

KEY STATS FROM THE PAST YEAR

- **Top visited region**—The University of Illinois campus with 42.8% of all visitation followed by Champaign at 27.8%.
- **Top origin markets**—Springfield/Decatur, Chicago, Peoria/Bloomington, St. Louis, Terre Haute, Quad Cities, Paducah/Cape Girardeau, Minneapolis, and Milwaukee.
- **Visitor Spending**—Champaign accrues 79.5% of all visitor spending at \$229/visitor. While Urbana's spending is lower, they have the second highest spend per visitor at \$145.
- **Top Market for Spending**—The Chicago area makes up our highest visitor spending at 24.6% exceeding the percentage of visitors (23.4%). St. Louis is also a high-value visitor, while the Peoria/Bloomington area has high visitation but low spending.
- **Top Sector for Spending**—Food & Beverage receives the most spending at 36.4% followed by retail at 28.8%.
- **Top Points of Interest**—University of Illinois campus, Memorial Stadium, Market Place Mall, Curtis Orchard, Big Grove Tavern, Crystal Lake Park, Rose Bowl Tavern, Rantoul Family Sports Complex, Willard Airport, Lake of the Woods.

Measuring Visitor Behavior

Understanding visitor behavior is a critical step in building our sales and marketing plans as we work to increase visitor spending to further bring tax dollars back to our community. While tools like Google Analytics, Facebook insights, STR reports (hotel occupancy), and data acquired through advertising channels have proven valuable over the years, Visit Champaign County invested in a more robust tool—Zartico—that paints a broader picture of what visitors do in our community, allowing us to track visitor movement, spending, market of origin, and top points of interest. A visitor is considered an individual who is coming 30 miles from where they live or work and spends more than two hours in our destination.

Collection of data can often be perceived as a breach of privacy, however Zartico's data collection ensures anonymous data based on sample sizes through three lenses: 1) geolocation through cell phone use (i.e. checking the weather, tagging a location on Instagram, calling an Uber); 2) credit card spending through four national brands and 3,000 financial institutions; and 3) event data from over 300 sources (Eventbrite, Ticketmaster, etc.).

Through the program, we can take a deeper look into visitor movement through a visualization report focusing on movements following a visit to a specific event or location. With only two available per year, we did our first visualization on the Rantoul Family Sports Complex to better understand how this facility is impacting the greater Champaign County area as a whole. We looked at visitor movement between June–August 2022 and received comparative visitation information back to May 2021.

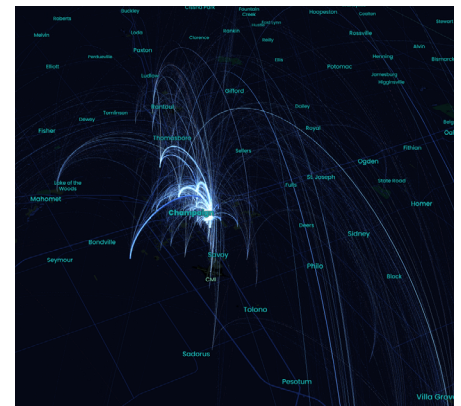
Among the many takeaways:

- During the busiest month of the year (April), the average visitor spend per person is \$133. Visitor overnight stays following their time at the Complex averages 62%.
- Chicago accounts for 27% of visitors and 27% of visitor spending, meanwhile Peoria/Bloomington accounts for 16% of visitors but only 1% of visitor spending.
- Accommodations, food, and retail have the highest cross visitation following their visit to the Complex.
- 40% of visitors visit the North Prospect/Market Place area, 35% visiting Champaign, and 25% visiting the University of Illinois campus.
- Top points of interest visited following their visit to the Complex include the University of Illinois Campus, Market Place Mall, Carle, State Farm Center, Dodds Park, Jupiter's at the Crossing, Tuscola Outlet Mall, and Black Dog. Chain destinations include McDonald's, Walmart, Jimmy John's, Subway, and Chili's.

Visual maps also highlight the many places people visit following their time at the complex and help us understand its broad impact. Visitors can be seen going to Allerton Park & Retreat Center, University of Illinois Golf Course, Curtis Orchard, Lake of the Woods, Japan House, and so many more.

This data can be helpful across many sectors, particularly economic development. Seeing the high visitation to fast casual restaurants encourages development of additional offerings close to the Complex. Similarly, the significant visitation to Jupiter's at the Crossing suggests a need for group friendly restaurants that can host teams and fans. The data also helps the Complex identify potential sponsors and advertisers that see high visitation. Additionally, we can identify high value visitors that should be targeted during digital campaigns for visiting our entire community.

