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DESTINATION CLEVELAND REPORTS 17% VISITATION GROWTH FOR CUYAHOGA COUNTY IN 2021; ALL PERFORMANCE METRICS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED AFTER 2020 INDUSTRY COLLAPSE

*Cuyahoga County visitation growth outperformed State of Ohio 2021 growth;
2022 performance on track for full travel and tourism recovery in 2024*

CLEVELAND (Oct. 11, 2022) – Destination Cleveland, the destination marketing and management organization for Cuyahoga County, today announced the county recorded **16.1 million visits in 2021** for business and leisure travel, representing a **17% increase over 2020**, when the county experienced a 30% loss in visit volume due to the global pandemicⁱ. Cuyahoga County’s 2021 visitation growth was firmly above the State of Ohio’s 9%ⁱⁱ rebound yet somewhat trailing the U.S. domestic visitation growth rate of 28%ⁱⁱⁱ.

Data from Tourism Economics, a division of Oxford Economics, shows that both day and overnight visitor volumes grew with day visits growing at 3.1% and overnight visits increasing by 42.4%. 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 2019 visit distribution.

“The recovery of Cuyahoga County’s travel and tourism industry is well underway as all key performance indicators returned to an upward trajectory in 2021 – from visits and spending to employment and taxes generated,” said David Gilbert, president and CEO, Destination Cleveland. “Travel and tourism remains a key industry for Cleveland’s future. Our recovery to 2019 levels is on pace for 2024, though facing headwinds from inflation, continued staffing challenges and supply chain disruption. Despite these challenges, we are laser focused on stewarding the recovery in collaboration with the region’s hospitality businesses and our civic partners. Together, we will return the industry to its position as a growth sector.”

Direct Sales and Economic Impact

Visitors continued to have an impact on the local economy^{iv}. Travel and tourism in Cuyahoga County accounted for nearly **\$5.4 billion in direct sales**, contributing to a total economic impact of \$9.3 billion. The 23% increase in direct sales over 2020 is nearly identical to both state (+24%) and U.S. domestic (+24%) travel spending recovery in 2021. While increased visitation contributed to both direct sales and economic impact recovery reaching near pre-pandemic levels, both were primarily driven by inflation (particularly high in lodging, airfare and gas prices) and increased indirect and induced economic benefits of the 2020 and 2021 financial stimulus packages. These dollars encouraged more spending as households and businesses returned to pre-pandemic behaviors.

Employment, Taxes Generated and Resident Tax Offset

Travel and tourism produced **\$3.1 billion in employment income for locals** through about **64,000 jobs** in Cuyahoga County, accounting for about 7% of all jobs in the county^v. The increase of 7,000 jobs from 2020 represents a rebound to 93% of the county’s 2019 travel and tourism employment (69,500). This recovery puts the leisure and hospitality industry just behind the financial activities industry for employment growth in the Cleveland market in 2021 according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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The industry generated **\$1.3 billion in federal, state and local taxes**, which resulted in a **savings of nearly \$1,200 in taxes for each Cuyahoga County household**.

“Visitors drive a significant portion of the Cleveland economy with \$5.4 billion in business activity supporting 64,000 jobs. The recovery thus far is a testament to Cleveland’s enduring attractiveness to visitors as well as its competitive strength,” said Adam Sacks, president of Tourism Economics. “While the broader economy faces uncertainty and the prospect of a recession in 2023, the Cleveland visitor economy is well-positioned to prevail.”

Recovery to 2019 Performance and 2022 Outlook

Industry data shows that Cuyahoga County is on pace with the recovery of the U.S. domestic travel industry to 2019 levels in visits and spending. The local employment recovery rate is well ahead of the overall domestic industry employment recovery. While the State of Ohio visit volume and direct spending recovery registered at a significantly higher rate due to travelers’ continued high interest in outdoor activities in 2021, Cuyahoga County’s employment recovery is on pace with the regrowth of industry employment in the State of Ohio overall.

- 2021 **visit volume** reached 82% of pre-pandemic (2019) visits, which slightly trailed the U.S. domestic recovery at 87% and the State at 97%.
- 2021 **visitor direct spending** reached 82% of 2019 levels, which is on pace with U.S. overall at 85% though trailing the State at 98%.
- 2021 **employment** recovered to 93% of 2019 totals, which is on pace with State recovery at 96% and ahead of U.S. overall employment recovery at 75%.

When looking at data related to 2022 lodging performance (the industry’s only close to real time indicator), Cuyahoga County’s travel and tourism recovery is on pace with regional drive markets and only slightly trailing the US overall. Through August 2022 hotel performance^{vi} in Cuyahoga County is strong in key categories:

- 2022 **YTD Hotel Occupancy** is at 93% of 2019 levels, which is the same as the U.S. hotel occupancy recovery overall through August. Cleveland leads its competitive set at 93% recovery to 2019 levels, with all peer cities within 7%.
- 2022 **YTD Hotel ADR** is at 111% of 2019 levels, which puts Cleveland at second among its peers and on pace with U.S. overall (112%).

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ABOUT DESTINATION CLEVELAND: *Destination Cleveland is Cleveland’s destination marketing and management organization. This private, non-profit organization’s mission is to drive economic impact and stimulate community vitality for Greater Cleveland through leisure and business travel. In 2021, visitation to Cuyahoga County rebounded to 16.1 million visits, a 17% increase after the COVID-19 global pandemic reduced visitation by 30 percent in 2020. Destination Cleveland continues its work to rebuild the travel and tourism industry, with the goal of exceeding pre-pandemic success as quickly as possible. For more information, visit www.thisiscleveland.com.*

ⁱ Metrics sourced from Cuyahoga County’s 2021 Visitor Volume study produced by D.K. Shifflet as well as the 2021 Tourism Economics Cleveland Visitation Report.

ⁱⁱ Data sourced from [TourismOhio 2021 Economic Impacts Report](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Data sourced from [U.S. Travel Association Summer 2022 Travel Forecast](#)

^{iv} Data sourced from Tourism Economics, a division of Oxford Economics and a world leader in global forecasting and quantitative analysis.

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^{vi} Data sourced from STR, Inc., a leading provider of premium data benchmarking, analytics and marketplace insights for the global hospitality industry