

WINMAN TRAILS:

A Year-Round Destination Trail System Contributing to the Local Economy



Executive Summary

WinMan Trails is a public, 501(c)3 nonprofit adventure park in Winchester that provides professionally managed trails and amenities that inspire active, outdoor lifestyles.

Its facilities offer year-round opportunities for biking, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing or just chilling - whatever moves visitors to smile and share joy with others.

WinMan prioritizes accessibility and is proud to be a free public trail system, ensuring everyone can experience its trails' beauty and adventure without barriers. With well-maintained, easy-to-navigate trails, the expansive trail system is carefully curated for groups and families to enjoy together. Intentional programming throughout the year offers training clinics, immersive camps, competitions and social outings for members of the community. All these opportunities encourage WinMan users to get better and grow stronger together.

While the trails are free to use, WinMan is an economic boon. The vast majority of trail users are non-locals whose visits generate significant spending for local businesses like hotels, campgrounds, restaurants and others. Three-quarters of visitors cite WinMan as the primary reason for traveling to the area.

The result: 55,000+ visits, adding over \$4 million annually to the local economy.

**WinMan Trails
generates over
\$4 million for the
area's economy**



Building on a Family Dream

It all started with one family's belief that embracing nature's playground unleashes the best in all of us. Groundwork for the trail system began in 2011 when a local family built a few miles of mountain bike trails on private land. As more trails were developed, they invited friends to ride, too. In 2013, WinMan officially welcomed the public with open arms, inviting everyone to join the adventure.

Since partnering with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in 2018, WinMan has expanded to 1,300 acres and now offers:

- 23+ miles of purpose-built mountain bike trails
- 24 kilometers of cross-country skiing trails
- 10 miles of snowshoeing
- 10 miles of groomed fat tire biking
- 7 miles of running and hiking trails
- Mountain bike skills park and pump track
- A sledding hill for all to enjoy

Over the past decade, WinMan has built a team of five paid, full-time staff - experts in trail-building, land management and community engagement. It has grown into a destination trail system, attracting users from across the Upper Midwest and beyond, welcoming visitors from over 30 states in 2024.

WinMan offers more than just great trails - it's about the whole experience. With a chalet featuring a wood-burning fireplace, outdoor gathering spaces, play areas and a store with custom apparel, craft beers, wine and cocktails, it truly caters to the entire family.



Drawing Intergenerational Users

WinMan brings in visitors of all ages - from 3-year-olds giggling on their first dirt trail to teens perfecting their skills, adults sneaking in some fun between remote work meetings at the chalet, and grandparents relaxing in WinMan Park. In 2024, 54% of survey respondents were aged 36-55, often visiting with their families. WinMan appeals to a wide range of guests thanks to the variety of trails and amenities.

From the start, WinMan's growth has been driven by its commitment to providing an exceptional trail experience. WinMan's leaders believe that visitors will naturally share their experience with friends and family if they create unforgettable moments. Surveys over the years show that most users first heard about WinMan through word of mouth.

Visitors return again and again, not just to experience the trails but because WinMan offers something that is increasingly hard to find: a place where all ages and abilities can immerse themselves in the serenity of nature and every new adventure uncovers something about yourself you never knew.

WinMan Users



**86% are
non-local visitors
from 30+ states**

**\$52 average daily
spend per person**

**75% visit the
area for WinMan
OR named
WinMan as an
important factor**

**62% visit the area
more frequently
because of WinMan**

**56% of users
began coming
in 2021 or later**

Source: 2024 WinMan Park Visitor Survey

Supporting the Local Economy

WinMan's visitor survey, conducted from May to September 2024, highlights its significant contribution to the local and regional economy. Most users (86%) live outside the area, and of those who have been visiting for years, 62% now visit more frequently because of WinMan.

Nearly half of users (49%) stay in a local residence owned by themselves or someone they know. That means just over half of WinMan users spend money on lodging, with 25% reporting camping and 26% staying in a hotel, resort or rental property. Beyond lodging, visitors to the region benefit businesses in nearby towns as they spend money on dining, groceries, gas and other recreational activities.

On average, survey respondents stay in the area for 4 days, visiting WinMan 2½ days during their trip. Though 75% of users come primarily for WinMan, they also enjoy other activities, such as exploring the paved bike trails, paddling, boating, hunting and fishing in the region. This suggests that WinMan attracts visitors who otherwise may not have visited and contribute to the local economy by supporting outfitters, guides and equipment retailers in the region.

