



Metropolitan Tucson Visitor Profile and Economic Impacts

Executive Summary

The Metropolitan Tucson Convention and Visitor Bureau (MTCVB) retained Nichols Tourism Group (NTG) to develop a deeper understanding of the composition and makeup of visitors to the metropolitan Tucson region, as well as to investigate the economic impacts of these visitors. NTG is based in Phoenix, Arizona and provides strategic advisory services to destinations around the country. NTG utilized research and data from a number of highly regarded national sources, including DK Shifflet and Associates (DKSA) and Dean Runyan Associates (DRA).

Visitation within the Metropolitan Tucson area was strong during 2006, with 3.99 million domestic overnight visitors coming to the region. This visitor base represented approximately 12.5 percent of all overnight domestic visitors to the state. The number of overnight metro Tucson visitors has continued to grow in recent years, expanding by 16.7 percent since 2002, the last time a similar analysis was undertaken. This 2006 overnight visitor base was supplemented by 3.19 million day visitors to the region, resulting in a total of 7.18 million visitors "choosing" Metro Tucson as a vacation getaway.

These visitors contributed heavily to the Metro Tucson economy, pumping \$2.3 billion in direct spending into the metro Tucson economy. While hotel and motel visitors were the biggest source of these expenditures (43 %,) day trippers and those visitors staying in private homes are also critical within the overall industry, as they contribute 27 and 24 percent of these expenditures respectively. This spending is spread in many sectors, with food and beverage establishments attracting the largest share (24%,) followed by retail operations (23%,) lodging facilities (18%,) arts/entertainment and recreation operations (15%) and ground transportation (14%.)

The metro Tucson travel industry contributes significantly to the economy not just in terms of the new spending it attracts, but also in terms of the jobs that are supported. DRA estimates that there are over 25,000 jobs that are directly related to activities of the visitor industry. When the associated indirect and induced jobs are also considered, this base of supported jobs grows to almost 40,000. This total job base accounts for 10.4% of all Tucson MSA jobs and reflects how critical the travel industry is in the broader metropolitan economic base.

In looking more closely at what attracts these leisure overnight visitors to Metro Tucson, fully 77% are coming for leisure purposes, with the balance attracted by business reasons. The important role of metro Tucson residents in attracting overnight visitors is clear as 55% noted they were coming to visit friends and family, with the next closest trip reason being a general vacation at 15%.

Reflecting the more "adult" orientation of the overall metro Tucson marketplace, a larger percentage of its leisure overnight visitors are couples at 44%, seven points above national averages. Correlating with this composition, 24% of leisure visitors are traveling with children, a level 4 points below national norms. The average size of travel parties is 2.49 persons, a level just slightly larger than the state (2.3) and national averages (2.45.) Approximately 18% of metro visitors come by air, a level above national norms (13%,) but below the Arizona average of 26%.

When questioned as to the activities metro Tucson visitors experienced during their trip, what stands out is the many physical and nature based experiences in which metro Tucson is far above the national norm. A total of 27% of travelers to metro Tucson noted sightseeing as an important activity, a level 7.1 points above national averages. National/State Parks and hiking/biking were cited at levels almost double that of overall U.S. averages. The unique cultural experiences metro Tucson possesses also is experienced at levels above that of the average destination in the U.S.

Tucson is also successful at stimulating repeat visits from many of these travelers. While 35% of visitors are experiencing metro Tucson for the first time, approximately 25% have come to 2 to 3 times in the past, a level consistent with national averages. Impressively, 40% of visitors have come to the metro area more than 4 times in the past.