

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

## *Summary Report*



ROOST

PlaceMaking  
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## BACKGROUND

The Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST) managed the marketing tourism assets for the Essex and Hamilton Counties as well as Tupper Lake and the Village of Saranac Lake in Franklin County, New York state in 2022. The agency commissioned a study to determine leisure traveler information at the county levels 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 2022 leisure travelers to Essex and Hamilton counties. The agency requested visitors to complete an online survey (via social media and email) and the results were compiled from the responses received specifically from those who visited the region. The survey was sent out following the end of each quarter of 2022 and results aggregated for the year.

The number of potential visitors who inquired about travel to the region in 2022 and provided contact information (traceable leads) was 215,944. Traceable leads do not include the larger audience that could also be influenced by promotional material for the region suggesting that the leads represent a conservative number on which to base study results.

Nearly 3,300 (3,293) visitors responded to the survey that they had visited the region in 2022. This is lower than the respondent pool of recent years, however the researchers feel confident that it is a viable sample given comparison to prior year's data collection and external review.

One component of this research was 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). Survey and project methodology, broader regional traveler data and marketing/return on investment (ROI) analysis for the full visitor group are included in a separate report. Analysis of the sub-groups of day visitors and short-term renters follows in this report.

## DAY TRIP VISITORS

Day trip visitors are those who responded in the survey that they traveled to the area for one day only, staying zero overnights. A total of 560 such responses from 2022 trips were received out of 3,293 total responses. This is 17% of respondents, far lower than the 26% of respondents from 2021 who reported day visits only. This proportion of day visitors in this data collection has declined steadily during the last several years (from 34% to 17%).

The following summarizes variations of 2022 day trip visitors from the overall regional visitor population:

- Average day trip visitor party size is 2.8 persons, including 2.3 adults and 0.5 child. This is consistent with the prior year visitor party size.
- Overall visit expenditures, not surprisingly, continue to be much lower among day trip visitors. The total average reported party expenditure for day travel is \$262 compared to \$459 daily expenditures by all visitors. Daily reported spending by day trip visitors increased only slightly (2%), whereas daily spending levels by visitors with longer durations increased markedly (9%) from 2021 to 2022 surveying.
- Shopping comprises the largest portion of this cohort at \$84. Meals are the next largest category of expenditures at \$73, followed by transportation (\$41) and attractions or events (\$17).
- Nearly one-third of day visits (32%) are reported during peak fall foliage season (September/October) with other visitation levels spread out fairly evenly throughout the rest of year. May/June time period demonstrates a higher proportion of day trip visitation.
- Sightseeing and outdoor activities are the equally strongest reported draws to visit the region, expressed by 56% of 2022 day visit respondents. Relaxing, shopping and dining is the next most common reason expressed to visit, reported by 51%. The next draw most commonly reported was to visit family or friends (25%).

- Among day visitors who responded that they were interested in outdoor activities, interest in hiking was by far the most popular interest, selected by 78% of respondents. Expressed interest in canoeing/kayaking was 16%, fishing 12%, birding 10% and boating 10%.
- Day trip visitors (at 59 years) continue to report a slightly higher average age compared to all visitor groups.

## SHORT-TERM RENTALS

The visitor survey asked respondents who traveled to the region for overnight stays in 2022 about their primary lodging choice. This section is devoted to the results of those visitors who indicated that they stayed in a private home rental (through AirBnb, AdkByOwner, etc.), referred to here as a “short-term rental”.

Just under five hundred (495) respondents, or about 15%, indicated that they stayed in a short-term rental. The following is a summary of visitors who stayed in short-term rentals in comparison to overall regional visitor respondents.

