

Pure Ludington

Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

PRESS RELEASE

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LUDINGTON LODGING INCOME AT ALL-TIME HIGH OF \$19.2 MILLION IN 2021 – UP 53.1 PERCENT FROM 2020 AND 27.7 PERCENT FROM 2019

Ludington State Park also Breaks Attendance Records in 2021 and 2020; Events and Attractions Build Back to Pre-Pandemic Levels

LUDINGTON, Mich. – March 7, 2022 – The tourism slump in 2020 across the country due to the global pandemic may already be a distant memory, as Ludington area lodging establishments experienced their strongest tourism year yet in 2021 – with room rental income at an all-time high of \$19.2 million that exceeded 2020 and 2019 figures. Also, Ludington State Park broke attendance records in 2021 and 2020. The [Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau \(LACVB\)](#) tracked these and other tourism impact trends for 2021.

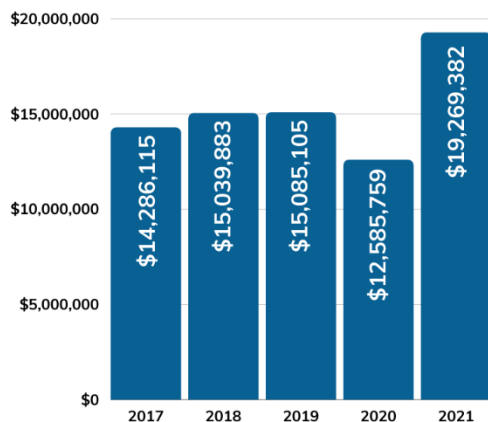
“We expected tourism to surpass 2020 levels, but seeing room rental income and state park visitors also exceed 2019 pre-pandemic figures shows that Ludington’s tourism industry is resilient,” said Brandy Miller, executive director of the Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. “The Ludington area has the ideal mix of amenities – including plenty of outdoor space – to offer visitors a safe, easily accessible destination. All signs point to a healthy and thriving tourism industry that plays an important role in bolstering Mason County’s economy.”

2021 Room Rental Income Hit Historic High

In 2021, Mason County lodging properties generated \$19,269,382 in room rental income – **the highest in the county’s history** – 53.1 percent higher than 2020 at \$12,585,759 and 27.7 percent higher than pre-pandemic levels in 2019 at \$15,085,105. Room rental income is a primary metric to measure tourism activity, and figures are collected from LACVB lodging members. (*Room rental income would be higher if non-members were included.*)

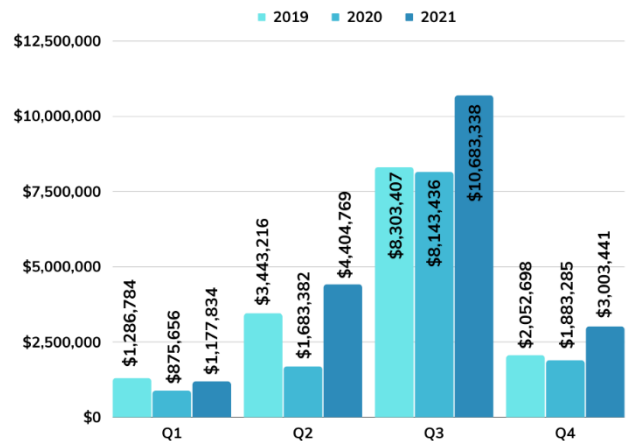
As expected, July, August and September were the highest months for room rental income in 2021, with July at \$4,312,719, August at 3,899,882 and September at \$2,470,737. And while annual room rental income in 2021 exceeded figures in both 2020 and 2019, there also were three months in 2020 where room rental income exceeded the same months in 2019 – August, September and October 2020 – when tourists started feeling comfortable visiting drive destinations, especially with many families and students doing remote work/school.

Mason County Room Rental Income



Source: Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau.

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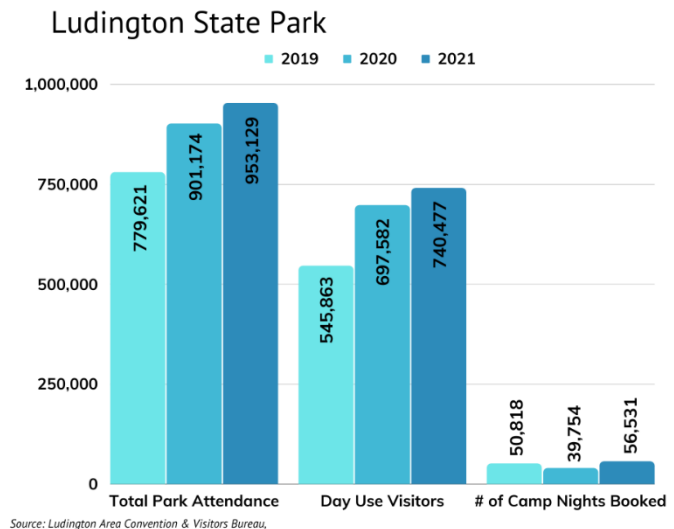


Source: Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Outdoor Attractions Popular in 2021

Mason County's outdoor draws like Ludington State Park, recreational boating and charter fishing increased in popularity in 2021 from pre-pandemic levels in 2019, attesting to visitors' desires to seek outdoor space throughout the pandemic.

- **Ludington State Park broke attendance figures** – The state park had its two best years ever for total park attendance and day-use visitors in 2021 and 2020, respectively. The park had 953,129 total visitors in 2021 – up 5.8 percent from 2020 and 22.2 percent from 2019. The park also had 901,174 visitors in 2020 – up 15.6 percent from 2019. Additionally, the park welcomed the most day-use visitors in its history in 2021 with 740,477 visitors – up 6.1 percent from 2020 and 35.6 percent from 2019. The park had its second highest year in day-use visitors in 2020 with 697,582 – up 27.8 percent from 2019 – reflecting people visiting from drive distances to get outside during the early months of the pandemic. The park also booked the most camp nights ever in 2021 with 56,531 camp nights – up 42.2 percent from 2020 and 11.2 percent from 2019.



