annual report

2025-2026



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Travel Salem
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message from the chair & CEO

Tourism remained one of the region's strongest economic engines this year. Visitor spending in Marion and Polk counties reached a new record of $822.1 million, supporting 8,050 local jobs and thousands of businesses.

Visitors continue to come for the region's food, outdoor recreation, and cultural heritage, and they report a high level of satisfaction with their trips.

Lodging performance softened, in line with broader trends across the U.S. hotel industry. Economic uncertainty led many travelers to take shorter trips and choose lower-cost options, which brought hotel rates, occupancy and lodging tax collections slightly below the prior year.

Travel Salem's marketing reached more travelers than ever, with strong growth in social media, online visits and overall consumer engagement. Leisure advertising continued to deliver a strong return on investment, and media coverage increasingly focused on travel publications that reach qualified audiences.

Group and sports business also expanded, supported by a strong pipeline of future bookings and continued investment in the region's sports facilities. Notably, Chemeketa Community College, supported by STPA funds installed turf and lighting at its athletic fields, which now serve as the long-term home of the Marion Berries Baseball Club.

Travel Salem also worked with partners across the region to improve the visitor experience. In partnership with Wheel the World, online content was creared to help visitors with disabilities plan their trips, featuring accessible attractions, activities and itineraries for Salem and the surrounding area. Additional work included an updated food trail, intern support for local museums and attractions, and new Santiam River Canyon recreational trail development.

The region also made significant progress toward strengthening its long-term tourism economy. The Salem Tourism Promotion Area was renewed and expanded to include short-term rentals, diversifying the funding base that supports tourism promotion. In addition, Travel Salem partnered with local stakeholders to pursue the restoration of commercial air service to Salem, and it continues to work with the region's federal delegation to identify funding opportunities that will advance this initiative.

Record visitor spending, growing group business, upgraded sports facilities, and a broader funding base all point to continued growth. The region is well positioned for the years ahead.



Chair
John Pataccoli
Redhawk Vineyard



President & CEO
Angie Villery
Travel Salem

AVERAGE DAILY RATE (STR)

25-26 HOTEL ADR DOWN 2.8%



OCCUPANCY (STR)

25-26 HOTEL OCCUPANCY DOWN 2.1%



$822.1 million

estimated economic impact

2025 marion & polk counties

key performance measurements

Key performance measurements are tracked to provide a picture of the overall economic health of the Salem & Mid-Willamette Valley tourism industry. When evaluating progress, consider these nine indicators alongside other measurements such as financial resources, program staff and advertising support. Environmental influences and other economic trends are also considered to gain better insight into the health of the industry.

Specific tourism-based activities also provide context for evaluating the bigger picture and can reveal trends and key market factors that influence how the organization makes adjustments in program initiatives. Travel Salem is not the sole contributor to or driver of the region's tourism-based economic outcomes. However, the organization takes a leadership role in economic development and tourism promotion to help shape industry results.



Second Chance Books

Joshua Rainey

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT*	25-26 ACTUAL	% YOY	24-25 ACTUAL	25-26 GOAL	% GOAL
1 Estimated Economic Impact	$822,100,000	+4%	$793,300,000	⬆ 2% = $809,166,000	102%
2 Salem Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)**	$5,014,868	-5%	$5,298,982	⬆ 5% = $5,563,931	90%
3 Leverage	$2,730,986	-4%	$2,859,290	$2,900,000	94%
4 Consumer Engagement	198,084,999	+13%	175,125,790	⬆ 15% = 201,394,658	98%
5 Visitor Information Network Attendance	81,738	+2%	80,256	⬆ 6% = 85,071	96%
6 Earned Media Impressions	137,501,483	-3%	141,782,300	⬆ 5% = 148,871,415	92%
7 Social Media Reach***	16,008,423	+58%	10,131,106	⬆ 12% = 11,346,838	141%
8 Online Visits****	2,021,257	+391%	411,260	⬆ 10% = 452,386	447%
9 Convention & Sports Actual Room Nights	31,011	+8%	28,655	⬆ 10% = 31,520	98%

* Targets are based on normal market conditions and don't take into consideration significant impacts such as pandemic, recession, depression, natural disasters or fuel anomalies.
** Outcomes influenced by fluctuations in ADR, occupancy.
*** Methodologies may change year to year as vendors update their algorithms; year-over-year changes may not be comparable.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS:

a closer look

YEAR-OVER-YEAR COMPARISON & HIGHLIGHTS

24-25 ACTUALS | **25-26 ACTUALS** | **25-26 GOAL**

1 ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT

25-26 GOAL: $809,166,000

$793,300,000

$822,100,000

Salem & the Mid-Willamette Valley surpassed 2024's record EEI by 4%. The region's diverse offerings (e.g., history, recreation, culinary), along with elevated hotel ADR, continue to bolster the tourism industry's performance.

