

DESTINATION DOOR COUNTY

May 2026

COMMUNITY & WORKFORCE PILLAR

National Travel & Tourism Week Recap - We celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week May 3-9! We shared messages on social media, in the Pen Pulse, local radio stations and during our special Tourism breakfast event what our visitor economy provides our community and the positive impacts it has on our residents. We also put together a special [Tourism Video](#) ⇨ to highlight tourism's impact in Door County along with what's coming up in 2026. It was a great week!



Municipal Meetings - In partnership with the Tourism Zone Administrator, we met with ten municipalities in May during their monthly board meetings as part of our municipal outreach program to provide annual in-person tourism updates, information, and answer questions they may have about DDC, our programs, and the visitor economy. Meetings included the City of Sturgeon Bay on 5/5; Town of Gibraltar on 5/6; Town of Clay Banks on 5/11; Village of Egg Harbor & Town of Gardner on 5/13; Village of Forestville & Town of Sevastopol on 5/18; Village of Sister Bay on 5/19; Town of Washington on 5/20; Town of Nasewaupee on 5/21. We have five more municipalities to meet with this year.

Community Business Association Memorandum of Understanding - A small working group consisting of representatives from Community Business Associations, Door County Tourism Zone, and Destination Door County continued meeting in May to formalize a new CBA/DDC partnership MOU and work on an updated agreement that will enhance collaboration. The new 3-year agreements will take effect in 2027.

Community Tourism Publication - We created and distributed our second [Tourism News & Insights](#) publication of the year in the May 1, 2026 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 [digital version](#). ⇨



STEWARDSHIP & REGENERATION PILLAR

Community Investment Fund - We [announced](#) the 13th round of grant awards on May 26, 2026, investing a total of \$318,852 to support 5 local projects focused on advancing accessibility, history and culture. Individual project awards ranged from \$7,000 to \$125,000 and went to two government entities, two non-profit local friends' groups, and one non-profit arts organization. The total impact of this program since it began in 2023 is currently \$3,774,623 invested into 71 local projects. Find details on every dollar invested in all grant awards at [DoorCounty.com/CIF](#). Upcoming grant application deadlines are 6/22/2026, 9/28/2026 and 12/28/2026.

Stewardship Activities - At our National Travel & Tourism Week breakfast event on May 5 at Stone Harbor, we worked with the Door County Climate Change Coalition to bring in small trees for our decorative table centerpieces. We used the opportunity to highlight the importance of planting trees in Door County, and provided a free tree (or two!) for anyone in attendance that wanted to take a tree home with them to plant at their business, home or other suitable location. The centerpieces looked great, and we distributed over 150 trees to be planted in/around Door County! ⇨



Water Stations - we began our 2026 Water Station outreach efforts at 2 events in May, with several more locations and events planned through October.

Regenerative Coffee Cup Initiative - Throughout May, Destination Door County partnered with Kick Ash Products, Door County North, the Climate Change Coalition of Door County, and Mighty Wind Farms to pilot a new Regenerative Coffee Cup Initiative. The program replaced traditional disposable cups with compostable bamboo cups and lids, resulting in 2,570 cups distributed and 762 cups returned for composting, a 30% return rate. The pilot program generated strong community engagement, increased awareness of sustainable practices, and provided valuable data and insights to support future sustainability initiatives and potential countywide expansion.

ECONOMIC VITALITY PILLAR

PAID MEDIA

Paid Search performance continued to excel in May, most notably the Leisure SEM campaign with a 21.48% CTR (a new high for this tactic, and 22% higher than last May). Demand Gen drove more clicks at a 20% higher CTR this month, while Performance Max continued to outperform its already-phenomenal CTR, landing at 12.73% this month. Paid Social saw similar MoM performance while continuing to drive more-engaged site traffic, with both Remarketing campaigns and Lead Gen seeing notable performance increases this month. The Azira and Afar display campaigns continued strong this month, alongside the additions of Azira CTV, Tiki, Expedia, and Carvertise. The Parks & Workforce Recruitment campaigns also continued in May, with WF concluding 5/31.

EMAIL

May email performance achieved a 44.7% open rate and a 3.0% CTR, as audiences increasingly shifted into summer planning mode. The second deployment of the Quarterly Drive Market series continued to validate the market-specific approach, generating open rates between 51% and 60% across Chicago, Milwaukee, and Madison while maintaining consistent engagement.

