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Paducah's Tourism Industry Leads Region and Ranks Among Kentucky's Top Markets

PADUCAH, KY, June 12, 2025 — Paducah's tourism economy reached new heights in 2024, setting the pace for the region and reinforcing its position as one of Kentucky's top destinations. In 2024, McCracken County generated \$321.6 million in total visitor spending, contributing more than 34% of all tourism dollars in the fifteen counties making up Kentucky's Western Waterlands region. That's the highest share of any county in the region, and the seventh highest county share in the state.

"What's so interesting about Paducah, and what brought me back after many years living away, is how this city has the ability to draw people from all over the world to come and visit," said Sara Bradley, owner of Freight House and member of the Paducah Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) Board of Directors. "Tourism in this city is such a driver for the economy, the arts, and cultural exchange."

Understanding the meaning of "economic impact" is key. The \$321.6 million attributed to tourism in McCracken County doesn't reflect a single profit or payout; it represents the cumulative effect of thousands of visitor transactions across the community. These dollars are spent at local hotels, restaurants, shops, attractions, and gas stations, supporting the people who work there and the small businesses that make Paducah vibrant.

"I see visitors from across the globe and their impressions of Paducah are always well beyond what they initially expected," said Landee Bryant, owner of Bricolage Art Collective in Downtown Paducah. "The CVB gets them here and then we have the distinct privilege of showing each visitor our own hospitality, curating a network of people sharing their experiences across the country."

According to the Kentucky Department of Tourism's annual economic impact report, Paducah's vibrant mix of arts, history, dining, and local experiences supports 2,456 local jobs, creates over \$71 million in labor income, and brings in \$26.1 million in state and local taxes that directly benefit local schools, infrastructure, and community services.

Looking ahead, the Paducah CVB is deepening its commitment to growth through targeted marketing and sales efforts. With recent investments in research, digital marketing, sales missions, and visitor experience enhancements, the team at the CVB is poised to connect with travelers in meaningful ways.

“As we reflect on a record-breaking year for tourism, we’re also looking ahead with clear intention,” said Alyssa Phares, Executive Director of the Paducah CVB. “We’ve launched a fresh marketing strategy that puts the many ways to experience Paducah front and center—from a new visitor guide and marketing campaigns to immersive storytelling that connects with today’s traveler. These efforts celebrate our identity as a UNESCO Creative City while also supporting our local economy.”

Paducah’s success is part of a larger wave of momentum across the Commonwealth, which saw a record \$14.3 billion in total economic impact from tourism in 2024, proof that travel continues to be a powerful driver of growth for both Paducah-McCracken County and the state of Kentucky.

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