliage on 9 of Wisconsin's prettiest autumn drives"

UpNorth News, September 5, 2025

"Here are the Midwest's Cutest Small Towns to Visit this Fall"

Midwest Living, September 2, 2025

<u>"8 Best Midwest Wine Trails Featuring Charming Small Towns and Scenic Views"</u> Midwest Living, September 23, 2025



Door County Winter Guide Debuts

We distributed a <u>press release</u> on September 24 announcing the release of our 2025-2026 Official Winter Guide.

View the 2025-2026 Winter Guide here!



Our Chief Communications
Officer attended the Society of
American Travel Writers
conference in Detroit in
September sharing all things
Door County.

Organic Social

Facebook continues to do extremely well with impressions up YoY 197% with 1.6M organic impressions and engagement up 119% with 39k engagements. We saw one of the biggest increase in followers this month with 1,264 new followers. This takes us over 151k followers on Facebook. September brought us 2 of our top 10 most engaged posts for the year. The first was a fall festival highlight and the second was the Cobia going to drydock in Sturgeon Bay. (These numbers don't include a couple posts that didn't register with our reporting software. One being our fall post that had nearly 34k impressions and 1k impressions.)

X saw a 149% YoY increase in engagement. Instagram saw a 29% YoY decrease in engagement. TikTok saw a 113% YoY increase in engagement.

Christmas Movie Update

On Thursday, October 9, 2025, <u>A Wisconsin Christmas Pie</u>, starring Katie Leclerc and Ryan Carnes, will see its original world premiere exclusively on Great American Pure Flix, the online streaming platform of the Great American Family network. The TV broadcast debut of the film will take place on Saturday October 11, 2025 at 7 PM on the Great American Family channel along with GFAM+.

The movie will also be available on several additional streaming platforms beginning in mid-November under the title *A Cherry Pie Christmas*.





SAVE THE DATE

LEARN MORE & RSVP FOR THESE EVENTS AT DOORCOUNTY.COM/RSVP

Stay in the know! Subscribe to DDC's partner newsletter.



Media Tactic Deep Dive | September 2025

Expedia..... What is it?

As a global leader in travel technology and data-driven marketing, Expedia Group Media Solutions empowers Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) to reach and inspire travelers throughout their booking journey. By leveraging Expedia's expansive first-party travel intent and booking data, DMOs can strategically connect with audiences who are actively planning trips, driving measurable visitation and economic impact. Here's how Expedia can elevate Door County's marketing:

- Accelerated Engagement & Results: Expedia's platform is built to drive awareness and conversion efficiently. With access to one of the world's largest travel marketplaces, campaigns can rapidly increase exposure to high-intent travelers, connecting Door County with audiences who are ready to book. Expedia's campaigns are optimized for performance and deliver fast, tangible results across channels.
- Precision Audience Targeting: Through Expedia's unmatched traveler insights, you can target audiences based on real booking intent, travel behaviors, and destination affinities. This ensures that Door County's campaigns reach the travelers most likely to visit, maximizing marketing ROI and driving qualified leads that translate to bookings.
- Boost Website Traffic and Engagement: Expedia helps destinations attract and engage visitors through coordinated, cross-platform campaigns. By aligning messaging across Expedia's travel brands and media channels, Door County can increase engagement, encourage exploration, and inspire conversion. Performance reporting and economic impact metrics further demonstrate the value of these marketing investments.
- Fortified Brand Presence and Community Building: Expedia's global reach and storytelling capabilities strengthen Door County's brand presence in a competitive travel market. By delivering personalized, relevant experiences at every stage of the traveler journey, Expedia helps foster deeper connections and long-term loyalty, turning first-time visitors into lifelong advocates





SEPTEMBER 2025 PARTNERSHIP & WELCOME CENTER DASHBOARD

2025 Mid Year Partnership Survey Results Summary - Insights from Our Business Community

Between July and August 2025, Destination Door County invited partners to share feedback through the Mid Year Partnership Survey. More than 112 local businesses participated, providing a valuable snapshot of how the first half of the year unfolded and how partners are feeling heading into the fall and winter seasons.