- Average short-term renter traveler party size is larger with 4.7 persons (3.6 adults and 1.1 children) versus 3.4 for all visitors to the region. This is a smaller party size than noted among short-term rental visitors in the last five years of data collection.
- Total expenditures reported among short-term renters were an average of \$3,019. This is nearly double the average regional visitor reported expenditures of \$1,697 per trip. The cost of lodging accounts for a sizeable portion of this greater reported spending. The total expenditures among this group also increased over 10% from 2021 reported levels.
- Lodging costs accounted for more than half of this reported expenditure (\$1,634). Meals (\$462) and shopping (\$320), entertainment (\$145), attractions/events (\$148) also showed marked increases. All average expenditure categories reported by short-term renters are substantially higher than averages as reported by all regional visitor averages.

- The reported average length of stay for short term renters is 5 nights, consistent with most recent years, excepting 2020 when pandemic travel resulted in much longer stays. Short term renter stays remain longer, on average, than those of all visitors (3.7 nights in 2022).
- Time of year visitation varies somewhat between these visitors who reported staying in short term renters in comparison with all visitors. Peak summer visits (July/August) were the most common time for reported visitation at 26%, followed by September/October (25%). The full visitor group demonstrated stronger fall (September/October) visitation (30%). November/December appears to be the more common time for visitation among short term renters (16% of these respondents, compared to 11% of all visitors).
- Outdoor activities (74%), relaxing/dining (67%) and sightseeing (53%) were the highest levels of reported interest to visit the area among short-term renters. This is consistent with the three most common activities reported by all visitors, however all three percentages are higher within the short term renter group.
- Short term renters express a lower rate of interest in “visiting family and friends” in 2022 than did all visitors (22% vs 25%). Olympic site visitation is also a higher expressed interest by short term renters than by all visitors in this year (25% vs. 15%).
- The mean age of short-term renters is slightly younger than the full regional group at 55 years (versus 58).

## CONCLUSION

The survey data was cross tabulated for the purpose of analyzing two subgroups of visitor data. The researchers caution that these sample sizes (560 and 495) are substantially smaller than collected in the last several years. As most survey findings are relatively near to those collected in recent years, the information appears valid enough to reasonably draw conclusions.

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. Day trip visitor presence appears to have declined

somewhat since pre-pandemic travel. This will be an area to continue to follow for longer-term trending.

Day trip visitors, on average, comprise smaller groups and spend less in all expenditure categories, even daily, than all visitors aggregated. Day trip visitor economic impacts are constrained by the brief time spent in the area and their spending patterns which are both substantiated by this research. Shopping expenditures account for nearly half of total reported spending by day visitors. Reported daily meal spending is lower than among other visitors as would be expected due to length of stay (may be just a partial day).

Another interesting note is that the “conversion rate” or measure of effectiveness of marketing materials is lower among this day visitor group (73% who note a positive influence of materials on their travel decisions vs. 82% of all survey respondents).

Short-term renters represent a sizable and continually growing market within the region and nationwide. National data confirms that short-term rentals rebounded faster than hotels<sup>1</sup> as the world moved out of the pandemic. The reported party size remains higher than overall visitors and length of stay remains higher than among all visitors to the region.

The “conversion rate” or measure of effectiveness of marketing materials is higher among this group (87% who note a positive influence of materials on their travel decisions vs. 82% of all survey respondents).

The data gathered from this survey shows continued highly positive indications from the short-term renter group and in particular, the high expenditure levels across all categories. It is important to the region that private home rentals average higher expenditure levels that expand well beyond lodging costs into all other expenditure categories, such as shopping, meals, entertainment, attraction, and events. While regulation and assimilation of short-term rentals presents some challenges to the community, the stronger economic impact of visitors who choose this lodging type presents positively.

The popularity of short-term rentals has steadily grown across the region, especially in more remote locations. Their location and presence provide both opportunities with expanding visitor markets and economic impact, however straining community infrastructure. ROOST was a regional leader in instituting occupancy tax collection many years ago. 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.

## Sources

1. Air DNA: [2022 U.S. Short-Term Rental Outlook Report | AirDNA Forecast](#)  
December 15, 2022.