

# North Dakota Tourism conference highlights collaboration and momentum

The 2026 North Dakota Travel Industry Conference continued Tuesday in Grand Forks, where nearly 250 tourism and hospitality professionals gathered to explore new strategies, strengthen partnerships and build on the momentum outlined in North Dakota Tourism's newly released 2025 Annual Report.

Hosted by Visit Greater Grand Forks, North Dakota Travel Industry Alliance (NDTIA) and the North Dakota Department of Commerce, the conference is the premier event for the state's travel and tourism industry. Monday's workshops and opening reception set the tone for meaningful engagement as attendees arrived for three days of professional development and collaboration.

Tuesday's sessions featured a keynote from author Andrew Davis on using artificial intelligence to work smarter, followed by breakouts on creative storytelling, AI-driven digital discovery, unified branding, and evolving creator strategies for small and rural destinations. Afternoon roundtables encouraged candid discussion among professionals working in sports marketing, media, advocacy, social media, and grant programs.

At the annual State of the

Industry Luncheon, Tourism and Marketing Director Sara Otte Coleman shared highlights from the 2025 Annual Report, emphasizing both growth and key challenges. North Dakota saw continued national visibility, with earned media reaching more than 9.24 billion impressions, and digital marketing generating more than 471 million paid impressions through the HELLO campaign.

Visitor interest remained steady, with travelers from all 50 states requesting information, and destination development continued advancing through 23 new grants supporting attractions and community-driven projects across the state.

The Annual Report also highlighted the industry's significant economic impact, noting more than \$2.3 billion in 2025 sales tax collections from Accommodations and Food Services as well as Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, along with over 46,000 tourism-supported jobs statewide.

While final visitation and spending numbers for 2025 will not be available until June, initial metrics indicate the tourism sector did not outperform 2024. Border entries from Canada declined nearly 25%, resulting in an estimated \$57 million in lost

visitor spending. Major attraction and cumulative lodging taxes also slipped 10%. However, state leaders noted the dollars invested in marketing the state showed growth and resulted in increased reach.

"North Dakota's tourism industry continues to show resilience and momentum as we look ahead," Otte Coleman said. "Strong domestic travel, rising interest in outdoor recreation and continued marketing investment can sustain industry momentum. What we're hearing from partners this week reflects the strength,

creativity and commitment driving our industry forward."

The conference continues Wednesday with the Governor's Awards Breakfast, honoring individuals, communities and organizations advancing North Dakota's tourism landscape, followed by sessions on legislative engagement and key trends influencing the future of travel.

For more information on the 2026 North Dakota Travel Industry Conference, go to <https://ndgov.link/NDTIC>.

# Grilled Cheese Burritos

## Ingredients

- Spanish Rice**
- 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 3/4 cup uncooked basmati rice
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce
- Seasoned Beef**
- 1 Tbsp. neutral oil
- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. onion powder
- 1/2 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce

## Chipotle Mayo

- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 Tbsp. chipotle sauce from a can of chipotle chiles in adobo
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt

## Assembly

- 6 (10") flour tortillas
- 1/2 cup store-bought or home-made queso, divided
- 1 cup red tortilla chips, broken into large pieces
- 8 oz. cheddar, shredded (about 1 1/2 cups), divided
- Sour cream and hot sauce

## Directions

### Spanish Rice

1. In a small saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Add rice and cook, stirring occasionally, until toasted and golden brown, about 5 minutes.

2. Add garlic powder, salt, and onion powder and cook, stirring, until warmed through, about 1 minute. Add broth and sauce and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and cover saucepan with a lid. Cook, undisturbed, for 17 minutes.

3. Uncover and fluff rice with a fork.

### Seasoned Beef

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add ground beef and cook, breaking up with a spoon, until browned, about 7 minutes.

2. Add garlic powder, cumin, chili powder, salt, onion powder, and paprika and mix until combined. Add broth and sauce and bring to a simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until liquid is mostly absorbed, about 5 minutes.

### Chipotle Mayonnaise

In a small bowl, combine sour cream, mayonnaise, chipotle sauce, and salt.

## Assembly

1. Place a tortilla on a work surface. Fill the center of tortilla with 1/2 cup rice, 1/2 cup seasoned beef, 1 Tbsp. chipotle mayo, 1 Tbsp. queso, and 4 to 5 pieces of broken tortilla chips. Fold 2 sides of tortilla toward each other, bringing the bottom half up and over the filling, then tightly roll into a burrito and tuck in the sides. Repeat with remaining 5 tortillas.

2. In a large nonstick skillet over medium heat, arrange 1/4 cup cheese in a line about the length of a burrito in the center of skillet. Place a burrito, seam side down, directly on top of cheese. Once cheese starts to brown around the edges, gently flip burrito with a spatula, keeping cheese pressed to seam side of burrito. Continue to cook until other side is golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer burrito to a platter. Repeat with remaining burritos.

3. Serve with sour cream and hot sauce

## Crossword Answers

(puzzle on page 16)

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