Who Responded

Responses represented a broad mix of industries:

- 41 accommodations providers (hotels, resorts, short-term rentals)
- 20 attractions and activities
- 20 retail businesses
- 10 restaurants and cafés
- 7 service-based businesses

Smaller cross sector participants combining categories such as lodging and dining. This variety reflects the diverse ecosystem of Door County's visitor economy.

Performance and Visitor Trends

Most businesses reported a moderate first half of the year, with 41% performing slightly below expectations and 29% meeting goals. Weather disruptions in June and growing market competition were common challenges.

Visitor demand remained stable overall as just over half described it as "about the same as usual," while roughly a quarter saw less traffic. A few sectors experienced stronger activity, particularly those benefiting from weekday visitation or community events.

Partners also noted shifts in traveler behavior: guests are booking later, visiting midweek, and spending more carefully. Despite these changes, sentiment toward the summer season remains positive, and many partners anticipate a solid finish to the year.

Outlook and Partner Sentiment

Nearly half of respondents (44%) described their outlook for the remainder of 2025 as "generally optimistic." Neutral responses were common, while fewer than 20% expressed concern.

Partner satisfaction with Destination Door County remains strong:

- 60% of respondents said they are satisfied or very satisfied with DDC support.
- 34% reported feeling neutral, and fewer than 5% expressed dissatisfaction.

This feedback demonstrates the importance of continued communication, education, and marketing partnerships that help businesses adapt to evolving visitor trends.

In Summary

Door County's business community remains resilient and optimistic, even as visitor behavior evolves. Businesses continue to adapt through flexible scheduling, creative marketing, and community collaboration. The results affirm that Destination Door County's work to connect, support, and promote its partners remains vital as the county transitions into the next tourism cycle.



SEPTEMBER 2025 PARTNERSHIP & WELCOME CENTER DASHBOARD (CONTINUED)

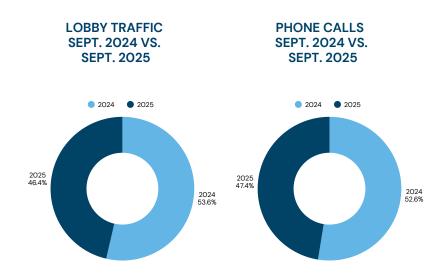
WELCOME CENTER TRAFFIC COMPARISON - SEPTEMBER 2024 VS. SEPTEMBER 2025

Visitor counts at the Welcome Center lobby totaled 2,872 in September 2025, compared to 3,321 in September 2024, a decrease of 449 visits, or approximately 13.5%. On average, about 96 people visited per day, with Fridays drawing the highest traffic (154 visitors on September 19) and Saturdays the lowest (57 visitors on September 13)

This decline aligns with a broader trend observed across visitor centers and tourism organizations nationwide, as travelers increasingly turn to digital tools such as apps, websites, and social media for trip planning and real time information, resulting in fewer in person visits. Even so, the lobby continues to show consistent weekly patterns, indicating that its role is shifting from broad visitor reach to serving more intentional guests who value personal, face to face interaction. This is particularly true for day trippers and spontaneous travelers who arrive without set plans.

PHONE CALLS

Phone calls declined slightly from 758 in September 2024 to 684 in September 2025, a decrease of about 1.7%. While modest, this continued drop reflects a broader industry trend as consumers increasingly move away from traditional phone support. Today's travelers, like consumers overall, tend to prefer email, social media messaging, or in-person assistance at visitor centers, which they perceive as more convenient and immediate than waiting on hold. This shift mirrors what many hospitality and tourism organizations across the country are experiencing as digital channels continue to reshape how people seek information and support.



GIFT CERTIFICATE SALES & REDEMPTIONS - SEPTEMBER 2025

Redemptions are currently outpacing sales, which is expected for this time of year. Many visitors are now redeeming gift certificates purchased earlier in the year as they travel to the county during the busy summer months. Looking ahead, we typically see sales rise again in the holiday season, when certificates are popular as gifts and for planning future visits.

