



Butte County's Tourism Economy Grew in 2021 with More Recovery Work Ahead

Economic Impact Data Released to Coincide with California Tourism Month

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. (May 9, 2022) – In partnership with Visit California and timed to coincide with California Tourism Month happening in May, Explore Butte County reports that the local tourism economy made great strides toward recovery in 2021, yet more work remains to fully restore the tourism economy in the county and across the state.

According to Visit California's newly released report "The Economic Impact of Travel" prepared by Dean Runyan Associates, below are topline details about the economic impact of tourism across the state in 2021:

- Visitor spending in 2021 increased by 55 percent over 2020 to \$301.3 million in Butte County
- Visitor-generated tax revenue in Butte County increased to \$6.7 million in 2021
- Tourism jobs in Butte County rose 15.5 percent to 3,630 in 2021
- Butte County's visitor spending number remained just 81 percent of the levels recorded in 2019, before the pandemic lockdown and subsequent waves of government restrictions.

"While it is promising that direct travel spending in Butte County in 2021 is up 55 percent from 2020, it is still at a low for travel spending for the years between 2012 and 2021 (note the highest recorded travel spending in Butte was in 2019 at \$382.5 million)," said Carolyn Denero, Explore Butte County Chief Executive Officer. "Further insights show that visitor spending by commodity purchased was at an all-time high for accommodations in 2021 at \$79.6 million. At the same time, arts, entertainment & recreation, and local transportation & gas were at 10-year lows, data which shows there's more progress to be made but hope on the horizon."

An upcoming local highlight that is welcome news to travelers and residents looking for local getaways is that Hotel Katerina – an upscale, 83,000-sf, 112 room hotel by the Oxford Collection – recently broke ground in Chico (1930 Baney Lane) on May 2. With sophisticated guest rooms, multi-function meeting and event spaces, and more, Hotel Katerina will have a California-casual feel with a nod to the equestrian style of décor.

California's visitor spending levels in 2021 amounted to just 69 percent of the record \$144.9 billion reported in 2019. Employment levels in California's tourism industry remained at only about three-quarters of the 1.2 million workers recorded in 2019.

"The increases in 2021 overall show Visit California's marketing programs are working," said Caroline Beteta, President and CEO of Visit California, the state's tourism marketing organization.

Source: Explore Butte County (www.ExploreButteCounty.com)

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“After a devastating 2020, visitor spending is on the stairway to recovery, but we still have a long way to go. Cities continue to suffer without the critical international and group business segments.”

Aided by marketing stimulus funds approved by the Legislature in mid-2021, Visit California has launched initiatives to promote leisure and business travel across the state, including a new domestic brand campaign with “Am I Dreaming?” that premiered during the Super Bowl pregame show. The organization has also reestablished marketing programs in priority international markets to tap into pent-up demand and inspire travelers to choose California for their first long-haul vacations. Locally, Explore Butte County launched a number of marketing initiatives since last year, including the hugely popular #HikeButteCA digital pass program in 2021, the How We Winter campaign celebrating the winter holiday season, and the all-new Adventure Pass that debuted earlier this year.

Economic projections, prepared by Tourism Economics and released by Visit California earlier this year, showed travel-related spending will reach \$144.6 billion in 2023, nearly the same as 2019. If achieved, the tourism economy will have returned to 2019 levels a year sooner than projected a year ago. Spending now is projected to reach \$155.9 billion in 2024.

“The always-enduring rural allure of Butte County as an outdoor leisure destination, in conjunction with post-disaster recovery work within our community, will collectively and assuredly result in positive economic impacts,” said Bruce Spangler, President of Explore Butte County and General Manager of Lake Oroville Holiday Inn Express & Suites. “As a connected community, we continue working diligently to uplift our local businesses and tourism industry as we continue on our path to full recovery.”

For more about information about Explore Butte County, please visit www.explorebuttecounty.com or follow on social media – Facebook at www.facebook.com/explorebutteca and @ExploreButteCountyCA on Instagram and @ExploreButteCA on Twitter.

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 visitcalifornia.com. For story ideas, media information, downloadable images, video and more, go to media.visitcalifornia.com.

About Explore Butte County

Explore Butte County is a nonprofit destination marketing organization with a mission to inspire people to visit Butte County, create tourism opportunities that contribute to economic vitality, and build community through partnerships. Serving six jurisdictions that include Biggs, Chico, Gridley, Oroville, Paradise and the unincorporated county, Explore Butte County is primarily funded by a local lodging assessment and works to promote Butte County to all travelers regionally, statewide, nationally, and internationally. For more, visit www.explorebuttecounty.com.

PRESS: Download photos [here](#). Interviews available upon request.

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