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Travel & Tourism

Oregon's tourism comeback: Travel, spending and economic impact are on the rise



Pioneer Courthouse Square, with its array of programming, entices passers-by to spend time in downtown.

COURTESY OF PIONEER COURTHOUSE SQUARE

By [Andy Giegerich](#) and [Brandon Sawyer](#) – Portland Business Journal
May 28, 2024

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No matter what the landscape in Portland proper is like these days, the city remains Oregon's top tourism driver.

So reports Travel Oregon, which, as demonstrated in the various charts on these two pages, spells out the degree to which the Rose City affects our robust, if pandemic-hampered, visitor economy. Some 38% of the dollars that tourism contributes to Oregon's economy are spent in the Portland region.

The \$5.4 billion spent in Portland represents a healthy chunk of change for a region constantly in need of tax revenue, positive public image reinforcement and, just as important, jobs. While the Oregon picture remains positive overall, it's instructive to compare the local figures to our national peers.

The Travel Oregon Economic Impact of Travel report, released last week, indicates that the travel sector absorbed huge hits due to the pandemic. Total travel spending dropped by 47% between year-end 2019 and 2020.

Only last year did the recovery begin resembling the pre-Covid days, with travel spending jumping by 4% over 2022 and actually beating 2019's overall travel spending by 7% (when adjusted for inflation, it's actually just 0.5% higher over the last five years).

Here are some of the numbers behind the state's tourism economy.

TRAVEL TO OREGON IN 2023

\$14B

Total travel spending in Oregon in 2023

0.6%

Percent increase 2022-23 in Oregon travel spending

-1.7%

Percent decrease 2022-23 in inflation-adjusted travel spending in Oregon

-9.6%

Percent decrease 2019-23 in inflation-adjusted travel spending in Oregon

118.5K

Travel-related Oregon employment

\$4.5B

Travel-related Oregon earnings

6.9%

Percent increase 2022-23 in travel-related earnings in Oregon

1.5%

Percent increase 2022-23 in state and local tax revenue generated by Oregon travel spending

