

# Pure Ludington

Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

## PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Kim Skeltis, APR; 616.419.8385; [kim@blueblazepr.com](mailto:kim@blueblazepr.com)

### LUDINGTON 2017 TOURISM SEASON SAW HIGHEST EVER HOTEL ROOM RENTAL INCOME PLUS INCREASED VISITORS TO MOST EVENTS AND ATTRACTIONS

*Ludington State Park Booked Most Camp Nights in State Park System, Sandcastles Children's Museum Broke Attendance Record, and New Maritime Museum Attracted almost 10,000 Visitors in First Year*

LUDINGTON, Mich. – Feb. 21, 2018 – Last year was a banner tourism season for Ludington and Mason County, with the highest-ever hotel room rental income, increased event attendance, and more visitors to attractions like Ludington State Park and Sandcastles Children's Museum. And the new Port of Ludington Maritime Museum attracted 10,000 visitors since opening in June 2017.

"Ludington keeps evolving its product offerings with new and exciting attractions and events like the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum and Love Ludington weekend, while continuing to offer favorite traditions that bring people back," said Brandy Henderson, executive director of the Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Clearly our numbers show that Ludington continues to be a hot visitor destination."

The [Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau \(LACVB\)](#), the official destination marketing organization for Mason County, promotes the area regionally and nationally to business and leisure visitors in order to maximize economic impact. The LACVB tracked the following tourism impact figures for 2017.

#### **Highest Room Rental Income in History**

In 2017, Ludington area hotels generated **\$14,235,564** in room rental income – **the highest yet in the county's history** – 14.1 percent higher than 2016 at \$12,479,105 and 25.3 percent higher than five years ago in 2013. Room rental income is a primary metric to measure tourism activity, and figures are collected from LACVB hotel members. (Actual room rental income is higher if non-member hotels are included.)

Annual Room Rental Income (by year)



Following are key findings relating to Ludington's 2017 room rental income:

- Ludington saw **year-over-year increases** in room rental income **every month of 2017**.
- **Biggest year-over-year monthly increases** were in March (27.9 percent higher than March 2016), April (26.8 percent higher than April 2016) and November (25 percent higher than November 2016). One factor is that the Holiday Inn Express was open after being closed through May 2016 for renovations.
- **July was the highest month for room rental income** at \$3,512,500, up 16.4 percent from July 2016 at \$3,018,117. August was the second-highest month at \$2,915,866, up 9 percent from August 2016.
- From a quarterly perspective, Mason County experienced the **most significant year-over-year increase in the second quarter** (April-June) at \$3,240,558, up 20.1 percent from the second quarter in 2016.
- The **strongest quarter for total room rental income was the third quarter** (July-September) at \$8,064,704, up 12.1 percent from that quarter in 2016.

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“We continue to break our annual room rental income records each year, demonstrating that new visitors are still discovering Ludington and Mason County while our regulars return year after year,” said Henderson.

### **Event and Attraction Attendance Increases**

The Ludington Area CVB saw another strong year for attendance at events like BrrrewFest, Lakestride, Ludrock and Octoberfest. Ludington State Park led all Michigan State Parks with the most camp nights booked and broke its revenue record. And Sandcastles Children’s Museum saw its best year yet in attendance. Highlights include:

#### ***Events***

- **Beer festivals** – The fourth annual [Pure Ludington BRRRewfest](#) attracted 775 people in 2017, up 10.7 percent from 700 in 2016 and 75 percent from 400 people in 2015 when the event started. [Bell’s Octoberfest](#) attracted 1,000 attendees, up 42.9 percent from 700 in 2016. Additionally, [Suds on the Shore](#) increased attendance 4.5 percent to 2,300 attendees from 2,200 in 2016.
- **Love Ludington/Lakestride Weekend** – The annual [Ludington Lakestride](#) running event June 10 had 1,013 runners, a 1.5 percent increase from 998 runners in 2016. Also, approximately 1,500 people participated in the “Be Someone’s Angel” Guinness World Record attempt for the most sand angels.
- **Music concerts** – The annual [LudRock](#) two-day outdoor live music concert attracted 5,000 attendees, up 42.9 percent from 3,500 in 2016. And the two [Rhythm & Dunes](#) concerts collectively continued its streak of high attendance, bringing in approximately 12,000 to 13,000 total in 2017 (the same as 2016).
- **Gus Macker** – [Gus Macker](#) held its own in its 26<sup>th</sup> year with 805 teams (down by 31 teams from 2016), 3,220 players (down by 124 from 2016) and 10,000 to 15,000 fans – the same as the last few years. The Ludington Gus Macker remains the largest Gus Macker tournament in the country.
- **New Year’s Eve Ball Drop** – While not a record-breaking attendance year like 2016, the 2017 [New Year’s Eve Ball Drop](#) still attracted 6,000. The reduced attendance is attributed to the extremely cold temperature in 2017 versus 2016.

