Day Trip Visitors and Short-Term Renters to the Adirondack Region of Essex and Hamilton Counties:

Summary Report

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Compiled by-PlaceMaking-

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BACKGROUND and METHODOLOGY

The Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST) managed the marketing tourism assets for Essex and Hamilton Counties and the Tupper Lake and Saranac Lake Regions in New York in 2025. The agency commissioned a study to determine leisure visitor information and to gauge key regional marketing program statistics. ROOST contracted with PlaceMaking, a regional community/economic development research firm, to complete this research.

ROOST sent a jointly created survey tool to a sample of its 2025 leisure travelers to the region. The agency requested visitors to complete an online survey (via email), and the results compiled from the responses received specifically from those who visited the region. The survey was sent out at the end of each quarter of 2025 and results aggregated for the year.

The number of potential visitors who inquired about travel to the region this year, and provided contact information (traceable leads), was 306,696. Approximately 21,000 visitors responded to the survey that they had visited the region in 2025, providing a 7% response rate of the full data pool.

Survey and project methodology, broader regional traveler data, and marketing/return on investment (ROI) analysis for the full visitor group are outlined in a separate report. One component of this research is a cross-tabulation of two subgroups of visitors from the survey response; this subset captures day-trip travelers and short-term renters (those who rented private homes for their visit). This report provides an analysis of the subgroups of day-only visitors and short-term renters.

DAY TRIP VISITORS

Day trip visitors are those who responded in the full survey that they traveled to the area for one day only, staying zero overnights. ROOST received a total of 570 such responses from 2025 trips, representing 15% of total completed responses from this pool. This is a drop from the last several years of this proportion, which included 17% from 2024 and 16% from 2022 and 2021.

The following summarizes variations of 2025 day trip visitor data from the overall regional visitor population:

- Day-trip visitors, with a mean of 60 years old, are a slightly higher average age compared to the full visitor group (59).

- The mean reported income of day visitors is $100,100, notably lower than the $115,500 income of all regional visitors.

- Day visitors report summer (July/August) visitation as the most common season, followed by fall (September/October), but varying from the regional visitor group, more commonly in winter (December/January) than in early summer (May/June).

- The average day trip visitor party size is 2.6 people, including 2.2 adults and 0.4 children. Day visitors report a lower average party size than all regional visitors (at 2.7 adults and 0.6 children).

- Overall visit expenditures, not surprisingly, are substantially lower among day-trip visitors. The total average reported party expenditure for day travel is $279 compared to $445 daily expenditure by all visitors. The reported daily visitor spending by day visitors dropped from the prior year ($330).

- Although overall reported spending was notably lower on average, reported spending on meals increased, to $88 from $82 in prior year. However, all other categories (shopping, arts/entertainment, events, transportation, other) declined.

- Most categories of reported day trip spending declined slightly. Reported entertainment expenditures exhibited the largest declines, falling to $43 from $81 in year prior.

- Outdoor activities (45%) are the strongest reported draws to visit the region by day trippers, followed closely by relaxing, shopping and dining (41%), and sightseeing (39%). These areas of interest for years have been lower than the rate of interest for outdoor activities expressed by all regional visitors (66% of all regional visitors select outdoor activities as a draw).

- Fourteen percent of visitors expressed interest in visiting family and friends. Ten percent expressed interest in events, 9% in heritage sites, and 8% in arts/entertainment.

- Among day visitors who responded that they were interested in outdoor activities, the interest in hiking is by far the most popular, as is among regional visitors. However, the expressed interest level is far lower. Interest in canoeing/kayaking is the second largest outdoor activity draw, followed by skiing/boarding and birding. Each of these latter two categories show higher interest levels than by the full group of regional travelers.

SHORT-TERM RENTALS

The visitor survey asked respondents who traveled to the region for overnight stays in 2025 about their primary lodging choice. This section analyzes the results of those visitors who indicated that they stayed in a privately rented home (through Airbnb, VRBO, Vacasa, AdkByOwner, etc.), referred to here as a “short-term rental”. Six hundred and three (603) respondents indicated that they stayed in a short-term rental. This is a slightly higher response from the prior year (593).

The following is a summary of visitors who stayed in short-term rentals in comparison to overall regional visitor respondents.

