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Harrisonburg sees new record in visitor spending with \$242 million in 2023

HARRISONBURG, Va. – Harrisonburg’s tourism economy grew to record heights last year as The Friendly City continues to be a hot destination for visitors and adventure seekers.

Visitors spent \$242.2 million in Harrisonburg in 2023, a nearly 17 percent increase over pre-pandemic numbers that have grown every year since 2019. That spending supported 2,678 jobs in Harrisonburg while contributing nearly \$13 million to local tax revenue.

Harrisonburg Tourism, a division of the City of Harrisonburg’s Economic Development Department, has focused on a number of new initiatives in recent years to help the local tourism economy recover from pandemic challenges. That has included working with Southern Living magazine on a lengthy feature article in fall 2023 that continues to attract visitors to the area, as well as working with numerous travel writers in the Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., areas to reach tourists looking for nearby weekend trips. Harrisonburg Tourism has promoted key local events, such as the ESPN Gameday visit to James Madison University, and other local collaborations such as a new addition to Rocktown Trails at Hillendale Park.



(Above) The Hardesty-Higgins House Visitor Center is located at 212 S. Main St.

“We diversified our marketing strategy in 2023 focusing on public relations and travel writers in addition to paid ads to help drive visitors to the area,” Harrisonburg Tourism Manager Jennifer Bell explained. “We reached out to metro areas where visitors can drive for a long weekend getaway and placed digital ads and ads in sports programs which have a long shelf-life by sports fans in order to draw more people.”

Increased tourism spending brings positive impacts to local community members. A typical Virginia household paid \$955 less in state and local taxes for services they received in 2023 due to tourism spending in the state, according to Tourism Economics.

Harrisonburg Tourism serves the community by promoting Harrisonburg as an attractive tourist destination, supporting local tourism-related businesses, providing promotional materials to showcase Harrisonburg, working with travel professionals to schedule meetings and conferences, and managing the Hardesty-Higgins Visitor Center.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 55,990 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.

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