

Has pent-up travel demand run its course?

DMOs are reporting declines in visitors but is this due to pent-up demand for travel petering out or natural disasters, which many destinations have endured?

Here are a few examples:

FLORIDA

The number of people traveling to Florida during the second quarter of 2023 decreased compared to a year earlier, according to estimates released by Visit Florida.

Florida drew an estimated 33.1 million visitors during the quarter, keeping the state slightly ahead of an overall record pace of visitors in 2022. But the figure from April through June represented a 1.2 percent decrease from the second quarter of 2022.

Domestic tourists from other parts of the U.S., who make up the bulk of Florida travelers, were off an estimated 2.4 percent from the same period in 2022.

Dana Young, president and CEO

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Artist rendering of completed observatory.

Photo: Snow King Mountain Resort

Wyoming mountain resort looks to the stars

Observatories on top of mountains aren't that unusual, but most of these high-dollar facilities are built for researchers. That makes the \$5 million Snow King Mountain Resort observatory unique.

It's not going to be geared first and foremost for researchers. It's all for tourists who love the sky, public outreach and education.

That will make Snow King's mountain observatory the first of its kind in not just Wyoming, but North America, Snow King Mountain Resort President

and CEO Ryan Stanley told Cowboy State Daily.

"There are other public access telescopes," he said. "There are some public-access planetariums, and there are some that are combined together. But there are none where you get to ride up a gondola to go visit them at like a resort facility-type tourist destination. And there are very few one-meter telescopes dedicated to public outreach. Most of those are for research."

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Resident sentiment is crucial information

Knowing what visitors want is crucial to DMOs, but they are not the only audience that should be studied.

Resident sentiment studies can tell organizations how much support they have in the community.

The Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau (OPVB) is developing a five-year Tourism Master Plan. This plan will

consider how the tourism economy could grow on the Olympic Peninsula, while also enhancing local residents' quality of life.

There is no incentive to participate, but the visitor bureau is using two cute Olympic marmots in the pitch to residents to complete the survey.

— *cityofpa.us*

IS TOURISM GOOD FOR THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA?

We want to hear from you!



The Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau is developing a five-year Tourism Master Plan. This will consider how the tourism economy could grow on the Olympic Peninsula in a way that ensures tourism remains a vital economic driver while also enhancing our residents' quality of life. Everyone who lives on the Olympic Peninsula or has a business in the area is invited to participate in a short survey to give us your input. Survey closes September 30, 2023.

The survey can be accessed by going to the TinyURL.com/OPasks or directly by scanning the QR code:



Has pent-up demand for travel run its course, or is nature to blame?

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of the Visit Florida tourism-marketing agency, pointed to increased competition from other states and countries that shut down longer than Florida during the pandemic. But she also touted an increase this year in international tourists in Florida.

“We compete globally, not just here in the U.S.,” Young told The News Service of Florida. “Destinations are opening up. And when they do, they're going to be using all those dollars they didn't spend (during the pandemic) to try and lure their people back. So, the fact that we have these massive increases in international visitation is great.”

– *wusfnews.wusf.usf.edu*

CALIFORNIA

The Kern River Valley's tourism industry is taking a hit and local

businesses say they are struggling.

Recovery efforts continue months after the storms devastated the area three hours north of Los Angeles back in March.

Flooding has cleared up and recovery efforts have been moving forward but locals say its not moving fast enough.

Kernville Chambers of Commerce President, Orion Sanders, said they continue to feel the impact of these storms in the local economy.

Kern River Conservancy Executive Director, Gary Ananian, said there has been a lot of misinformation told to potential tourists on social media.

Anyone can come camping, Kernville did not “get wiped off the map,” Ananian said.

– *bakersfieldnow.com*

TAMPA BAY

After a red-hot rebound in the post-

COVID tourism market, the Tampa Bay region's hospitality industry shows signs of cooling.

Tourist tax collections are off, compared to a year ago, for consecutive months in both Hillsborough and Pinellas counties, and the monthly hotel occupancy rate has dipped more than 5% in Pasco County.

Industry leaders, however, seem unfazed, attributing some of the declines to expanded options for travel as the rest of the world welcomed visitors after the pandemic.

“Last year was a record-breaking year, so gravity was bound to take affect at some point,” said Ron Barton, assistant Hillsborough County administrator for economic prosperity.

– *tampabay.com*

Look to the stars

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With good reason. A 1-meter telescope is a \$575,000 investment all by itself, much less a suitable facility to house it in.

Construction of the new observatory is going well, Stanley said, and is on track for a fall completion.

Not this year, but next, observatory visitors will be able to dine in a restaurant on top of the mountain as well. The restaurant and the observatory are part of an overall effort to boost the resort's visitors.

– *cowboystatedaily.com*

Wisconsin emphasizes agricultural assets

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers has proclaimed September 21-October 2 as Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Week, recognizing the growing impact of agritourism on the state's economy and culture.

According to the Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association (WATA), agritourism generated an estimated \$949 million in economic activity in 2017, supporting over 435,000 jobs. The industry is also growing rapidly, with tourism to Wisconsin farms increasing by 21% in 2021.

The WATA is a non-profit organization that promotes agritourism in Wisconsin. The association provides resources and support to farmers who



Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association

want to start or expand their agritourism businesses.

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism also supports agritourism. The department offers grants and marketing assistance to help farmers develop and promote their agritourism businesses.

– *wisconsinagconnection.com*