

DESTINATION DOOR COUNTY

August 2026

COMMUNITY & WORKFORCE PILLAR

Municipal Meetings - In partnership with the Tourism Zone Executive Director, we met with the Village of Ephraim on August 11 during their monthly board meeting 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. This was the last of 19 meetings we attended in 2026 and completes the meeting schedule with our municipalities this year.

Workforce Collaboration - We continued participation with Door County Economic Development Corporation's Workforce Retention Committee in August, and are providing assistance with their upcoming Talent Attraction & Retention Employer Forum on Tuesday, Sept. 22, focused on helping Door County employers strengthen workforce attraction and retention.



⇐ **Community Presentation** - We had a fun and fulfilling experience sharing information about our Door County state parks during a community presentation with residents at Pine Crest Village Assisted Living in Sturgeon Bay on August 18.

STEWARDSHIP & REGENERATION PILLAR

Community Investment Fund - We presented a ceremonial ⇐ big check in August to the good folks at Gathering Ground on Washington Island. The grant funding will help this non-profit organization construct a pavilion, trails, and a new food processing station, strengthening agrotourism offerings while supporting educational programming & local food production. The next CIF grant application deadline is Monday September 28. Find details on the nearly \$4 million dollars DDC has invested in 74 local projects through this program since it began in 2023 at DoorCounty.com/CIF



Latest Grant Awards - We announced the 14th round of grant awards on August 14, 2026, investing a total of \$190,260 to support 3 local projects focused on advancing accessibility and historic preservation. Individual project awards ranged from \$29,000 to \$87,000 and went to three local non-profit organizations including Destination Sturgeon Bay, the Patriot Racing Project and Open Door Bird Sanctuary.

Water Stations - We continued our efforts to reduce single-use plastics through our compostable bamboo cup water station initiative. The program provides event attendees with an alternative to single-use plastic water bottles while introducing a simple, visible stewardship action: Sip! Enjoy! Compost! We were at the Washington Island Fair in August ⇐



Regenerative Coffee Cup Initiative - In partnership with Get Real Café, we launched our second regenerative coffee cup initiative in August (*first one was at Kick Ash in May*). The month-long pilot raised awareness among coffee drinkers about alternatives to traditional paper and plastic beverage cups by replacing them with compostable bamboo cups. The initiative provided an opportunity to connect an everyday consumer experience—enjoying a cup of coffee—with destination stewardship.

ECONOMIC VITALITY PILLAR

PAID MEDIA

Both Paid Search campaigns saw notable improvements in site engagement, with engagement rates increasing by roughly 16% each while session durations increased by 14-18%. Both Cross Network campaigns also drove notable site engagement improvements while maintaining their strong monthly performance. Paid Social had a strong month as nearly all tactics delivered MoM gains in CTR, site engagement, or both, and Azira CTV delivered a perfect 100% VTR again.

EMAIL

August email performance saw opens climb to 48.0%, up from July's 45.1%, while click rate eased slightly to 2.0% from July's 2.5%. YoY, both open rate and click rate are up, though click-to-open rate dipped slightly (4.1% vs 4.3%), suggesting stronger delivery and inbox placement but a fraction less engagement once people are in.

Lead Gen audiences posted a 36.1% open rate and 2.0% click-through rate, opens up nicely from July but click rate down from July's 2.7%. Bandwango Leads again led all segments on engagement, up to a 48.4% open rate, though click-through rate eased to 3.4% from July's 4.5%, still the strongest CTR of any segment this month.

SMS shifted fully into drive-market-targeted content, sending Midwest Living Itinerary and Supper Clubs of Door County, both exclusively to Drive Markets rather than the mixed drive market/full audience split we ran in July. Both performed well: Midwest Living Itinerary at 34.9% CTR and Supper Clubs at 33.1% CTR, both ahead of July's Cherry Recipes (32.9%) and Cherry Picking (29.1%).

SEO

In August, Door County continued to see an increase in Engagement Rate (+18.2% Y/Y) and an Average Session Duration of over 4 minutes (19.6% Y/Y). Restaurant pages also saw a 17.1% increase in impressions year-over-year, mostly driven by searches for localized restaurant searches.

