

For Immediate Release

**Economic Impact of Travel Spending to Snohomish County
Tops \$1 Billion in 2015**

Snohomish County, WA – Snohomish County ranked fourth out of 39 counties in Washington State in 2015 visitor spending after King, Pierce and Spokane counties, according to the Dean Runyan Associates’ report prepared for the Washington State Destination Marketing Association. The WASHINGTON STATE COUNTY TRAVEL IMPACTS & VISITOR VOLUME report for 1991-2015P * found that travel spending in Snohomish County topped \$1 billion in 2015 – a year-over-year increase of 2.1 percent.

Tourism is Snohomish County’s third largest industry. Direct tourism-related jobs employ 10,750 people in the county, contributing \$273.9 million in payroll, \$33.1 million in local taxes and \$66.2 million in state taxes.

“While many people assume hotels are the largest recipient of visitor dollars, restaurants, transportation and fuel receive a larger portion of the visitor dollars than do hotels and motels,” said Amy Spain, executive director, Snohomish County Tourism Bureau. “As reported by Smith Travel Research, Snohomish County ranked third in occupancy behind King and Clark County with an annualized occupancy of 69.5% in 2015. Although occupancy was down slightly over the previous year, the lodging community was able to hold their rate integrity ending the year with a slight increase in revenue per available room (RevPar). Hotel/Motel tax collections increased 12.9% over 2014.”

“Tourism however is about much more than hotel stays. Tourism is a key economic development strategy and positively impacts a cross section of businesses and reaches all communities in Snohomish County. Travel spurs growth, builds a strong tax base and creates jobs that cannot be outsourced. Travel promotion is a wise strategic investment. It kicks off a virtuous cycle of increased traveler visits, greater traveler spending in local businesses, faster job creation and higher tax revenues that far surpass the initial investment.”

Visitor Spending in Snohomish County:

Restaurants	\$308 million
Transportation and fuel	\$146 million
Accommodations	\$141 million
Retail	\$139 million
Recreation, entertainment	\$136 million
Grocery Stores	\$ 63 million
Other travel expenditures	\$ 79 million
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Total	\$1 Billion*

“Those of us who live and work in Snohomish County know that it is one of the most beautiful places on the planet,” said Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers. “Now that tourism’s impact has surpassed \$1 billion per year, we know that an ever-increasing number of tourists also appreciate what the county has to offer. The work of the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau is critical to maintaining our edge in the competition for tourists. With increasing numbers of tourists and growing economic impact, we must continue to innovate and attract even more tourist visits.”

“Economic development is one of our highest priorities, and tourism is a key component of our economic development plans,” said Snohomish County Council Chair Terry Ryan. “More tourists result in more jobs and an improved standard of living in our communities. We are committed to supporting our tourism industry.”

The Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA) notes that while tourism in Washington State improved slightly in 2015, it was comparatively slower than the state’s overall taxable sales growth. “The research underscores the importance of maintaining the WTA’s current marketing programs, which include the *Washington State Visitors’ Guide* and ExperienceWA.com destination website,” said WTA Board Chair Cheryl Kilday. “It also points to the need for a long-term, industry led and funded tourism marketing program.”

“Robust worldwide travel, combined with the individual tourism marketing investments of the state’s major cities, port districts and private sector companies, have helped buoy our industry for the past five years since the state tourism office closed,” said Kilday. Nevertheless, WTA officials worry about loss of tourism market share in the absence of a legislatively approved, statewide industry funded long-term marketing program.

Seattle, Spokane, Snohomish County and “other destinations with local tourism promotion areas (TPAs) have raised marketing funds to offset the loss of statewide funding when the State tourism office closed five years ago, but our research continues to suggest that this cumulative return is not enough for our state as a whole,” said WTA Executive Director Louise Stanton-Masten. “The WTA strategy for funding a statewide tourism marketing program is essential to benefit the entire state.”

The Snohomish County Tourism Bureau is a non-profit economic development agency responsible for the year-round professional tourism marketing of Snohomish County, Washington as a visitor destination to packaged travel, convention, special events and sporting groups as well as leisure travelers.

Dean Runyan Associates prepared this study for the Washington State Destination Marketing Association. Dean Runyan Associates has specialized in research and planning services for the travel, tourism, and recreation industry since 1984.

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*Source: Dean Runyan and Associates

“P” is preliminary numbers

Actual total \$1,014,000,000

“Other travel” includes travel impact for travel to other Washington visitor destinations.

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