



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Monterey County Tourism Grows in 2024, Guided by Vision for 2030**

*Visitor Spending Rises to \$3.1 Billion and reaches record levels of Employment, Hotel Spending and Tax Receipts*

**Monterey, Calif., May 14, 2025** – Monterey County’s tourism economy continued its upward trajectory in 2024, with visitor spending reaching \$3.1 billion – a 5.7% increase over the previous year – according to the latest countywide tourism economic impact study from Dean Runyan Associates. While total visitor spending has not yet returned to 2019’s peak of over \$3.2 billion, the year-over-year growth reflects a resilient and evolving tourism landscape, guided by See Monterey’s Monterey County Tourism 2030 Roadmap (MCT 2030), a strategic vision focused on responsible tourism that supports economic vitality and community prosperity countywide.

The Roadmap’s guiding principles – enhancing quality of place, stimulating economic development, and fostering collaboration – are clearly reflected in this year’s progress. The latest study revealed record-breaking gains across key economic indicators, including an all-time high in hospitality employment at 27,596 jobs, accommodations spending surpassing \$1 billion for the first time, and tax receipts exceeding \$310 million.

“Monterey County is not just recovering—it’s evolving and coming back stronger than ever,” said Rob O’Keefe, President and CEO of See Monterey. “We’re shaping our tourism strategy around what residents value and what travelers are seeking. That’s the essence of MCT 2030.”

Rooted in a vision that prioritizes both quality of life and economic vitality, MCT 2030’s success depends on destination-wide collaboration. “Our tourism economy’s fundamental currency is unity,” said Bina Patel, See Monterey Board Chair and hotel owner-operator, adding. “With that, we’re not just accelerating recovery—we’re shaping a more resilient future.”

While group and international travel remain below 2019 levels, See Monterey is actively rebuilding these segments. International travelers typically spend two to three times more than domestic visitors and tend to stay longer, making them a highly valuable market. Dedicated marketing and sales programs in the U.K., Mexico, and Canada, along with outreach in Western Europe and Asia, are helping to reengage these high-value travelers.

The group segment, which has faced a slower recovery and new economic headwinds, remains critically important. Group travelers typically spend 158% more than leisure visitors. Rebuilding these segments directly support MCT 2030’s goals to expand reach and ensure destination resilience.

Challenges like Highway 1 closures in Big Sur underscore the importance of infrastructure investment and destination accessibility—both key pillars of the roadmap. “When travelers can’t access Big Sur, it impacts the entire region and the state as a whole,” said O’Keefe. “We’re working

# SEE MONTEREY

with partners to restore confidence and ensure long-term resilience.” One such initiative is the launch of the new “HOW 2 HWY 1” campaign, which reframes the iconic road trip experience.

Rather than focusing on whether the highway is open or closed, the campaign highlights the best ways to explore it under any condition. See Monterey is collaborating with Big Sur partners, Visit SLO CAL, Central Coast destinations, and Visit California to amplify the message. The campaign will launch with a major PR push in June, just in time for summer travel.

The roadmap also emphasizes sustainability, workforce development, and celebrating local culture. In 2024, visitor spending increased across several major categories, including dining which grew more than 7%, a testament to Monterey County’s rising reputation as a culinary destination. To spotlight this, See Monterey is partnering with the James Beard Foundation in New York City, taking five acclaimed local chefs – Justin Cogley (Aubergine), Jonny Black (Chez Noir), Reylon Augustin (Post Ranch Inn), Michael Rotondo (Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa), and Annamarie Kosa (Pebble Beach Resorts) – along with local sommelier Ted Glennon. The team will host a large-scale media event and a public “Culinary Road Trip through Coastal California” dinner, showcasing the best of Monterey County’s food and wine.

“We’ve long said, it’s not just about welcoming more visitors – it’s about building a destination that’s more resilient, more connected, and more community-focused,” O’Keefe added. “With 1,000 new hotel rooms on the horizon between now and 2030, a managed and strategic approach is needed to achieve that balance. That’s the future we’re working toward, and the 2024 numbers show we’re on the right path.”

To learn more about See Monterey and [MCT 2030](#), visit [www.SeeMonterey.com](http://www.SeeMonterey.com).

###

## **ABOUT SEE MONTEREY**

See Monterey is a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization that drives tourism for Monterey County. Tourism is the largest industry on the Monterey Peninsula and the second largest in the County. See Monterey is a partnership of the hospitality community and local governments, working together to generate community prosperity and enrich economic vitality through the responsible growth of the tourism economy. In 2024, travel spending in Monterey County reached \$3.1 billion, supporting 27,596 jobs and generating \$310.1 million in state and local tax revenue. These funds directly benefit local infrastructure, emergency services, and programs that enhance quality of life for residents.

For more information, visit [www.SeeMonterey.com](http://www.SeeMonterey.com) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

Katie Soltas

e: [katie@seemonterey.com](mailto:katie@seemonterey.com)

c: 219-775-0307