

Tourism Drives Economic Growth Across Oregon

EASTERN OREGON

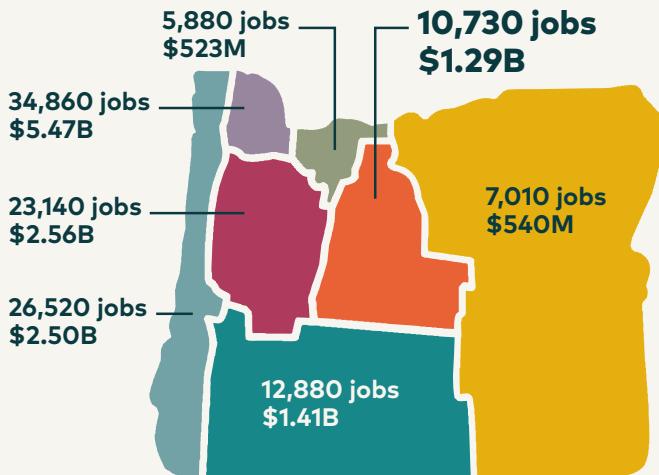


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TOURISM SPURS OREGON'S ECONOMY

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 legislature made tourism and hospitality a pillar of Oregon's economy by creating Travel Oregon and, with support from lodging operators, establishing a statewide lodging tax. This tax dedicated revenue into tourism development and marketing for all of Oregon, and as the economy grew, 30% of the state lodging tax became focused on direct community investment via regional tourism organizations and grant programs.

This industry investment has delivered results. Over the past two decades, Oregon has seen consistent annual growth in jobs, visitor spending and related tax revenue that outpaces inflation. **Travel spending across Oregon has more than doubled** since 2003, and the **tax revenue generated by that spending has nearly tripled**. This economic activity has **created more than 35,000 new jobs** since 2003, providing meaningful opportunities in every corner of the state.



\$14.3 BILLION IN DIRECT TRAVEL SPENDING SUPPORTS 121,000 JOBS AND GENERATES \$691 MILLION IN STATE AND LOCAL TAX REVENUE ACROSS OREGON

TOURISM CREATES CAREERS

Nationally, the travel and tourism industry provides more first jobs than any other industry, and the skills learned in these roles make a difference. Tourism jobs are also often small business jobs connected to the communities they serve across Oregon. The travel and tourism industry is the nation's top small business employer, and 17% of early career tourism employees go on to own their own business. National studies have also shown visitation and exposure to destination marketing can improve impressions of communities as places to start and relocate businesses, meaning that tourism also serves a cycle of small business development in several unique ways.

Sources: US Travel Association, Oregon Employment Department

TOURISM STEWARDS OREGON'S FUTURE

As tourism organizations across the state bring increased focus to stewardship efforts, care is taken to align economic, social and environmental opportunities for today and well into the future:

- In 2025, 40 Oregon communities worked together to achieve the nation's first statewide "Destination Verified" status with trusted accessibility travel platform Wheel the World, ensuring disabled visitors and Oregonians alike can explore detailed listings and receive tailored recommendations based on their specific needs.
- Tourism organizations bring marketing and outreach expertise through partnerships with other state and federal agencies, non-profits and businesses to address broad community challenges such as responsible recreation, wildfire safety or congestion management efforts at well-loved destinations.
- The tourism industry strives to align tactics with broader state economic development efforts to ensure future prosperity in Oregon, whether that is aligning global sales and marketing work with international flight expansions at PDX or connecting local hospitality and agriculture leaders with renown journalists, recognizing Oregon as a world-class culinary destination.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM IN EASTERN OREGON 2024

Direct Travel Spending	\$540 million
Jobs	7,010
Employee Earnings	\$189 million
State & Local Tax Revenue*	\$25 million
Overnight Stays	5.6 million

* State and local taxes include income taxes, gas taxes, rental car taxes and transient lodging taxes

Source: Dean Runyan Associates

- Local Eastern Oregon tax receipts generated by tourists in 2024 accounted for \$17 million in state revenue, and \$8 million in local taxes—representing more than \$333 per local household in the region.
- For every \$100 spent by visitors in the region, \$36 goes directly back to locals in employee earnings.

TOURISM BOLSTERS COMMUNITIES

More than 120 cities and counties across Oregon—including 15 in Eastern Oregon—collect a local transient lodging tax that is distinct from the statewide tax to expend on local programming. A statewide study conducted by ECONorthwest in 2018 found that cities and counties that levied a local transient lodging tax spent the plurality of the revenue on general services. Other major categories of local investment include tourism facilities such as meeting spaces and sports fields; tourism promotion and marketing through organizations such as Travel Pendleton or the Wallowa County; arts, culture and entertainment and local events.

In line with statute, 20% of state transient lodging taxes are directed to seven regional tourism organizations, with Eastern Oregon Visitors Association serving the Eastern Oregon region, for community responsive tourism development and promotion. Local transient tax dollars, especially those expended on tourism facilities and promotional programs, can be leveraged against regional and state tourism expenditures to attract and steward visitors in individual communities. This increase in visitors, in turn, increases resources for arts and culture, infrastructure and public services—directly benefiting Oregonians in those communities.

TOURISM DOLLARS AT WORK IN EASTERN OREGON

Many tourism organizations, including Travel Oregon, The Eastern Oregon Visitors Association and Travel Pendleton invest millions of dollars in community initiatives through grant programs, strategic investment funds or direct sponsorship. In recent years, these investments have been critical contributors to local projects such as:

- Infrastructure at Anthony Lakes Ski Resort, including enhancing the rental shop to improve accessibility and providing new opportunities for rural recreation and youth programs serving visitors and locals alike.
- Working to expand the Oregon Outback Dark Sky Sanctuary, developing new tourism opportunities in remote Southeastern Oregon and capitalizing on the growing demand for astro-tourism.
- Culinary tourism, including investing in marketing and media efforts that highlight food producers, Eastern Oregon wine regions and local farmers—bringing visitors dollars to these businesses and instilling a brand affinity after travelers return home.
- Outdoor recreation in Wallowa County, including investing in creating the Joseph Branch Trail; providing responsible recreation messaging in the Eagle Cap Wilderness; and generally putting tourism dollars at work to steward well-loved recreation infrastructure.

A visit to the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute as part of the *Wheel The World* "Destination Verified" assessment in Eastern Oregon.



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It is our mission to develop, market and promote the Eastern Oregon region as a destination for visitors to enhance the regional economic vitality and quality of life for all residents.
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