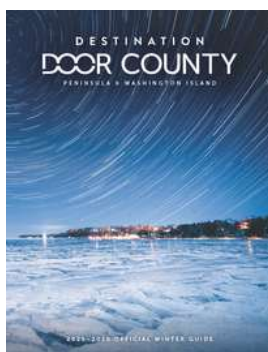
Lead Gen audiences continued to perform well, delivering a 32% open rate and a 3.1% click-through rate, while Bandwango Leads remained one of the strongest-performing segments with a 45% open rate and a 4.9% click-through rate.

SMS efforts focused on a single Cherry Blossom Alert for Drive Market audiences. The campaign achieved a 32.8% click-through rate and a 100% delivery rate.

SEO

Google launched the May 2026 Core Update as part of its ongoing efforts to transform in to an AI-first search experience, deprioritizing traditional rankings and hiding them behind additional clicks.

One of the largest updates was to how Google handles events, now sending users directly to event detail listings, contributing to a 12% YoY decrease in Site Clicks, and a 6% YoY decrease in Site Impressions, largely attributed to Memorial Day Weekend. Despite these metrics, average position has increased 60%, indicating Destination Door County's trust signals are aiding in ranking first for hotel and neighborhood content.



2026/2027 Winter Guide Ad Sales

To date, we've secured \$38,150 in Destination Guide ad sales—surpassing last year's \$31,450—and gathered nearly 400 partner listings for inclusion in the guide. Advertising opportunities included 1/4, 1/2, and full-page placements, offering businesses flexible ways to increase visibility alongside their free partner listing. Together, these listings and ads help showcase the full range of experiences across Door County and ensure strong exposure heading into the new guide season.

2026 IPW

At IPW in Fort Lauderdale, hosted by the US Travel Association and attended under Circle Wisconsin (a branch partner of Travel Wisconsin), Destination Door County engaged in over 30 one-on-one appointments with international travel trade partners from markets including Brazil, Germany, China, Japan, and more. Across the event, the team connected directly with tour operators and travel planners to share updates on Door County and strengthen global relationships—supporting continued efforts to position the destination as a standout Midwest travel experience.



May Press Trip

We welcomed three journalists on a blossoms themed press trip May 14-17. Journalists enjoyed checking out blossoms, exploring lighthouses, hiking, and sampling many restaurants. We continue our press trip program next month with a theater/arts trip.

Organic Social

Instagram started the month with lower numbers as Meta conducted a platform-wide purge of inactive users and bot followers. This resulted in a loss of 881 followers. While the loss was large for the month we saw a tremendous gain in followers with 1,129 gained. This increase has now taken us close to 93k followers. Organic views on Instagram YoY are 26% with engagement down 24%.

Facebook had another down month, but saw an increase in followers as we are nearing 156k. We still see a very good organic engagement with a 3.3% rate.

Media Highlights from the work of the Destination Door County Team

["Top 10 Things to Do on Washington Island in Wisconsin's Door Peninsula"](#) *Midwest Living*, Summer 2026

["Best Retro and Midcentury Motels in the Midwest"](#) *Midwest Living*, Summer 2026

["Spring in Door County is the Cherry Blossom Trip No One's Talking About-Yet"](#) *Charlotte Observer*, May 26, 2026

["Our Town-Door County Maritime Museum Live Show"](#) *Local 5 Live*, May 29, 2026



Journalists on our May press trip visited Peninsula State Park to explore the new summer kitchen and barn at Eagle Bluff Light Station ahead of its grand opening.

PARTNERSHIP & WELCOME CENTER

Partnership – May 2026

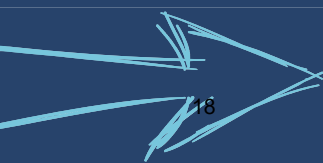
- Advanced the regenerative coffee cup program through launch planning, vendor coordination, composting logistics, and program monitoring.
- Expanded the Door County water station program through volunteer coordination, event support, and equipment and supply management.
- Prepared municipality presentation materials, CIF reports, agendas, and meeting packets for spring and summer community presentations.
- Conducted partner outreach visits to gather feedback on business conditions, workforce needs, visitor activity, and seasonal trends.
- Coordinated community and workforce initiatives, including National Travel & Tourism Week, SSA Sign-up Days, BridgeUSA support, and H-2B workforce response efforts.

