

# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **GOVERNOR STEVE BULLOCK**

### **STATE OF MONTANA**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Bullock Announces Record-Breaking Year for Montana Tourism**

HELENA – Governor Steve Bullock and Montana Department of Commerce Director Meg O'Leary were joined by dozens of members of the Montana tourism community today for an event at the Great Northern Brewing Company in Whitefish to announce the record-breaking 2013 Montana tourism numbers and acknowledge the efforts of Montana's tourism community to pull the industry out of the recession.

"The Montana Office of Tourism and Montana's tourism communities have worked tirelessly to put this industry back on track and poised for growth," said Bullock. "It's evident that those efforts are paying off – the number of people coming to our state to have their own #MontanaMoment is more than ever before and they're spending more than ever, too."

According to the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) at the University of Montana, the state of Montana hosted upwards of 11 million visitors last year, which is a 2.3 percent increase from 2012. These visitors added over \$3.6 billion to Montana's economy, a 10.7 percent increase from 2012 and a number that shattered the 2007 visitor spending record. Tourism is one of the top employers in Montana, directly employing over 44,000 people at a payroll of \$1.1 billion. It also contributed approximately \$306 million in state and local taxes, decreasing the tax liability for Montana households.

"Visitors come to Montana for the experiences," said Commerce Director Meg O'Leary. "They're coming to experience our spectacular and unspoiled nature, vibrant and charming small towns, and breathtaking experiences and relaxing hospitality."

The quality of experience that a visitor has in Montana may very well be the catalyst for deciding to locate a business in the state, a fact that was highlighted in the Governor's recent Main Street Montana Project Business Plan. One of the five pillars in the plan is to market Montana by strengthening and promoting the Montana brand in order to recruit businesses and employees as well as tourists.

"It was abundantly clear that business leaders and many other Montanans who participated in the Project see our quality of life as our greatest strength," said Bullock. "We can take lessons learned from the success of tourism communities and transfer that knowledge to building Montana's main street businesses."

More information about the Main Street Montana Project can be accessed by visiting [www.mainstreetmontanaproject.com](http://www.mainstreetmontanaproject.com). For more information about Montana's tourism industry, contact the Montana Office of Tourism at (406) 841-9238.

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