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FIRST TAKE

PEAK EXPERIENCE

VISITORS FLOCK TO WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA IN AUTUMN TO EXPERIENCE THE HIGH LIFE.

BY TAYLOR WANBAUGH

There is one undeniable fact when it comes to fall in western North Carolina: The views are breathtaking. Changing leaves and cooler weather attract visitors to the mountains to hike, catch a glimpse of wildlife and sip on local wine, craft beer and cider. It's also a huge business boon for the state. Last year's hotel room occupancy in September, October and November exceeded 70% in 13 mountain counties: Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, Polk, Rutherford, Swain and Transylvania. Visitors spent more than 1.1 million room nights at the region's lodgings. Thousands of other visitors landed at homes through Airbnb and other short-term rental agencies. ■

3.4 **\$724**

Average number of nights overnight visitors spent in the region in 2017. Out-of-state visitors stayed an average of 4 nights, and in-state visitors stay an average of 2.5 nights.

Average trip expenditure in the mountain region in 2017. The average for overnight parties, averaging 2.1 people, was \$789, and day-trip groups spent \$518 per visit.

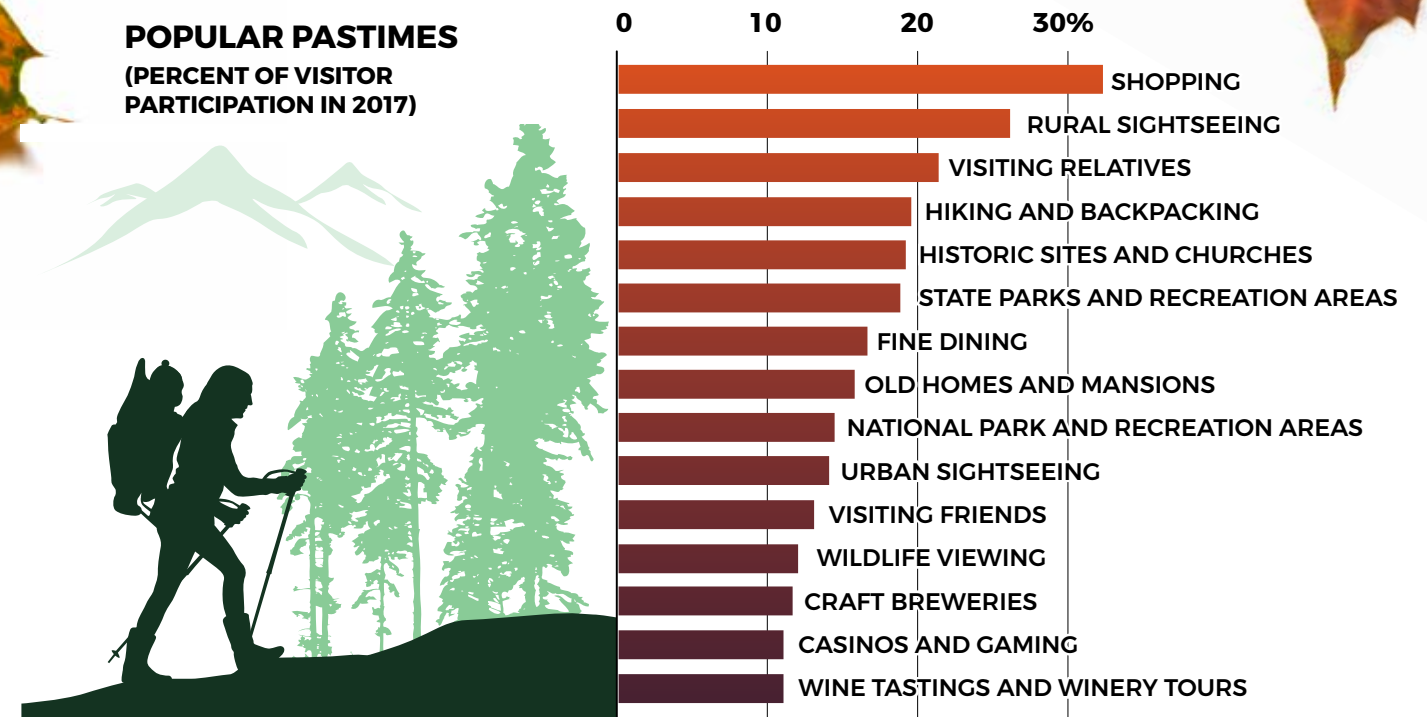
51%

Visitors to North Carolina's mountain region in 2017 with household income of more than \$75,000

2.1

Average party size for all mountain region visitors. Twenty-five percent of all groups included children.

POPULAR PASTIMES (PERCENT OF VISITOR PARTICIPATION IN 2017)

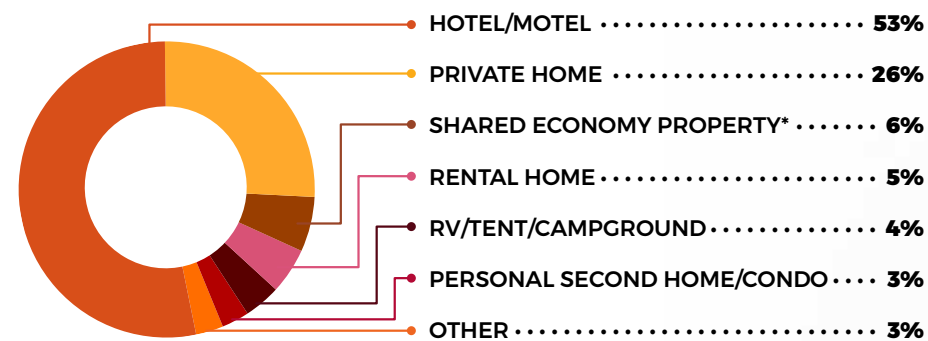


A VARIETY OF VISITORS WHERE THEY CAME FROM

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| North Carolina | 44.3% |
| Florida | 9.2 |
| Georgia | 8.4 |
| South Carolina | 8.2 |
| Tennessee | 5.4 |
| Virginia | 3.4 |
| Texas | 3.2 |
| Missouri | 2 |
| Ohio | 1.7 |
| Kentucky | 1.6 |
| Maryland | 1.5 |
| other | 11.1 |

MOUNTAIN MANORS

LODGING USED IN THE MOUNTAIN REGION



*includes Airbnb and VRBO

TOP WESTERN N.C. TOURIST DESTINATIONS* (2017 ATTENDANCE)

| | |
|--|---------|
| North Carolina Arboretum, Asheville, | 494,532 |
| Grandfather Mountain, Linville, | 287,611 |
| Chimney Rock State Park, Chimney Rock, | 253,715 |
| Linville Caverns, Marion, | 177,642 |
| Cherokee Cultural Attractions, Cherokee, | 161,146 |

*Asheville's Biltmore no longer reports attendance totals.