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2026 Cape May County Tourism Conference

CAPE MAY COUNTY
CHAMBER

Presented by: Cape May County
Department of Tourism

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Adapting to Tourism Shifts and Marketing Realities

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Adapting to Tourism Shifts and Marketing Realities



There is no doubt that 2025 was a challenging year, requiring countywide tourism marketers to operate in an unusually difficult environment shaped by weather conditions in June, political uncertainty, and continued economic pressure on both businesses and consumers. These factors affected travel planning, visitor confidence, and discretionary spending across all tourism sectors. At the same time, changing consumer behavior continues to influence how, when, and why visitors make travel decisions, changing visitor expectations and spending.

In this environment, a proactive and well-targeted marketing strategy was not optional; it was essential to maintain visibility, preserve market share, and reinforce Cape May County's position in an increasingly competitive leisure travel marketplace. For the first time since casino gaming started, Cape May County moved to the top New Jersey leisure destination, generating \$8.44 billion in visitor spending.

While reports from tourism stakeholders reported that June was slower than expected, July and August were reported as greatly improved, exceeding expectations. However, those perceptions were not reflected in Occupancy Tax collections as reported by the New Jersey Treasury. Occupancy Tax revenue remains one of our key benchmarks for assessing overnight visitation on both a month-over-month and year-over-year basis. When viewed alongside business activity, visitor trends, and sector performance, this data provides the tourism department, tourism partners, and stakeholders with a grounded measure

of market conditions. It also reinforces the need for a marketing strategy that is responsive, data-informed, and designed to address shifting demand rather than relying solely on anecdotal observations.

Adaptability is essential for businesses, tourism venues, marketers, and visitors as they respond to changing conditions and evolving traveler needs. Staying ahead of these trends has helped keep Cape May County relevant and establish it as a leading leisure travel destination in New Jersey and beyond.

The Tourism Department's marketing has evolved into a multi-layer campaign designed to reach diverse visitor groups and deliver trip-planning information in the formats they prefer. Annual visitor survey data shows that not all travelers rely on social media for information. Although that is gradually changing, we remain focused on reaching the audience most likely to plan vacations and have the time and discretionary income to travel.

Cape May County's strength has been its resilience and ability to adapt to changing market conditions while continuing to deliver a destination experience that resonates with visitors. Businesses, attractions, tourism venues, and destination marketers have worked together to respond to changes in traveler expectations and maintain the County's relevance across multiple visitor segments. This flexibility, combined with a strong tourism product and a recognized brand identity, has been a key factor in the County's continued success. It has helped sustain Cape May County's standing as New Jersey's NUMBER ONE leisure destination, expanding its reputation as a competitive regional and out-of-state

travel choice. This rise is due to the businesses, tourism organizations, and elected officials who work hard to maintain high-quality standards that support positive growth and investment.

For that reason, the Tourism Department's marketing strategy has evolved into a multi-level, audience-driven campaign built to reach travelers through the channels they use and trust. This strategy is designed not simply to promote the County, but to place the right message in front of the right audience at the right time in the planning cycle. Today's visitors are not a single demographic. They vary by age, household income, travel motivation, booking habits, and media preferences. A broad-based yet targeted marketing approach allows the County to respond to that complexity deliberately and cost-effectively, maximizing the impact of promotional investments while supporting overnight stays, visitor spending, and long-term destination awareness.

The Department's annual visitor survey continues to validate this approach. Survey findings show that although digital and social media platforms are increasingly influential, they are not the only sources travelers use to gather information and make vacation decisions. Many potential visitors continue to rely on destination websites, email communications, print materials, referrals, and other traditional channels as part of their planning process. This reinforces the importance of maintaining a diversified communications strategy that meets travelers where they are, rather than assuming that one platform can effectively reach all audiences. Advertising buys are determined by reach, impressions, and audience. Our multi-layer marketing campaign ensures our message is viewed on the platform our

visitors prefer. That diversity in outreach is one of the County's marketing strengths and an important reason the destination remains visible and competitive across multiple market segments.

In addition, the Department's outreach targets travelers who influence vacation decisions and have the time and discretionary income to visit and spend in the destination. Public relations initiatives extend the impact of paid advertising by placing Cape May County in front of millions of trip planners seeking vacation ideas and highlighting the County's award-winning resorts and acclaimed beaches, including Ocean City, the Wildwoods, and Cape May as top-ranked favorites, along with other nationally recognized resort destinations across the Jersey Cape.