Welcome Center – May 2026 (Stats)

- **Visitors: 1,953 vs. 2,225 (2025) -12.2%**
 - Average daily visitors: 63
 - Busiest day: Friday
 - Lowest traffic day: Sunday
- **Phone Calls: 593 vs. 541 (2025) +9.6%**
- **Kiosk Sessions: 113**
 - Average screens per session: 1
 - Average session time: 4:32
- **Gift Certificates**
 - **Sales:** \$40,395 vs. \$34,435 (2025) +17.3%
 - **Redemptions:** \$19,630 vs. \$21,600 (2025) -9.1%

SAVE THE DATE

JUNE 1	DOOR COUNTY NIGHT AT THE MOVIES COMMUNITY CELEBRATION, SKYWAY DRIVE-IN THEATER
JUNE 18	DOOR COUNTY TOURISM ZONE ANNUAL MEETING
JUNE 26	SOCIAL SECURITY SIGN-UP DAY #1, EPHRAIM VILLAGE HALL
JULY 16	SOCIAL SECURITY SIGN-UP DAY #2, EPHRAIM VILLAGE HALL



MONTHLY DEEP DIVE | MAY 2026

Door County 2025 Advertising Return on Investment (ROI) Study Results

Destination Door County recently completed a [2025 Advertising Return on Investment \(ROI\) Lite Study](#) in partnership with Longwoods International to measure the effectiveness of our tourism marketing efforts across six primary drive markets: Minneapolis-St. Paul, Wausau-Rhineland, Green Bay-Appleton, Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago. The study evaluated both advertising-driven visitation and overall awareness of Door County's marketing campaign.

The study found that a \$485,000 advertising investment generated:

- **94,500** incremental trips to Door County
- **\$26.0 million** in incremental visitor spending
- **\$2.5 million** in incremental tax revenue

This equates to:

- **\$54** in visitor spending for every \$1 invested in advertising
- **\$5** in tax revenue for every \$1 invested in advertising
- Approximately **\$5.13** in advertising cost per incremental trip generated

Benchmark Comparison

To better understand performance, Door County's results were compared against a benchmark group of similar destinations with comparable advertising budgets and spending levels:

Metric	Door County	Benchmark Range
Visitor Spending ROI	\$54	\$22-\$71
Tax Revenue ROI	\$5	\$2-\$7
Advertising Awareness	62%	33%-73%

Door County's performance places the destination in the upper tier of comparable destinations, demonstrating that our advertising investment is generating strong returns and efficiently converting marketing dollars into visitation, spending, and tax revenue.

Advertising Awareness and Market Impact

The campaign achieved 62% overall advertising awareness among target travelers, with digital advertising leading performance at 60% awareness, followed by social media at 41% and video advertising at 28%.

Importantly, nearly half of respondents (47%) indicated they probably or definitely plan to visit Door County within the next 12 months, demonstrating continued strength in destination appeal and future travel intent.

Creative Performance Insights

The study found that:

- 82% of respondents agreed the advertising clearly showcased Door County
- 73% said the advertising made them want to visit
- 66% felt the ads highlighted experiences and attributes important to them

Key Takeaway

The 2025 ROI Study ([download full PDF version](#)) validates that Destination Door County's advertising program is effectively driving measurable visitation, visitor spending, and tax revenue while maintaining strong awareness among potential travelers. The results provide objective evidence that tourism marketing continues to deliver substantial economic value for Door County and compares favorably against similar destination marketing organizations nationwide.

Next Month's Deep Dive: Economic Impact of Tourism 2025

RESEARCH DATA SNAPSHOT - COUNTY-WIDE LODGING

A significant late-season snowstorm in mid-March resulted in a particularly weak month for accommodation growth and demand, contributing to a challenging first quarter. Through Q1 2026, accommodation revenue was down 7% and room tax collections fell 6% compared to the same period in 2025. Rates were largely in line with last year, but occupied rooms declined faster than available rooms, resulting in an 11% drop in occupancy.

Q1 accommodation metrics were negative across most property types with the exception of hotel/motel which had positive lodging sales driven by positive demand while B&B's experienced positive occupancy rate growth compared to Q1 2025.

Looking toward the summer travel season, short-term rental bookings are more positive. Short-term rental bookings through late August are expected to increase by 7%, even with a 13% increase in rates resulting in a 21% increase in revenue. Short-term rental booking windows are averaging 132 days for the next 90-days, up 6% compared to 2025, potentially making immediate demand appear softer than reality.

