



@VisitVisalia



Media Contact: Nellie Freeborn
Nellie@VisitVisalia.com
(559) 334-0141

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC DEVASTATES VISALIA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY FOLLOWING STRONG 2019

New economic impact report highlights the importance of tourism to Visalia and Tulare County, Calif.

Visalia, Calif. (May 4, 2020) -The coronavirus pandemic has shattered Tulare County's tourism industry, which, according to Visit California's latest economic impact report, was thriving in 2019. The "California Travel Impacts" report, prepared for Visit California by Dean Runyan Associates, states that visitor spending reached \$451 million in 2019, an increase of 5.8% from the previous year, and supported 5,530 jobs in Tulare County.

Continued growth highlights how important tourism is to the region and California's economy. "Just look at the numbers. Travel supports one in nine American jobs, including 5,530 right here in Tulare County, an increase of 2.6% over the previous year," said Nellie Freeborn, executive director of Visit Visalia. The tourism economy and tourism related jobs in Tulare County showed sustained growth for the last 10 years – making it a strong decade for the local industry.

"Visitor spending generated \$17.4 million in local tax revenue in 2019, providing a stream of revenue in Tulare County to fund the community's way of life including support of essential programs, such as public safety, infrastructure and parks. This illustrates the economic power of tourism to our community and underscores the work Visit Visalia will continue to focus on as families take first steps in planning travel, when safe, to road trip friendly destinations like Visalia."

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, Tourism Economics projects California will lose \$72.1 billion in statewide travel-related spending in 2020, nearly half of what was generated last year. The study also showed the pandemic will wipe out 613,000 California jobs by the end of May, more than half the tourism industry's workforce.

Statewide, 2019 marked a record 10 years of travel-related economic growth for the state, further signaling the steady influence tourism has had on California's economy for the past decade.

Visitors to California spent \$144.9 billion in 2019, a 3.2 percent increase over 2018. The number of travel and tourism jobs increased to 1.2 million last year, an additional 13,000 jobs. Travel-generated tax revenue also grew for the 10th straight year, providing \$12.2 billion to state and local governments, a 3.4 percent increase over 2018.

"The data show just how vital tourism is to the California economy and why it must be restored when we control and ultimately overcome this deadly outbreak," said Caroline Beteta, president and CEO of Visit California, the state's tourism marketing non-profit organization. "When that time arrives, we'll be calling on Californians to become the main drivers of recovery by traveling in the state, shopping locally and visiting local restaurants, wineries and attractions. California has led the nation in its response to the health crisis, and it will lead the economic comeback."

To ensure the tourism industry rebounds in Tulare County, Visit Visalia is working with Visit California on initiatives to inspire community support and begin safe and responsible travel when the time is right.

The release of the 2019 Travel Impact Report coincides with California Tourism Month, which occurs every May following a resolution enacted by the Legislature in 2016. This week, California also joins U.S. Travel in honoring the *Spirit of Travel* for National Travel and Tourism Week. The spirit of travel isn't only found in far-off places. When residents embrace the spirit of travel by supporting local businesses and helping neighbors, they also play a key role in rebuilding their community, their state - and America.

Visit Visalia is celebrating National Travel and Tourism Week digitally, since in-person events are not an option this year. We will be highlighting our tourism partners across all our platforms throughout the week.

As well, travelers and locals are encouraged to download and use our free Zoom backgrounds from our website to share their dream travel destination, show local pride and to show support to the local travel industry. <https://www.visitvisalia.com/visalia-zoom-backgrounds>

###



@VisitVisalia



ABOUT VISIT VISALIA:

Visit Visalia is a collaboration of the Visalia Tourism Marketing District and the Visalia Convention and Visitors Bureau (VCVB) dedicated to marketing, advertising, public relations and other promotional efforts that inspire travel to the City of Visalia. Visit Visalia works closely with local lodging properties, restaurants and attractions to foster interest in Visalia as a year-round destination for leisure, family, and meeting and convention travelers. For more information about Visit Visalia go to www.VisitVisalia.com and follow VisitVisalia on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

ABOUT VISIT CALIFORNIA:

Visit California is a nonprofit organization with a mission to develop and maintain marketing programs - in partnership with the state's travel industry - that keep California top-of-mind as a premier travel destination. For more information about Visit California and for a free California Official State Visitor's Guide, go to www.visitcalifornia.com. For story ideas, media information, downloadable images, video and more, go to media.visitcalifornia.com