The Department's annual visitor survey is a critical planning tool because it provides direct insight into who our customers are, how they make travel decisions, what influences their spending, and which marketing channels they use. This research helps us move beyond assumptions by grounding our strategy in current customer feedback, allowing us to refine messaging, evaluate campaign effectiveness, and better target both new and returning visitors. Just as important, the survey helps identify changing preferences and emerging trends so the Department can adapt its marketing plan to meet customer expectations and strengthen Cape May County's competitive position.

Canadian Marketing

Canadian visitors remain an important part of Cape May County's tourism market. Travelers from Montreal have been visiting since 1968. As visitation grew, the County first opened a part-time office and

then a full-time office in 1970. Drawn by warmer ocean waters, the Wildwoods, and expanding campgrounds, many Canadian visitors have returned for generations. Today, they continue to enjoy the County's amenities, support local businesses, and increasingly choose condos and Airbnbs over traditional motels.

The County's downtown Montreal office operated from 1970 to 1995 but closed because of rising costs, including GST and provincial taxes on rent, utilities, and supplies. Today, Canadian outreach is managed by a public relations consultant who oversees advertising, news releases, brochure translation, and media familiarization tours. Marketing efforts focus primarily on Quebec and the Toronto region of Ontario. Many Canadians still drive the nine hours from Montreal to the Jersey Cape, and the Department continues to partner with the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism in both Toronto and Montreal.

Economic and political pressures are likely to affect Canadian visitation over the next several years. Canada has not rebounded to its pre-pandemic level. The Canadian dollar, valued at approximately 73 cents U.S., reduces purchasing power for cross-border travel and adds to the strain created by persistent inflation. At the same time, broader domestic challenges in Canada, including housing affordability, high levels of personal debt, cost of living, and ongoing labor shortages, may continue to limit discretionary spending and influence vacation decisions.

Despite the ongoing media narrative, Cape May County welcomed a strong number of Canadian visitors

during the 2025 summer season. Although early forecasts predicted a decline of more than 50%, the actual decrease was less than 20%. More importantly, the sharp drop in Canadian tourism spending predicted by many news outlets never occurred. Instead, visitor spending across all sectors increased by 4.2%. Traditionally, Canadians represent 7-9% of our visitor base during July and August. Cancellations quickly recovered with hotels, motels, and campgrounds filling open rooms and sites with domestic visitors, and reported July and August reservations that exceeded their expectations.

One-on-one conversations at travel shows in Toronto and Montreal suggested that sentiment among prospective Canadian travelers had softened from the intensity seen during the past two years. Rather than anger, many attendees expressed a more measured hesitation shaped by household budget pressure, the exchange rate, and broader uncertainty about the cost of cross-border travel. That shift appears consistent with wider 2025 travel patterns, as discretionary trips to the United States became more sensitive to affordability and value, particularly among drive-market travelers. Even so, the feedback also underscored that Cape May County continues to benefit from long-standing goodwill, especially among repeat visitors from Quebec who know the destination well, value the beach experience, and have a history of returning across generations. While near-term travel decisions may be more cautious, our relationship with this market remains meaningful and resilient, and we believe that consistent outreach, respectful engagement, and strong value messaging will help sustain Canadian interest in the Jersey Cape over time.

Cape May County Tourism Economic Impact

Total Direct Tourism Expenditures in 2025 - \$8.440 Billion

Representing a 4.2% or \$338.4 million increase over 2024

(Source: Tourism Economics)

Lodging	Food & Beverage	Retail	Recreation	Transportation
\$3,590.6 B	\$1,947.5 B	\$1,540.2 B	\$833.4 M	\$529.0 M

- Cape May County ranks as the top tourism destination in total direct spending in New Jersey. *Lodging includes all accommodation types and casino revenue. Transportation includes both ground and air transportation. In-person casino spending in AC was reported at \$2.89 billion.*
- Cape May County outpaced ALL other counties in Lodging, Food & Beverage, Retail, and Recreation.
- All sectors saw growth in 2025, except Transportation, with a decline of 4.3% or \$17.3 million.
- Cape May County generated \$679.6 million in State & Local Taxes, an increase of 1.7% or \$11.1 million. 12.4% of the total share collected in New Jersey. (\$1.86 million per day) Offsetting New Jersey household taxes by \$1,550.
- Visitor supported direct jobs were 32,568, an increase of 1.6%; 45.4% of total county employment.
- Visitor supported Direct and Indirect jobs 42,611; 59.4% of county employment. Representing 9.6% of total share of statewide employment.
- Total Visitor volume 12.03 million, decline of 0.7% (800); 9.7% share of state volume. (Nearly 1 in 10 visitors to New Jersey went to Cape May County) Day trip to Cape May County – 7.19 million, a decline of 2.9%; Overnight stays 4.84 million, an increase of 2.9%. Representing 6.8% of state share of overnight stays.
- Per person spend is \$700 per trip.

