



Tourism: When Kansas City Is Not Kansas City

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Eyebrows were raised at the claim by Kansas City's tourism board, VisitKC, that Kansas City has over 25 million visitors each year. The skepticism is warranted. After all, [Denver only claims to have had 16 million](#) visitors in 2015. Is Kansas City really a bigger tourist draw?

The 25-million-visitor claim comes from the 2016 Tourism Economics report prepared for VisitKC by Longwoods International and the U.S. Travel Association. A copy of the report is available at the link at the bottom of this post. The study defines Kansas City as “a five county region in Kansas and Missouri—Johnson and Wyandotte in Kansas; Clay, Jackson, and Platte in Missouri.”

This means the 25 million visitors visited not only Kansas City, Missouri, but Kansas City, Kansas; Overland Park; Olathe; and Independence. It includes the Cabela's at the Legends Outlet, which for a while was [the number one tourism attraction in the entire state of Kansas](#), and since then has only added attractions such as Sporting KC's stadium.

The report divides visitor spending by the five different counties, with Jackson County, the home of Kansas City (and Independence) receiving just under half. It is reasonable to conclude that only half of the 25 million visitors are coming to Jackson County—and even fewer may be visiting Kansas City proper. After all, [the five-county area](#) has a population of 1.8 million, while Kansas City has only 480,000.

For an administration that talks about dealing only in facts, the 25 million visitors claim is misleading at best. People are right to be skeptical of such big claims, and city leaders should do a better job of ensuring their accuracy.

 [KC Visitor Economic Impact 2016 - client.ppt](#)

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[2] <https://www.denverpost.com/2016/06/15/denver-tourism-record-2015/>

[3] <https://www.bizjournals.com/wichita/stories/2003/04/07/daily49.html>

[4] <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/claycountymissouri,wyandottecountykansas,johnsoncountykansas,plattcountymissouri,jacksoncountymissouri/PST045217>

[5] <https://showmeinstitute.org/sites/default/files/KC%20Visitor%20Economic%20Impact%202016%20-%20client.ppt>

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