- **Marine traffic increased** – Both municipal marinas saw increases in the number of transient boats (sail into Ludington and stay overnight) in 2021. Ludington Municipal Marina had 930 transient boat days in 2021 – up 30.2 percent from 2020 and 6.2 percent from 2019. Harbor View Marina had 822 transient boat days in 2021 – up 4.8 percent from 2020. (*Figures are not available for 2019 when Harbor View was under private ownership.*)
- **Charter fishing increased** – According to the DNR Fisheries Division, Ludington had 1,144 charter fishing excursions on Lake Michigan in 2021, not only up from 2020 but also slightly up from 2019 figures of 1,136 excursions. The number of charter boats on Lake Michigan also was similar to the past two years at 44 in 2021 (versus 42 in 2020 and 43 in 2019). There were also 21 excursions on Pere Marquette Lake, up 90 percent from 2019 (11 excursions).

Events and Cultural Attractions Build Back

Most events returned and all attractions re-opened in 2021, with attendance figures still recovering to pre-pandemic levels as event planners and attractions made adjustments for safety protocols and visitors reacclimated to attending events and activities again. School and group tours still lagged in 2021 due to COVID precautions, which impacted attendance at a few Mason County properties.

- **Most events returned in 2021** – After a scrubbed event calendar in 2020 except for the Offshore Classic Fishing Tournament and a virtual Lakestride Half Marathon, 2021 saw an almost full event calendar except for Brrrewfest, Gus Macker and LudRock still cancelled due to COVID. Some event figures:
 - *Lakestride* – 670 runners in 2021, up from 500 in 2020 and down from 857 in 2019.
 - *Suds on the Shore* – 1,900 tickets were sold in 2021 after being cancelled in 2020 – down from 2,900 in 2019 due to a cap on ticket sales in 2021 to allow for social distancing.
 - *Octoberfest* – 1,000 attendees in 2021 after being cancelled in 2020, up from 750 in 2019.
 - *New Year's Eve Ball Drop* – 8,000 attendees in 2021 after being cancelled in 2020, slightly down from 9,000 in 2019.

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- **Museums and cultural attractions reopened in 2021** – After a difficult year for Mason County’s cultural attractions, all reopened in 2021 (though some with shorter seasons) and are building back attendance.
 - *Mason County Historical Society properties* – Historic White Pine Village attracted 6,590 visitors in 2021 – more than double 2020 when the property had a shortened season by two months. While general admissions were up by 128 percent in 2021 from 2019, school tours were down by 90 percent, resulting in a 20.1 percent drop from 2019. The Port of Ludington Maritime Museum attracted 5,681 visitors in 2021 – three times more than 2020 (the museum also had a shorter 2020 season) but down 25.5 percent from 2019 also due to the reduced school and group tours. However, gift shop sales were up 40 percent from 2019.
 - *Sandcastles Children’s Museum* – Attracted 14,224 visitors in 2021 after being closed all of 2020. While down from 2019 attendance figures of 26,284, the museum was closed four months more in 2021 than in 2019, and it did not hold its traditional New Year’s Eve Balloon Drop in 2021 that typically boosts December attendance.
 - *SPLKA Lighthouses* – Ludington’s two lighthouses had visitors again in 2021 after being closed all of 2020. Ludington North Breakwater Light logged 5,328 tower climbs in 2021, down 29 percent from 2019. Big Sable Point Light logged 14,085 tower climbs, down 21.5 percent from 2019.

“Most of our tourism industry partners have exceeded 2019 figures, and those who haven’t yet are headed in the right direction,” said Miller. “All of this is a positive sign that we are recovering as an industry to pre-pandemic levels, and that is only trending upward in 2022 as traveler confidence fully returns.”

2022 Expected to be Stronger Tourism Year

The LACVB is gearing up for what is predicted to be an even busier tourism season in 2022, with nine in ten Americans planning to travel during the next six months (*according to [Longwoods International’s study of U.S. traveler sentiment](#)*). Mason County has a full calendar of events, new attractions, plus some milestone anniversaries with celebrations, including the 30th anniversary of the Ludington Gus Macker 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament (largest Macker in the country) and fifth anniversary of the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum.

Regarding new attractions, the [Mason County Historical Society Research Center](#) opens this summer as a downtown welcome center to the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum and Historic White Pine Village. A new [Artisan Market](#) selling handmade items will run Thursdays, May 26 through Sept. 22 at Legacy Plaza. New food and drink establishments include [Ludington Meat Company](#) opening this spring, [STIX Ludington](#) that opened in November featuring a two-story, fine dining restaurant with event space and beer garden plus adjacent state-of-the-art bowling lanes, and [876 Baldwin](#) that opened in October in downtown Baldwin featuring hand-crafted food and cocktails. Mason County also recently opened two new wineries – [Pere Marquette Winery](#) in Buttersville Peninsula and [North Branch Winery](#) in Scottville. In terms of expanding businesses, soy candle company [House & Harbor](#) opens a brick-and-mortar location this summer in the former Biercamp building, featuring a manufacturing and retail store plus candle-making classes. The Tinderbox, a family-friendly 18-hole disc golf course, opened in October. And Ludington State Park is adding more accessible features, including a Universal Access Kayak Launch at Hamlin Lake Beach; an off-road, electronic Trackchair®; and a SeeCoast Viewer to help those with color blindness experience a broader spectrum color.

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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