2025 Cape May County Tourism Economic Impact

- Total Direct Tourism Expenditures: \$8.44B (Up 4.2% / \$338.4M)
- Top NJ County in Total Direct Tourism Spending
- Sector Performance: Lodging \$3.59B, Food & Beverage \$1.95B, Retail \$1.54B, Recreation \$833M, Transportation \$529M
- Transportation Declined 4.3% (\$17.3M)
- State & Local Taxes: \$679.6M (12.4% of NJ total)
- Visitor-Supported Jobs: 32,568 Direct; 42,611 Total
- Visitor Volume: 12.03M (9.7% of NJ total)
- Day Trips: 7.19M (Down 2.9%); Overnight: 4.84M (Up 2.9%)
- Average Spend: \$700 per trip

Executive Summary: 2025 Cape May County Tourism Economic Impact

Cape May County continued its position as New Jersey's premier tourism destination in 2025, achieving **\$8.44 billion in total direct tourism expenditures**, a **4.2% increase** (\$338.4 million) over 2024. For the first time, Cape May County edged out Atlantic County as the top tourism destination in New Jersey. The county led the state across all major visitor-spending sectors—**Lodging, Food & Beverage, Retail, and Recreation**—further strengthening its role as the economic engine of New Jersey's tourism industry.

Direct spending was driven primarily by the **Lodging sector (\$3.59B)**, an increase of 6.88%, which includes all accommodation types and casino revenue. In-person casino spending in Atlantic City is part of the economic impact of lodging, and totaled **\$2.89 billion**, reflecting the region's continued draw for visitors.

Followed by **Food & Beverage (\$1.95B)**, an increase of 4.28%. **Retail (\$1.54B)**, an increase of 1.3%, and **Recreation (\$833M)** an increase of 0.6%. Transportation was the only sector to decline, by **4.3%** (\$17.3 million).

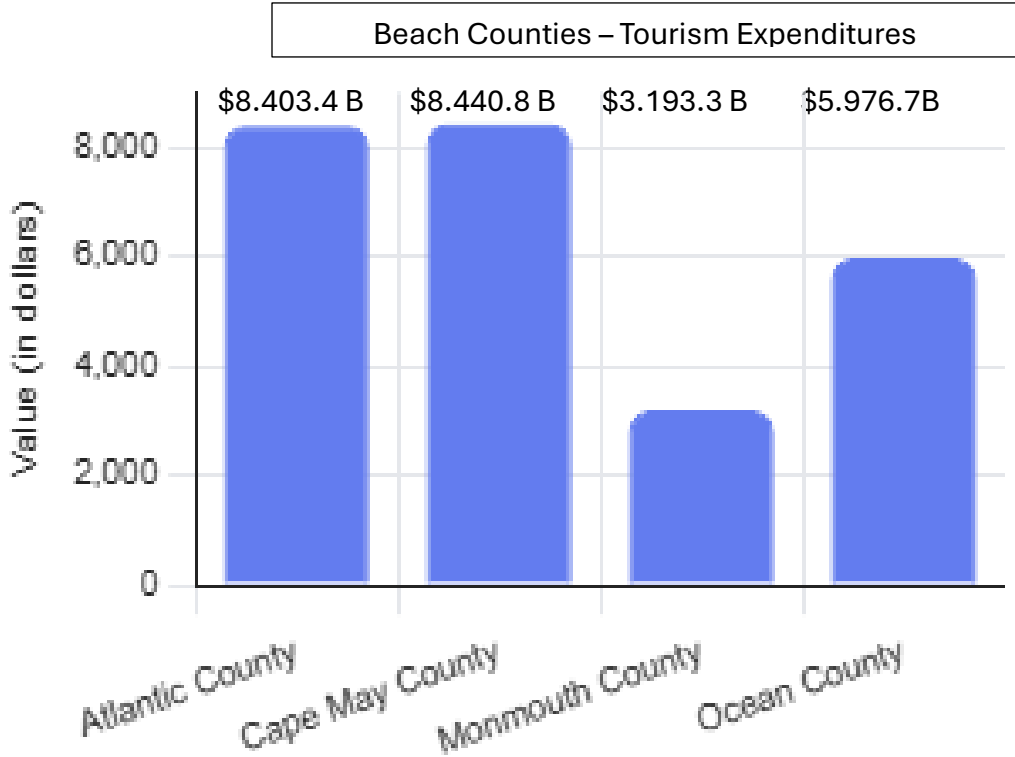
Tourism generated **\$679.6 million in state and local taxes**, up **1.7%**, representing **12.4% of all tourism-related tax revenue in New Jersey**. This amounts to approximately \$1.86 million per day in tax contributions from visitors to Cape May County.

