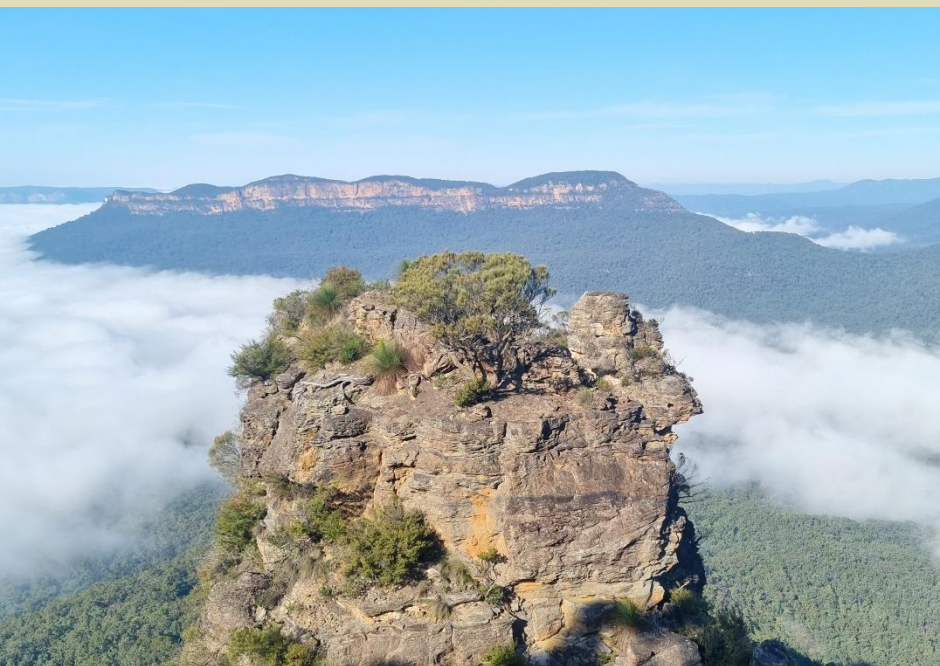




**Benje  
Patterson**  
People & Places

March 2025

# Economic impacts of Ultra-Trail Australia 2024



Prepared by: Benje Patterson

Benje Patterson | People & Places

Economist and ultra runner

[www.benjepatterson.co.nz](http://www.benjepatterson.co.nz)

March 2025

All work provided and services rendered are at the request of the client and intended for the client's purposes only. Benje Patterson Ltd and its employees do not accept any responsibility on any grounds whatsoever, including negligence, to any other person or organisation. While every effort is made by Benje Patterson Ltd to ensure that the information and analysis are accurate and reliable, Benje Patterson Ltd shall not be liable for any adverse consequences of the client's decisions made in reliance of any report provided by Benje Patterson Ltd. Furthermore, Benje Patterson Ltd make no representations or warranties of any kind as to whether any report provided by Benje Patterson Ltd will assist in the performance of the client's functions. Any reliance will be at your own risk.

# 1. Contents

---

2. Overview .....	2
3. About the participants and their supporters .....	3
4. Economic impacts of UTA 2024 .....	4

## 2. Overview

---

This report estimates the economic impacts on the Blue Mountains economy from spending by trail runners who attended Ultra-Trail Australia (UTA) by UTMB in May 2024.

---

UTA is the world's second-largest Ultra-Trail running event and includes a variety of races centred on Katoomba, in Australia's Blue Mountains. Events in UTA 2024 included 11km, 22km, 50km, and 100km options, with a 100-mile race also being added to the upcoming 2025 edition of UTA.

---

At its heart, this report helps answer the following questions<sup>1</sup>:

- How many people visited the Blue Mountains because of UTA 2024?
- How much was spent in Blue Mountains businesses by visitors for UTA 2024?

This report's author, Benje Patterson, is an economist from Arrowtown, New Zealand, which is a small mountain-backed village that is widely regarded to be New Zealand's trail running mecca. Benje has over a decade of experience analysing economic activity in local economies, including many projects related to tourism, sport and recreation. His previous work has included assessments of the economic impacts of trail running events (e.g. [the WILD](#)), as well as the economic benefits of [skiing](#) and [biking](#) on communities. Outside of his professional work in the economics of sport and recreation, Benje is a leading [New Zealand ultra runner](#) – he has previously achieved a top 5 result in the UTA100 (2023) and recently won one of New Zealand's most iconic trail runs, the Motatapu Marathon (2025).

### 2.1. Key findings

- There were 6,870 people who participated in UTA 2024 across UTA11, UTA22, UTA50, and UTA100, with an estimated 95% (6,545 athletes) visiting from outside of the Blue Mountains.
- In addition to the 6,545 visiting athletes, there were 15,908 supporters who travelled to the Blue Mountains. On average each visiting athlete brought with them about 2.4 supporters to the Blue Mountains.
- Visitors for UTA 2024 stayed an average of 3.0 nights and spent \$729 in the Blue Mountains.

