



Missouri Economy Indicators

Outdoor Recreation Economy

VOL. 7, ISSUE 10, 17 AUG 2026

Outdoor recreation is an important part of Missouri’s economy, drawing visitors to hike, bike, boat, camp, and enjoy other activities across the state. Its benefits extend beyond tourism, supporting manufacturing, retail, real estate, and other industries. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) estimates outdoor recreation contributed \$10.67 billion to Missouri’s economy in 2024, or 2.4% of the state’s gross domestic product (GDP). That share matches the U.S. average and ranks higher than six of Missouri’s eight neighboring states. Across the country, outdoor recreation ranged from 6.1% of Hawaii’s GDP to just 1.6% of New York’s. Complementing this broad measure of the outdoor economy, a 2026 study of Missouri’s state parks provides additional insight into how these public lands benefit visitors and communities.

Hunting Is a Missouri Recreation Strength

Eight outdoor recreation activities generating at least \$100 million in GDP have significant concentrations in Missouri. Measured by location quotients (a 2.0 means the activity is twice as concentrated as the U.S. average), these activities represent potential competitive advantages.

Missouri has a high concentration (1.73) in hunting-related spending, with \$437 million in GDP. One reason is higher levels of hunting participation: Missouri was ranked 10th nationally for hunting licenses in 2025, despite ranking 18th in population. Equestrian-related spending ranked second in concentration (1.58), with \$176 million in GDP.

Missouri’s Top Outdoor Recreation Concentrations

GDP concentrations compared to the U.S. average

Outdoor Activity	2024 GDP (M\$)	Missouri GDP Concentration
Hunting / shooting / trapping	\$437	1.73
Equestrian	\$176	1.58
Festivals / sporting events / concerts	\$431	1.53
Climbing / hiking / tent camping	\$180	1.51
Productive activities (e.g., gardening)	\$361	1.49
Motorcycling / ATVing	\$245	1.41
Boating / fishing	\$739	1.26
Game areas (e.g., golfing, tennis)	\$513	1.19
		U.S. 1.0

Sources: MU Extension graphic using 2024 Outdoor Recreation Economic Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis for activities greater than \$100 million in GDP. Concentration measured with location quotient analysis. 2025 hunting license and population figures from U.S. Department of the Interior and Census, respectively.

The BEA measures outdoor recreation not only by activity, such as hunting and boating, but also by the industries and jobs it supports. Retail generated 28% of Missouri’s outdoor recreation GDP and 32,800 jobs, with retailers such as Bass Pro benefiting from consumer spending. Manufacturing, including boat builders and athletic gear makers, accounted for 15% of outdoor recreation GDP and nearly 7,300 jobs. Leisure spending related to outdoor recreation, including entertainment, accommodations, and food services, contributed \$2.35 billion (22% of outdoor recreation GDP) and supported over 33,000 jobs. One-third of Missouri’s 90,600 outdoor recreation-related employment was in these leisure and hospitality industries.

Missouri State Parks Offer Recreational and Economic Benefits

Missouri's state parks and historic sites attract nearly 20 million visitors each year, with Table Rock and Bennett Spring state parks among the most visited destinations. A 2025 survey of park goers found that more than 9 in 10 used the parks for walking, hiking, or running.

Camping and wildlife viewing were also very popular.

The survey also asked visitors about their activities around the state parks. Just over half of overnight visitors (53%) dined at nearby restaurants, compared with 44% of day visitors, who typically travel shorter distances. One-third of overnight visitors also shopped in nearby communities, versus 1 in 5 day visitors, reflecting their longer stays.

Visitor spending in and around Missouri state parks provides a significant boost to local communities, supporting outdoor recreation, retail, lodging, and restaurants. Combined with household spending on state park-related goods, it is estimated to support nearly 11,900 Missouri jobs and contribute \$883 million to the state's GDP in 2025.

Research across the U.S. has found that rural recreation communities often experience stronger population and job growth than similar areas. Missouri shows the same pattern: Over the past 20 years, ZIP codes adjacent to state parks outperformed comparable metro and nonmetro communities in both population and employment growth. Although this does not prove causation, it is consistent with the positive relationships found in other research.

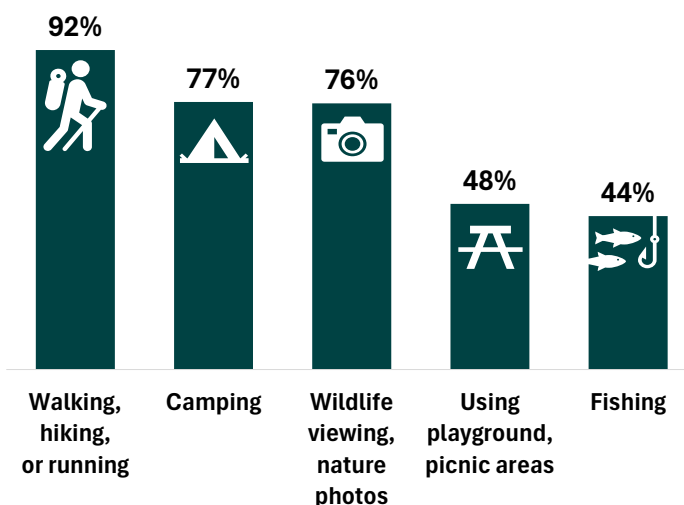
Additional Notes and Resources

- The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis provides additional state-level details on the [outdoor recreation economy](#), with downloadable tables covering 2012-24.
- The Missouri Department of Natural Resources' 2026 [Missouri State Park](#) and [Katy Trail](#) Visitor and Economic Impact Reports provide detailed survey results, economic impact and ZIP code analyses, along with additional information on visitor and community benefits.

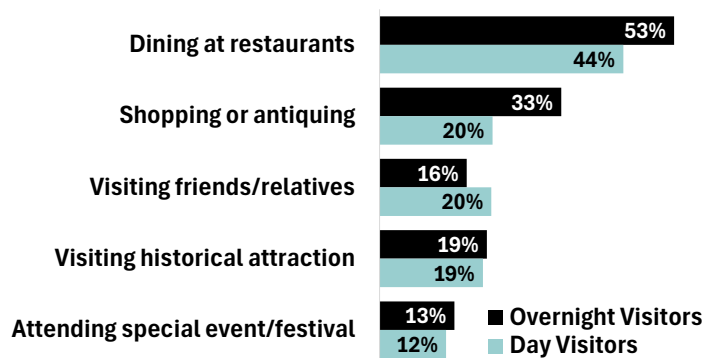
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Top 5 Activities at State Parks All Visits to Missouri State Parks/Historic Sites



Top Activities in the Surrounding Area During Most Recent State Park Visit



Source: MU Extension graphics using the 2026 Missouri State Parks System Visitor and Economic Impact Report survey data.