



# TOPICS IN THE NEWS:

## Tourism – On the Road to Recovery?

(September 2021)

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### INTRODUCTION

As summer vacations give way to back to school preparations, this Timely Topics reflects on the travel and tourism industry [one of the hardest hit sectors of the economy](#), and how it is faring as the COVID 19 pandemic ebbs and flows. By the end of spring 2021, COVID numbers were dropping, and vaccination rates were climbing, [fueling optimism for a travel-friendly summer](#). States and localities loosened restrictions and a pent-up populace was eager to hit the road. By the middle of July, the phrase “Delta variant” had overtaken our news feeds as COVID numbers started to climb at a startling rate. Varying degrees of masking requirements reappeared, and other factors led to [a decline in prospective travelers’ confidence](#).

Complicated by the seasonal nature of the travel and tourism industry in Michigan, businesses that depend on [foreign labor](#), open doors and face-to-face interactions have suffered, leaving them to find new ways to lure and [reassure](#) those still seeking an escape from the hard realities of the last 18 months. Creative solutions to attract travelers and boost the tourism industry include [new approaches to marketing](#), [unique volunteer opportunities](#), [alternative lodging options](#), and [new ways to explore Michigan favorites](#).

Some of the new freedoms afforded by the pandemic, in particular the ability to work and attend school remotely, inspired people to head for the great outdoors, causing an “explosion” in camping across Michigan. [RV sales](#) saw a big boost in 2020, as did use of parks and recreation areas and [sales of vacation homes](#). Looking to socially isolate from others, but still get away, more travelers flocked to remote locations like [Michigan’s Upper Peninsula](#), which saw a significant uptick in tourism.

While welcome, the surge in outdoor tourism also exposed problems, notably the [impact of increased use of outdoor spaces](#) and a [backlog of maintenance and infrastructure development](#) at state and local parks that are only just being addressed due to [federal relief dollars](#). Other challenges to travel and tourism include a [significant drop in international travelers](#), labor shortages due to [changes to federal visa programs](#), concerns about [‘overtourism’](#), [algal blooms](#) and the effects of [climate change on Michigan lakes](#).

**If you need assistance accessing any of these items or need more information, please contact us at [librarian@michigan.gov](mailto:librarian@michigan.gov) or by phone at 517-335-1477.**

### RESOURCES TO READ

#### Travel and Tourism in Michigan

- [Loved to death: Iconic Michigan lakeshores battered by crowds, waste](#), *Bridge Michigan*, Nov. 11, 2020
- [Michiganders took pandemic refuge outdoors. Will that continue?](#) *MLIVE*, Mar. 20, 2021.

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- [Experts predict tourism boom in Michigan, but could face labor shortage](#), WILX 10, May 13, 2021.
  - [Don't give up on a Pure Michigan tourism comeback after COVID-19](#), *Detroit Free Press*, June 19, 2021.
  - [Group: Great Lakes Algal Blooms Could Cost Region Billions If Not Treated](#), *Gongwer*, June 29, 2021
  - [Michigan RV industry continues long, strange trip](#), *Crain's Detroit Business*, July 3, 2021.
  - [Michigan businesses weather lockdowns, surge of interest in great outdoors](#), *Crain's Detroit Business*, July 4, 2021.
  - [Michigan tourism sector fumes at new delay in opening border to Canadians](#), *Bridge Michigan* July 21, 2021
  - [Avoid toxic algae bloom on Southwest Michigan lake, health officials warn](#), *MLIVE*, Aug. 12, 2021
  - [Michigan on track for record camping year as remote workers fuel surge](#), *Detroit Free Press*, Aug. 26, 2021.

#### Travel and Tourism in the U.S and worldwide

- [Tourism in the post-COVID world: Three steps to build better forward](#), World Bank Blogs, Apr. 30, 2021.
- [Summer 2021 travel trends: pack your wallets and patience](#), June 15, 2021.
- [Coronavirus Visa Issues, Travel Restrictions Threaten Summer Fun and Seasonal Businesses](#), *US News & World Report*, June 21, 2021
- [U.S. will not lift travel restrictions, citing Delta variant, White House says](#), Reuters, July 26, 2021.
- [8 travel industry trends for 2021 \(and beyond\)](#), Exploding Topics, Sept.2, 2021
- [I'm a U.S. Citizen. Where in the world can I go?](#) *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 2021.

#### RESOURCES TO WATCH AND LISTEN

- [NCSL Webinar: State Outdoor Recreation: Climbing to New Heights](#), June 10, 2021.
- [Michigan Matters: Tourism and Convention Industry](#), CBS Detroit, July 4, 2021.
- [Pure Michigan anniversary](#), viewed Sept. 8, 2021.
- [Pure Michigan Radio Show](#), viewed Sept. 8, 2021.