Employment remained strongly tied to tourism, with **32,568 direct tourism-supported jobs—a 1.6% increase**, accounting for **45.4% of total county employment**. When including indirect and induced employment, tourism supported **42,611 jobs**, representing nearly **60% of the county's workforce** and **9.6% of all tourism-related employment statewide**.

Total visitation reached **12.03 million**, a slight decline of **0.7%**, though the county still attracted **nearly 1 in 10 visitors to New Jersey**. Day trips totaled **7.19 million** (down 2.9%), while **overnight visitation increased 2.9% to 4.84 million**, accounting for **6.8% of New Jersey's total overnight visitors**. Visitor spending remained strong, with an average per **person spend of \$700 per trip**.

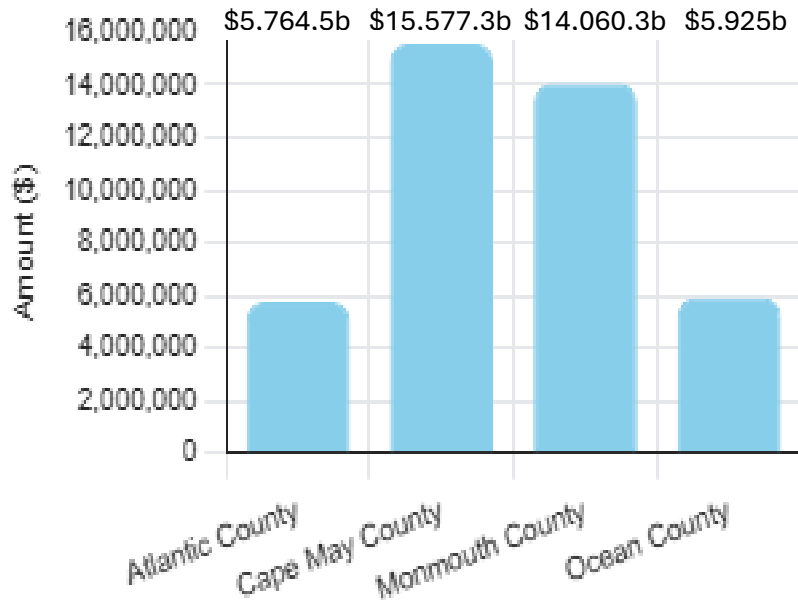


Beach Counties Total Spending

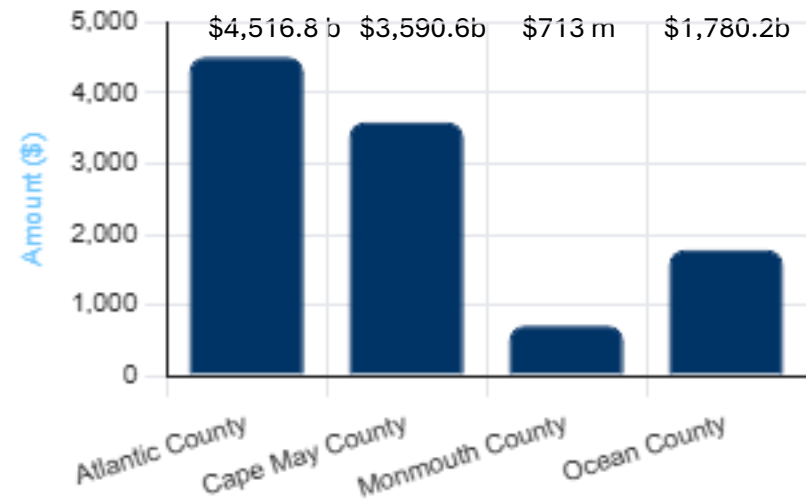


- One half of the total visitor spending comes from the four beach counties, Atlantic, Cape May, Monmouth, and Ocean.
- The four beach counties generated \$26.01 billion in direct tourism spending, or 50.1% of total direct spending.
- The 17 non-beach counties generated 49.0% in direct tourism spending, or \$25.91 billion of total direct spending.
- The four beach counties generated 24.6% of Occupancy Taxes, or \$41,328,316.50.
- The four beach counties generated 75.67% of total lodging, or \$10.601 Billion.

