

# 2022 Community Report

## About the I-Rural Project

Rural and nature-based tourism is one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism industry. The Bureau of Economic Analysis estimated the U.S. outdoor recreation economy accounted for \$374 billion of GDP in 2020. The goal of this project is to design and implement a model that rural communities in Illinois can use to guide tourism development.

This report focuses on findings from two rural tourist surveys. Survey 1 was about general rural tourist behaviors and decision-making with a large online panel sample. Survey 2 collected a sample of visitors who have been to Galena, Grafton, Havana, and/or Savanna and was about past visitors' travel experience and satisfaction.

## Survey 1: Rural Tourist Survey

The sample targeted rural tourists from eight Midwest states, including Illinois, Kentucky, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. A total of **1015** responses were gathered.

### Rural Tourist Behaviors

- Average travel distance is **238 miles**.
- Average travel time is **3.63 hours**.
- Top 5 Destinations for Rural Tourists
  1. Springfield, IL (2.76%)
  2. Rockford, IL (1.67%)
  3. Gatlinburg, TN (1.58%)
  4. Branson, MO (1.08%)
  5. Starved Rock Park, IL (.89%)
- Top 5 States for Rural Tourists
  1. Illinois (17.9%)
  2. Michigan (11%)
  3. Tennessee (7.49%)
  4. Wisconsin (7.39%)
  5. Indiana (7.09%)
- Top 5 Destinations in IL for Rural Tourists
  1. Springfield (2.9%)
  2. Rockford (1.9%)
  3. Starved Rock Park (1%)
  4. Peoria (.9%)
  5. Galena (.8%)
- Stay average **3 nights** in a rural destination.
- Top 3 Accommodations
  1. Hotel or motel (32.4%)
  2. Family's/relative's/friend's home (27.1%)
  3. Vacation rentals/home-sharing lodging (e.g., Airbnb, VRBO) (12.3%)

- Average **\$523 spending** for a trip.
- 47.8% trips are **family trips**.

### Rural Tourist Decision-Making

- Top 3 Trip Motivations for Rural Tourists
  1. Travel with or visit family or friends (32.1%)
  2. Discover new things/places (17.7%)
  3. Get away/escape from daily routine (16.7%)
- Rural tourists tend to plan their trip **1-2 weeks in advance** (19.6%).



- Top 5 Information Source
  1. Friends, family, and colleagues (75.4%)
  2. Previous visit(s) (46%)
  3. Social media and networking websites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) (43.2%)
  4. Search engines (e.g., Google, Bing) (41.2%)
  5. Destination websites/app/brochures (29.9%)

### Rural Tourist Post-Visit Evaluations

- Most Frequent Words Describing Activities Done at the Destination
  1. Hiking/camping/watching wildlife/cycling/walking/hunting (13.2%)
  2. Visiting small towns & villages (9.2%)
  3. Visiting friends & family/homecoming (9.2%)
  4. Water sports/beach/winter sports (8.9%)
- Most Frequent Words Describing Experiences Rural Tourists Liked the Most
  1. Natural scenery/being in nature (21.6%)
  2. Attractions/tourist sites (4.8%)
  3. Food (4.4%)
  4. No crowdedness (4%)
- Most Frequent Words Describing Experiences Rural Tourists Liked the Least
  1. A long travel to the destination (4.1%)
  2. Lack of stores & shops (3.9%)
  3. Lack of recreational opportunities (2.9%)
  4. Poor facilities/infrastructure (2.6%)

