

Summer Adventure Awaits

Posted on Jul 13, Posted by [Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31](#) Category [Wisconsin](#)



Sen. Smith writes about the many opportunities Wisconsinites have to explore the state this summer.

BRUNSWICK, WI - Summer is the time to get outdoors and travel, and there sure are plenty of opportunities to do so right here in Wisconsin. Wisconsinites know this all too well, but it's exciting to know out-of-state travelers are getting in on the fun.

Last year, there were 102.3 million visitor trips to Wisconsin, according to the Department of Tourism. Like nearly all other industries, Wisconsin's tourism industry was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020; fortunately last year's tourism numbers show a positive step forward.

The total economic impact of Wisconsin tourism in 2021 was \$20.9 billion – this is a 21% increase from 2020! Tourism surged in all 72 counties, helping small businesses and local communities across the state. I have a feeling 2022 is going to be even better for Wisconsin tourism and there are ways you can help make that happen.

Here's how you can help: start planning a trip of your own in our beautiful state. Whether you want to stay close to home or travel to the opposite side of the state, there are plenty of exciting adventures awaiting.

We're fortunate to live in western Wisconsin, which I regard as one of the most beautiful areas of the state – if not the whole country. In the 31st Senate District, we have multiple state parks to go hiking and camping, including Merrick, Perrot and Kinnickinnic. If you enjoy fishing, this area is the right spot for you; trout streams can be found throughout the Driftless Region or you'll find anglers along the Mississippi River. Canoeing, birding and biking are some more activities you can take advantage of in this region.

If you'd rather not spend all of your time outdoors, you're still in luck in western Wisconsin. Our region has a plethora of things to do, such as visiting historic landmarks, stopping at a local brewery or winery or attending a local festival. The options are endless!

As an Eau Claire County resident my whole life, it's been exciting to see the arts community develop in this area thanks to investments made by our community. In Eau Claire and surrounding communities, you'll find beautiful handmade artwork or be able to hear incredible work by local musicians.

As much as we love western Wisconsin, I understand the urge to explore new parts of the state. Unlike many of our Midwestern neighbors, all Wisconsinites have a little something to brag about. Each region of Wisconsin is unique and has something different to offer.



One of my favorite areas to visit with my family is the Lake Superior region and communities in Northern Wisconsin. Similar to western Wisconsin, the Northwoods is truly breathtaking with its forests, rivers and trails. If you visit Northeastern Wisconsin, you'll be close to Lake Michigan and you could even visit historic Lambeau Field where we'll cheer our state's team on in the fall.

If you choose to visit Southeast Wisconsin, you're probably thinking of stopping in Milwaukee, our state's biggest city. With its many fests, restaurants and sports teams, I'm sure you will find enough to stay busy.

Southcentral Wisconsin is another picturesque area of our state, including our state Capitol and the beginning of the Driftless region. Located near many farms, this region offers delicious, fresh food that all can enjoy.

Each county in Wisconsin has something very special to offer. Even if you're able to visit all regions this summer, I guarantee you'll be returning soon to finish your adventure checklist and try out different fall and winter activities.

Now that you're thinking of all of the fun places to travel next, you're probably wondering how to plan your trip. Well, you're in luck. Travel Wisconsin is our state's one-stop shop for all information to create your itinerary. They have countless ideas on what to do and where to stay in areas all over the state. Visit TravelWisconsin.com to get started.

Make memories with your friends and family this summer. Be safe and enjoy the many adventures Wisconsin has waiting for you.

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