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Winston-Salem Tourism Gains Momentum in 2026 Following a Steady 2025

Early 2026 hotel revenue indicates visitor spending is trending up.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WINSTON-SALEM, NC (Aug. 13, 2026) — Following a relatively steady 2025, Winston-Salem and Forsyth County’s tourism industry is showing strong momentum in 2026, with hotel revenue increasing 11.2% through June compared with the same period last year.

The strong first-half performance follows a slight decline in visitor spending during 2025. Visitors spent approximately \$1.08 billion in Forsyth County last year, a decrease of 0.8% from 2024. Despite the decline, tourism remained one of the county’s most important economic drivers, supporting more than 6,500 jobs and generating more than \$73 million in state and local taxes.

“While 2025 reflects the varied impacts of and recovery from Hurricane Helene in 2024, the strength of our hotel performance through the first six months of 2026 demonstrates the resilience of Winston-Salem’s visitor economy,” said Stephanie Pace Brown, president and CEO of Visit Winston-Salem. “An 11.2% increase in hotel revenue is an impressive gain and a strong indication that our destination is building momentum. Meetings, conventions, sporting events and leisure travel are delivering new business to our hotels, restaurants, attractions and retailers.”

Forsyth County continues to rank among North Carolina’s top counties for visitor spending. The county was also among the first five in North Carolina to adopt a special tax on visitor accommodations, establishing a dedicated investment in tourism promotion in 1983.

“Tourism promotion expands the customer base for local businesses, supports jobs and generates tax revenue that benefits residents,” Brown said. “The gains we’re seeing in 2026 reinforce the value of sustained destination marketing and sales efforts, especially in an increasingly competitive travel environment.”

Forsyth County Tourism Impact Highlights for 2025

- Visitors spent approximately **\$1.08 billion** in Forsyth County, a slight decrease of **0.8%** from 2024.
- The travel and tourism industry supported more than **6,500 jobs** in Forsyth County.
- Visitor spending generated more than **\$73 million** in state and local taxes.
- Forsyth County remained among North Carolina’s **top 10 counties** for visitor spending.
- Hotel revenue increased **11.2%** through June 2026 compared with the first six months of 2025.

The county-level figures come from Visit North Carolina’s annual “Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties” study, prepared by Tourism Economics.

Statewide, North Carolina set another tourism record in 2025, although growth slowed from previous years. Visitors spent \$37.2 billion across the state, an increase of 1.3% from 2024. Tourism employment increased 0.3% to 230,997 jobs, while visitor spending generated more than \$2.7 billion in state and local tax revenue.

North Carolina Tourism Facts for 2025

- Total domestic and international visitor spending reached **\$37.2 billion**, a 1.3% increase from 2024.
- Domestic travelers spent a record **\$36.1 billion**.
- International visitor spending totaled **\$1.1 billion**.
- Tourism supported **230,997 jobs** statewide.
- Direct tourism payroll increased **3.5%** to **\$9.8 billion**.
- Visitor spending generated more than **\$2.7 billion** in state and local taxes.
- The average NC household saved **\$605** in state and local taxes as a result of visitor spending.

About Visit Winston-Salem

[Visit Winston-Salem](#), operating under the Forsyth County Tourism Development Authority, is the official destination management organization for Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. Its mission is to attract visitors and generate economic impact that benefits local businesses and residents. Through strategic sales and marketing initiatives, Visit Winston-Salem positions the destination for leisure travel, meetings and conventions, group tours, and sporting events.