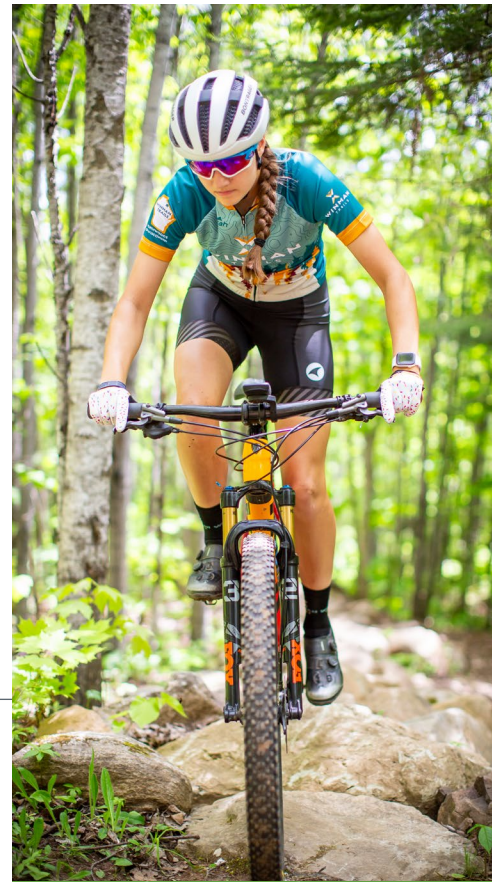
Becoming a Community Hub

While WinMan is a major economic driver in the region (the annual number of visitors is more than double the population of Vilas County), what truly sets it apart is that it is completely free and open to the public. WinMan Park is a community hub for families, friends and local organizations.

North Lakeland School uses WinMan's trails for cross-country ski training and mountain biking as part of their after-school program, introducing local kids to these sports at no cost. Lakeland Star Academy, a high school for children with special needs, brings students to enjoy nature safely on snowshoes, skis and sleds, with the wide trails accommodating all abilities. WinMan also hosts middle and high school National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) mountain bike teams from across the state as they train and prepare for their season.

It also collaborates with other local nonprofits like the North Lakeland Discovery Center and the Manitowish Waters Historical Society for interpretive programs and hikes across the 1,300 acres.

By focusing on building sustainable, high-quality trails, WinMan not only provides access to nature but helps conserve and protect the surrounding environment.



"One of the best hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing areas out there. Incredibly well maintained, great staff, good amenities, and most importantly, super high-quality trails. If you're in the area and love one of the activities I mentioned, it's a must do."

Daniel Loudenback,
visitor to WinMan Trails

The Economic Impact



55,271
projected visits
in 2024



\$4.3 million
in economic impact



31 jobs
supported



\$932,000
in labor income
supported

Investing in the Future

WinMan Trails is uniquely positioned to enhance its role as a premier destination trail system and community asset. The strategy is to continue focusing on its core strength - high-quality, year-round trails - paired with an enriched user experience. Doing so can further boost the impact on the local economy.

WinMan's event calendar is thoughtfully curated to benefit WinMan, its sponsors and area businesses. For example, in August 2024, it hosted a Junior Mountain Bike Camp, bringing 34 high schoolers and five professional mountain bikers as coaches. Partnering with Camp Jorn for lodging and meals, both local nonprofits saw significant benefits. In September 2024, it welcomed over 150 Onewheel riders from 22 states for the Midwest WinMan Onewheel Enduro race. These are just two examples of the many programs and events that grow the trail system and support local and regional businesses.

Looking ahead to 2025, WinMan is excited to launch WinMan BaseCamp, offering on-site camping and lodging to encourage even more visitors to stay overnight in the area. BaseCamp - designed in direct response to feedback from annual visitor surveys - will elevate the trail experience and help extend WinMan's reach nationally.



"We are so grateful to have this place to ride. The trails are meticulously maintained, there always seems to be something new whenever we visit. This is a top-notch trails system and a model for how silent sports trails should be!"

Em Meier, trail user



Methodology & Data Sources

The economic impact analysis is based on data collected from WinMan Trails users. The visitor counting program includes car counters in the parking lot, trail counters at the main trailhead and group size reported by survey respondents. Working with multiple data sources allowed the research team to confidently estimate the total number of visitors.

Visitors to WinMan are routinely surveyed. During the summer of 2024, the data that is typically collected was augmented with a separate, more in-depth survey that visitors completed while on-site, either independently or through intercept interviews by staff and volunteers. The team prioritized on-the-spot feedback to collect more accurate and immediate insights than were gathered through post-visit surveys. This survey provided direct data on visitor spending, behavior and motivations.

The economic contributions of trail user spending to the local economy were estimated using a sales area multiplier calculated using the formula provided by Wen-Huei Chen in "Variations in multipliers and related economic ratios for recreation and tourism impact analysis" (Michigan State University, 2001).

Other impacts (jobs and labor income) were estimated using ratios between visitor spending and local jobs, and visitor spending and labor income reported by Travel Wisconsin for the economic impact of tourism in Vilas County in 2023.



OutdoorRecreation.wi.gov



WinManTrails.com



HarbingerConsult.com

This report was produced by WinMan Trails with support from the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation and The Harbinger Consultancy as the result of a nine-month effort guided by the Office's pilot Do-It-Yourself Economic Impact Report program in 2024.