Regular reviews of the data will help Visit Champaign County strengthen their efforts, allowing us to be adaptable to the season and the traveler based on their specific interests and spending habits. As we continue to drive business to the area, ensuring we share data with our partners will continue to benefit our entire community.



From Our CEO



Looking back on the third quarter, we are definitely in the middle of our busiest events season, hosting the Illinois High School Theatre Festival, IHSA State Wrestling Championships, IHSA Boys State Basketball Championships, Illinois Middle School Basketball

Championships, Illinois Archery State Championships, and the inaugural Illini Esports Invitational, plus hosting several significant conferences that provide that important weekday traffic to heighten the visitor economy.

A very special day for our team included an outing to Allerton Park & Retreat Center for a sneak preview of two amazing things: 1) Opening of the new Visitors Center; and 2) Discussion on The Farms Folk School coming this fall.

Perhaps most meaningful was the installation of our first interpretive sign for the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail in One Main Plaza and the road trip to Bartonville for a sneak preview of the sculpture by Preston Jackson that will be installed in Skelton Park this summer.

Wearing my state tourism hat, the Illinois Council of CVBs (ICCVB) hosted our board retreat in Aurora, which provided deep discussion on legislative priorities, strategic planning, and challenges facing our industry. Grateful to serve alongside colleagues from around the state in mapping out our future together.

A shout out to The Literary for hosting our January board meeting, to Hilton Garden Inn for hosting our February board meeting, and to Atkins Golf Club for hosting our March board meeting.

Grateful for our board leadership, our partners and our work force who support a community-based mission to promote a welcoming destination experience for visitors to strengthen economic opportunity and enhance the lives of residents. Everything starts from that point.

Jayne DeLuce

Toast to Tourism Save the Date

The Visit Champaign County Foundation will celebrate our hospitality industry during our annual Toast to Tourism, held on Wednesday, May 17, 4:00-6:00 p.m. at Carmon's in downtown Champaign. During this annual event, we honor local tourism ambassadors whose efforts have paved the way for tourism to the greater Champaign County area or enhanced the visitor experience. RSVP to Brooke Gordon at brookeg@visitchampaigncounty.org.



CCAHT Update

In February 1869, famed abolitionist and orator Frederick Douglass spoke at Barrett Hall, now One Main Plaza, in Champaign. This February, the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail officially installed an interpretive sign near where he spoke. The sign, sponsored by the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois, was dedicated at an unveiling ceremony led by Trail Co-Chairs Angela Rivers and Barbara Suggs Mason. A smaller sign was also installed in Champaign at the former home of Albert R. Lee, known as the unofficial Dean of African American Students at the University of Illinois during the early 20th century.

To engage residents in the Trail, the Visit Champaign County Foundation is allowing donors to inscribe messages on bricks that will be installed at the transformed Skelton Park later this year. Bricks are available at ccafricanamericanheritage.org/donate.

Finally, the Trail received two significant boosts that will help sustain its efforts well into 2024. First, the Trail was selected as a Champaign County First priority project, adding it to a slate of local high-importance projects to be presented to federal legislators, asking for their support. The Trail also will receive a \$475,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Tourism Attractions & Festivals Grant Program to support the development of Skelton Park, educational materials, murals, website enhancements, and more.

Foundation Update

The VCC Foundation generates resources that support the destination experience of people who visit, work, and live in the greater Champaign County area. Current initiatives include supporting the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail, the Chambana Welcome Crew program, the Champaign County Regional Film Office, and bids for bringing major events to the community. This past quarter, staff has gotten involved with workshops hosted by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, East Central Illinois Chapter and by the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois to broaden our knowledge of best practices. Plus the VCC Foundation Board kicked off the "Be a Trailblazer" brick program to benefit the transformation of Skelton Park into a tribute to African American musicians from the area.





Welcoming America

VCC is proud to join the Welcoming Network, composed of over 300 nonprofits and local governments working to build more inclusive and welcoming communities in the United States. Led by Welcoming America, the Welcoming Network is both a network and a movement, driven by the conviction that communities make better decisions when residents of all backgrounds, identities, and perspectives are meaningfully engaged. By joining the network, we further support the ongoing efforts of the City of Champaign in being a certified 'Welcoming' Community through the welcoming standard.

New to CU Mixer

The Winter New to CU Mixer, our fourth event, was held on February 28 at Triptych Brewing. The Village of Savoy sponsored and greeted guests with information about the community. Over 70 new residents and members of the Champaign Welcome Crew attended to foster connections and learn more about the community. Guests were treated to Flour & Fire Pizza, and many gathered to play the board games on hand. The event continues to grow in popularity. The next event will be July 10 at Riggs Beer Company and will be sponsored by Think Urbana.