While clicks and impressions continue to trend down year-over-year due to the new URL paths and the impacts of Large Language Models (LLMs), Door County saw a 219.7% increase in AI Overview features, indicating the site continues to be a crucial part of the trust layer in LLM search. Entrances from LLMs also increased 108.7% year-over-year, and also saw an increase in key engagement metrics.

Heritage Trail

Since launching in June, the Heritage Trail Pass has welcomed **1,228 sign-ups** and generated **1,711 redemptions**; already surpassing last year's final totals of 960 sign-ups and 1,401 redemptions. So far, **50 prizes** have been shipped, compared with 70 prizes redeemed by the end of last year's pass term. The pass was also featured on TV show *Local 5 Live (WFRV/CBS)* on August 28, with the Door County Granary and Door County Museum & Archives highlighted during the interview. Most trail pass participants are from Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota, with international sign-ups from Australia and Spain.



Theater/Farmers Market Video

We debuted a new [theater video](#) across our social channels in August, generating nearly 17,000 views. Earlier this summer, we worked with Door County's four professional theater companies to capture footage showcasing the diverse theater experiences available throughout the county. Following the project, we also provided each theater company with the footage to use in their marketing efforts.

While capturing evening footage at our theater companies, our videographer used the daytime hours to showcase Door County's vibrant [farmers markets](#). The resulting video generated more than 15,000 views and was widely shared across social media. We have one more video from the project that will debut in summer 2027.

Content Creator Visit

We worked with Chicago-based creator @agirlaboutchicago on a visit August 6–9. Sarah visits Door County annually, and this partnership gave her the opportunity to share some of her favorite spots while also experiencing a few new ones. During her visit, she shared four reels that generated more than 153,000 views, along with numerous stories highlighting her time in Door County.

ESTO-Bridging Communities Finalist

We attended US Travel's Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO) August 23-26. The Door County Christmas Movie Trail was a finalist in the Bridging Communities category, which recognizes destination-led programs that positively impact local communities.

Organic Social

Last year Instagram struggled, but this year it seems like our Instagram has become the more popular channel. Our organic views are up 19% YoY and engagement is up 96% YoY. Last month we also gained 1,792 followers on Instagram.

Facebook continued to have lower views and with talking to other destinations this seems to be the trend. Our organic views were down 40% YoY and engagement was down 41% YoY. Our most engaged post this month was about playgrounds and asking people to share their favorites in Door County.

Media Highlights from the work of the Destination Door County Team

["8 U.S. Spots Where you Need to Witness Autumn at Least Once"](#) *Yahoo! Creators*, August 2026

["Door County Packs Cherry Orchards, Lavender Fields and Miles of Waterfront into One-Late Summer Escape"](#) *Syndicated multiple outlets*, August 2026

["Here are the Midwest's Cutest Small Towns to Visit this Fall"](#) *Midwest Living Online*, August 2026

PARTNERSHIP & WELCOME CENTER

- **Mixed Business Performance:** August visits reflected an uneven season. Many businesses reported stronger traffic and sales than 2025, while others (particularly some restaurants and retailers) reported softer sales, lower customer spending, or flat performance.
- **Staffing Challenges:** Workforce shortages remain a common concern, with several businesses operating with fewer employees, struggling to attract applicants, or relying heavily on returning and international seasonal staff.
- **Outreach & Partnership Growth:** Business visits continue to strengthen relationships and provide valuable firsthand insight into local conditions. Outreach generated multiple follow-up opportunities and resulted in Spun Creations joining as a new partner.
- **Sustainability & Community Engagement:** The Washington Island Fair water station experienced exceptional engagement, including distribution of all available trees, while the regenerative cup initiative continues to be refined based on partner feedback and will expand to another business in September.
- **Retail Trend to Watch:** Several established retailers reported plans to close this fall, including Tea Thyme, Twice the Quilt, Twisted Tree and Village Clothier, suggesting an emerging shift in the local retail environment worth monitoring.