2 TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX (TOT)

25-26 GOAL: $5,563,931

$5,298,982

$5,014,868

Transient Occupancy Tax revenues decreased 5% YOY, reflecting a 2.8% decline in hotel ADR and a 2.1% decline in occupancy.

3 LEVERAGE

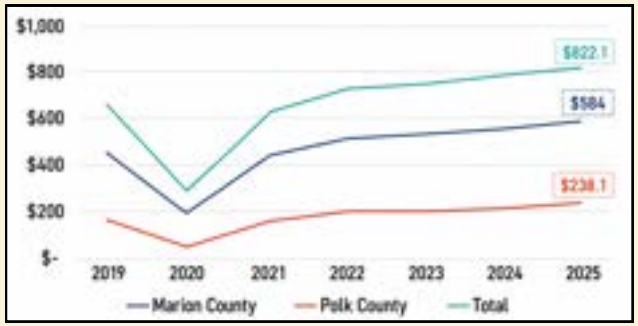
25-26 GOAL: $2,900,000

$2,859,290

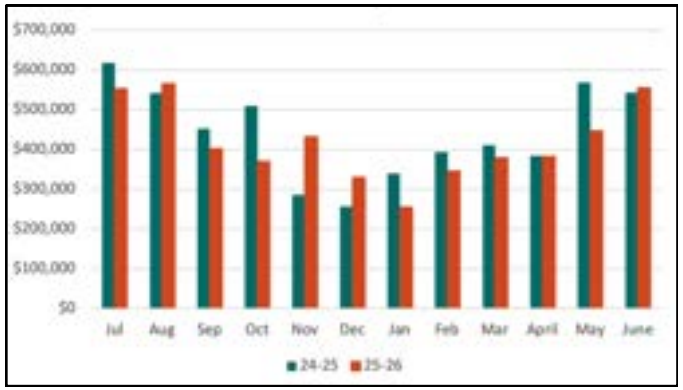
$2,730,986

Total leverage decreased 4% YOY due to less earned media and one-time grant contributions. Increased WVVA and Marion Berries partnerships partially offset the decline.

travel spending (millions)



salem tot





Marion Berries

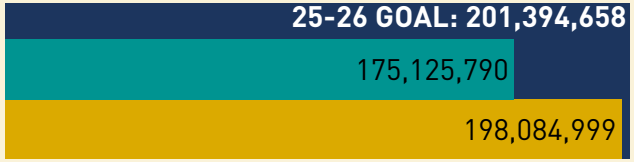
KEY PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS:

a closer look

YEAR-OVER-YEAR COMPARISON & HIGHLIGHTS

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4 CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT



Overall consumer engagement increased 13% YOY and reached 98% of its goal. The increase was led by earned media and Google advertising.



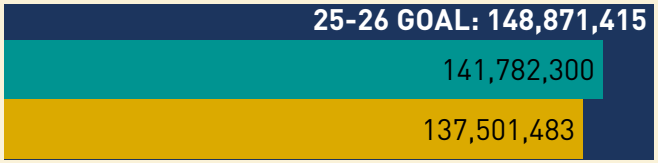
5 VISITOR INFORMATION NETWORK



Visitor Information Network attendance increased 2% YOY but fell short of goal after two hotels stopped serving as satellite visitor center locations (due to staff changes and renovations).



6 EARNED MEDIA IMPRESSIONS



Earned media impressions decreased 3% YOY as strategy shifted to regional and national travel publications with smaller but more qualified travel audiences.

Yahoo Travel:
"Oregon's Largest State Park Has a Famous 7-Mile Trail That Takes You to 10 Waterfalls"

Highlighted: Silver Falls State Park

Ad Value: $39,000
Circulation: 26,600,000



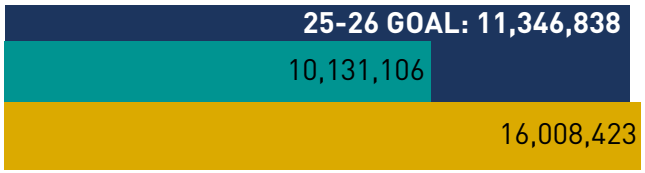
KEY PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS:

a closer look

YEAR-OVER-YEAR COMPARISON & HIGHLIGHTS

24-25 ACTUALS | **25-26 ACTUALS** | **25-26 GOAL**

7 SOCIAL MEDIA REACH



Social media reach increased 58% YOY, reaching 141% of the annual goal, driven by short-form video and search-optimized content.

