



HARRISONBURG | VA FRIENDLY BY NATURE



For Immediate Release – Sept. 27, 2023

Contact: Jennifer Bell, Harrisonburg Tourism Manager
540.421.9609
Jennifer.Bell@harrisonburgva.gov

With \$239M in tourism spending in 2022, City sees big jump from pre-pandemic totals

HARRISONBURG, Va. – The numbers are in, and it's clear tourism has returned to Harrisonburg in a big way.

New data from Tourism Economics released recently through the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) shows that Harrisonburg saw visitor spending reach \$239 million in 2022 – an 11 percent increase from the year prior and a 15 percent increase from pre-pandemic numbers seen in 2019 before many travelers put plans on hold due to COVID-19. Additionally, tourism-supported jobs in The Friendly City reached 2,629 positions, which nearly matches pre-pandemic numbers, and local tourism-related local taxes collected reached \$12.5 million.

The news is validation for Harrisonburg Tourism and Visitor Services, which works hard to attract visitors to the community by highlighting everything the area has to offer – especially outdoor recreation.



(Above) Shoppers in Downtown Harrisonburg. Tourism spending increased by 11 percent in 2022 compared to 2021.

“We utilized grant funds and other funds to increase advertising efforts and promote Harrisonburg in new outlets ranging from *Outside Magazine* to ads on buses in the D.C. metro area,” Harrisonburg Tourism Manager Jennifer Bell explained. A lot of that effort focused on the area’s natural beauty and outdoor attractions, with Harrisonburg being the perfect place to stay, eat and shop while visiting nearby forests, parks and trails. Harrisonburg Tourism released an online Trail Guide which was followed by a printed Trail Guide earlier this year.

“Harrisonburg is the outdoor adventure capital of the Shenandoah Valley,” Bell added.

Harrisonburg Tourism is a division under the Economic Development Department which serves the citizens of Harrisonburg by promoting the city as an attractive tourist destination, supporting Harrisonburg’s 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 mission of Harrisonburg Tourism is to promote Harrisonburg as an attractive travel destination and enhance The Friendly City’s public image as a dynamic place to live, work and visit. Through increased tourism the department strengthens the local economy and provides opportunities for local businesses.

Find more information on Harrisonburg Tourism and the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Trail Guide at <https://www.visitharrisonburgva.com/>.

More Information On Recent Virginia Tourism Data:

According to the VTC, tourism in Virginia generated \$30.3 billion in visitor spending in 2022, an increase of 20.3 percent from 2021, exceeding 2019 levels by 4.4 percent. The tourism industry in Virginia directly supported 210,721 jobs in 2022, an increase of more than 25,000 jobs relative to 2021, but still down about 30,000 jobs relative to 2019.

The leading tourism sectors in Virginia are recreation and food and beverage, which have exceeded 2019 levels by 10 percent. With the additional marketing dollars that came through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, Virginia and its localities continued to see growth in visitor spending.

Tourism spending at these levels brings a significant positive impact to Virginia residents. It is estimated that a typical Virginia household paid \$880 less in taxes for the services they received in 2022 due to tourism spending in the state. *(Data is from Tourism Economics and is based on visitor spending from trips taken 50 miles or more away from home.)*

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 55,700 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.

###