



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## CUYAHOGA COUNTY VISITATION & TOURISM SALES INCREASED IN 2023; GROWTH RATES MIRROR PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

*Industry growth returns to sustainable rate, keeps pace with statewide increases*

**CLEVELAND** (Oct. 2, 2024) – Destination Cleveland, the destination marketing and management organization for Cuyahoga County, today announced that leisure and business travel generated **18.34 million visits to Cuyahoga County in 2023**. This represents a **2.2% increase over 2022<sup>i</sup>**, which mirrors the State of Ohio’s 2023 visitor growth rate (2.3%). The year-over-year increase is identical to the County’s 2019 (pre-pandemic) growth rate and reflects a return to sustainable, pre-pandemic growth.

“In 2023, Cuyahoga County’s tourism industry moved beyond recovery and continued to increase its value to our region’s economy,” said David Gilbert, president and CEO of Destination Cleveland. “Additionally, the consistent and continued growth in key metrics illustrates the impact and importance of the Cleveland visitor brand, which we launched 10 years ago. Since that launch, we’ve seen growth not only in visitation, direct spending and employment income but also in consideration of Cleveland as a place to visit. As the steward of the industry, Destination Cleveland continues to collaborate with our hospitality and civic partners to positively impact the region’s long-term equitable growth.”

Since the launch of the Cleveland visitor brand in 2014, visitation is up more than 8%; direct spending is up 24%; employment income has grown by an impressive 55%; and taxes generated are up 40% – translating into direct savings for Cuyahoga County residents.

Data from Tourism Economics, a division of Oxford Economics, shows that both day and overnight visitor volumes grew, with day visits increasing 2.5% and overnight visits up 1.3%. Day visitors represented 58% of the total number of visitors to the region, while 42% were overnight visitors, which is consistent with Cuyahoga County’s visit distribution since 2019.

### **2023 Direct Sales and Economic Impact**

Visitor spending continued to contribute to the local economy<sup>ii</sup>. Travel and tourism in Cuyahoga County accounted for **\$6.7 billion in direct sales** and generated a total economic impact of \$10.9 billion when indirect and induced spending are included. This increase in direct spending represents a 3.7% increase from 2022 and is slightly greater than 2019’s pre-pandemic direct sales growth of 3.3%.

### **2023 Employment, Taxes Generated and Resident Tax Offset**

More than 68,100 locals whose jobs support tourism in Cuyahoga County took home \$3.7 billion in employment income, a 6.6% increase over 2022. Tourism-related jobs account for 7% of all jobs in the county<sup>iii</sup>.

Additionally, tourism generated **\$1.5 billion in federal, state and local taxes**, resulting in a **savings of \$1,380 in taxes for each Cuyahoga County household**.

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## **Recovery to 2019 Performance and 2024 Outlook**

In 2023, all key performance indicators for Cuyahoga County's tourism industry increased for a third straight year, infusing money into the economy. The increases are in line with or surpass the pace of pre-pandemic tourism growth in the County:

- **2023 visit volume** reached 94% of pre-pandemic (2019) visits. This represents a 2.2% change over 2022 – mirroring the visitation growth rate from 2018 to 2019.
- **2023 visitor direct spending** reached 104% of 2019 levels. This represents a 3.7% increase from 2022 and is slightly ahead of the 3.3% increase from 2018 to 2019.
- **Employment income** in 2023 reached 132% of 2019 levels. This 6.6% increase from 2022 far surpassed the 2019 growth rate of 1.7%.

“Visitors to Cleveland spent \$6.7 billion in 2023, a new peak that continues to benefit local residents and businesses,” said Adam Sacks, president of Tourism Economics. “Visitor economic impacts rose 3.7% in 2023, reaching 4.5% ahead of pre-pandemic, 2019 levels. Amidst a slowing economy, the travel sector is returning to more sustainable growth trends, but consumer and corporate fundamentals point to further growth potential for Cleveland's visitor economy.”

When looking at 2024 lodging performance data (the most real-time indicator for the industry), Cuyahoga County's tourism recovery is on pace with competitor drive markets and only slightly trails the U.S. overall. Through August 2024, hotel performance<sup>iv</sup> in Cuyahoga County is strong in key categories:

- **2024 YTD Hotel Occupancy** (through Aug. 2024) is 62.1%, which is 98% of 2019 (pre-pandemic) numbers. This positions Cleveland at third highest in its competitive set (Indianapolis, Detroit, Cincinnati, Columbus, Pittsburgh, Louisville, Milwaukee) and slightly below the national YTD occupancy rate of 63.9%
- **2024 YTD Hotel ADR (average daily rate)** is \$136.92 – putting Cleveland third highest among its peers. This ADR is 128% of 2019 levels. The national year-to-date ADR is \$158.18.

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**ABOUT DESTINATION CLEVELAND:** *Destination Cleveland is Cleveland's destination marketing and management organization. The private, non-profit organization's mission is to stimulate economic growth by attracting people and connecting them to experiences that illustrate Cleveland's diversity, creativity and contagious passion. In 2023, visitation increased for the third straight year to 18.34 million visits. For more information, visit [www.thisiscleveland.com](http://www.thisiscleveland.com).*

<sup>i</sup> Metrics sourced from Cuyahoga County's 2023 Visitor Volume study produced by MMGY Travel Intelligence as well as the 2023 Tourism Economics Cleveland Visitation Report.

<sup>ii</sup> Data sourced from Tourism Economics, a division of Oxford Economics and a world leader in global forecasting and quantitative analysis.

<sup>iii</sup> Data sourced from Tourism Economics, a division of Oxford Economics and a world leader in global forecasting and quantitative analysis.

<sup>iv</sup> Data sourced from STR, Inc., a leading provider of premium data benchmarking, analytics and marketplace insights for the global hospitality industry