Welcome Center Visitors: 2,909 vs. 3,181 (2025) -8.6%

Average daily visitors: 93.8

Busiest days: Friday, Aug. 7 & Sunday, Aug. 16 (147 visitors)

Lowest traffic days: Sat., Aug. 29 & Sun., Aug. 30 (45 visitors)

Phone Calls: 638 vs. 649 (2025) -1.7%

Kiosk Usage: Sessions: 168

- **Average session duration:** 5:46

- **Most Viewed Categories:**

- Things to Do (91)
- Food & Drink (34)
- Where to Stay (17)

- **Time of Day Usage:**

- 6–9 am (0) | 9 am–12 pm (77) | 12–3 pm (56) |
- 3–6 pm (31) | 6–10 pm (4)

Gift Certificates

Sales: \$25,225 vs. \$28,525 (2025) -11.6%

Redemptions: \$41,675 vs. \$57,680 (2025) -27.7%

SAVE THE DATE

SEPTEMBER 23 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION, 1 PM, GIBRALTAR TOWN CENTER IN FISH CREEK
 SEPTEMBER 29 DDC PARTNER MIXER + NETWORKING EVENT, 5 PM, DRÖMHUS IN STURGEON BAY
 OCTOBER 27 DESTINATION DOOR COUNTY ANNUAL GATHERING EVENT, 5:30 PM, LANDMARK RESORT IN EGG HARBOR

MONTHLY DEEP DIVE | AUGUST 2026

Financial Stewardship (Board Financials)

Funding, budget development and the Board's financial oversight role

Where Our Funding Comes From

Countywide room tax collections provide the majority of DDC's funding. Publications, cooperative advertising, grants, sponsorships and other smaller sources provide additional revenue to support our mission and diversify funding.

Annual Budget Cycle | August–December

The budget translates the Strategic Plan into funded priorities. Professional staff, departments, agency partners and vendors help shape initiatives, operating needs and investments.

- **August** - Review strategic priorities, assess initiatives and identify needs for the coming year.
- **September** - Gather proposals and estimates; review year-to-date results and year-end projections. Begin Joint Finance Committee discussions.
- **October** - Joint Finance Committee reviews the proposed budget; DDC Finance Committee advances its recommendation.
- **November** - Full DDC Board reviews and approves the annual budget.
- **December** - Door County Tourism Zone Commission gives final approval before the January fiscal-year start.

DDC and the Tourism Zone share a Joint Finance Committee. All DDC Finance Committee members also serve on that committee.

Monthly Reporting & Board Oversight

Board members receive financial statements, budget-to-actual reports, investment information and supporting schedules each quarter. Use these reports to monitor financial health, question variances, identify trends and make informed decisions. Staff provide context and help make the information understandable.

Financial resources & Governing Policies

The operating budget reflects annual revenues and expenses; cash, reserves and investments also support long-term financial health. Bank balances are not all available for discretionary spending.

- **Financial Management Policy:** Defines operating cash for day-to-day needs, operating reserves for unexpected events, and designated reserves for Gift Certificates, Tourism and Capital.
- **Capital Reserve Policy:** Establishes two dedicated categories: planned capital replacement projects under \$200,000 and major capital projects over \$200,000, supporting proactive planning for facilities and infrastructure.
- **Accounting Policies and Internal Controls:** Sets procedures for budgeting, transactions, cash management, asset protection, approvals, separation of duties and the annual audit.

Audit & Accountability

An independent CPA firm audits DDC's financial statements annually. Internal controls, financial policies and approval procedures safeguard assets and support transparency and responsible stewardship of public funds. The Board approves the annual budget and provides ongoing financial oversight.

Board reference: These three policies are available in the Board Orientation Manual or by request. Staff are available to answer questions and walk through financial reports.