- The mean age of short-term renters is slightly younger than the full regional respondent group at 57 years (versus 59).

- The average mean income reported by short-term rental-staying visitors is $124,700, notably higher than the $115,500 reported by the regional visitor group.

- The average short-term renter visitor party size is substantially larger at 5.3 people (4.1 adults and 1.2 children) versus 3.3 for all visitors to the region (2.7 adults and 0.6 children). Visitor party size, particularly adult count, has increased year by year for the past four years of the survey.

- The reported average length of stay for short-term renters is 4.7 nights, just below last year’s reported average stay and the 5-year average of 4.8 nights. This is well above the average reported length of stay for regional visitors of 3.8 nights on average over the past five years.

- Total expenditures reported among short-term renters were an average of $2,935, 5% above the total reported for the prior year. This represents the first increase in four years (post-pandemic) for this group’s reported travel expenditures.

- Reported lodging costs increased slightly from the prior year to $1,570. Visitors reported average meal costs at $495, an increase over $440, or an 11% increase from the year prior.

- Reported shopping expenditures by visitors declined among 2025 visitor respondents (from $341 to $285). Expenditures reported by short term renters in events and entertainment rose from the prior year, from $124 to $166 and $123 to $133, respectively. Reported “other” expenditures declined somewhat from the prior year.

- Reported interest in outdoor activities (at 73%) by those staying in short-term rentals is higher consistently across recent years than among all visitors. Interest in relaxing/dining (at 53%) is also higher than among all respondents. Sightseeing was the next most reported interest (at 40%), however similar in rate of the full group.

- One out of five (20%) of short-term rental respondents’ state that visiting friends and family was a drive to visit, while closer to one out of four indicate this interest among the full respondent group.

- Hiking, canoeing/kayaking, fishing, skiing/boarding, and boating are the most reported outdoor attractions by short-term renters. Each of these areas reports higher interest than among outdoor interests reported by the full regional visitor group. Areas of less reported interest than among all regional visitors include birding and cross-country skiing/snowshoeing.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey data was cross tabulated for the purpose of analyzing two subgroups of visitor data. Day-trip visitors are a large piece of the visiting fabric of the region and provide substantial economic impact, particularly with assumed proximity to visit and ability to return more frequently.

The proportion of day-trip visitors appears to have declined since pre- and post-pandemic travel. Day-trip visitors, on average, comprise smaller groups and spend less in all expenditure categories, even daily, than all visitors aggregated. This group, on average, is slightly older and reports a lower median income level than among all other regional visitors.

Day-trip visitors' economic impacts are constrained by the brief time spent in the area and their spending patterns demonstrated through this data collection. Following reported increases in daily spending by this group in the prior two years, 2025 reported spending fell across all categories except meals.

Short-term renters represent a sizable and strong market within the region and nationwide. National data confirms that short-term rentals rebounded faster than hotels as the world moved out of the pandemic. However, over the last two years the rapid growth among these accommodation types may have moderated.

The average reported party size and length of stay among short-term renters rose from the prior year. The reported party size and length of stay remain higher than the overall visitors.

Total reported visitor spending by short term rental-staying visitors increased from 2025. This follows two years of declines so may indicate that this travel market is growing again following flattening of average pricing for short-term rentals over the last several years.

The "conversion rate" or measure of effectiveness of marketing materials is higher among this group (85% who note a positive influence of materials on their travel decisions vs. 82% of all regional respondents).

The data gathered from this survey shows continued highly positive indications from the short-term renter group and overall continued high expenditure levels across all categories. While regulation and assimilation of short-term rentals present continued challenges to the community, a higher level of economic impact of visitors who choose this lodging type presents positive considerations.

The popularity of short-term rentals continues to grow across the region, especially in more remote locations. Their location and presence provide both opportunities with expanding visitor markets and economic impact; however, these facilities often strain the community infrastructure.

With intensive workforce challenges across the region, in hospitality and all industries, the growth of short-term rentals over the last decade has exacerbated housing shortages. ROOST was a regional leader in establishing occupancy tax collection many years ago and continues to advocate for solutions that will benefit the region and enrich its tourism assets.

ROOST has engaged stakeholders and resources to work toward improving the workforce housing supply. The agency and its partners will continue to use collected data to work to improve solutions to the challenges and opportunities for short-term rentals.