



Hotel/Motel Tax collections in 2018 rose in another record-breaking year for Fairbanks tourism industry Fairbanks had four consecutive record-breaking years of hotel/motel tax collections. The total hotel/motel tax collections (combined total of the Fairbanks North Star Borough, including the cities of Fairbanks and North Pole) have increased year-over-year:

- 5% increase in 2015
- 9% increase in 2016 when collections broke the \$5 million mark for the first time
- nearly 3% increase in 2017
- and nearly 6% increase in 2018.

The growth in hotel/motel tax collections has been primarily attributable to growth in winter tourism during this period. When analyzing summer and winter bed tax collections from 2008 through 2017, the average growth of the five-month May through September summer period was flat, whereas the seven-month October through April winter period grew an average of nearly 6%. In 2008, winter collections accounted for 26% of the total collections; whereas in 2017, winter accounted for 38% of the total collections. Winter 2017 collections broke the \$2 million mark for the first time. The lion's share of collections continues to be during the summer period.

However, for the first time in well more than a decade of record-keeping, winter collections decreased slightly by 1% between 2017 and 2018. Despite this dip, 2018 is the second highest year for winter collections with 2017 being the highest. Summer collections increased a significant 10% between the two years; 2018 was the highest ever for summer collections with 2008 as the second highest.

To access the Explore Fairbanks Annual Report for 2018, go to <https://www.explorefairbanks.com/about-explore-fairbanks/what-we-do/annual-report>.



2019 Board of Directors are ready to roll after they pause for a group photo outside of the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center following their January Board meeting. Of the 17 board members, 13 are elected for three-year terms with term limits to represent specific sectors of the tourism industry; two are appointed for one-year terms; and two serve as *ex officio* members representing the City of Fairbanks and Fairbanks North Star Borough. If you'd like more info on how to become a board member, email Judy Dellinger at jdellinger@explorefairbanks.com.



Preparing for new United flights

Representatives from Fairbanks International Airport (FAI) and Explore Fairbanks pose with operations personnel for United Airlines in early January as they prepped for summer flights. United Airlines announced new five-hour, San Francisco-to-Fairbanks direct flights from June 6 to September 3, operating three days/week. United's San Francisco flights were given impetus by a \$750,000 grant awarded to FAI through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) to help improve airline service. Explore Fairbanks assumed responsibility via a Memorandum of Understanding with FAI to take responsibility for the coordination of cash and in-kind community

partner commitments. Explore Fairbanks contributed \$40,000 of the \$70,000 cash match raised by the community to accompany the grant application and, over a two-year period, has committed a minimum of \$48,000 of the \$127,450 in-kind commitments. Explore Fairbanks is aggressively marketing both the inbound and outbound United flights direct from San Francisco and Denver hubs. The five-and-a-half-hour Denver service will be in operation from June 7 to September 2, also operating three days/week. United has been offering nonstop summer seasonal service from Fairbanks to Chicago since 2013. The daily service began on April 29 and will continue to October 10, an extension of more than two months over the summer 2018 schedule. Fairbanks is also served seasonally with direct flights to Minneapolis with Delta Airlines, and year-round with service to Seattle with both Delta and Alaska airlines. Also, in summer 2019, Alaska Airlines is offering an additional fifth daily flight to Seattle, resulting in a 17 percent increase.



140 job seekers meet with hiring managers at the Tourism Works for Fairbanks Job Fair, part of the Annual Interior Tourism Conference, held January 23 at the Westmark Fairbanks Hotel and Conference Center. The job fair was free and open to the public. Interested job seekers ages 16 and up learned about fun and challenging winter and summer jobs. Free customer service classes were provided during the event. Sponsored by Explore Fairbanks and Northern Alaska Tour Company, the fair featured 14 employers.



Annual gala honors volunteers and meeting ambassadors On February 26, Explore Fairbanks celebrated the donated hours Golden Heart Greeter Volunteers and the economic impact of meetings secured and coordinated by local meeting ambassadors. In 2018 Explore Fairbanks had 28 year-round Golden Heart Greeter volunteers plus 11 seasonal for a total of 39 active volunteers. They assisted with 24 conventions, community events, and Personal Greets to provide 376 hours of service. In 2018 Explore Fairbanks tracked statistics on 22 meetings or events that were brought home to the community by a combined total of 37 Golden Heart Meeting Ambassadors. These events brought an Estimated Direct Attendee spending amount of more than \$1.6 million to Fairbanks.



Festive annual banquet recognizes achievements of partners and other individuals and organizations for their support of the local visitor industry at the 2019 Annual Awards Banquet on April 26 at Aurora Pointe Activity Center. Awards were presented as follows: Golden Heart Award to Connie Parks-Karl, for her exceptional hospitality, commitment and effort to Fairbanks' visitors; Aurora Award to the Salmon Berry Tours, for its contributions to the development of the Fairbanks visitor industry; Jim and Mary Binkley Award to Borealis Basecamp, for their creation, innovation, courage and entrepreneurialism in the introduction of a new product;

and the Raven Award to Dr. Larry Hinzman (represented by Marie-Sylvestre Belanger), for promoting a distinct local, statewide, national and international interest and awareness among prospective visitors. Colleen and Leo Zeek were recognized as Golden Heart Greeters of the Year for dedicating themselves to helping make a visitor's experience special and memorable. Staff service awards included Judy Dellinger, Bob Eley, Jerry Evans, and Scott McCrea for five years of service; Kasey Gillam for 15 years of service; and Deb Hickok for 20 years of service.