Door County Total Lodging* Jan - March				
Metric	2025	2026	YoY % Chg	
Revenue (\$ millions)	\$ 7.6	\$ 7.0	-7.4%	
Average Daily Rate	\$ 145	\$ 147	0.7%	
Available Rooms (000's)	261.3	268.5	2.7%	
Occupied Rooms (000's)	52.0	47.8	-8.1%	
Percent Occupied	19.9%	17.8%	-10.6%	



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

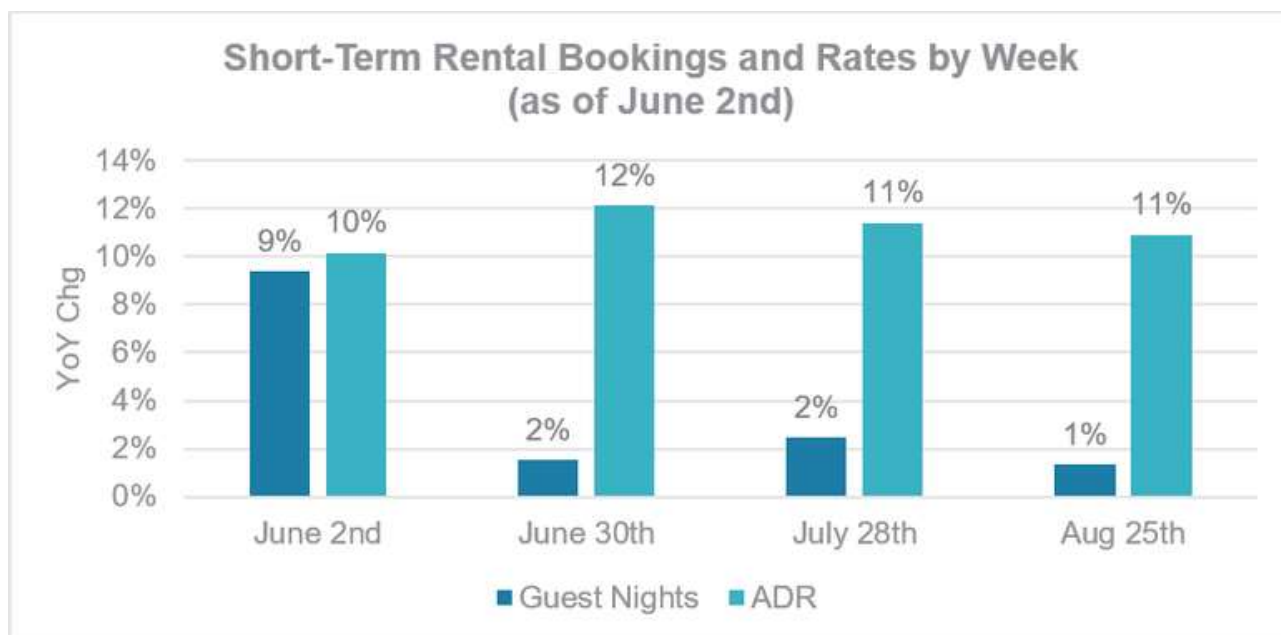
RESEARCH DATA SNAPSHOT - SHORT TERM RENTALS**

- Through May, short-term rental revenue was down 4% compared to 2025.
- Rates were up slightly compared to the prior year but while night supply was down 4%, demand declined 5%, resulting in negative occupancy.
- The booking window is now comparable to 2025, averaging 45 days.

Door County Short-Term Rentals** Jan - May					
Metric	2025		2026		YoY % Chg
Revenue (\$ millions)	\$	16.4	\$	15.8	-3.9%
Average Daily Rate	\$	327	\$	330	1.0%
Percent Occupied		16.0%		15.8%	-1.3%
Avg Active AirBNB Listings		1,143		1,146	0.3%
Avg Booking Window		44.5		45.0	1.1%
Avg Length of Stay		3.1		3.0	-3.8%

Short-Term Rental Outlook - Next 90 Days

- As of early June, short-term rental bookings for the next 90-days were up 7% compared to the same time frame in 2025.
- While guest nights remain positive week-to-week throughout the summer, demand growth is somewhat weaker compared to rate growth.
- While occupancy is up 6%, a 13% increase in rates drove up revenue +21%.
- ADR is estimated to reach nearly \$600 for much of July and August—10% to 15% above 2025 rates.

