

## Fall Is on Its Way, What Will You Discover?



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As a public service reminder, the autumnal equinox takes place on Saturday, September 22nd at 9:54 pm EDT. Please don't shoot the messenger. How is it possible that summer has nearly come and gone already?

The fall is truly a spectacular time of year. Cooler days and even cooler nights; later sunrises, earlier sunsets.

The changing of the seasons means that the leaf peepers are on their way. And that is a good thing. All of those visitors are looking for the unique experience that only Vermont's foliage can present.

Visitors come to central Vermont for year-round enjoyment. The fall is especially attractive, however. Tourists come for biking, hiking, hunting, and shopping in our historic downtowns. You'll find them visiting working farms as part of our agri-tourism sector or checking out the artisans transforming a block of granite into a beautiful work of art.

Visitors are also an integral contributor to our economic profile.

A check with the Vermont Department of Taxes for "Taxable Receipts" in Washington County is revealing. In September-October 2017, \$28,079,224 was spent on meals, rooms and alcohol. This compares favorably against January and February (\$25,769,036), June and July (\$26,278,544) and November and December (\$29,587,996). Obviously, not all of that was spent by visitors. However, we do know that visitors are a significant, important part of the equation.

The University of Vermont regularly publishes its biennial report on the impact of tourism in Vermont for the Department of Tourism and Marketing. The most recent, the 2017 edition, "2015 Benchmark Report Tourism in Vermont" looked at data from 2015.

Overall, in 2015, "Tourism," as a sector of our economy, was responsible for 8 percent of our state's gross domestic product. According to the report, tourism and recreation dollars are largely provided by out-of-state residents. Visitors spent more than \$2.6 billion in Vermont for the period. Interestingly, most of the visitors to Vermont come from within a 500-mile drive.

According to the DTM, visitor spending contributed \$318 million in tax and fee revenue for the state.

This spending translates directly into jobs. Tourism supports approximately 31,000 jobs in the state. The resulting



spending by those earners brings an additional \$750 million of economic activity to the state.

The average visitor spends about \$850 per person trip when staying in commercial lodging. Those staying in a second home spend about \$500 per person trip. Those on day trips spend about \$70. Fall spending in Vermont is about \$116.77 million from September through November.

What does all of this mean for central Vermont? Plenty. Central Vermont is a prime visitor destination in the fall. While November and December are the months for the highest meals, rooms and alcohol taxable receipts, leaf season runs a very strong second.

The tourism industry is a major sector of our regional economy. It means good jobs in tourism and tourism-related sectors. Tourism touches the local economy through millions of dollars in retail purchases. Whether it is lodging, dining, attractions, outdoor activities, antiquing or checking out the foliage, the lure to central Vermont is real.

Visitors will be streaming in to experience fall's splendor that we are able to enjoy annually. While we undergo nature's changing spectacle, we will also enjoy a boost to the local economy. There will be more crowded streets, hotels, B&Bs, shops, attractions, farm stands and farmers' markets. It may take a little longer to be seated at your favorite restaurant or pub. It all adds up to fall in central Vermont.

Remember, the activities and attractions are not limited to our visitors. Take some time to get out and participate in those things that our visitors from around the world come to enjoy. Who knows what you may discover on your own tour?