Next Month's Deep Dive: Welcome Center Highlights

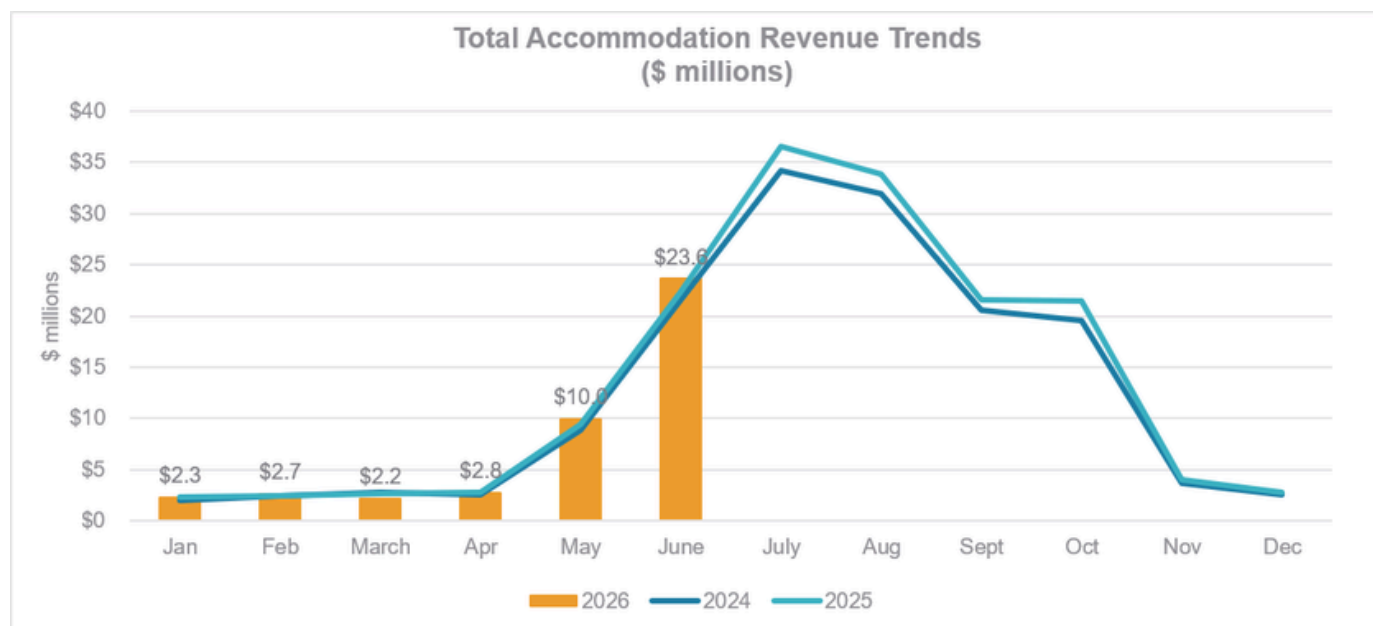


RESEARCH DATA SNAPSHOT - COUNTY-WIDE LODGING

Room revenue increased another 6% in June following a positive May. Available rooms are on the decline, contracting 5% in June while occupied rooms were also down 2%, resulting in positive occupancy growth for June. Rates continued to increase and were up 6.5% year-to-date, driving positive revenue despite declining occupancy. Through June, accommodation revenue was up 3.4%, and room tax collections totaled \$3.4 million, up 3.6% compared to 2025.

Forward looking short-term rental bookings into the fall were flat with the same time frame last year while rates were up 10%, driving any revenue gains over the next 60 days. Short-term rental booking windows are averaging 101 days for the next 60 days—up slightly from last year.

Door County Total Lodging* Jan - June				
Metric	2025	2026	YoY % Chg	
Revenue (\$ millions)	\$ 42.1	\$ 43.5	3.4%	
Average Daily Rate	\$ 210	\$ 224	6.5%	
Available Rooms (000's)	640.2	637.9	-0.4%	
Occupied Rooms (000's)	200.4	194.5	-3.0%	
Percent Occupied	31.3%	30.5%	-2.6%	



