

PRESS RELEASE

TOURISM EXPENDITURES IN PORTAGE COUNTY INCREASES NEARLY 7% *Portage County ranks as 6th largest increase of all 72 counties*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STEVENS POINT, Wis. (May 11, 2009) -- Portage County saw the sixth largest increase of tourism expenditures for all 72 counties in Wisconsin for 2008. Travelers to Portage County spent \$140,940,740, up 6.95 percent from \$131,784,912 in 2007.

"This is a complement to the area and all that it has to offer, especially in the face of the current economy. Showing any gain is a credit to all the people in the hospitality industry in Portage County," said Tom Barrett, executive director of the Stevens Point Area Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Among the contributing factors to the increase in Portage County was the strong meeting and convention business, and continuing growth in the amateur and youth sports tournament market.

Statewide, total traveler spending exceeded \$13 billion, despite spring rains, a summer of high gas prices, and a plummeting economy that affected the last quarter. Spending by travelers statewide posted a gain of 2.7% in 2008, according to the annual industry survey conducted by Davidson-Peterson Associates, Inc. released by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism on Sunday.

"Even as our nation contended with an unprecedented economic crisis and severe weather in 2008, Wisconsin's \$13 billion tourism industry remained one of the core strengths of the state's economy," said Tourism Secretary Kelli A. Trumble. "This is a testament to the power of travel and its impact on our state's economy, generating jobs, wages and tax revenues for the state. It also proves what we've always known; that our tourism industry provides a vacation experience so valued by our visitors that it is not something that they are willing to part with easily."

Each year, the Department of Tourism works with a national research firm whose expertise in tracking and studying the economic impact of tourism is well established. That firm is Davidson-Peterson Associates of Maine. The trend line they've established for Wisconsin is accurate, in that they've used the same methodology for nearly 20 years. They also conduct thousands of face-to-face and phone interviews to arrive at the numbers.

The Stevens Point Area Convention and Visitors Bureau is an economic and community development organization whose purpose is to expand Portage County's economy by attracting conventions, sporting events and leisure tourists to Portage County. Millions of dollars from visitor spending and increased tax revenues can be generated to increase commerce, sustain jobs and to create a desirable destination. The CVB provides visitors with state and local information including travel guides, maps and brochures. To receive more information on the Stevens Point Area Convention and Visitors Bureau and their services visit www.stevenspointarea.com or stop by the Visitor Information Center located at 340 N. Division Street, Stevens Point.

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