



UPDATE

It's A Record First Quarter Statewide "Bed Tax" Collections Up 5%

Over \$2 million in statewide "bed tax" monies were collected from January-March, 2000, up 5% from 1999. This collection sets a new state record for first quarter reports. 1999 collections totaled \$1.82 million.

"Our winter product, plus added airline service...is beginning to be recognized by our nonresident visitor."

Missouri River Country led the tourism regions with 15% growth. This growth may be a signal of better economic activity in eastern Montana. Yellowstone Country followed with a 13% increase and Glacier Country grew 12%. Russell Country remained even. Custer and Gold West Country reported declines.

"Our winter product, plus added airline service to many of our cities is beginning to be recognized by our nonresident visitor," said Travel Montana Director, Matthew Cohn.

West Yellowstone topped community collections with a 24% increase, while Whitefish grew 22%, Kalispell was up 16%, Butte posted a 5% gain, Missoula increased 4% and Bozeman grew by 1%. Helena, Billings and Great Falls reported collection declines.

Cohn adds that Kalispell and Whitefish have had some tough winter numbers in the past few years, but with strong marketing efforts both towns seem to be rebounding.

Summer Travel Forecast

Everyone wants to know what's up with summer visitation. Although there are not hard figures to report, tourism contacts throughout the state believe this should be a

strong tourism year, even with higher gasoline prices it shouldn't affect our numbers. A more complete assessment of Montana's summer visitation will follow this fall.

Reservations Made Easy

Over 100 Montana lodging properties can now offer consumers the opportunity to book their reservations online via a direct link through Travel Montana's website to WorldRes Inc. WorldRes, one of the largest online reservation services in the world, began operating in February. This feature is a partnership with Travel Montana and Montana Innkeepers Association (MIKA).

According to Travel Montana Director, Matthew Cohn, as the Internet continues to grow, consumers are demanding a wider range of services. "This on-line program is an example of a cost-effective tool that will benefit our Montana businesses and our future visitors."

There is no cost for lodging properties to participate in this project; the only thing that is necessary is Internet access. For more information or to get enrolled in the program, contact WorldRes representative Sharon McAuliffe at (888) 973-7303.

Pedaling Montana on the Web

Discover Big Sky Country on two wheels by cruising Travel Montana's new biking feature on its consumer website www.visitmt.com.

"You just have to look at all of the cars on our roads that have bikes mounted on them to know this is a popular activity in our state, says Electronic Marketing Manager, Corrie Hahn. "Our biking feature is helping us

accomplish our goal to add more content to our site so residents and nonresidents can have the best available information so they need to make informed travel decisions."

All level of cyclists can access an array of mountain and road bike routes throughout the state. The detailed bike rides are tied to a specific scenic or historic site in the state. This feature can be accessed through the site's homepage.

Other new visitmt.com features include paddling, hiking, fishing and wildlife viewing.

Montana is Kidrific Montanakids.com website giveaway

The Tindall family of Suwanee, Georgia are the winners of this year's montanakids.com, "Treasure Hunt," promotion. The Tindalls won a weeklong vacation for four to Montana. They were randomly selected from a list of 92 daily winners. Northwest Airlines, Glacier National Park, and long list of Montana tourism related businesses will provide services along the family's journey.

"Kids are very influential when it comes to planning a family vacation. This promotion is one way to raise a child's awareness of the state and teach them how to navigate through our website," explains Consumer Marketing Manager, Sarah Lawlor.

The promotion attracted entrants from all fifty states and Washington, DC.

Seventeen percent more kids entered this year's contest compared to last year. Montanakids.com has hosted over 200,000 visitors from January - May 31, 2000. This is a 52% increase from the same time period last year.

A full list of prize sponsors and daily winners are posted on montanakids.com

Travel Director Assumes Added Duties

Matthew Cohn has been assigned by Commerce Director, Peter Blouke, to oversee the coordination and management of an advertising and marketing plan to attract new businesses to Montana. The funds for this project were allocated by the special session of the legislature at the Governor's request. Matthew will continue to perform his duties as Travel Director.

\$230,000 in Tourism Infrastructure Grant Funds Available

Travel Montana will be providing \$230,000 in "bed tax" financed grant funds for tourism-related projects over the next twelve months. Here is a quick summary of the grant funds available:

- \$150,000: Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program (TIIP) for tourism-related infrastructure projects sponsored by non-profit organizations. Minimum grant: \$20,000. Matching funds: \$1 of sponsor's financial investment for every \$2 in TIIP Grant funds awarded. Application deadline: 5 p.m., August 1, 2000.
- \$30,000: Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP) Grants for three rural communities accepted into and successfully completing the 8-month assessment process. Each community will be eligible for a

\$10,000 grant. Matching funds: \$1 of sponsor's financial or in-kind investment for every \$2 in CTAP Grant funds awarded. Application deadline: 5 p.m., August 1, 2000.

- \$50,000: Montana Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commission Grant Program for bicentennial projects sponsored by non-profit organizations. Travel Montana's funds will be used to leverage grant funding from other sources to create a grant pool of \$150,000 or more. Application deadline: Spring 2001.

For more information on TIIP and CTAP Grants, contact Victor Bjornberg at Travel Montana, 444-4366. For the Lewis & Clark grants, contact Clint Blackwood, Montana Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commission, 443-2109.



Kids Brochure

Travel Montana's Kid Friendly Montana brochure has been revamped. New graphics and pictures have been added to this already colorful cartoon-bordered piece. Facts about Montana's geography, economy, history, wildlife and Native peoples highlight the brochure. Publications Manager, Donnie Sexton says the updated brochure will complement the kid's website and offer another learning tool. If you are interested in receiving the kid's brochure call Travel Montana at (406) 444-2654.

Market Yourself

In early July, Montana's tourism-related businesses will receive survey forms to update or add information to their free listings in the Montana Travel Planner and on Travel Montana's consumer website, www.visitmt.com. This information will also be used by Travel Montana's 1-800-VISIT MT travel counselors. Please fill out the survey, this is your opportunity to make sure Travel Montana has the most complete information about what you have to offer Montana's visitors. Included with the survey will be a rate sheet for advertising in the Travel Planner. The deadline for reserving ad space is August 7, 2000. For more information contact Susan Albrecht, (406) 444-1617.

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events

July

13-18 "Ghost Town" FAM - Gold West Country, Helena

August

- 1 Deadline TIIP and CTAP Applications
- 7 Deadline Travel Planner advertisements

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to Travel Montana's Intranet site: travelmontana.state.mt.us.



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