Gift Certificate Redemptions

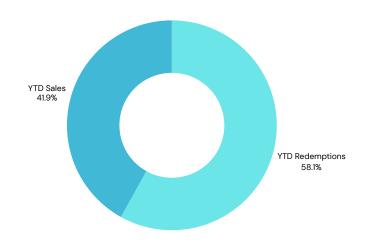
January \$55,165 February \$31,465 March \$30,890 April \$31,860 May \$21,600 June \$31,275 July \$36,460 August \$57,680 September \$36,825

YTD TOTAL \$333,220

Gift Certificate Sales

January \$23,870 February \$13,255 March \$18,130 April \$22,435 May \$34,435 June \$34,905 July \$29,395 August \$28,575 September \$35,535

YTD TOTAL \$240,485





SEPTEMBER 2025 PARTNERSHIP & WELCOME CENTER DASHBOARD (CONTINUED)

New Partner Report: September 2024 vs. September 2025 Comparison

As of this reporting period, 10 new partners have joined in 2025, compared to 12 in the same timeframe in 2024, a decrease of 10%. Again, this reflects both limited new business formation and already high enrollment levels among existing businesses. Each new partner remains valuable and underscores the importance of ongoing outreach. Anecdotally, new partnerships have tended to rise in tandem with the release of Destination Guide contracts, as many businesses wished to participate and joining was part of that process.

Partner Category Overview

Our current partner list includes 1,178 businesses and organizations across a mid range of categories. The three most represented sectors are:

- Lodging: Vacation Rentals (262 partners)
 Hotels/Motels/Resorts: (104 Partners)
- Recreation & Entertainment (196 partners)
- Retail (178 partners)

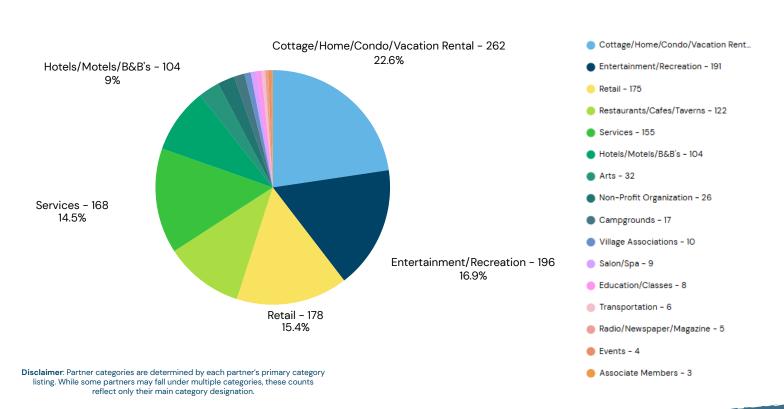
These numbers reflect what our visitors consistently seek out, places to stay, things to do, and local shops to explore. It also shows where we have the strongest connections, which can help guide future outreach, programming, and promotion.

Top 5 Industries Represented in 2025 New Partner Growth:

- 1. Vacation Rentals (Cottage/Home/Condo) 31 new partners
- 2. Restaurants, Cafés, and Taverns 16 new partners
- 3. Services (e.g., wellness, professional, personal care) 24 new partners
- 4.Entertainment & Recreation 2 new partners
- 5.Retail 13 new partners

Given the size of the county, the steady addition of new partners meaningfully enhances our representation across all communities. Eliminating partnership dues has removed a key financial barrier, which in turn has virtually eliminated partner attrition. As a result, our website continues to present a comprehensive view of Door County's travel and tourism landscape, while also showcasing a growing number of businesses beyond the traditional tourism sector.

TOTAL PARTNERS BY CATEGORY* 2025 (TO DATE)





SEPTEMBER 2025 PARTNERSHIP & WELCOME CENTER DASHBOARD (CONTINUED)

PARTNERSHIP ENGAGMENT SUMMARY - SEPTEMBER 2025

Throughout September, Destination Door County engaged in a wide range of partner relations, board outreach, and community sustainability efforts that strengthened connections across the county. The month reflected expanding collaboration with both new and returning partners while reinforcing relationships with municipalities, local associations, and business leaders. The month began with several new partnerships and renewed engagement, including inquiries from Emeil's Old School Road Rental, Green Gables, and Door Passage Vacation Rentals.

Community collaboration and event support remained central to September's activities. The Baileys Harbor Community Association reached out for guidance on its 2025 Autumnfest and coordinated volunteer support for this year's festival. Open Door Pride shared plans to expand its compost site in 2026 to accommodate more bamboo cups, advancing sustainability efforts connected to the Care for Door County program.

