

Top Tourist Attractions Make \$1B Local Impact

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 [Cincinnati Enquirer Article](#) [1]

This is the time of year when many people look forward to their vacations and family entertainment. The arts and entertainment industries are gearing up to present an array of appealing choices. Across the nation, regions will compete to attract tourists and their spending. These tourists represent an infusion of new money into an economy and usually provide a welcome boost to the region. Over the years, the UC Economics Center has measured the economic impact of many of the Cincinnati's regional entertainment and art venues and, for this column, we have updated some of our findings.

When the Economics Center examines this type of economic impact, the focus is on spending done by visitors from outside of our metropolitan area. This is the spending that creates an extra stimulus to our area and boosts economic activity and employment. While spending of residents within the metro area is important to the providers of arts and entertainment, it does not give the same extra stimulus to our economy. In most situations, the spending by local residents on one type of entertainment, for example the Zoo, is a substitute for another type of spending such as going to the movies. Therefore, spending by local residents on entertainment attractions does not increase the overall spending in the area, it simply redistributes the spending.

One big attraction for non-local visitors is the Cincinnati Reds where more than half of all fans attending the games reside outside of the metro area. The Cincinnati Bengals and the Freedom Center also draw heavily from outside of our area. Kings Island attracts more people than the Reds, but its impact, while significant, may not be quite as large as the Reds because fewer of their visitors are from outside the metro area.

We estimate that the seven most popular local attractions, each having an annual attendance of more than 1,000,000, produce an annual combined economic impact of \$1.1 billion. These venues include Hamilton County Parks, Kings Island, Summer Festivals (including Taste of Cincinnati, Riverfest, Summerfair, Oktoberfest, and others), the Fine Arts Fund organizations, Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Museum Center, and the Cincinnati Zoo. Adding in the Aronoff, Freedom Center, US Bank Arena and the Cincinnati Bengals raises that number to \$1.35 billion.

How do such big numbers translate to the real economic impact on our region? One way to bring more reality to them is to calculate the number of jobs associated with these venues. We estimate that these eleven attractions directly generate 13,000 jobs. The employees who receive income from these jobs and businesses who receive revenue from sales to these attractions spend much of this money in our region which creates an additional 9,500 jobs. Directly or indirectly, approximately 22,500 jobs are associated with these attractions. This accounts for 2.25 percent of total employment in our metro area.

While it is important to note that job creation is beneficial, there are other significant effects that go well beyond the numbers stated above. Having quality entertainment choices, professional sports and arts opportunities available in our region creates a better place to live and provides important quality of life benefits to the residents of our region. In this troubled economy, when more people are spending their vacations at home, this is even more important. These “staycations” also will limit the amount of vacation spending dollars that leave this area.

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