



**CITY OF WACO**

**Waco Convention & Visitors Bureau**

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# PRESS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## WACO CELEBRATES NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM WEEK

Waco, TX (May 9, 2018) - National Travel and Tourism Week (NTTW) is being celebrated across the country this week, including here in Waco. This is a time when travel and tourism professionals across the country unite to celebrate the value travel holds for our economy, businesses and personal well-being.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the 1983 congressional resolution that established NTTW.

The theme for 2018 is "Travel Then and Now." This theme is a challenge to industry leaders to reflect on travel successes of years past while advocating for policies that promote growth for the future.

For Waco, the last several years have brought tremendous growth in the tourism sector. Looking back five years to 2013, Waco's hotel occupancy was ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the state at 62%. With the opening of Magnolia Market at the Silos in October, 2015, Waco's hotel occupancy skyrocketed to #3. In 2017, Waco was only behind Austin-Round Rock in hotel occupancy, at 72%.

Many new tourism-related businesses have opened and thrived, including local tour operators, restaurants, and recreational ventures such as paddleboarding and river cruises. These create jobs for Wacoans, and Wacoans can enjoy all these new amenities as well. There are 5,700 Wacoans employed in the travel industry.

The Office of the Governor, Economic Development & Tourism, recently released 2017 statistics for the Waco-McLennan County area. That was good news for Waco.

Total direct travel spending in the Waco area has increased to \$572.9 million, an 8% increase over 2016. Total direct earnings by those employed in the travel industry locally increased to \$144.3 million, a 3.8% increase over last year. Finally, local tax receipts from travelers totaled \$9.4 million in 2017, an increase of 15.9% over last year.

"Travelers spend money when they come to Waco, and it benefits all of us here in Waco and McLennan County," said Carla Pendergraft, Director of Marketing for the Waco Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Without spending from visitors, each person in Waco would pay at least \$520 more each year to maintain our current level of services."

*The Waco Convention & Visitors Bureau is a department of the City of Waco.*

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