Partner communications had a measurable impact. The Old Post Office Restaurant expressed appreciation for the Gift Certificate Fraud Prevention email and requested additional staff be added to partner communications. Prince of Pierogi expressed interest in mid season survey data, while A Door County Cottage and other lodging partners inquired about property engagement opportunities.

Mid month brought expanded sustainability conversations and growing interest in stewardship initiatives. Door County North discussed event implementation, and Write On, Door County explored opportunities tied to the 2026 Island Literary Festival and potential volunteer service projects. Collaboration with Good Start Packaging continued to advance bamboo cup integration, supporting DDC's waste reduction goals. The visibility of DDC's sustainability programs grew through local events. Visitors shared stories of trees thriving from prior giveaways, families expressed interest in implementing water stations in their own communities, and Shoreline Boat Tours offered gratitude for DDC's efforts.

The latter part of the month was especially active in Southern Door. The Southern Door Business Association led sustainability and partnership discussions with organizations such as the Hen House, Sorenson's, Sand Bay Beach Resort, and the Southern Door Snow Travelers. Topics included shoulder, season events, potential compost sites, a 2026 Haines Beach cleanup, and sustainable business tracking. Additional outreach included discussions with Brey Farms, Mighty Wind Farms, and Compost Crusades on compost expansion efforts, as well as visits to Greens & Grains to observe their new water filter system. New residents and visitors (including those from Casco and New Zealand) expressed interest in volunteering and participating in Care for Door County initiatives.

By month's end, the Baileys Harbor Historical Society joined as a new DDC partner. Ongoing collaboration with JobBoardHQ to enhance workforce listings, and immigration updates from USITEX Law to support local employers. Overall, September demonstrated continued progress in strengthening partnerships, advancing sustainability, and expanding collaboration across the county, further reinforcing Destination Door County's role as a connector, educator, and leader in destination stewardship.

JOBS IN DOOR COUNTY.COM - Job Search Activity - September 2025 Summary

Job search activity remained steady throughout September, averaging 70–138 unique users per day and 87–169 total searches. Interest centered on hospitality and service positions, including housekeeping, front desk, server, and maintenance roles. The keyword "Housing" appeared often, reinforcing that employee housing continues to be a key consideration in the local job market. Most searches were concentrated in Sturgeon Bay, Sister Bay, and Egg Harbor, mirroring areas with the highest employment density. There was also modest interest from out–of–area users, suggesting continued attraction to Door County's seasonal workforce. While hospitality remains dominant, emerging searches in healthcare, government, education, and trades point to growing interest in more diverse, year–round employment sectors. Overall, the data reflects consistent engagement from job seekers and continued workforce housing challenges heading into the off–season.





Door County Accommodation Revenue Remains Strong, Yet Demand Slowing

Through July, total accommodation performance in Door County remained positive but growth slowed somewhat the first two months of the summer season. YTD, total lodging revenue was up 3%, driven largely by a 4% increase in rates. Occupied rooms were down 2.0% through July although occupancy rate remained essentially flat compared to 2024. Revenue generated from short-term rentals was up 14% through August, although short-term rental booking windows are slightly shorter than in 2024, indicating some hesitancy from consumers before committing to travel plans.

Forward-looking short-term rental bookings through December are also slowing compared to last year, down 4%, although this is likely also due to a shorter booking window than last year. Rental revenue remained positive and was up 18% over the next 90 days (as of September 30th).

Total Accommodation: January - July 2025 Comparable to 2024

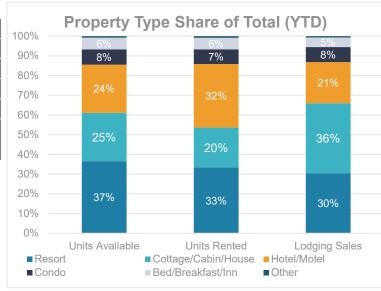


Through the first seven months of the year, lodging performance showed positive growth compared to the prior year with revenue up 3%. Both available and occupied rooms declined in June and July, likely in an attempt to maintain rate parity. While June revenue was flat from 2024, July was up 3%.