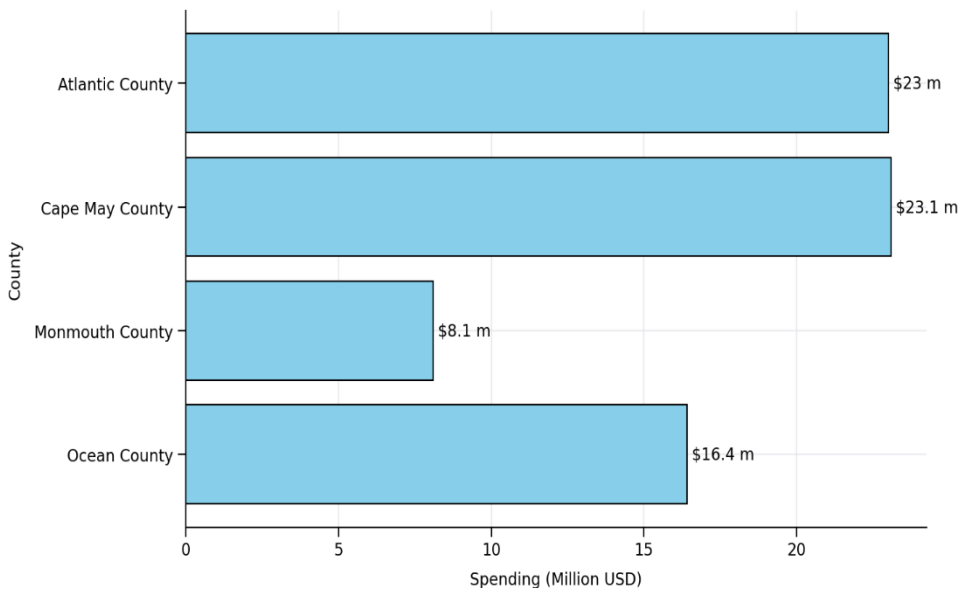
2025 Beach Counties - Occupancy Tax



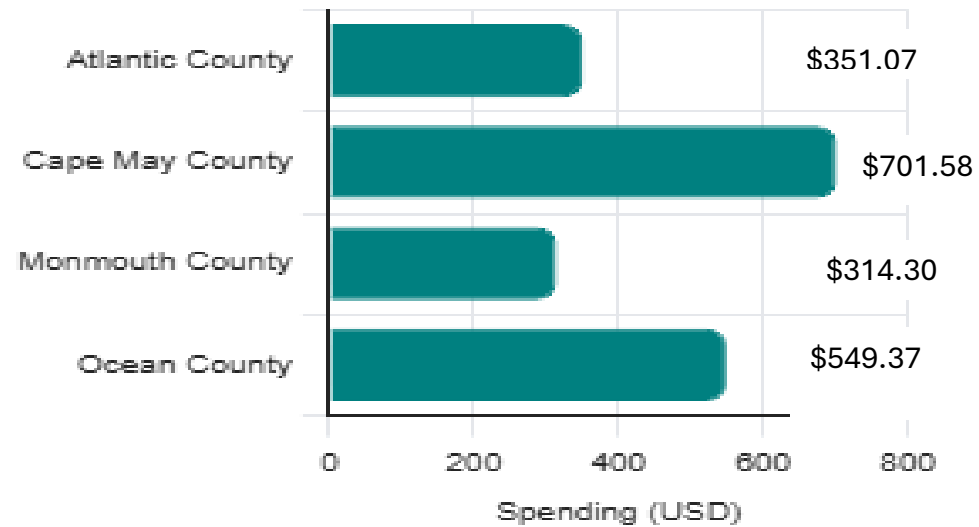
2025 Beach Counties - Total Lodging



2025 Per Day Spend - Beach Counties Total divided by 365



2025 Beach Counties - Per Person Spend



Understanding and Adapting to Changing Visitor Behavior

Today's travelers are increasingly value-driven and experience-focused. Since 2020, they have prioritized meaningful experiences over material things. Rather than giving up travel, they are:

