

Thanks to 4th, tourism up in state

A solid turnout of holiday vacationers over the Fourth of July weekend helped boost Michigan's 6-percent increase in tourism so far this year and should help make 1981 the state's second-best tourism year ever, according to the Automobile Club of Michigan.

"Although inflation, unemployment and lagging car sales still are seriously hindering Michigan's economy, they are having little effect on state tourism as Michiganders travel at a pace second only to record 1978," auto club touring manager Joseph Ratke said.

"The only concession travelers are making to their economic circumstances is to take closer-to-home vacations, which is benefiting tourism activity in most sections of the state," Ratke said.

An Auto Club check of regional tourist associations, hotel associations, popular holiday attractions and state and private camp-

grounds indicated that tourism over the Fourth of July weekend was up approximately 6 percent over the 1980 holiday.

Weather permitting, the Michigan Department of Transportation predicted that motorists in Michigan would drive 725 million miles over the 78-hour holiday, which is 2 percent more than a year ago. The record for a July 4th holiday is 770 million miles set during the 102-hour 1973 holiday period.

This year's holiday officially ran from 6 p.m. on Thursday to midnight Sunday.

"NOT ONLY is Michigan heading towards its second-best tourism year ever, but several tourist barometers show the state running ahead of the 1978 record," Ratke said.

Auto Club routings to Lower Michigan vacation destinations are up 13 percent over the

first five months of last year and are 8 percent above 1978. Requests for Upper Peninsula routings are down 2 percent over last year, but Mackinac Bridge crossings are 2 percent ahead of a year ago.

"Michigan continues to grow as a popular close-to-home vacation destination for residents of such bordering states as Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin," Ratke said.

The nearly 1.3-million-member organization has assisted 25 more out-of-state residents interested in Michigan vacations than last year and 23 percent more from 1978. Some 84,000 more travelers have visited the state's 10 travel information centers so far this year over last.

A number of Michigan attractions also are experiencing banner years. A record 500,000 persons attended Holland's Tulip Time Festival last month while a record 1,000 visitors

enjoyed Boyne City's Mushroom Festival in May. Business on both Mackinac Island and in the Irish Hills is up 10 percent over 1980.

Gasoline supplies are plentiful, and costs have dropped steadily for the last nine weeks along main state highways.

Auto Club's pre-Fourth of July "fuel gauge" survey shows an average 86 percent of 300 stations checked along major highways will operate daylight hours, 41 percent after 9 p.m. and 12 percent after midnight. An average 5 percent of the stations were unsure of holiday hours.

Twenty-five persons were killed on Michigan roads during the 1980 July 4th weekend. Sixty-four percent of the at-fault drivers were either known to have been drinking or were suspected of having been drinking.

Look for lunar eclipse

In July, sky watchers will be treated to a partial eclipse of the moon.

"The main part of the eclipse will begin at 11:25 p.m. on July 16, when the moon first touches the dark central shadow cast by our earth. It will end at 2:09 a.m. on July 17," Richard G. Teske, Michigan astronomy professor, said.

"During this time the moon will be low in the south, moving from right to left through the earth's shadow."

Mid-eclipse comes 47 minutes after midnight, when only the southern half of the moon will be immersed in shadow. Its northern part will still be illuminated by sunlight, Teske said.

"If spectators were to stand on the moon's southern regions at mid-eclipse and watch our planet, they would observe that the sun was completely hidden behind it," Teske said. "But to on-

lookers located on the moon's lighted northern hemisphere, a part of the sun's bright disk would be seen peeking from behind the dark earth.

"Michigan observers who watch July's partial eclipse will easily see the curving reddish rim of earth's shadow as the moon passes across it."

What causes the red coloring at the rim? "Our planet's covering of air," the U-M astronomer said. "Sunlight which just skims the edge of earth on its way to the moon passes through our upper and middle atmosphere where the light is reddened by the same process that gives rise to glorious crimson sunsets."

Teske said that "although the earth's shadow perpetually accompanies our planet, we only become aware of the shadow's presence when the moon enters it."

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