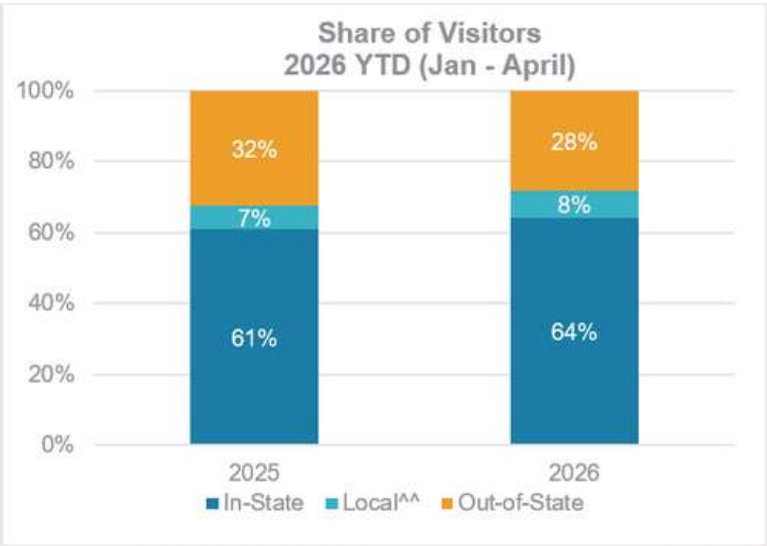
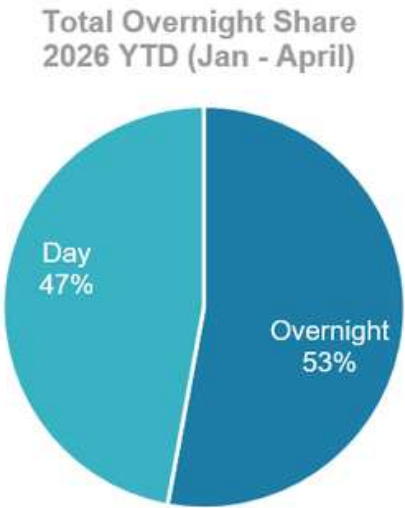