Sources

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

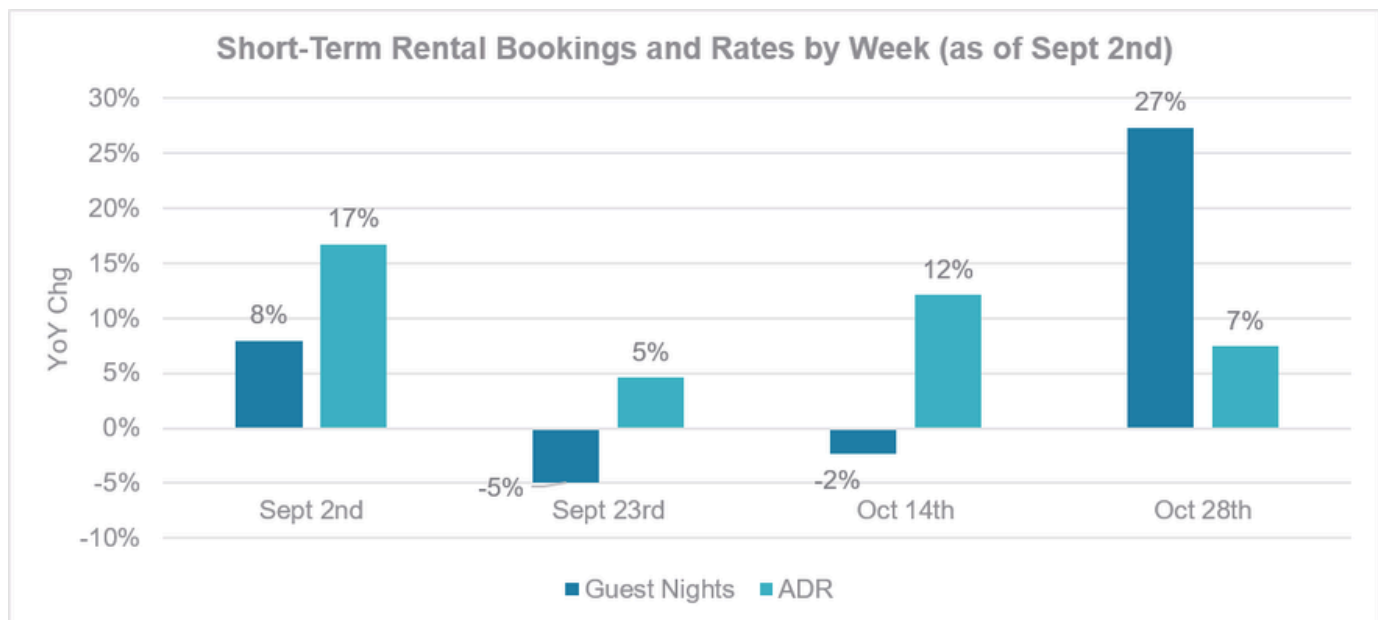
RESEARCH DATA SNAPSHOT - SHORT TERM RENTALS**

- Through July, short-term rental revenue remained positive but was up just 1% year-to-date compared to 2025.
- Revenue increases were largely driven by a 14% increase in rates while occupancy was down nearly 10%.
- While the average length of stay is comparable to 2025, the booking window is up 10% compared to the first seven months of 2025.

Door County Short-Term Rentals** Jan - July				
Metric	2025	2026	YoY % Chg	
Revenue (\$ millions)	\$ 47.0	\$ 47.5	1.1%	
Average Daily Rate	\$ 415	\$ 474	14.4%	
Percent Occupied	25.8%	23.3%	-9.5%	
Avg Active AirBNB Listings	1,147	1,190	3.7%	
Avg Booking Window	69.5	76.3	9.8%	
Avg Length of Stay	3.3	3.3	-0.9%	

Short-Term Rental Outlook - Next 60 Days

- As of early September, short-term rental bookings for the next 60-days were flat compared to the same time frame in 2025.
- Heading into the early fall, short-term rental bookings have stagnated while rates continue to grow and were up 10% for the next 60-days.
- With occupancy projected to increase just 1%, revenue is expected to increase 9% for the next 60-days, driven entirely by rate increases.



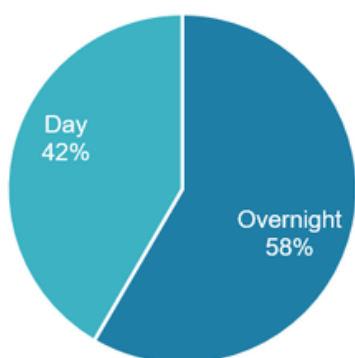
**Short-term rentals sourced to KeyData. Data reported monthly, latest data available is July 2026.