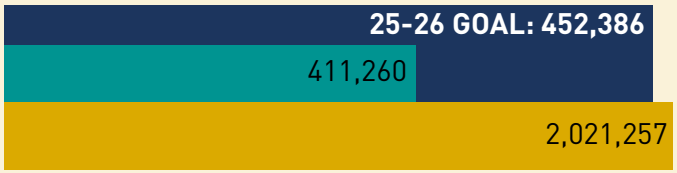
Best-Performing Post: "Movies in the Park Are Back"

Combined Views: 199,594

Engagements: 5,522



8 ONLINE VISITS



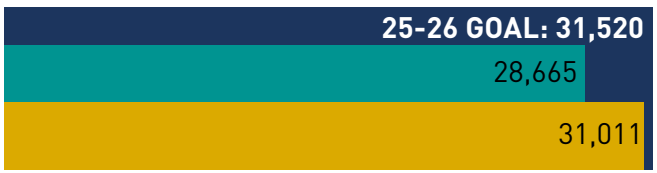
Online visits increased 391% YOY and reached 447% of the annual goal. This growth was driven by a strategic shift in paid search advertising, including two campaigns targeting evergreen content and seasonal lodging across multiple high-traffic networks.

Best-Performing Blog: "Pumpkins, Hayrides and Apple Cider, Oh My! Celebrate Fall at These Salem-Area Harvest Festivals"

Views: 6,980



9 CONVENTIONS & SPORTS ROOM NIGHTS



Convention and sports room nights increased 8% YOY:

- IRONMAN led all events with 7,500 room nights
- Jim Sherman Memorial NW Championships
- Western Nationals (12, 14, 16 & 18A)
- Capital Cup youth tournaments



365 Creative

core areas of focus

Strategic Imperative: INCREASE VISITOR-RELATED ECONOMIC IMPACT

EXTERNALLY FOCUSED

INTERNALLY FOCUSED

DESTINATION MARKETING

Blaze the Most Oregon Part of Oregon brand and promote the region as a premier destination to create demand for group and leisure travelers and connect visitors with the people and the place.

OBJECTIVE	MEASUREMENT
1. Implement dynamic communications & industry relations programs to enhance the perception of the region with consumers & residents	• Annual visitor & resident sentiment surveys • Social media sentiment • Media engagement & impressions • In-person visitor comments • Speakers bureau impact
2. Implement strategic sales & marketing initiatives to drive more group & sports business	• Sales pipeline reports • ROI (Estimated Economic Impact calculator) • Post trade show reports • Post group surveys
3. Refresh Travel Salem brand to celebrate the unique character of the region	Survey brand resonance with visitors, residents & stakeholders
4. Drive shoulder season visitation (Nov-Mar)	Advertising calendar, geo-tracking, hotel data, Avelo passengers & sales pipeline report
5. Highlight regional EDI experiences to meet all consumer needs	Apply an EDI lens to all strategies & initiatives
6. Identify & engage with strong & emerging consumer target audiences (e.g., Latinx/Hispanic, generational travelers) to increase reach & visitation	Partner with Mid-Willamette Valley leaders & organizations (e.g., Latino Business Alliance, AARP, Center 50+); increased visitation from target audiences

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Enhance destination appeal & create transformative experiences utilizing deep industry expertise, partnerships, advocacy, sustainable tourism initiatives & strategic product development.

OBJECTIVE	MEASUREMENT
1. Develop & implement a sports master plan to maximize destination potential	Annual venue capacity, quality & footprint of existing events, new business recruitment, improvements to venue inventory
2. Engage with partners to retain & recruit commercial air service	Grow existing service & secure new service
3. Research & identify regional EDI experiences to broaden demographic reach & improve destination accessibility	Increase EDI assets & experiences
4. Advocate on behalf of the industry to promote key priorities that enhance livability & destination experience	Annual visitor & resident sentiment surveys
5. Unite Mid-Willamette Valley partners through shared vision, advocacy & collaboration	Implement a unified messaging strategy with economic development partners

ORGANIZATIONAL OPTIMIZATION

Develop long-term stable funding, strategic staffing levels & the technology & tools to support a robust Destination Marketing & Management Organization.

