

Tourism

Tennessee's varied geography and storied history offers a wide range of activities for visitors and locals alike. From the musical pilgrimages in Nashville and Memphis to natural escapes in the Appalachian Mountains, the aviation industry plays a significant role in allowing tourists to access Tennessee's amenities. Tennessee's airports bring in visitors from all across the United States and the world to experience the unique natural and cultural wealth of the state. Approximately 66,000 jobs were created through recreation-focused businesses and supporting activity.

Pigeon Forge, Gatlinburg, and the Great Smoky Mountains

East Tennessee is set against the famous Appalachian Mountains and is known for its vibrant recreational scene. Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge Airport (GKT) provides general aviation (GA) services directly to the area. Knoxville Downtown Island Airport (DKX) also provides GA services in nearby Knoxville. McGhee Tyson Airport (TYS) provides both general and commercial access for visitors. In total, visitors spent nearly \$700 million in 2019 while traveling through these airports.

Anchored to air service in Knoxville, resort towns in Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg have become destinations for tourists from around the world. Pigeon Forge is located about one hour east of Knoxville and is known for its country music and bluegrass attractions, such as the Southern Gospel Hall of Fame and the Smoky Mountain Opry. Gatlinburg is another vibrant city located in the Great Smoky Mountains' foothills. Gatlinburg provides access to recreation in the surrounding natural amenities, such as the only ski resort in Tennessee and the Appalachian Trail. Peak visitor months in East Tennessee are typically July and October. During these peak months, jet traffic operations at Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge Airport increase between 81 percent and 94 percent compared to non-peak visitor months, and at McGhee Tyson Airport, jet traffic operations increase between nine percent and 17 percent compared to non-peak visitor months.



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Nashville – Music City Attractions and Wedding-Related Celebrations

For decades, Nashville has been an important center for Americana musicians and their fans. Numerous historic performance venues and recording studios are in Nashville, such as the Ryman Auditorium, the original home of the Grand Ole Opry. While in Nashville, music fans can also visit the Country Music Hall of Fame or check out a performance at surrounding venues. Live music festivals abound in Nashville, including Live on The Green, which is a free, annual outdoor festival that takes place on Memorial Day weekend.

In recent years, Nashville has also become a major destination for wedding-related celebrations. Business leaders and tourists alike emphasize the friendly, low-key qualities Nashville has to offer compared to other popular wedding celebration destinations. A large part of Nashville's recent success as a wedding-related destination is its central location and ease of access from cities across the United States. Both Nashville International Airport (BNA) and John C. Tune Airport (JWN) contribute to Nashville's accessibility. In 2019, 8.9 million passengers passed through Nashville International Airport on 87,000 scheduled flights, bringing in almost \$3.3 billion in spending.



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Chattanooga – Southern Tennessee Scenery

Chattanooga, located along the Tennessee River in the Appalachian Foothills, is known for its natural and scenic destinations such as Ruby Falls, Lookout Mountain, and national military parks. Known as “The Scenic City,” Chattanooga is Tennessee’s fifth most-visited city. In 2019, visitors spent \$3.2 million daily, and visitor spending totaled \$1.16 billion for the year. Visitors arrive daily to Chattanooga by car and plane, and the city annually experiences over 119 million domestic visitors. Lovell Field (CHA), the area’s commercial service airport, supports Chattanooga tourism by offering nine direct connections to destinations across the United States. In 2019, Lovell Field recorded its first instance of exceeding over 500,000 boardings. In the same year, over one million passengers travelled through the airport, and the airport supported over 1,300 jet operations, another increase from the previous year.



Overview

Tennessee airports are the backbone of the state’s travel and tourism industries. Visitors travel from all over to experience the art and entertainment in the Nashville area and the natural scenery in the south and east regions of Tennessee. The airports serve as entry points for domestic and international air travelers into Tennessee.