



RVMBA Ashland Mountain Challenge Survey Results

Background: The Ashland Mountain Challenge is a long-standing Enduro format race that takes place annually in the Ashland Watershed. The race sells out in less than 24 hours each year and this year 283 total racers participated.

This is just one race on one weekend. However thousands of mountain bikers travel to Ashland to ride on non-race weekends. By surveying the enduro racers on their spending habits, RVMBA was able to learn more about the economic benefit that just one weekend of mountain biking can bring to Ashland.

RVMBA members offered a voluntary survey to Ashland Mountain Challenge racers at Race Packet pickup, October 4th 2019 at Ashland Mountain Adventures. 156 racers participated in the survey. Respondents were instructed to accurately record their answers, and major outliers, ineligible answers, and non-numeral answers were disregarded. Answers in ranges (ie: "\$400-600") were averaged for data.

Survey: Respondents were asked to answer 8 questions. The survey is attached to this report. Respondents were asked to pay specific attention to what they spent in Ashland during their trip, how many nights they stayed, where they stayed, and what would bring them back.

Survey Highlights:

- 156 out of 283 (55% of riders) participated in the survey.
- 141 out of 156 (**90%**) **surveyed traveled from California.**
- 446 total nights were spent in Ashland or Jackson County (Emigrant Lake, Mt. Ashland campground). Of those nights, 218 (**49%**) **were spent in local hotels/motels.** 146 (33%) nights responded no hotel but didn't specify sleep location. 46 nights (10%) were spent at VRBO or Airbnb locations. 36 nights (8%) were spent at campgrounds.
- Every respondent signaled they would visit a restaurant or bar while in Ashland.
- 150 out of 156 surveyed provided a dollar amount on what they spent for the weekend.
- **\$78,927** was spent in Ashland over an average of 2.85 nights in Ashland by 150 respondents. This averages out to **\$526.18** per person for their trip. This number is right in line with Oregon Mountain Biking Coalition statistics at the state level.
- Extrapolated to total racers, accounting for and removing approximately 20 local racers, the amount spent in Ashland restaurants, hotels, and local businesses comes to **\$138,338** in that weekend.
- Respondents were asked how much they spend on yearly mountain bike travel (not just Ashland). 123 respondents to this question spent **\$608,850** total on mountain bike travel. This averages out to **\$4,950** spent on yearly mountain bike travel per respondent.
- 43 respondents were visiting Ashland for the first time
- **156 out of 156 (100%)** said they would return to Ashland for mountain biking in the future.



- **76%** of respondents said more trails (both beginner and advanced), trail connectivity, and jumps/technical trails are what is missing from our current trail system.

Conclusions:

There are several notable conclusions RVMB A can draw from these survey results. It is obvious that bike tourism is playing a large role in drawing riders to Ashland, and these numbers back this up. By continuing to cater to this demographic, as well as branching out to more kids and non-racers, we believe that Ashland can continue to be one of the top bike tourism destinations on the West Coast.

Tourism:

Our proximity to both Portland and the Bay Area make us a key stop on I-5 during large events (namely Sea Otter in Monterrey, CA, Mountain Bike Oregon in Oakridge, OR and Crankworks in Whistler, Can.) for those looking to stop and ride on their trip. Many riders use Ashland as a stopping point on the way to final premier destinations in Washington and Canada all summer long.

Ashland's unique position geographically also attracts many weekend visitors during the summer/non snow months from roughly June 1 - November 1. Ashland Mountain Adventures, our local shuttle service, reports that they shuttled approximately 4100 riders in 2019. With local (Rogue Valley) shuttlers accounting for 50% of business, and an average of \$175 being spent per day by out of town mountain bikers, roughly **\$358,750 is being pumped into our local economy just from riders using Ashland Mountain Adventures per year.** This is a conservative number ONLY accounting for shuttlers (not everyone who visits rides shuttles, and many self-shuttle or pedal) as well as not accounting for Rogue Valley residents who visit restaurants or stores while in town. A much broader economic impact study would need to be conducted to reach an accurate ceiling of how much money mountain biking brings into town, but these base numbers are a good indicator of what that potential may be.

While shuttle season is the "high" season, Ashland is unique because our decomposed granite allows lower trails to be ridden year round. In fact, locals prefer riding in the Spring, Winter, and Fall when trails are wet from rains and trail work can be completed to offer an easier and more enjoyable riding experience. For those in the northern reaches of the Pacific Northwest, Ashland remains a viable year round option for great riding. Ashland can and should be promoted as year round cycling destination!

An important stat in the bike tourism data pool is the fact that 49% of racers stayed in hotels/motels in Ashland totaling 218 "heads in beds" for the race weekend. RVMB A would like to explore options in tapping into the **transient occupancy tax** in Ashland, as well as other forms of funding future projects through Travel Southern Oregon and Travel Oregon that would be equitable to the numbers of people spending nights in Ashland for



the purpose of mountain biking. It's our understanding that much of what the larger travel groups look for is how to attract people to stay overnight, and mountain biking adds significant numbers to that metric. There could also be an opportunity to partner with local hotels and motels to try and draw more race traffic and bike tourism into hotels and motels.

Any form of tourism that can bring \$125,000-150,000 into town in one weekend should be viewed as an asset to travel groups, stakeholders, and funders in building economic diversity in Ashland's tourism plan.

Landowners

For our landowners and managers, it is clear from our results that we have an amazing trail system. However, our missing links that we have been advocating to fix are apparent in our survey results: More trails are needed to serve the growing population of riders, both local and from out of the area.

There are more than enough models along the West Coast of communities who have created sustainable trail diversity, offering everything from beginner to advanced terrain. This only serves to attract a much broader audience. A few projects that would satisfy many of the respondents' suggestions are already in the works, further showing that the implementation of these projects is critical. (Bull Gap Road to Trail project, Lithia Trails, and Pump Track). More trails in the watershed will also take pressure off of our current trail system.

Strava, a GPS tracking system popular with mountain bikers, shows that riders have ridden Jabberwocky, a trail that has been in existence for 2 ½ years, 15,413 times by Strava users. Keep in mind this is only users who use this app, so the actual number of riders would be much higher. RVMBA has a long history of excellent trail building and trail work, but increased numbers like we are experiencing is akin to a congested freeway: more wear and tear, more traffic, and a need for additional routes. More trails, built sustainably and strategically following industry guidelines, is the answer to this problem. We believe all efforts should be made to streamline this process and increase efficiency in approving trail building projects. We aren't alone in this thinking. Currently, the Governor's Task Force in Outdoor Recreation is developing a plan to implement some of the aforementioned ideas to help communities like ours continue to develop and promote outdoor recreation.

RVMBA is a resource for any and all stakeholders in tourism, trail building, and trail system expansion. We hope to work with any interested parties in continuing to offer an amazing network of trails in Ashland while expanding and progressing as a mountain bike town. With mountain biking's status as the fastest growing use of public lands, we are excited for what the future could bring.

Knowledge is power. Help us demonstrate the economic value of mountain biking—and potentially expand our trail network— by completing this brief survey.

From what state did you travel?

How many nights did you stay in Ashland?

Did you stay in a hotel during your visit?

Did you eat in a restaurant or visit a bar in Ashland?

How much money do you think you spent during your visit in Ashland?

Approximately how much do you spend on mountain bike travel annually?

Have you traveled to Ashland before to mountain bike?

How likely are you to come back to Ashland to ride?

Would you be more likely to come back if we had more mountain bike trails?