# Tourism

## Introduction

Tourism is one of Tennessee's most important economic drivers, attracting millions of visitors each year to destinations such as Nashville, Chattanooga, and the Great Smoky Mountains region. Tennessee's airports play a critical role in connecting these destinations to national and international tourism markets by providing convenient access for travelers from across the world. These visitors generate economic activity through spending at hotels, restaurants, attractions, entertainment venues, and other local businesses. The following case studies show how Nashville International Airport, Lovell Field, and Gatlinburg Pigeon Forge Airport support Tennessee's tourism economy by serving as gateways to some of the State's most popular destinations and experiences.



## Nashville International Airport (BNA)

### Driving Tourism Growth and Visitor Spending

BNA serves as a key gateway to Tennessee's tourism economy, supporting visitor access to one of the State's most popular destinations. In recent years, there has been significant growth in passenger activity, which has aligned with Nashville's emergence as a major tourist destination. Millions of visitors arrive at the airport each year to experience the city's live music venues, professional sporting events, cultural attractions, conferences, and festivals. Tourists spend money on hotels, restaurants, transportation services, retail establishments, and entertainment venues, supporting thousands of jobs and contributing millions of dollars in local and State tax revenues. As Nashville's tourism sector continues to expand, BNA will become a fundamental part of the city and State's continued economic growth.

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## Lovell Field (CHA)

### Supporting Regional Tourism Through Air Access

CHA supports tourism throughout Chattanooga and the broader southeastern Tennessee region. The airport provides convenient access for visitors traveling to the area's outdoor recreation destinations, including Lookout Mountain, the Tennessee Riverfront, and numerous hiking, biking, and climbing attractions. As tourism in the region continues to grow, CHA provides connections to major metropolitan areas across the country, helping attract visitors who may not otherwise travel to Chattanooga. Notably, Hamilton County generated more than $1.8 billion in visitor spending in 2025, reflecting the region's continued growth as a tourism destination and its increasing appeal to visitors from across the country. CHA plays an important role in supporting the region's growing tourism economy by providing critical air access that drives tourism spending and supports local businesses and jobs.





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## Gatlinburg Pigeon Forge Airport (GKT)

### Gateway to the Smoky Mountains

With nearly 44,000 incoming general aviation visitors each year, GKT records the highest volume of general aviation tourism traffic in Tennessee. The airport provides access to the Great Smoky Mountains region, providing direct access to attractions such as Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Dollywood, The Island in Pigeon Forge, Ober Mountain, and the resort communities of Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, and Sevierville. As one of the nation's premier vacation destinations, the Great Smoky Mountains region benefits from the airport's role in enhancing visitor accessibility and supporting continued economic growth throughout Sevier County. Visitors from all over the world visit the Great Smoky Mountains region each year, making tourism a major economic driver for the region.



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## Conclusion

Airports across Tennessee play an important role in supporting the State's tourism economy by providing access to some of its most popular destinations. BNA, CHA, and GKT connect visitors to Tennessee's music, cultural, entertainment, and outdoor recreation attractions, generating spending that supports local businesses and communities. These airports help strengthen the State's tourism industry and contribute to economic growth.