**Short-term rentals sourced to KeyData. Data reported monthly, latest data available is May 2026.

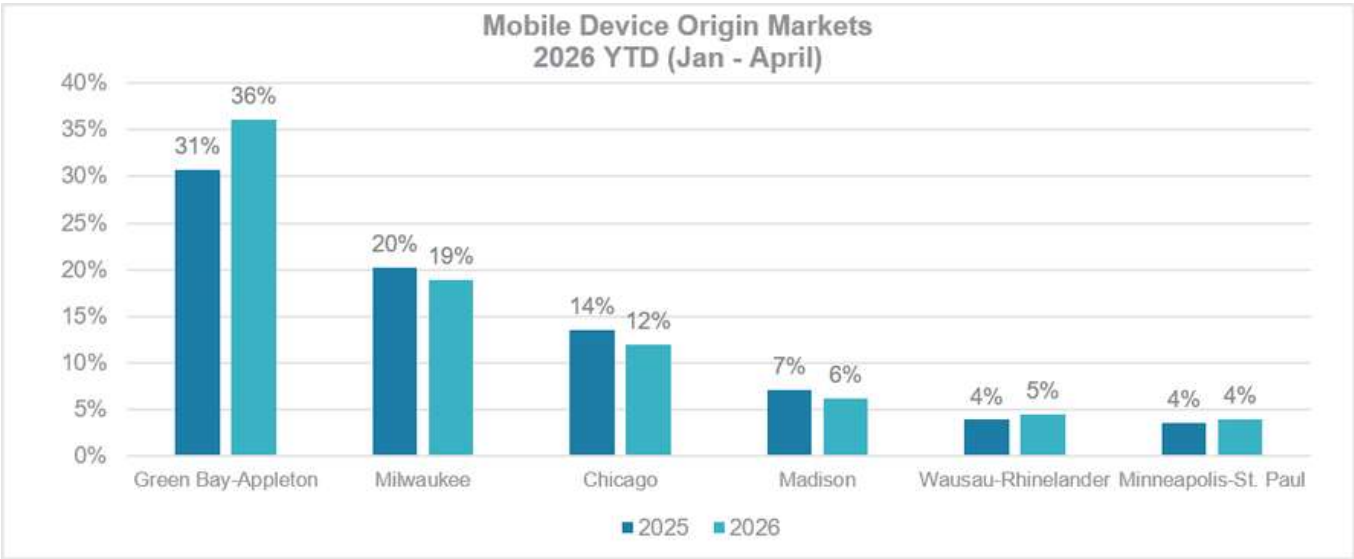
RESEARCH DATA SNAPSHOT - VISITOR BEHAVIOR

Visitor Behavior via Mobile Location Data^

- Compared to the first four months of 2025, the share of locals increased slightly while the share of out-of-state visitors declined to 28%. ➡
- Year-to-date, 53% of all visitors stayed overnight, increasing from 41% the same time frame last year. ⬇



The share of visitors originating in Green Bay-Appleton continue to increase compared to 2025 while the share of visitors from Milwaukee, Chicago and Madison were slightly lower.



^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 reported monthly, latest data is from April 2026. ^^Locals defined as Door County residents.



2025 ECONOMIC IMPACT FACT SHEET

the power of door county's visitor economy

Door County's visitor economy generated **\$551.6 million** in direct spending in 2025. That breaks down into the following share by key business categories:

\$268.6M 48.7% → LODGING

\$117.0M 21.2% → FOOD & BEVERAGE

\$76.3M 13.8% → RETAIL

\$59.5M 10.8% → RECREATION & ENTERTAINMENT

\$30.3M 5.5% → LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

Source: Tourism Economics, 2025 Economic Impact of Visitors to Door County

statewide impact

Tourism plays a significant role in Wisconsin's economy statewide and is a significant source of both employment and tax revenue.

\$27.0B → OVERALL TOURISM IMPACT ON STATEWIDE ECONOMY

\$17.0B → DIRECT VISITOR SPENDING STATEWIDE

\$1.7B → STATE & LOCAL TAX REVENUE GENERATED

183,594 → JOBS SUPPORTED IN WISCONSIN

Source: Tourism Economics, 2025 Economic Impact of Visitors to Wisconsin

economic impact

\$685.8M IN OVERALL IMPACT

→ **\$34.6M** (+5.3%) OVER 2024

\$551.6M IN DIRECT SPENDING

→ **\$28.4M** (+5.4%) OVER 2024

2025 DIRECT SPENDING PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN, BY QUARTER:

19%
Q1 (JAN-MAR)

24%
Q2 (APRIL-JUNE)

30%
Q3 (JULY-SEPT)

27%
Q4 (OCT-DEC)

tax revenue

\$55.7M IN STATE & LOCAL TAXES GENERATED

→ **\$2.4M** (+4.5%) OVER 2024

employment

3,575 JOBS SUPPORTED BY THE VISITOR ECONOMY

\$131.0M TOTAL LABOR INCOME FOR EMPLOYEES

→ **\$6.7M** (+5.4%) OVER 2024

did you know

\$3,717 ADDITIONAL AMOUNT EACH DOOR COUNTY HOUSEHOLD WOULD NEED TO PAY TO REPLACE THE TAX REVENUE GENERATED BY THE VISITOR ECONOMY

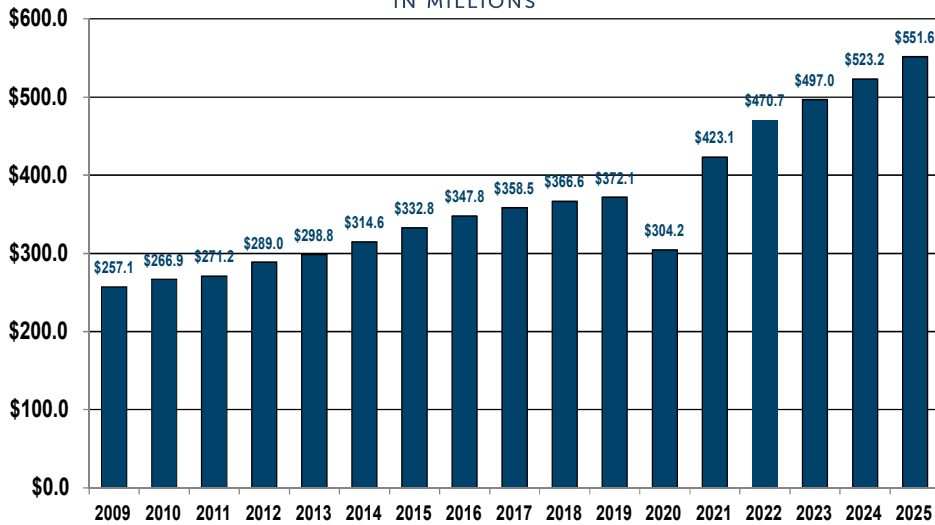
\$551.6M \$1.5M IS GENERATED PER DAY, ON AVERAGE, BY THE DOOR COUNTY VISITOR ECONOMY