OBJECTIVE	MEASUREMENT
1. Leverage complex & dynamic funding streams to maximize economic impact	Maintain diversified revenue streams
2. Adapt human resources to meet industry demands	Ensure adequate resources through a mix of in-house staffing & contractors
3. Hone communication & strategic collaboration across program areas to efficiently & seamlessly execute initiatives	Utilize streamlined & effective communication systems
4. Utilize technology to streamline productivity & spur innovation	Adopt new technology as needed
5. Ensure detailed reporting, research & stakeholder communication to educate, engage & empower the industry	Deliver meaningful, user-friendly reports & industry communications

CORE AREAS OF FOCUS:

highlights

The following initiatives highlight progress in Core Areas of Focus of the 2025-30 Strategic Plan

funding sources key

- **grant FUNDED** — Funded by grants
- **tot FUNDED** — Funded by Transient Occupancy Tax
- **wcp FUNDED** — Funded by Wine Country Plate program
- **stpa FUNDED** — Funded by Salem Tourism Promotion Area
- **wvva FUNDED** — Funded by the Willamette Valley Visitors Association
- **flex FUNDED** — Funded by private revenue sources
- **blend FUNDED** — Item funded by more than one source

DESTINATION MARKETING [DM]

Blaze the Most Oregon Part of Oregon brand and promote the region as a premier destination to create demand for group and leisure travelers and connect visitors with the people and the place.



TRAVELSALEM.COM ACCESSIBILITY PAGE [DM 1,5]

tot FUNDED

In partnership with Wheel the World, Travel Salem launched an accessibility page to better serve visitors with disabilities.

Content includes integrated hotel booking links, curated accessible attractions, a blog on regional accessible activities and a complete itinerary for Salem and the surrounding area.



STREAMING BROADCAST COMMERCIALS [DM 1]

wcp FUNDED

Streaming broadcast commercials ran in Seattle, Wash. (Sep-Nov 2025) and Dallas, Tex. (Feb 2026), promoting the Mid-Willamette Valley to wine, food and travel enthusiasts. Willamette Valley Wineries Association data used to identify target markets.





GROUP SALES & SPORTS [DM 2]

stpa FUNDED tot FUNDED

Connected with 60 event organizers and secured future business, including the 2027 One True Champion National Softball Tournament and Jehovah's Witnesses conventions through 2030. Sports events generated 25,278 room nights and $21.8 million in EEI. Tradeshows attended:

- Meetings & conventions: IMEX, Connect West, MPI Cascadia, Small Market Meetings and Small & Boutique Meetings
- Sports: Sports ETA Symposium, TEAMS, U.S. Sports Congress, CONNECT Sports, S.P.O.R.T.S. Relationship Conference and S.P.O.R.T.S. The Invitational



ADVERTISING RESULTS [DM 4]

stpa FUNDED

Leisure advertising ran on online and broadcast channels. The $295,000 investment generated an estimated 25,514 room nights and $3.57 million in hotel revenue, returning $12 for every $1 spent.

CORE AREAS OF FOCUS:

highlights

Below are initiatives from the year that demonstrate progress in Core Areas of Focus from the 2025-30 Strategic Plan

funding sources key

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DESTINATION MANAGEMENT [DMGMT]

Enhance destination appeal & create transformative experiences utilizing deep industry expertise, partnerships, advocacy, sustainable tourism initiatives & strategic product development.



TRAVEL SALEM SPORTS FACILITY MASTER PLAN [DMGMT 1]

stpa FUNDED

The Sports Facility Master Plan was developed and set into motion, providing a unified vision for the region. Created with input from local partners and informed by data, the plan outlines a shared approach to planning and improving sports and event facilities across the destination.

The plan balances long-term goals with near-term needs and helps guide future investments, renovations and programming to reflect community priorities, market demand and economic impact.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM [DMGMT 4]

tot FUNDED

Met with partners to identify needs and recruited interns to deliver results. Interns worked at Salem's Riverfront Carousel, the B-17 Alliance Museum, Willamette Heritage Center and Salem Multicultural Institute. They digitized 1,000+ historical photos at the Riverfront Carousel, cataloged WWII artifacts at the B-17 Alliance Museum and improved attendee surveys for Salem Multicultural Institute's World Beat Festival. Travel Salem's own intern updated the Experience Salem brochure.



GREAT OAKS FOOD TRAIL [DMGMT 3]

grant FUNDED

Updated food trail brochures and maps with participating businesses and attractions. New brochures distributed throughout Travel Oregon's Welcome Centers, expanding the trail's reach to visitors across Oregon.