RESEARCH DATA SNAPSHOT - VISITOR BEHAVIOR

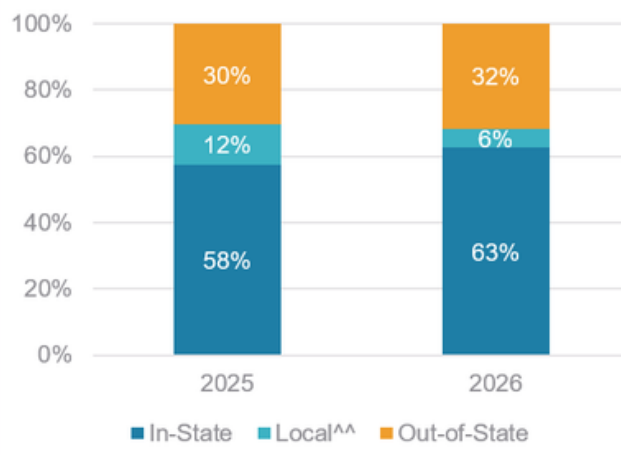
Visitor Behavior via Mobile Location Data^

- Compared to the first seven months of 2025, the share of in-state visitors increased while the share of locals declined. ⇨
- Year-to-date, 58% of all visitors stayed overnight —increasing from 43% the same time frame last year. ↓

**Total Overnight Share
2026 YTD (Jan - July)**



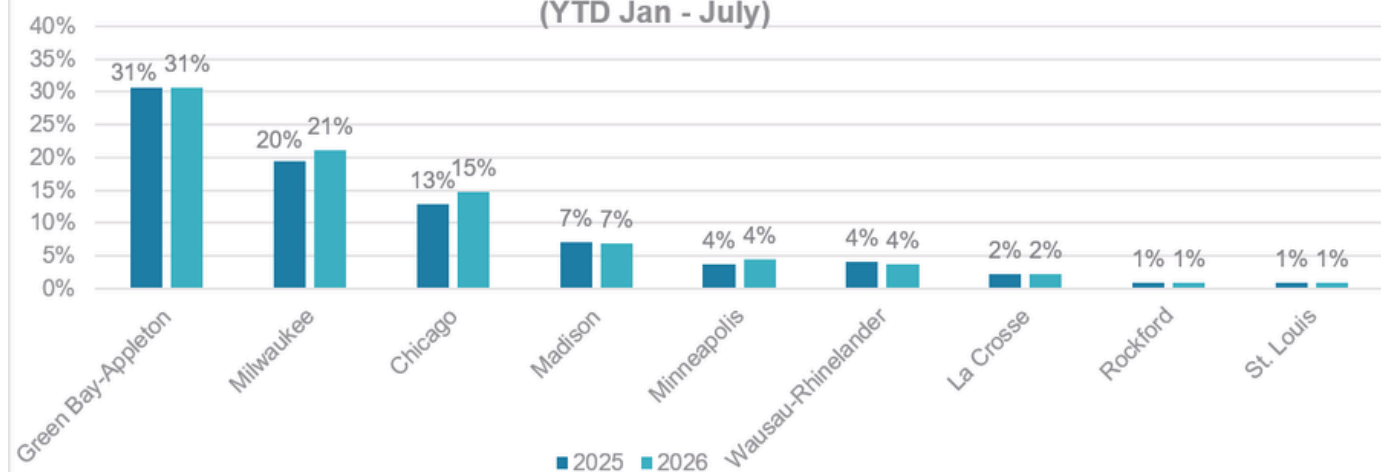
**Share of Visitors
(YTD Jan - July)**



Mobile Device Origin Markets

- Through July 2026, the share of visitors originating in Green Bay-Appleton, Madison and Minneapolis are consistent with 2025, while the share of visitors from Milwaukee and Chicago increased. ↓

**Mobile Device Origin Markets
(YTD Jan - July)**



^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 July 2026.

^^Locals defined as Door County residents.