Where in the world is Explore Fairbanks? The team works fast and furiously to spread the word about the Fairbanks region as a visitor destination. Here's some highlights from January through April:

When	EF Team	Where	What	Who
January				
23	VSPD*	Local	Interior Tourism Conference	64 local tourism businesses; 85 attendees
27-2/2	Communications	Local	Media Tour	2 domestic media
25-30	Tourism	Louisville, KY	American Bus Association Convention	34 domestic tour operators
25 & 26	Tourism	Local	World Trade Center AK-China Conference	China General Consul delegation
29-30	European Contractor	Zurich, Switzerland	Sales calls and Visit USA Seminar	3 tour operators; 350 travel trade at the seminar
varies	China Contractor	China and Taiwan	Sales calls	6 tour operators
	VSPD	Local	Eielson AFB Right Start Information Fair	35 attendees
23	VSPD	Local	Tourism Works for Fairbanks Job Fair	140 job- seeking attendees; 14 employers
Jan 31- Feb 3	European Contractor	Reykavik, Iceland	Mid Atlantic Tradeshow	25 travel trade agents / operators; 1 media
February				
	M&C**	Juneau, Anchorage	Alaska Federation of Natives Board Meetings	Ongoing to plan 2019 AFN in Fairbanks
3-6; 18-21; 20-24	Communications	Local	Media Tours	3 domestic media tours with 5 media
	VSPD	Local	Eielson AFB Right Start Information Fair	35 attendees
25-27	Tourism	Boise, ID	2019 GoWest Summit	51 tour operators, travel agents, wholesalers and online travel providers
12-14	Tourism	Quebec City, Canada	Routes America Conference	7 airlines
24-3/1	Tourism	Local; Denali Park	Familiarization (FAM) Tour	19 travel agents
21-25	Tourism	Denver, CO	Travel & Adventure Consumer Show	Consumer show to promote new flights from DEN to FAI
varies	China Contractor	China and	Sales calls; destination training	Sales calls-6 tour companies; training-

		Taiwan		25 staff
March				
	M&C	Local	Sales calls	5 meeting planners
2/26-3/3	Communications	Local	Media Tour	1 domestic media
varies	VSPD	Local	EAFB Right Start Info Fair; Ft WW Info Fair	EAFB-38 attendees; Ft WW-25 attendees
10-15; 13-20	Tourism	Local	FAM Tours	24 domestic and international tour operators
25-28	Tourism	Anchorage	N. American Journeys Active America China	24 travel agents and tour operators from China
3-4	European Contractor	Copenhagen, Denmark	Visit USA Workshop	165 travel agents; 70 media attendees
6-10	European Contractor	Berlin, Germany	ITB Berlin	37 travel trade; 13 media
varies	China Contractor	China, Taiwan	Sales Calls	6 tour companies
23-24	Tourism	San Francisco, CA	San Francisco Travel & Adventure Show	Consumer show to promote new flights from SFO to FAI
24-25	Tourism	Local	Active America China FAM tour	8 tour operators
30	VSPD	Anchorage	Summer Showcase	500 attendees
26-28	M&C	Local	Meeting Planner Site Inspections	20 local meeting planners
31-4/2	Communications	Vancouver, WA	Travel and Words	Travel journalists
April				
2-5	Tourism	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Cruise360 Trade Show	Destination training for 125 travel agents
4	VSPD	Anchorage	Partner Breakfast	15 attendees
8-11	European Contractor	Austria	AVIAREPS Road Show	150 travel agents at 4 locations
9- 2	Administration	Washington DC	US Travel Association	Destination Capitol Hill and Board Meeting
10-12, 15-19	Tourism	Korea and Japan	Alaska Sales Mission	22 tour operators, 10 travel agents, 9 media, 3 airlines
10-15	China Contractor/Tourism	Local	FAM Tour	10 tour operators and one social media key opinion leader from China
16-18	M&C	Anchorage	Meeting Planner Lunch & Mini Trade Show; Sales Calls	31 planners
varies	China Contractor	China, Taiwan	Sales Calls	70 tour companies
30, 5/2	VSPD	Local	Summer Sizzles Partner Spotlight	12 businesses, 21 attendees

* Visitor Services and Partnership Development

** Meetings and Conventions



Explore Fairbanks overseas contractors diligently and enthusiastically promote Fairbanks Pictured is long-term contractor Elke Brosin representing Fairbanks in northern Europe at the Visit USA Workshop in Copenhagen, Denmark, in early March. Newly hired China-based contractor, East West Marketing, brought a contingent of tour operators and media for a first-hand experience in the Fairbanks region in early April.



Lastly, I was honored to be elected to a two-year term on the **Board of Directors of the U.S. Travel Association**, a national, non-profit organization representing all components of the travel industry. U.S. Travel's mission is to increase travel to and within the United States. I attended my first Board meeting on April 11 and 12 in Washington DC. Here I am pictured with Kari Kornfeind Westlund, a former Fairbanksan and head of Explore Fairbanks, who has served as CEO of Travel Lane County in Eugene, Oregon, for more than 20 years.

Thank you for supporting tourism.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deb Hickok'.

Deb Hickok
President and CEO
Explore Fairbanks