DESTINATION MANAGEMENT [DMGMT 4,5]

tot FUNDED stpa FUNDED

Continued development and management collaboration with the following groups:

- Travel Salem Downtown Advisory Committee: Updated the downtown business map & supported advocacy regarding safety & cleanliness.
- Mid-Willamette Valley Tourism Economic Development Consortium: Hosted the Oregon Film Office to discuss "film tourism" and the consumers who visit film locations.
- Resilient Headwaters: Managed grants for Santiam Canyon trail development.

CORE AREAS OF FOCUS:

highlights

Below are initiatives from the year that demonstrate progress in Core Areas of Focus from the 2025-30 Strategic Plan

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ORGANIZATIONAL OPTIMIZATION [00]

Develop long-term stable funding, strategic staffing levels & the technology & tools to support a robust Destination Marketing & Management Organization.

AMERICA 250 GRANT [00 1]

grant FUNDED

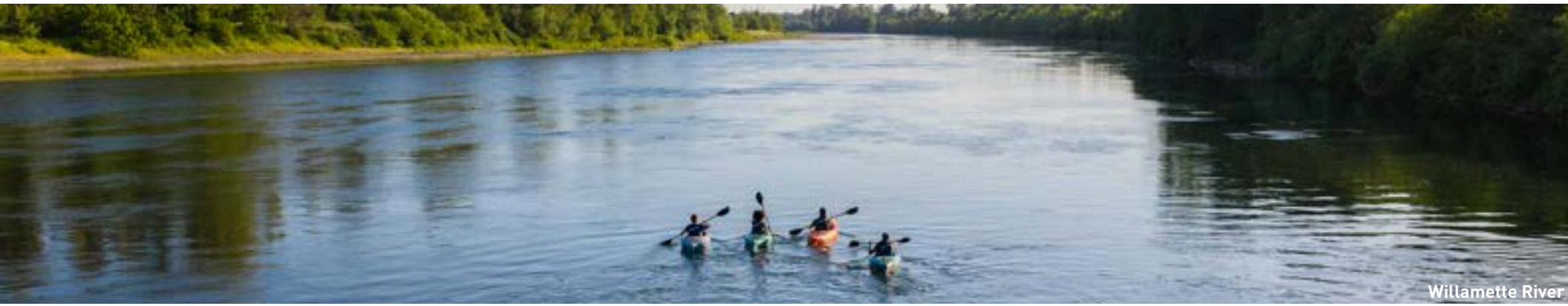
Travel Salem was awarded an America 250 grant to install a photo mural on the exterior of its headquarters on Center Street. The mural highlights the region's indigenous people, scenic beauty and the broader historical context that shaped Oregon and our nation.

AI AUDIT [00 4]

tot FUNDED

AI was used to identify where routine tasks, such as research, content creation and administrative work, could be streamlined. Reducing time on those tasks enables staff to focus on higher-value work that requires creativity, critical thinking and relationship-building.

Departments received reports with flexible AI recommendations enabling them to adopt AI at their own pace and within budget, ultimately improving efficiency and overall productivity.



Willamette River
Autumn Schrock

2025-2026 state of the industry

An estimated 2.8 million visitors traveled to our region in 2025, driving an overall visitor spend of $822.1 million in Marion & Polk counties, including an estimated $698.8 million spent in Salem.

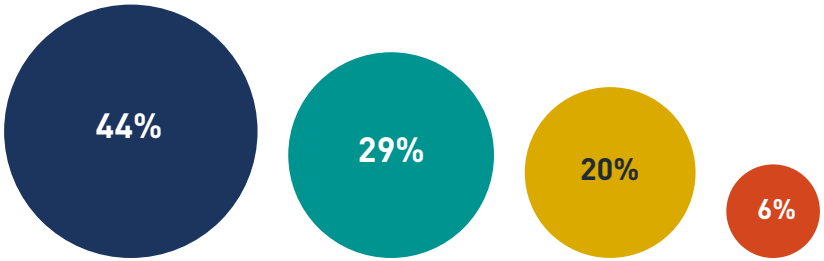
Visitors to Salem were 53 years of age on average, and more than three-quarters traveled with a spouse or partner. The vast majority were repeat leisure travelers, visiting friends & relatives or attending an event, and staying primarily in hotels, motels, or private residences.

The region's key satisfaction rating was a near-perfect score for overall trip experience, with visitors specifically citing local food, inclusiveness, outdoor recreation and value.

