

Study: Eclipse had historic economic impact on SC

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COLUMBIA — Hotel bookings and other travel expenditures related to last month's total solar eclipse had an estimated economic impact of \$269 million across South Carolina, making the eclipse the largest single tourist event on record in the state.

Roughly 1.6 million people traveled to or within South Carolina to view the total solar eclipse on Aug. 21, according to research released Wednesday by the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

Another 3.8 million South Carolinians did not travel, but saw the eclipse in their hometowns.

"Not only does this research confirm what our indicators hinted at weeks ago, it puts the picture into sharper focus, adding more definition to

the eclipse's total impact," SCPRT director Duane Parrish said.

The survey that produced the new data was conducted in states along the Eastern seaboard that traditionally have high concentrations of consumers who choose South Carolina for their travel, but does not reflect international visitation.

According to the research, more than half of eclipse travelers were South Carolinians who left their hometowns to see the eclipse in another location in the state. About 800,000 visitors were from out of state, primarily from North Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

Most people who traveled to or within South Carolina to view the eclipse stayed overnight and reported participating in activities such as shopping, unique local dining, beach activities,



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The total solar eclipse visible across South Carolina last month brought an estimated economic impact of \$269 million across the state, experts estimate.

visiting historical attractions or engaging in outdoor recreation.

Other findings from the survey included that most visitors viewed the eclipse in the Greenville, Columbia or Charleston metro areas and that about 48 percent of out-of-state visitors and one-third of in-state travelers indicate they went to an optimal viewing site like a park, a mountain site or coast.

About 23 percent of out-of-state visitors and 25 percent of in-state travelers reported participating in an organized solar eclipse event, the survey said.

Nearly all of the respondents rated their experience as "excellent" or "good," describing their time in South Carolina

viewing the eclipse as "unique," "amazing," or "once in a lifetime." The few "fair" or "poor" ratings were almost all due to poor weather.

Locally, 101 planes were on the ground at the Oconee County Regional Airport for the eclipse, according to county officials. NASA estimated that as many as 1 million visitors would be in South Carolina to view the eclipse.

Oconee officials told The Journal the county's parks began getting reservations 11 months in advance — which is the earliest they were available — and had been booked for about three months prior to the event.

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