---

It is estimated that total direct spending in the Blue Mountains by all visiting UTA 2024 participants and their supporters was \$16.4 million, which is equivalent to approximately 3.8% of all tourism spending in the Blue Mountains over the 12 months to June 2024 (\$431.6 million).

---

- On top of the direct spending of \$16.4 million associated with UTA visitors, there was an estimated further \$9.1 million of flow-on spending in the local economy, taking the total economic impact of UTA 2024 from a gross spending perspective to \$25.5 million.
- It is estimated that the total economic impact of UTA from a gross spending perspective has grown by 66% in real terms between the 2018 and 2024 editions of UTA.
- The total potential employment effect of UTA 2024 is 93 jobs. The \$16.4 million of direct spending can potentially support 67 long-term local jobs, with the \$9.1 million of flow-on spending estimated to be sufficient to support a further 26 jobs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Modelling has been primarily informed from publicly-available lists of participants, which outline numbers of athletes and their country of origin for people who started UTA11, UTA22, UTA50, and UTA100 in 2024. This data has been overlaid against visitor spending patterns from Tourism Research Australia surveys and prior research into spectatorship and local participation in UTA.

### 3. About the participants and their supporters

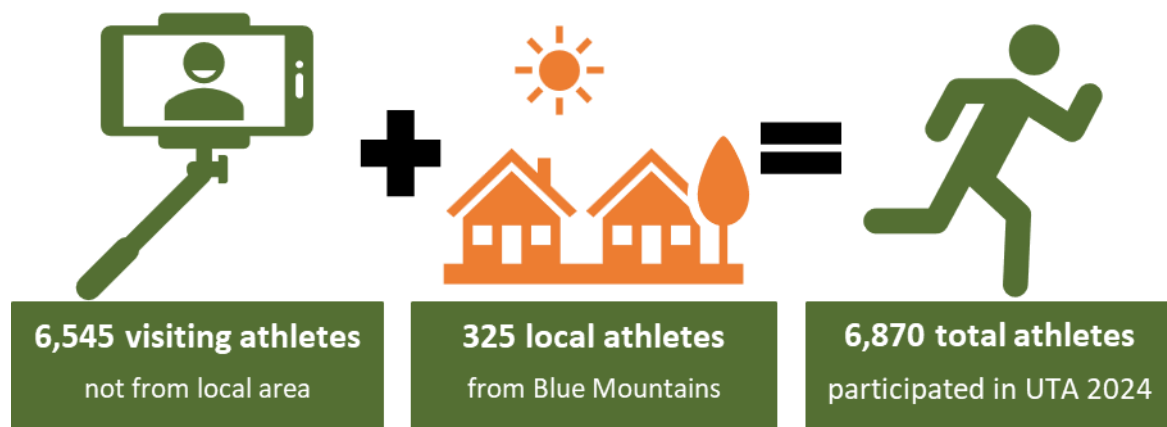
This section introduces baseline understandings about the participants in UTA 2024 and their supporters.

#### 3.1. How many people participated in UTA 2024?

There were 6,870 people who participated in UTA 2024 across UTA11, UTA22, UTA50, and UTA100. Most of these participants travelled from outside of the Blue Mountain to participate.

Visitors from outside the Blue Mountains represented an estimated 95% (6,545 athletes) of all competitors in UTA 2024. Of these visitors, 84% (5,515 athletes) were from other parts of Australia, while 16% (1,030 athletes) travelled from overseas<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 1** – Overview of participants in UTA 2024



#### 3.2. How many supporters travelled to watch UTA 2024?

On average each visiting athlete brought with them about 2.4 supporters on their visit to the Blue Mountains<sup>3</sup>. In total, there were approximately 15,909 supporters who accompanied visiting athletes participating in UTA 2024.

**Figure 2** – Overview of supporters who accompanied visiting athletes at UTA 2024



<sup>2</sup> Event results give countries of origin of participants. Participation by Blue Mountain residents in the cohort of Australian competitors has been estimated using 2018 research into rates of local participation in UTA. The research is published in the Blue Mountains City Council Events Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

<sup>3</sup> Calculations with data available from the Blue Mountains City Council shows the typical visiting domestic participant brings 2.87 supporters with them, while each international athlete brings 0.07 supporters.

## 4. Economic impacts of UTA 2024

---

This section introduces the economic impacts from spending by UTA 2024 participants and their supporters. The analysis focusses on spending by athletes and supporters visiting from outside of the Blue Mountains because their spend represents fresh money into the local area that would not have existed in the absence of UTA 2024.

Spending by local athletes from the Blue Mountains and their supporters is not factored into core economic impacts as many would spend their budget on other things in the local area had they not participated in UTA 2024<sup>4</sup>.

### 4.1. Characteristics of the average stay by UTA attendees

---

The average person visiting the Blue Mountains for UTA 2024 is estimated to have stayed in the area for 3.0 nights<sup>5</sup>.

---

These visitors for UTA stayed longer than the typical visitor to the Blue Mountains, with data from Destination NSW showing that the average visitor to the Blue Mountains staying for 2.3 nights<sup>6</sup>.