*Travel Salem conducts a Visitor Profile Study every other year. The next study is due in fall 2027.

Generational Breakdown

Average visitor age: 53



Boomers & older
b. 1964 or earlier

Gen X
b. 1965–1980

Millennials
b. 1981–1994

Gen Z
b. 1997–2012

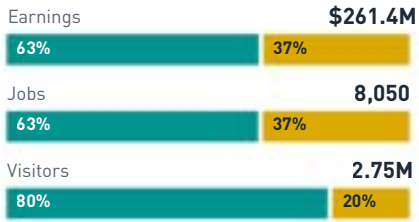
2025 Visitor Economy

Polk County draws 20% of visitors but 29% of spending and 37% of jobs due to Spirit Mountain Casino



- Marion County **71% · $584.0M**
- Polk County **29% · $238.1M**
- Salem **85% · $698.8M**

Salem spans both counties.



Ethnic Breakdown



- **4%** Hispanic / Latino
- **4%** Asian
- **2%** Native American / Indigenous
- **2%** Black / African American
- **89%** White / Caucasian

Who Visits



76% travel with a spouse or partner



15% have accessibility needs

Each square = 1% of visitors.

Gender



60% Female

39% Male

3% Other

Type of Lodging

Each square = 1% of visitors.



- **53%** Hotel
- **28%** Friends & relatives
- **7%** Vacation/rental
- **5%** B&B
- **5%** RV site
- **2%** Camping

2025-2026 state of the industry visitor snapshot

Most Visitors Come for Leisure and Stay Overnight

Each figure = 5% of visitors

Primary Purpose

85% leisure — 15% business / conference

Visitor Type

77.5% overnight — 22.5% day trip

Where Visitors Come From

Top 5 states of origin



1. Oregon
2. California
3. Washington
4. Arizona
5. Texas

Top Countries of Origin



1. USA
2. Canada
3. United Kingdom
4. Mexico
5. Germany

The Average Visitor

- **$120,744** average household income
- **18%** households with children
- **3.4 days** average stay, out of a 7-day week
- **$851** average spend
- **9/10** overall satisfaction

Activities in Destination

Visiting friends & relatives	33%
Event	33%
Outdoor recreation	22%
Wine	20%
Food	17%
Arts & culture	15%
Business & conference	15%
Heritage	13%
Family activity	12%
Shopping	11%
Beer & cider	9%
Agriculture	8%

Where the Region Could Improve

Each dot = 1% of visitors

Public restrooms	13%
Road conditions	12%
Signage	11%
Cleanliness	9%
Other	8%
Safety	7%
Transportation	6%
Customer service	3%

Travel Salem Marketing Used

Social media	27%
TravelSalem.com	17%
Visitor guide	12%
Special promotion	10%
Advertising	9%
Signage	9%
PR article	6%
Visitor info network	5%
Other	4%

staff

Administrative

Angie Villery, President & CEO
Irene Bernards, EVP & Chief Strategy Officer
Jennifer Miller, Operations Manager
Yvonne Nguyen, Executive Support Coordinator

Marketing & Communication

Kara Kuh, Chief Marketing Officer
Emily Lauer, Marketing Manager
Marissa Brown, Digital Marketing Specialist
Sara Germann, Marketing & Destination Development Coordinator
Sierra Langford, Guest Services Coordinator
Caridad Brown, Visitor Center Assistant
Susan Tanabe, Visitor Center Assistant

Sales

Joey Jewell, Chief Sales Officer & Executive Director of SASC
Greg Heinze, VP of Meetings & Conventions
Tom Garlock, Sports Development Manager
Alex Trevino, Sales & Services Coordinator

Travel Salem
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Mallory Phelan, Oregon AgLink
Rochelle Rafn, Salem Orchestra
Scott Stokely, Stokely Enterprise
Jason Unruh, Hoopla Association

Travel Salem is pleased to present the 25-26 Annual Report & State of the Industry, pursuant to the 2023 City of Salem contract, Sections 1.8 & 1.8.1. The contract stipulates that quarterly reports include a financial report, an overview of activities and performance measurement data, and a clear demonstration of how Transient Occupancy Tax funds and Salem Tourism Promotion Area funds are used on projects, programs and initiatives in Salem.

This report fulfills these contractual requirements. All programs and services tie back to Travel Salem's 2025-30 Strategic Plan and the 2025-26 Business Plan, and drive toward the imperative to increase visitor-related economic impact through three core areas of focus: destination marketing, destination management and organizational optimization.