

More than 3 million campers visited state parks in 2021

By JAIME HALE
The Oregonian

SALEM — Oregon state park campgrounds were packed in 2021, as locals and tourists alike left the comforts of their homes to sleep under the stars, among evergreen forests and beside the gentle roar of the ocean. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department reported a total 3,026,756 camper nights last year, far outpacing the pandemic-impaired numbers from 2020, and eclipsing the 3 million mark for the first time, the department said.

In state park parlance a “camper night” is one camper spending one night at a campsite. A family of four spending two nights in a tent, for example, would equal eight camper nights. And since virtually every campground saw a dip in numbers during statewide park closures in 2020, it’s more useful to compare the recent numbers to those in 2019, when state park campgrounds were in the midst of a huge surge in popularity.

Most of the growth in 2021 came on the Oregon Coast, which saw a 9% increase in

camper nights over 2019 — the only region in the state to see an overall increase last year. More than a third of that increase came from the massive campground at Fort Stevens State Park outside Astoria, which alone saw 343,485 camper nights last year, far more than any other.

Parks department spokesman Chris Havel said the data show a continued trend of midweek camping in the summer, as well as weekend and holiday camping in the fall, winter and spring. The numbers also continue a significant uptick in state park camping that began in 2012, a trend that park officials see as a win.

“Hooray for people continuing to realize enjoying the outdoors is good for body and mind, and good for both the individual and the community,” Havel said in an email Wednesday. “As people continue to look for places to experience in our centennial year, we hope they branch out to look for places new to you, and take the time to prepare well.”

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department will



Jamie Hale/The Oregonian

A camper cooks dinner as the sun begins to set at Harris Beach State Park on the southern Oregon Coast. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department reported state parks in 2021 had more than 3 million campers, a first.

be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2022, marking the occasion with special events that might draw even more people to parks across the state.

The centennial celebration of the National Park Service in 2016 led to record numbers of national park visitors that year.

At state park campgrounds on the Oregon Coast, securing campsites might be competitive for the centennial this summer — at least if last year’s numbers are any indica-

tion. Almost every state park campground on the coast saw more camper nights in 2021 than in 2019, and while the most popular campgrounds got a little more popular, the biggest increases by percentage were at two of the smallest places: Umpqua Lighthouse and Humbug Mountain state parks.

Least-visited parks have big jumps

Smaller campgrounds in Eastern, Central and South-

ern Oregon also saw big increases last year, continuing a trend from 2020 that saw more people looking for more remote getaways amid the pandemic. Some of the least-visited state park sites in recent years saw huge jumps in camper nights in 2021, including Red Bridge State Wayside and Hilgard Junction State Park outside La Grande, as well as the tiny, remote Minam State Recreation Area along the Willowa River, which saw an eye-popping 254% increase last year, going from 5,498 camper nights in 2020 to 19,460 in 2021.

Willamette Valley campgrounds, meanwhile, saw their camper nights down compared to 2019, almost across the board. Increases at the popular L.L. Stub Stewart State Park, as well as the state park campgrounds of the Columbia River Gorge, were outweighed by decreases at places like Milo McIver, Willamette Mission and Detroit Lake state parks.

Some decreases were due not necessarily to unpopularity, but to campground closures that followed wildfires, windstorms and flooding

— events that have become a more frequent threat to campers in recent years.

Money that has been earmarked for Oregon state park improvements will go to both adding new campsites and moving existing ones out of harm’s way, as campsites in some parks are currently threatened by eroding cliffs, rising rivers and wildfires. In 2021, the state Legislature approved a \$50 million bond to upgrade Oregon’s state parks over the next two years, a plan that will include new campsites at some of the state’s busiest parks, in addition to infrastructure and other projects.

That may help alleviate crowds in the state’s busiest campgrounds, but not if crowds continue to grow apace, an issue the parks department said it is keeping an eye on.

“It’s a concern,” Havel said of the overcrowding at campgrounds. “Planning, designing, and building new sites takes a couple of years, in some cases more time than the three year limit on the bonds, so we’re still in pursuit of a long-term solution.”

Oregon wine leads U.S. in growing direct-to-consumer sales

By GEORGE PLAIVEN
Capital Press

PORTLAND — Bolstered by high demand and rising prices, Oregon’s wine industry led the U.S. in accelerating its rate of growth for direct-to-consumer sales in 2021, according to an analysis of shipment data from more than 1,300 wineries nationwide.

The annual report, issued by Sovos ShipCompliant and Wines Vines Analytics, shows Oregon wineries shipped 560,702 cases of wine valued at \$285.5 million.

That represents an increase of 12.9% in volume and 18.7% in sales value over

2020, outperforming all other wine regions across the country.

Pinot noir dominated the share of Oregon direct-to-consumer sales, accounting for more than half of the state’s wine shipments and two-thirds of the total sales value. Even with a 5.1% increase in the average price per bottle — up to \$51.29 — shipments of pinot noir still jumped 8.2%.

“This translates into an undeniable increase in demand for Oregon wines, and Oregon pinot noir in particular,” the report states.

Sarah Murdoch, communications director for the Oregon Wine Board, said

Oregon only produces 2% of the nation’s wine, but has garnered a reputation for high quality, driving up demand among wholesalers and retailers.

“We’re still little, but we’re just getting more and more well known,” Murdoch said. “That demand is really hard to create in a crowded marketplace.”

Last year also saw a “great return to wine country” following pandemic closures in 2020, Murdoch said. More people were comfortable visiting tasting rooms, and wineries themselves became more savvy with online marketing.

“These things really

helped people buy and have more Oregon wine shipped to them,” Murdoch said.

While Oregon wines account for only 6.8% of the value of direct-to-consumer shipments nationwide, that is more than double its share from a decade ago, the report states.

It isn’t just Willamette Valley pinot noir. In 2021, chardonnay shipments from Oregon increased 28.7% in volume and 36.4% in value over 2020. That includes a 6% increase in the average price per bottle.

Sparkling wine also is gaining steam in Oregon, increasing 60.7% in value and 55.6% in volume over 2020.

Murdoch said pinot noir has long been the bellwether wine grape variety in Oregon, though she described chardonnay as a “sleeping giant.” Between 2016 and 2021, chardonnay plantings increased 43% in Oregon, to 2,600 acres.

“As plantings go up, our optimism in that grape goes up, and so does the attention,” Murdoch said.

Industry-wide, direct-to-consumer wine shipments in 2021 returned to normal following pandemic-fueled turmoil of 2020, the report states.

Total sales value eclipsed \$4 billion for the first time. That was due to the largest

ever year-over-year increase in the average price per bottle, up 11.8% to \$41.16.

However, the large increase in average price per bottle comes on the heels of a 9.5% decrease in 2020, when more first-time buyers stuck at home were purchasing less expensive wines, and wineries were offering unusually large discounts.

“The winery (direct-to-consumer) shipping channel experienced a recovery in 2021 and a transition back to relative normalcy,” the report states. “In fact, 2021 looks a good deal like what we would have expected it to look like had the pandemic never happened.”

Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia ARE YOU AT RISK?

According to a new study by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the National Institute on Aging, men and women with hearing loss are much more likely to develop dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. People with severe hearing loss, the study reports, were 5 times more likely to develop dementia than those with normal hearing.

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-2011 Study by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the National Institute on Aging

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| Do you feel that people mumble or do not speak clearly? | | Do you have trouble understanding the voices of women and small children when they are speaking? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you turn the TV up louder than others need to? | | Is it hard to follow the conversation in noisy places like parties, crowded restaurants or family get-togethers? | |
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