Sales & Marketing Efforts

IHSA Individual State Wrestling Finals

Since 1967, the IHSA Individual State Wrestling Finals has made a big impact in Champaign County. This year's event, held February 16-18 at State Farm Center, saw nearly 38,000 fans, including more than 8,000 for Saturday's finals, and generated an estimated economic impact of \$5.5 million. Visit Champaign County hosted a welcome booth and sponsored the Official's Party on Friday night at the Eastland Suites. VCC Board chair Bryan Snodgrass and Foundation Board Vice Chair Rachel Coventry addressed fans prior to Friday's semifinals and presented our financial contribution to IHSA Assistant Director Sam Knox.



IHSA Boys Basketball Championships

Year two of the return of IHSA Boys Basketball Championships to Champaign, March 9-11, was a big success with more than 40,000 fans through the turnstiles over the three days, including more than 15,000 for Saturday's championship sessions. The increase in attendance contributed to an estimated \$6 million in economic impact.



As hosts of the tournament, Mike organized community hosts, three of whom were profiled in the News-Gazette, who assisted teams once they qualified for State by helping with hotels, practice facilities, restaurant recommendations, and much more. The University of Illinois police provided escorts to the State Farm Center. As part of the fan experience, the ChampaignMoms.com All-Star Zone was held in the Traditions Club and featured eSports, caricatures by Dan Wild, face painting and glitter tattoos with Wild Style, button making, and oversized games to play. Thanks to our many volunteers who helped us in welcoming fans and teams to the area.

Illini Esports Invitational

Visit Champaign County was a presenting sponsor at the inaugural Illini Esports Invitational, March 31-April 2, at State Farm Center. AJ Taylor, President of Illini Esports, led the effort to bring this event to fruition. A total of 275 participants from 20 schools and universities competed in Rocket League, League of Legends, and Super Smash Brothers. The event was free for spectators and offered a variety of vendors and interactive opportunities. Popular casters, including RichRad, Spaceghost, OrbitalCasting, TinyShiny, ULTCHARGE, HueyYoshikage, and Loki Casts, commentated the event worldwide. When not competing, players could attend five panels and VIP events.



SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS



Middle School Basketball Championships

March also featured the return of the Illinois Middle School Basketball Championships, March 17-19. More than 130 boys' and girls' teams from around the state descended on the ARC, the Leonhard Center, St. Thomas More High School, St. Matthew Middle School, and St. Thomas School in Philo. VCC sponsored the event, which had an estimated economic impact of \$2.1 million.

ILEAS Conference

VCC was thrilled to welcome home the ILEAS Conference after spending more than 20 years in Springfield. This annual conference brings in 500 first responders from across the state for three days of education, networking, and vendor opportunities. The event was held at the I Hotel & Illinois Conference Center with an off-site reception at the Colonnades Club and other downtown Champaign experiences. We hope to continue to host this conference for the foreseeable future, continuing to drive impact during the week.

Circle Wisconsin

Caitlyn, along with 16 other Illinois representatives, attended Circle Wisconsin in the Wisconsin Dells, March 19-22 for a three day trade show with tour operators who are housed in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Michigan and beyond. Julie Hardy from Hardy's Reindeer Ranch also attended and the duo were able to tag team on multiple appointments from the 55 planners participating.



Together, they highlighted the various wonderful experiences that our area has to offer. Several groups have already committed during the event, most notably a group from New Hampshire who will be flying in for a mystery trip. Julie and Caitlyn will be working on producing a familiarization tour (FAM) from other potential operators from the show in early August.

Occupancy Rate

Reporting December 2022-February 2023

Champaign County 48.9%

Bloomington 50.5%

Peoria 41.7%

Springfield/Decatur 44.0%

Average Daily Rate

Reporting December 2022-February 2023

Champaign County \$96.12

Bloomington \$102.32

Peoria \$104.52

Springfield/Decatur \$94.16

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

SPORTS, EVENTS, & FILM

4

leads

0

tentative

4

definite

2,662

estimated room nights

CONFERENCES

12

leads

2

tentative

10

definite

4,702

estimated room nights

GROUP TOUR

3

leads

0

tentative

3

definite

LEAD: Potential business distributed to hotels

TENTATIVE LEAD: Potential business, no commitment yet

DEFINITE LEAD: Business secured



Restaurant Week Wrap-Up

Our 7th Annual Champaign County Area Restaurant Week, held January 27-February 4, was a huge success. We had our highest participation with 42 restaurants across the area including several new spots—83 Vietnamese Cuisine, Café Sababa, Chophouse on Main, Cowboy Monkey, Cracked on Green, Forage Kitchen, Homegrown, Les Gourmet Cuisine, Martinelli's, and Piato To Go. We highlighted a diverse range of cuisines, spanning the globe, introducing diners to new flavors and experiences. Feedback from our participants was extremely positive, with many running out of food, or having to bring in additional staff to meet the demands. We look forward to eating all the food again in 2024, January 26-February 3!

