

DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH ACROSS OREGON

EASTERN OREGON



PHOTO: CHRISTIAN HEEB

TOURISM SUPPORTS OREGON'S ECONOMY

In 2003, Oregon faced one of its highest unemployment rates in history. As part of a statewide initiative to create new job opportunities for Oregonians, the Oregon Tourism Investment proposal was signed into law. This bill made tourism and hospitality a pillar of Oregon's economy by establishing a 1% state lodging tax, which dedicated the revenue into tourism development and marketing for all of Oregon. In 2016, the legislature increased the state lodging tax to 1.8% through June 2020, when it decreases to 1.5%. In addition, state statute dedicated 30% of the state lodging tax to regional tourism organizations and grant programs across Oregon. This industry investment has delivered results with an increase in visitors which has equated to increased resources for regional programs that support jobs, culture, infrastructure and public services.

THE INVESTMENT IS PAYING OFF

Through Travel Oregon's Regional Cooperative Tourism Program, the Eastern Oregon region is scheduled to receive \$600,000 over the 2019-2021 biennium. The funding is programmed to achieve multiple goals, including the following:

- Reconvene Tourism Studios and meet with niche marketing groups in key areas of agritourism and culinary, outdoor recreation, and arts, heritage, and cultural to determine investment opportunities and support of new, emerging, and tourism studio product.
- Use industry trends and global sales data to provide industry training and education on the impact of familiarization tours for the travel trade and international media; bolster and foster industry connections through FAMs and Road Rally and attend the GoWest tradeshow.
- Oregon: Focus on a content creation strategy, then use brand assets (photo, video, story content) to optimize the marketing of Eastern Oregon's diverse range of product.

EASTERN OREGON:

IN 2010	IN 2018	CHANGE
Direct Employment 5,050 jobs	6,100 jobs	+2.4%
Employee Earnings \$87 million	\$132 million	+5.4%
Visitor Spending \$316 million	\$376 million	+2.8%
Taxes (State/Local) \$12 million	\$17 million	+4.9%

STATEWIDE:

IN 2003	IN 2018	CHANGE
Direct Employment 84,500 jobs	115,400	+37%
Employee Earnings \$1.7 billion	\$3.6 billion	+112%
Visitor Spending \$6.5 billion	\$12.3 billion	+89%
Taxes (State/Local) \$246 million	\$560 million	+128%

More than 120 cities and counties across Oregon collect a local transient lodging tax to expend on local programming. A study conducted by ECONorthwest in 2018 found that cities and counties that levied a local transient lodging tax spent the revenue on the following programs that directly benefit Oregonians in those communities:

Program Category	Expenditures	Share
General Services	\$84,194,912	39%
Tourism Facilities	\$58,312,100	29%
Tourism Promotion & Marketing	\$48,965,052	18%
Arts, Culture & Entertainment	\$20,855,625	6%
Events	\$9,184,891	1%
Economic Development	\$4,071,652	5%
Chambers of Commerce	\$4,035,060	2%
Other	\$2,062,897	1%
Administration & Overhead	\$1,170,350	0%
Total	\$232,852,539	100%

These dollars, especially those expended in the tourism facilities and promotion and marketing programs, can be leveraged against the regional destination management organization and state tourism investments.

**IN EASTERN OREGON
EMPLOYMENT IN THE
TRAVEL INDUSTRY
HAS INCREASED
NEARLY 3% FROM
2017-2018.**

PHOTO: DAWN TALBOTT



"As a business owner in Eastern Oregon, the tourism industry gives me a chance to connect with those outside my community who bring with them a certain sense of curiosity about what they might find in our little corner of the world. It's our job (and privilege) to showcase the best of what our community has to offer as well as make recreation as accessible as possible. We pride ourselves in being a little off-the-beaten-path out here, and that just makes us all the more welcoming to those who make the trip to see us."

