

Long Island's Summer Economy

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The summer season is now entering full swing on Long Island. Schools are out, beaches are open, summer camps are opening up, and many of the towns on the Island have already started up their summer concert seasons and festivals. Having finally escaped the lingering late season cold snap, everything seems to be in order. Living on Long Island in the summer comes with many benefits – but it also comes with increased traffic.

Just as the work week is winding down, traffic ratchets up. Given all of the issues with Penn Station and the Long Island Railroad right now, traffic woes may be even worse than usual. While residents of the Island may despair over the traffic, all of that visitor traffic is essential to the Island's economy.

Employment in the tourism and recreation sector on Long Island is in excess of 42,000 persons. As of 2014, there were over 9 million overnight visitors annually that generated at least 5.1 billion dollars in local spending. This translates into \$567 of spending per overnight visitor.

A recent report from the New York State Bureau of Labor Market Information, Division of Research and Statistics (2015), reports that two of the sectors most closely associated with tourism, food services and drinking places and amusements, gambling and recreation combined employed 106,300 people. Employment in these two sectors is expected to grow by over 23 percent between 2012 and 2022. As is evident from these statistics, tourism is a growing and important sector of the economy. New York State ranks it 4th in employment in the region and 9th in terms of total exports for the region.

Visitors to the Island come for a number of different reasons. Many come to visit friends and family. While they are here they also may take advantage of the many amenities the Island has to offer such as the parks and beaches. There are the seasonal visitors that head out to the Hamptons and the East end. And a number of visitors may also own a second home on the North Fork, Fire Island, or Sag Harbor that they come out to on weekends.

Many businesses in communities such as Long Beach, in wine country along the North Fork, and as far as Montauk, rely on summer tourists. In many ways, Long Island is like other tourist driven regions.

Just as South Florida relies on winter tourists, there are parts of the Island that are dependent upon the influx of summer visitors. While these visitors can sometimes wreak havoc on traffic, create parking problems, and additional law enforcement expenditures from unruly visitors, they also contribute significantly to the generation of income and gross regional product for the Island.

Recent news reports have raised the specter that Penn Station's problems may result in a dip in summer visitors to the Island. It is difficult to predict what the impact will be as a result of the reductions in service that are occurring, but they could very well reduce income for a number of businesses in the region. So the next time you are sitting in traffic, consider the positive economic impact of all those visitors that may be sitting in the car in front of you. These individuals are helping to pay the incomes of local residents, paying sales taxes that help to provide many local services, and make the community a great place to live.