Paxton Regional Partnership

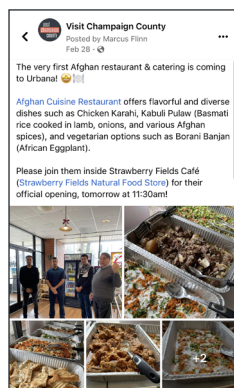
Expanding our regional partnerships, Visit Champaign County is excited to partner with the City of Paxton to promote their robust and growing community. Located just 15 miles north of the Rantoul Family Sports Complex, Paxton aims to capture traffic from the facility and attract them into their downtown to visit their many businesses. The community is also undergoing a regrowth phase with new development and updates happening along their main street that will provide more opportunities to gather, shop, eat, and be entertained. Look for inclusion of Paxton events and destinations in our future marketing and sales efforts.

Destinations International MarCom Summit

Terri attended the Destinations International MarCom Summit, February 13-15, in Norfolk. This conference brings together director-level marketing and communications professionals to learn from industry experts and connect with peers across the country. Some takeaways from the event include ideas for workforce development, place branding, integrating data into decision-making, talking about crime & safety, and key trends among travelers.



Social Media & Web Stats



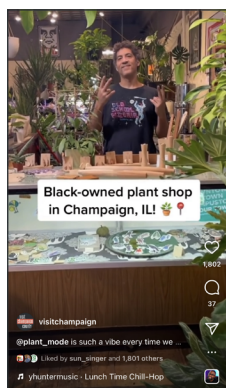
Facebook
Afghan Cuisine
13,166 reach
713 reactions
41 shares

10,375
Followers



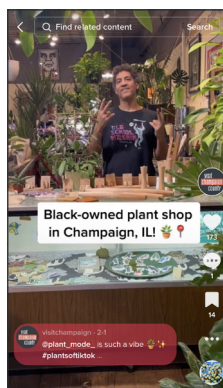
Twitter
IHSA Boys Basketball
7,474 views
113 engagements
26 likes

6,281
Followers



Instagram
Plant Mode
21,267 views
1,802 likes
503 shares

6,907
Followers



TikTok
Plant Mode
1,434 views
173 likes
20 shares

1,584
Followers

Website Report

91,673 Sessions
186,612 Views
65,342 New Visits
2.82 Views per User

Top Visited Pages

Restaurant Week
Calendar of Events
Our Stories
Hotels & Motels
Food & Drink

75.2%

of website traffic is from outside the greater Champaign County area

47.3%

is from outside of Illinois
Top States: Texas, Virginia, Missouri

Our Mission

We promote a welcoming destination experience for visitors to strengthen economic opportunity and enhance the lives of residents.

Visit Champaign County Partners

Destination Founder

Illinois Office of Tourism
City of Champaign
University of Illinois
Champaign Rotary Club

Destination Leader

Busey
Carle
City of Urbana

Destination Builder

Ameren
Champaign County
Community Foundation of
East Central Illinois
Hyatt Hotel
OSF Healthcare
University of Illinois
Community Credit Union
Village of Rantoul
Village of Savoy

Destination Backer

Lynne & Dick Barnes
Copper Creek Church
CU Public Health District
D&V Farms
First State Bank
Gies College of Business
I Hotel & Conference
Center
Illinois American Water
Sarah Laufenberg
Village of Mahomet
Janet & Doug Nelson
Randall & Marcia Nelson
Parkland College
Robeson Family Benefit
Fund
City of Tuscola
Urbana Park District
Village of St. Joseph

Regional Partners

Amish Country of Illinois
City of Tuscola
Monticello Chamber of Commerce

For information on our Tourism Industry Partner Program
and how you can support our mission visit:
visitchampaigncounty.org/partners



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Caleb Miller, Carle
Vanna Pianfetti, Champaign City Council
Sam Santhanam, I Hotel & Illinois Conference Center
Katie Simpson, Village of Savoy
Charles Smith, Village of Rantoul

Visit Champaign County Team

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Terri Reifsteck, Vice President of Marketing & Community Engagement
Caitlyn Floyd, Director of Sales & International Travel
Mike Koon, Director of Sports, Special Events & Film
Marcus Flinn, Communications Manager
Tim Oravec, Community Development Manager
Brooke Gordon, Director of Administrative Services
Estella Samii, Visitor Experience Coordinator
Leslie Lundy, Finance Manager (contracted)



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