### 4.2. Spending characteristics by UTA attendees

---

The average spend for each person visiting the Blue Mountains for UTA 2024 is estimated to be \$729 across their trip.

---

It is estimated using data from Destination NSW<sup>7</sup> that the average domestic UTA visitor from elsewhere in Australia spent \$739 across their trip, while international UTA visitors spent \$540 in the Blue Mountains.

### 4.3. Economic impact of spending by UTA attendees

---

It is estimated that total direct spending in the Blue Mountains by all visiting UTA 2024 participants and their supporters was \$16.4 million<sup>8</sup>.

---

This spending represents the direct economic impacts on the Blue Mountains economy attributable to UTA 2024 – in the absence of the race, these people would not have been in area spending money.

Comparisons of UTA can also be made against the rest of the Blue Mountain's tourism economy.

---

<sup>4</sup> Economic impacts calculated in this report are conservative as they do not consider money from entry fees flowing back into the local economy due to the event organisers' procurement of local goods and services. The economic impacts also do not make any provisions for estimated spending associated with future visitation by athletes who return to visit the Blue Mountains again as a result of a positive experience associated with UTA.

<sup>5</sup> Data available from the Blue Mountains City Council shows the average domestic UTA visitor stays 2.82 nights, while the average international UTA visitor stays 6.0 nights.

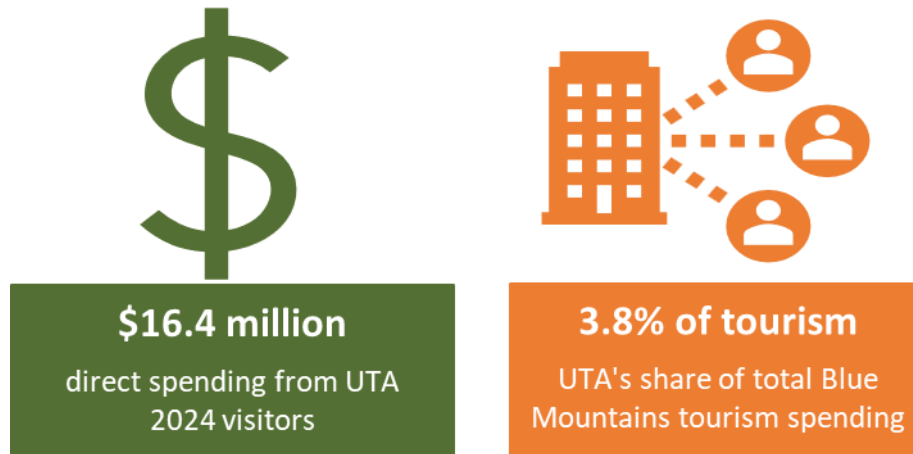
<sup>6</sup> Source: Destination NSW, Blue Mountains Visitor Profile, year ending June 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Destination NSW, Blue Mountains Visitor Profile, year ending June 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Direct spending by all visiting UTA 2024 participants and their supporters was calculated as the total number of athletes and supporters who travelled to the Blue Mountains for UTA 2024 multiplied by their average spend.

The \$16.4 million of direct spending associated with UTA 2024 is equivalent to approximately 3.8% of all tourism spending in the Blue Mountains over the 12 months to June 2024 (\$431.6 million<sup>9</sup>).

**Figure 3** – Direct spending in the Blue Mountains from UTA 2024 visitors compared to total tourism



On top of these direct spending effects, there are also so-called multiplier effects that then flow through into other parts of Blue Mountains economy. These multiplier effects occur because of:

- 1) Indirect effects on supply chains – these capture procurement spending that occurs when businesses benefiting from the additional UTA 2024 visitors lift their spending with suppliers.
- 2) Induced effects on consumption – these capture the consumption that occurs from workers spending the additional wages and salaries they have earned from servicing UTA 2024 visitors.

On top of the direct spending of \$16.4 million associated with UTA visitors, there was an estimated further \$9.1 million of flow-on spending in the local economy, taking the total economic impact of UTA 2024 from a gross spending perspective to \$25.5 million.

This \$25.5 million total gross spending impact from UTA 2024 is significantly higher than previous estimates. Research into UTA 2018 showed that the 2018 edition of the event had a total gross spending impact of approximately \$12.5 million. After adjusted for inflation, this suggests there has been total spending growth of 66% in real terms between UTA 2018 and UTA 2024.

The additional spending that occurs because of UTA can also support a significant amount of employment in the Blue Mountains. The \$16.4 million of direct spending can potentially support 67 long-term local jobs, with the \$9.1 million of flow-on spending estimated to be sufficient to support a further 26 jobs, taking the total potential employment effect of UTA 2024 to 93 jobs.

The potential total long-term employment effect of UTA 2024 of 93 jobs is higher than the estimated 58 long-term jobs supported from the tourism impacts of UTA 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Source: REMPLAN Economy, <https://app.remplan.com.au/bluemountains/economy/tourism/output>