Door County Total Lodging* YTD Jan - July							
Metric		2024		2025	YoY % Chg		
Revenue (\$ millions)	\$	74.4	\$	76.5	2.8%		
Average Daily Rate	\$	190	\$	198	4.2%		
Available Rooms (000's)		110,684		110,451	-0.2%		
Occupied Rooms (000's)		44,396		43,514	-2.0%		
Percent Occupied		35.2%		35.4%	0.5%		

While cottages/cabins and houses make up onequarter of units available, they contributed more than one-third of total lodging revenue generated through July 2025. Resorts make up a larger share of supply than revenue.









Short-Term Rental Snapshot:**

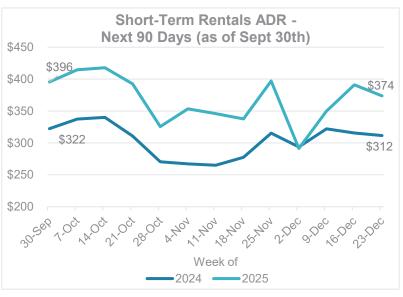
- Through August 2025, short-term rental revenue was up 14% compared to 2024 totaling nearly \$56 million.
- Short-term rental ADR continues to surpass other types of lodging and YTD increased 7.5%, versus 4% for all lodging ADR.
- While revenue and ADR were positive for the first eight months of the year, the occupancy

Door County Short-Term Rentals** YTD Jan - August						
Metric		2024		2025	YoY % Chg	
Revenue (\$ millions)	\$	48.7	\$	55.7	14.4%	
Average Daily Rate	\$	351	\$	377	7.5%	
Percent Occupied		29.3%		28.3%	-3.5%	
Avg Active AirBNB Listings Avg Booking Window Avg Length of Stay		1,227 77.2 3.4		1,246 73.4 3.3	1.5% -4.9% -2.3%	

rate for short-term rentals was down 3.5% and the booking window shortened, likely a result of many consumers feeling uncertain about the economic environment and their finances.

Short-Term Rental Outlook—Next 90 Days

- As of late September, compared to the same time frame in 2024, short-term rental bookings are starting to slow and are down 4% across the next 90-days.
- Yet, revenue generated from short-term rentals is up 14% YTD and predicted to continue to increase, up 18% over the next 90 days.
- Short-term rental rates also continue to increase and are up 23% over the next 90 days, hovering around a \$400 average rate into December.





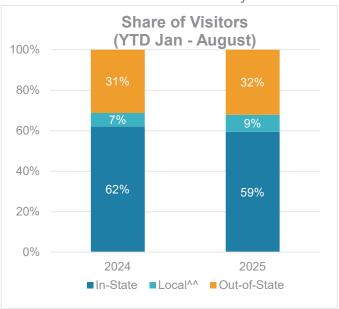
^{**}Short-term rentals sourced to KeyData. Data reported monthly, latest data available is August 2025.

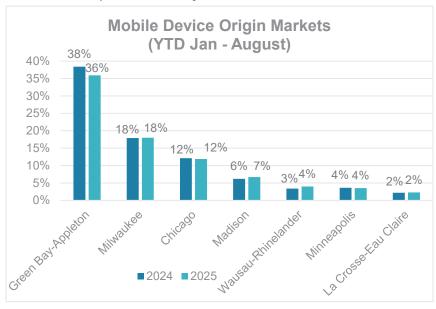




Visitor Behavior via Mobile Location Data[^]

- The share of out-of-state visitors to Door County continued to surpass last years levels and represented 32% of visitors through August 2025.
- Overnight visitor origin markets were largely consistent with the prior year although the share
 of visitors from Green Bay continues to be lower compared to last year.





- Slightly lower than the same time period in 2024, 43% of all visitors and nearly half of out-ofstate travelers stayed overnight.
- Average length of stay was also slightly shorter over the first eight months of 2025, averaging 17.9 hours down from 19.2 hours the same time period in 2024.



Overnight Share YTD (Jan - August)	2024	2025	YoY % Chg
In-State	45%	44%	-2%
Out-of-State	51%	48%	-5%

^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 visitior behavior while in destination. Data reported monthly, latest data is August 2025. ^^Locals defined as Door County residents.