7th RANK OUT OF 72 COUNTIES, GENERATING 3.24% OF ALL DIRECT VISITOR SPENDING IN WISCONSIN IN 2025

Source: Tourism Economics, 2025 Economic Impact of Visitors to Door County

visitor spending

IN MILLIONS

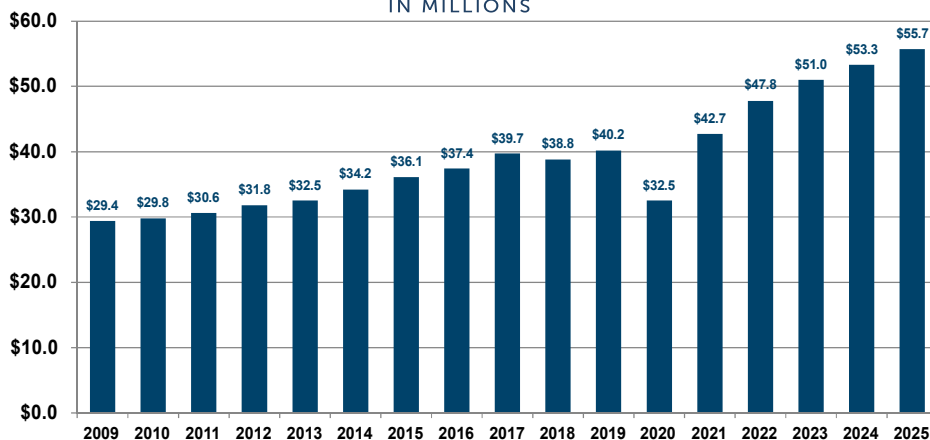


In 2025, direct spending generated by the visitor economy in Door County totaled \$551.6 million, up 5.4%, an increase of \$28.4 million over 2024.

Source: Tourism Economics, 2025 Economic Impact of Visitors to Door County

state & local taxes

IN MILLIONS

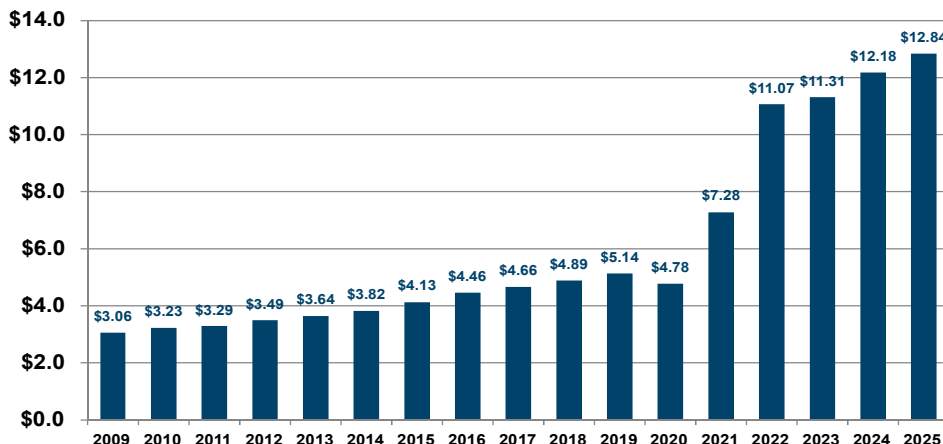


In 2025, state and local tax revenue generated by the visitor economy in Door County totaled \$55.7 million, a 4.5% increase over 2024.

Source: Tourism Economics, 2025 Economic Impact of Visitors to Door County

room tax collections

IN MILLIONS



In 2025, room tax collections in Door County were up \$657,846, a 5.4% increase over 2024.

Note: the room tax rate from 2009-2021 was 5.5%. The room tax increased to 8% on January 1, 2022.

Source: Door County Tourism Zone Commission

View this [flow chart PDF](#) to see where room tax goes in Door County.