#### ***Attractions***

- **Ludington State Park** – In 2017, [Ludington State Park](#) attracted 840,305 visitors, down only 1.1 percent from 2016. The total number of camp nights booked was up 1.2 percent from 2016 at 48,838, ***the most camp nights booked in the park’s history and among all Michigan State Parks*** last year. The park also topped \$2 million in annual revenue in 2017 for the first time. Day users dropped slightly to 579,932 from 624,725 in 2016 – mainly due to cooler temperatures that reduced the number of beach days.
- **Mason County Historical Society properties** – The historical society’s newest property, the [Port of Ludington Maritime Museum](#), opened in June 2017 and saw almost 10,000 visitors in its first year, with total admission at 9,892. [Historic White Pine Village](#) also attracted 8,358 visitors in 2016, down slightly from 8,615 visitors in 2016. However, regular daily admissions were up by more than 875 visitors while special event admissions were slightly down.
- **Sandcastles Children’s Museum** – [Sandcastles Children’s Museum](#) attracted 27,666 visitors in 2017, a 6.7 percent increase from 25,922 visitors in 2016. Last year also marked the museum’s ***best year yet in attendance*** since opening its doors a decade ago in 2007.

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- **S.S. Badger** – While the [S.S. Badger](#) does not disclose passenger numbers, the company confirmed it saw an increase in passenger sales in 2017 from 2016. Also, all of the shoreline cruises sold out again in 2017 (at a capacity of 600 passengers per shoreline cruise).
- **Marine metrics** – The [Ludington Municipal Marina](#) sold 65,000 gallons of gas in 2017, up 17.9 percent from 55,000 gallons in 2016 due to the Ludington Offshore Classic’s Big Boys Tournament added in 2017. Sales of diesel dropped 24.8 percent to 44,000 gallons from 2016, and the number of boat days (days boat parties docked overnight) dropped 29.3 percent to 2,590 days partially due to a slow fishing year. However, even though the [Ludington Offshore Classic](#) ran only one day due to high winds and rough waves (the same scenario as 2016), it still attracted 2,900 participants – up 16 percent from 2,500 in 2016.
- **NEW 2017 DATA: Ludington Lighthouses** – [The Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association](#)’s two Ludington lighthouses saw an increase in purchases of its tower climbs. The [Ludington North Breakwater Light](#) sold 9,599 tower climbs, an 18.4 percent increase from 8,104 in 2016. The [Big Sable Point Lighthouse](#) sold 19,116, an 8 percent increase from 17,699 climbs in 2016.

### **New Visitor Experiences in 2018**

The LACVB is gearing up for another busy tourism season as it welcomes visitors to its many annual events ([click here](#) for a full schedule), as well as new attractions and events. New tourism offerings include:

- **Coast to Coast Gravel Grinder**, May 12. [micoasttocoast.com](#). The latest in the [Michigan Adventure Racing](#) series, this new 218-mile bike race on gravel roads and two-tracks goes from Saginaw Bay to Ludington, finishing at Stearns Park where racers touch Lake Michigan to end the journey.
- **Vintage Badger 1953 Anniversary Cruise**, June 3, 9-11 p.m. [sbadger.com](#). Step back to 1953 when the [S.S. Badger](#) first set sail and celebrate its 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a commemorative shoreline cruise aboard the last coal-fired steamship – with original menu items, 1950s rock and big band tunes, original staff uniforms, 1953 trivia and more. Attendees are encouraged to dress in 50s vintage attire. Tickets are \$42 (children under 5 are free) and include a 1953 Badger Buffet with desserts and soft drinks and cash bars. Space is limited and tickets can be purchased online, at 800.841.4243, or at the ticket office after May 6.
- **Guinness World Record attempt**, June 9. [pureludington.com/love](#). Tied to the annual Love Ludington weekend, Ludington will attempt a third Guinness World Record after pursuing the World’s Longest Ice Cream Dessert and Most Sand Angels (still the record-holder) – this time for the longest single line of bicycles and longest bicycle line moving simultaneously.
- **Mason & Oceana Railroad Locomotive Exhibit – Historic White Pine Village**, Opening in summer. [historicwhitepinevillage.org](#). The Mason County Historical Society purchased a retired steam locomotive built in 1924 from the Coopersville & Marne Railway and will refurbish it, rename it the *Mason & Oceana Railroad* and display it in a permanent exhibit replicating the Mason & Oceana Railroad that operated from 1886 to 1909. Featuring an engine, flat car and tender car, the locomotive will be displayed on 100 feet of railroad tracks at the village in conjunction with a newly developed Buttersville Depot building.

### **About the Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau**

The [Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau \(LACVB\)](#) is the official destination marketing organization for Mason County, promoting the region to business and leisure visitors to maximize economic impact. An independent nonprofit organization, the LACVB collaborates with its partners to champion the continuous improvement of the region as a unique and memorable tourism destination. For more information, visit [pureludington.com](#), [Facebook.com/PureLudington](#) and [twitter.com/@Pure\\_Ludington](#).

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