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TOURISM IN TENNESSEE SHATTERED RECORDS WITH \$23 BILLION IN TRAVEL SPENDING AND 126 MILLION DOMESTIC PERSON STAYS IN 2019

Report Shows Tourism is Vital to Restoring State's Economic Recovery

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Recently released numbers from U.S. Travel Association show tourism in Tennessee hit a record-high \$23 billion in domestic and international travel spending in 2019, marking a decade of consecutive growth. Tennessee also saw 126 million domestic person stays in 2019, up 5.7 percent from 119 million the previous year. Tennessee tourism was on a record track in the first three months of 2020 before COVID-19. The Coronavirus pandemic is the largest crisis to hit the travel, leisure and hospitality industries in history, shutting down almost all travel activities and threatening the security of businesses and employees the industry supports.

“Tennessee is a world-renowned destination, and I look forward to the time when we can gather together again at our festivals, sporting events and more,” said Gov. Bill Lee. “Tourism is our state’s second largest industry. Coming off another record year, this data underscores the tremendous positive tourism impact on our state’s revenue. As we’ve seen now more than ever, travel and tourism are vital to restoring economic health and recovery in Tennessee.”

In 2019, Tennessee outpaced the nation in all areas of travel; including tax revenue, expenditures, payroll and employment. The leisure and hospitality industry produced more jobs than any other industry. Last year, travelers in Tennessee spent an estimated \$64 million per day. Tourism generated over \$75 million in new state and local tax dollars in 2019, approximately half of which directly supports public education. Those tax dollars also support public safety, health and human services, business and economic development. Travel in Tennessee generated 195,000 jobs and \$1.92 billion in state and local

tax revenue. Revenue generated saved each household in the state \$748 in taxes, an increased savings of almost \$40 compared to 2018.

These numbers reflect tourism's significant impact prior to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. U.S. Travel Association predicts the travel economy in Tennessee could see a 35-45% decline in 2020 from 2019.

"With our businesses taking the [Tennessee Pledge](#), our restaurants, businesses and attractions are ready for safe travel," said Commissioner Mark Ezell, Tennessee Department of Tourist Development. "I encourage travelers to safely explore, support local businesses and attractions, create family memories, discover outdoor scenic beauty where social distancing is a natural, take road trips, explore rural destinations and hidden gems that drive visitation. Our goal is to become the best non-beach tourism state in America. We're constantly exploring new opportunities to inspire growth across the state, drive jobs and economic growth, including in rural, at-risk and distressed counties."

"Tourism is a significant economic driver for our state; ensuring we are able to maintain a safe environment for both visitors and residents is necessary to the livelihoods of the many people who depend on this industry," said Craig Ross, Chairman of Tennessee Tourism Committee and President of Dollywood.

The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development received [\\$25 million in CARES Act funding](#) to remarket the severely devastated industry to aid in its recovery, promote safety and inspire responsible travel. Funding will be used to demonstrate how travelers can safely enjoy activities and attractions; promote outdoor activities; a campaign with messaging around masks, social distancing and sanitization; and safety messaging, digital screens and infrastructure at all 16 Tennessee Welcome Centers. \$15 million in grants is available for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) in all 95 counties. Additional funding will support Tennessee State Parks and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.

To view the full report, click [here](#). Additional highlights and images for media can be found [here](#). The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development works with the Tennessee Tourism Committee, local convention and visitors' bureaus, chambers of commerce, city and county leaders, tourism attractions and the hospitality industries in all 95 counties to inspire travel to the state.

Media Contact:
Jill Kilgore
Jill.Kilgore@tn.gov.

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