0.1%

3.8M

U.S. visitors who traveled to Oregon by plane 2023

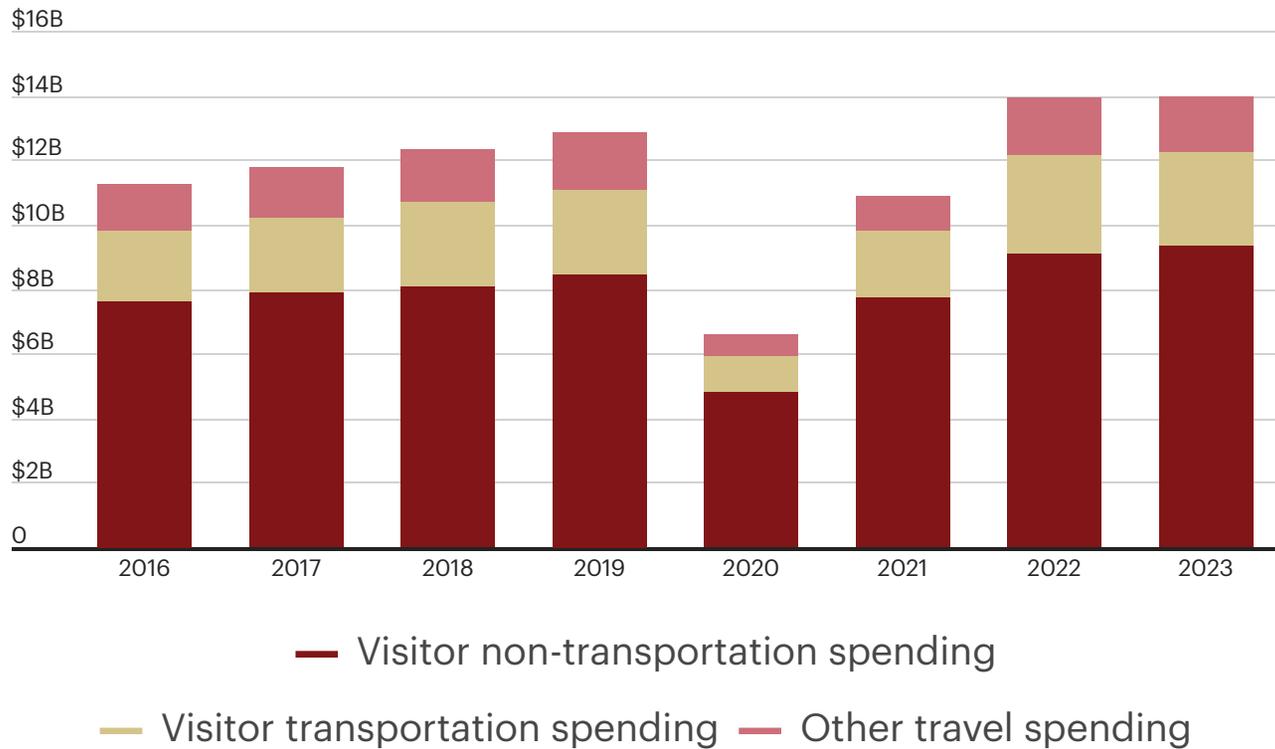
3%

Percent increase 2022-23 in air travel visitors to Oregon

-450K

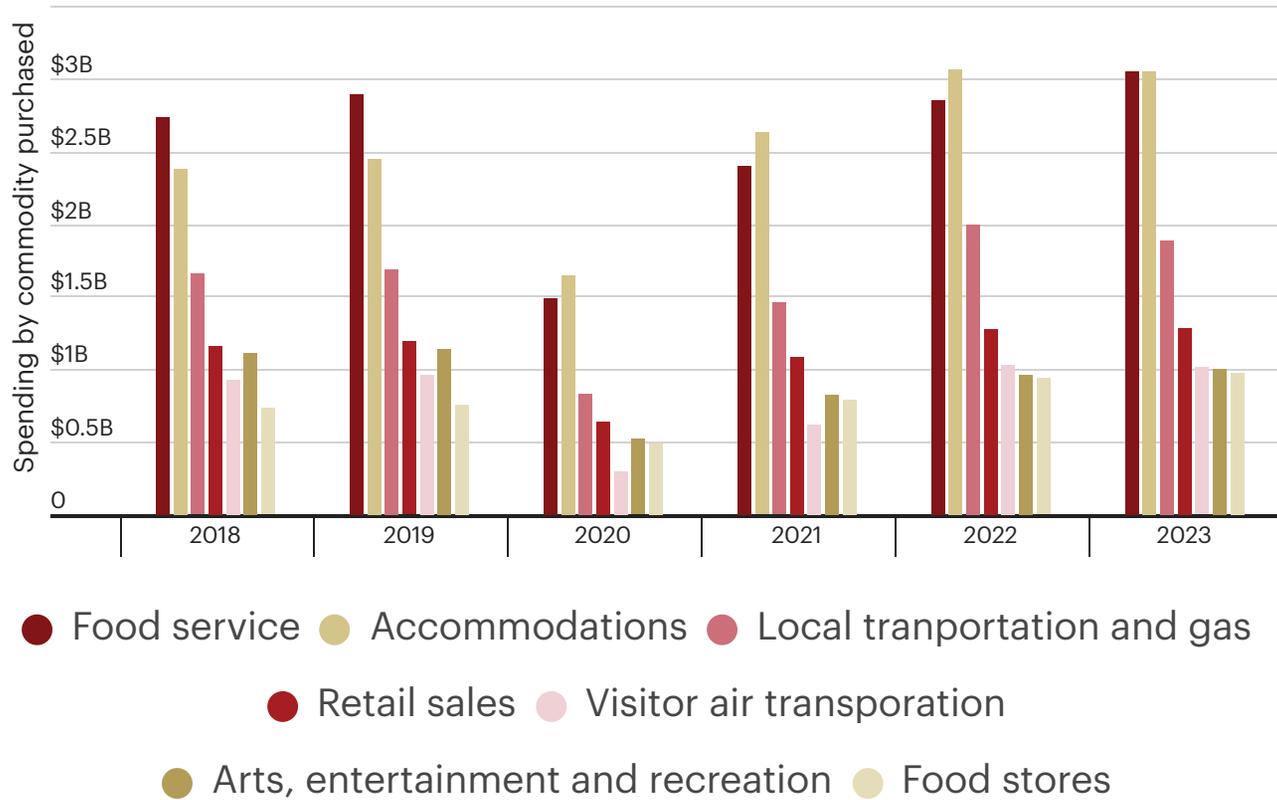
Shortfall in air travel visitors to Oregon 2019-23

Travel spending in Oregon has increased 9.1% pre-pandemic 2019, but fell 9.6% when adjusted for inflation



Oregon visitors spent about the same on food service and accommodations last year

\$3.5B



Oregon visitor spending by type of travel accommodation changed little since 2019, but involved much more overnight stays in hotels and short-term rentals than 20 years ago

Travel-related employment in Oregon only reached the same level in 2023 as 2019 but earnings rose 17.7% over that time, not accounting for inflation

Oregon travel-related employment by industry in 2003, 2019 & 2023

State and local tax revenue from travel spending in Oregon rose 8.5% since pre-pandemic 2019

Overnight travel party volume to the Oregon fell by 0.5% in 2023 but was 3.3% above pre-pandemic 2019

More than half of 2023 travel spending occurred in Portland and the Willamette Valley while travel-related employment was more dispersed across state regions

Source: Dean Runyan Associates, The Economic Impact of Travel in Oregon.

TRAVEL TO PORTLAND REGION IN 2023

Travel spending in the Portland region grew 1.5% in 2023 but was still down 4.6% from pre-pandemic 2019, not counting inflation

*Represents a portion of resident spending on air travel to leave Oregon and travel-arrangement activities.

Overnight travel party volume to the Portland region rose a mere 0.6% in 2023 and was 3.9% below pre-pandemic 2019

Source: Dean Runyan Associates, The Economic Impact of Travel in Oregon.