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Photo caption: "The Power of Travel" graphic is provided by the U.S. Travel Association depicts how the trickle-down economic benefits of tourism affect even non-tourism-related industries and all local residents.

Johnston County Exceeds 11% Growth in Visitor Spending

(Smithfield, N.C., August 29, 2023) — Travel statewide rose 15.2 percent in 2022 to set a record in visitor spending. That increase followed a 2021 turnaround from the pandemic’s 2020 peak, which brought a devastating drop of 32 percent in visitor spending in NC. Total spending by domestic and international visitors in North Carolina reached \$33.3 billion in 2022.

In Johnston County, visitors spent \$284.93 million in 2022, which is an 11.5% increase over 2021 spending. This places the county 28th in the state in total spending and 32nd in spending growth rate. In the Triangle Region, Johnston County is ranked third in total visitor spending behind Wake (\$2,951.56m) and Durham (\$1,018.33m), and fourth being Orange County (\$236.29m).

“Although these numbers are encouraging, tourism recovery continues to be impacted by the higher costs of goods and services, and workforce shortages for our tourism partners. Many small businesses have cut back hours and raised prices to overcome some of these challenges. We continue to hear the real struggles from our hospitality industry, and we encourage all of Johnston County to support your local businesses – it means a lot for their prosperity,” stated Donna Bailey-Taylor, President/CEO, Johnston County Visitors Bureau.

What does \$284.93 million in visitor spending mean for the county?

- Visitors to Johnston County spend \$780,630 a day in local businesses such as hotels, retail and outlet shopping, attractions, dining, and travel services.

- \$11.9m in state tax and \$9m in local tax receipts which provide county services and reduce the tax burden on every household in the county by almost \$300.
- Johnston County’s visitor spending represents 9% of the state’s tourism economic impact.
- Room tax collection paid by visitors is the sole source of operating funds for the Visitors Bureau’s marketing campaigns; no local county taxes fund the bureau.
- More than 2,000 people are employed in the tourism sector, with labor income more than \$70m.

Based on tourism industry segments, visitors spent in the following categories: (millions)

Lodging	\$59.77
Food & Beverage	\$96.83
Recreation	\$36.43
Retail	\$23.56**
Transportation	\$68.33
Total	\$284.93

*** (the VisitNC report excludes retail outlet spending, related sales tax from retail, and jobs at Carolina Premium Outlets as the research is not customized for Johnston County)*

“Tourism is more than an essential industry for the state,” said Visit NC’s Wit Tuttell. “It’s an economic development force in all 100 of our counties, the places where travelers experience our scenic beauty and adventure, our cuisine and unique culture, our history and the dynamic forces that create our enduring appeal. Our visitor spending reports underscore the value of these assets in terms of jobs and tax revenues that relieve some of the burden on residents. We look forward to continued success in welcoming people to experience places they won’t find anywhere else.”

The [visitor spending study](#), commissioned by [Visit NC](#) and conducted by Tourism Economics in collaboration with the U.S. Travel Association, provides preliminary estimates of domestic and international traveler expenditures as well as employment, payroll income, and state and local tax revenues directly generated by these expenditures.

To learn more about tourism in Johnston County, the Visitors Bureau provides additional information on the website, www.johnstoncountync.org/about. Residents and community leaders are encouraged to sign up for our monthly partner-facing newsletter, “*Tourism Does That*”, [here](#).

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