

# MONTANA TRAVEL & TOURISM BRIEF



## ECONOMIC IMPACT

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's leading industries. In 2008, **10 million people** visited Montana **spending \$3 billion** during their stay. Over **42,210 jobs** are directly and indirectly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over **\$1.04 billion in total personal income** for Montana residents. These visitors also contribute **\$228 million in state and local taxes**.

## TOP TRAVEL & TOURISM PRIORITIES FOR MONTANA

### INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

#### Travel Promotion Act

- The Travel Promotion Act (S. 1023 and H.R. 2935) would develop a program to market the U.S. as a travel destination and explain U.S. travel security rules to international travelers at no cost to American taxpayers. This is the national travel community's highest legislative priority. International travelers, including Canadians, are an important and growing market for Montana. Having a program that promotes the U.S. as a premiere travel destination, in addition to more clearly explaining new U.S. travel rules and procedures, will encourage further travel to our state.

### NATIONAL PARKS

#### National Park Service Tourism Office

- Although the NPS has had a National Tourism Office for more than two decades, it has never been adequately funded. Although this Tourism Office produced an impressive National Tourism Strategy for the National Parks, which was adopted last year by the NPS, no additional implementation funding for the strategy has been provided. Montana is fortunate to have two spectacular national parks anchoring our state; a strong, adequately funded NPS Tourism Office would enable the NPS to work more effectively with tourism industry partners and gateway communities.

#### National Park Centennial Fund Act

- The National Park Service will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016. As part of the National Parks Centennial Initiative, sustained funding is required to improve the parks in order to provide inspiring, safe and accessible places for people to enjoy. Montana's National Parks are the top reasons travelers visit Montana. The economic benefits of these visitors to our national parks then filter out to gateway and surrounding communities. It would be in Montana's best interests to support a Centennial Fund Act which would commit dollars that, among other purposes, would increase visitation to the National Parks.

## **NATIONAL PARKS (cont.)**

### **Going-to-the-Sun Road Rehabilitation Funding**

- The spectacular 52-mile Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park has been undergoing an extensive multi-year rehabilitation. This road is an engineering marvel unmatched by any in our National Park System. The Going-to-the-Sun Road is an integral component to the economic well-being of Northwestern Montana. It is critical that there is funding available in order to continue, and ultimately complete, this multi-year reconstruction.

### **Yellowstone National Park Winter Use**

- Winter access in Yellowstone National Park is a crucial component to the economy of our gateway communities of West Yellowstone and Gardiner. A consistent winter use plan that allows for multiple uses and considers the economic impacts to the gateway communities is vital to the state and local tourism industry.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Amtrak Empire Builder Route**

- Amtrak is a valuable tourism partner to the northern tier of the state and the travel and tourism community appreciates Congress' continued support in funding this important travel resource. Last year, we supported the Passenger Rail Improvement Act (S.294) which provided funding for Amtrak for 2007-2012. We want to emphasize the importance of maintaining this route across Montana's Hi-Line which brings nearly \$14 million in economic benefits annually to Montana.

### **Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha Passenger Route**

- The passage of last year's S.294 included an amendment to study the feasibility of reopening the North Coast Hiawatha Route, which would provide a southern Amtrak route for Montana. Montana's tourism industry supported this feasibility study and wants to continue our support of looking into the potential possibility of restoring Amtrak's North Coast Hiawatha passenger route across southern Montana.

### **Air Travel**

- Having adequate and competitive air travel options is crucial to tourism for Montana. With the changes in air service and the increased regulatory expenses for airport operators, air service costs will continue to make it difficult to compete with other states for the tourism market. 10% of our annual 10 million visitors – which translates to 1,000,000 million annual visitors to Montana - travel by plane for some portion of their trip. In addition, those vacationers that traveled by plane spend an average of 15% more per day (for first time visitors) to 40% per day more (for repeat visitors.) Air passengers are a valuable market for Montana's tourism industry and we want to continue to encourage more affordable and more accessible air travel to and from Montana.