JIM WHITBECK

*Owner, Blue Mountain Outfitters and City Councilor
La Grande*



"At the Sustainable Agriculture and Energy (SAGE) Center we want to educate each visitor about how food gets from the farm to our table. This unique building on the I-84 corridor attracts the attention of many travelers who marvel at the unexpected hands-on fun learning opportunities found inside. Our guests leave excited about the amazing technological advancements in agriculture that are essential for farmers to feed a growing population. Consequently, we are very dependent on tourism to spread this globally important message to the world one person at a time. It is amazing to be involved with a network of providers that brag on one another in an effort to highlight all Oregon has to offer and bring new guests to our great state."

LISA PATRICK

*Director, SAGE Center
Boardman*



"Travel and tourism enrich the soul and enlighten the mind! When visitors explore Condon, the John Day River Territory or anywhere in Oregon, it revitalizes their spirit and they yearn to get outdoors and be in nature more. What we enjoy most about tourism, is the cultural exchange between residents and visitors. The dollars they spend within our communities are vital and make a huge regional impact."

K'LYNN LANE

*Condon Chamber of Commerce
Condon*



PHOTO: MOUNTAIN LEGACY

TOURISM BENEFITS EASTERN OREGON

- Total annual visitor spending contributed \$352 million to the economy of the 11-county region of eastern Oregon. That equated to more than 6,000 jobs and more than \$14 million in state and local taxes.
- International visitation to Eastern Oregon continues to increase, with visitors from China, UK, Germany and the Netherlands.
- In 2018, overnight visitors to Eastern Oregon contributed \$282 million to total visitor spending and day visitors contributed more than \$94 million.

EMPLOYMENT & REVENUE ACROSS OREGON

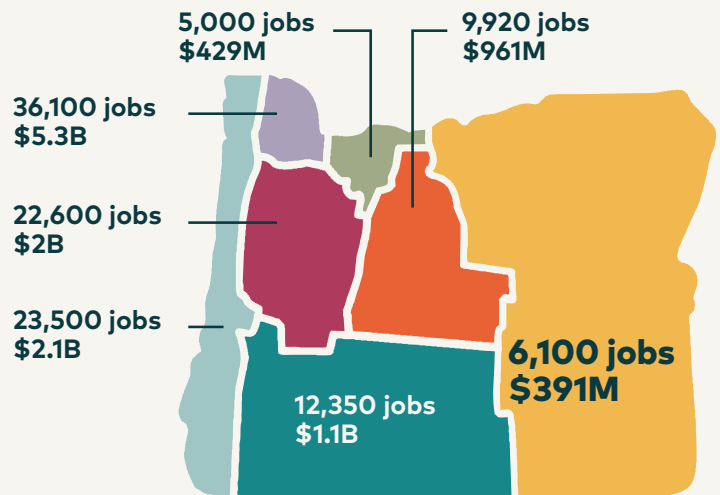




PHOTO: RUSS ROCA



TRAVEL OREGON'S COMPETITIVE GRANTS:

In the past year, \$120,000 of Travel Oregon Competitive Grant funding is working to expand tourism opportunities in Eastern Oregon through investments, which include the following highlighted projects:

- Eastern Oregon Regional Theatre, Inc. to produce construction documents necessary to begin the renovation of the historic Orpheum Theater building in Baker City's Main Street District.
- Liberty Theatre Foundation, Inc. to complete construction and restoration of the Liberty Theatre. Upon completion, the theatre will open for public use, providing a cultural resource for the region.

TRAVEL OREGON'S REGIONAL COOPERATIVE TOURISM PROGRAM:

The Eastern Oregon regional program received \$600,000 over the 17-19 biennium and completed a variety of projects, a few of which are highlighted below:

- Funding was allocated to the promotion of the 175th anniversary of the Oregon Trail in partnership with the Oregon Trails Coalition, Oregon Department of Transportation and local regional destination management organizations. The promotion increased visitation to the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, increased visitor spending and overnight lodging in local establishments.
- Developed a branded series of agritourism routes: "The Wallowa Barn Tour" "The Whisky & Rocks Farm Loop" and "The River to Hills Farm Trail" to drive visitors to local producers. Participating businesses, such as farms, restaurants and museums reported an increase in visitor traffic and spending in locations highlighted on the routes.



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