- Choosing destinations that are easier to reach and more affordable
- Traveling during shoulder seasons to avoid crowds and lower costs
- Seeking authentic, immersive experiences that reflect local culture and community
- Creating lasting memories through meaningful travel experiences
- Choosing small towns and rural areas over major cities

Today's vacation planners are less interested in "checklist tourism" and more drawn to meaningful connections with a place or destination. They want to understand how locals live, work, and celebrate, whether that means exploring historic neighborhoods, enjoying regional cuisine, participating in cultural events, or discovering hidden gems off the beaten path. More importantly, these experiences do not require exotic or far-off destinations. Many travelers are finding fulfillment through close-to-home road trips that still offer discovery, enrichment, and relaxation. They are looking to take trips where the journey is part of the overall experience.

This shift in traveler mindset leans toward destinations that are accessible, authentic, and rich in character. While developing our brand, focus group members identified the Jersey Cape as authentic, full of local charm, and diverse. This is where Cape May County aligns well with current and emerging travel trends. Located within easy driving distance of major population centers, with more than 30 million

people living within a 300-mile radius, or a single tank of gas away, the region is perfectly positioned to attract regional travel planners as well as spontaneous leisure travelers. The county is one of the top destinations for visitors in New Jersey, with 12.3 million visitors in 2025. The easy drive works well for day trips and overnight stays.

Cape May County's resorts and mainland communities each offer a distinctive mix of qualities that appeal to today's travelers:

- Offering distinct local cultures and vibrant communities
- Preserving historic attractions and landmarks
- Providing hands-on experiences that invite participation, not just observation
- Combining compact geography with easy drivability

From heritage tourism and arts experiences to culinary offerings and outdoor recreation, Cape May County provides the kind of genuine, place-based experiences travelers are actively seeking. Our beaches, boardwalks, camping, world-class birding, nature, and fishing add to vacation options. Major events in Philadelphia, such as the FIFA games, the 250th Anniversary of America, and the MLB All-Star game, will generate additional international and domestic interest in the Jersey Cape.

What This Means for Cape May County

For tourism stakeholders, these trends highlight the need for collaboration, strong storytelling, and experience-driven marketing. In this environment, success depends less on volume and more on value,

showcasing what makes each community distinctive and how visitors can connect with it in meaningful ways.

To respond effectively, the Department of Tourism works in partnership with tourism organizations, municipal leaders, attractions, lodging properties, restaurants, retailers, and local businesses to advance a coordinated marketing strategy. This approach is designed to strengthen demand in a more competitive and value-conscious travel environment, position Cape May County for growth beyond the traditional summer season and ensure that tourism promotion supports both economic vitality and the distinct character of the communities that make up the Jersey Cape. The strategy is not based on broad promotion alone, but on targeted efforts that align messaging, timing, and audience outreach with the way travelers now plan, book, and experience leisure travel.

- **Capture and protect regional demand in a value-driven market.** The Department prioritizes nearby drive markets where Cape May County's accessibility, familiarity, and broad range of experiences provide a compelling alternative to more expensive or logistically complex trips. Marketing messages emphasize convenience, value, and trip variety, helping the County remain competitive when households are more cautious about discretionary spending. This strategy is intended to preserve market share, encourage shorter-lead bookings, and convert visitors who are looking for meaningful getaways closer to home.

- **Extend visitation beyond the traditional peak season.** The Department promotes Cape May County as more than a summer beach destination by highlighting the experiences that remain strong in spring, fall, and holiday periods, including festivals, culinary travel, arts and culture, heritage tourism, outdoor recreation, birding, shopping, and special events. By building awareness of shoulder-season opportunities and aligning promotion with seasonal programming, the County can generate additional overnight stays, support businesses over a longer operating window, and reduce dependence on a narrow peak-season calendar.
- **Support the local economy while preserving community character.** Marketing efforts are designed to drive visitor spending in ways that benefit local businesses, sustain jobs, and reinforce the distinct identity of Cape May County's municipalities. Rather than promoting a one-size-fits-all destination message, the strategy highlights the County's diverse communities, authentic experiences, and locally rooted assets. This helps attract visitors who value quality, place, and authenticity while strengthening the long-term tourism economy in a manner that respects the character, history, and livability of the Jersey Cape.

Cape May County's tourism assets are not only resilient but exceptionally diverse, allowing the destination to meet the changing preferences of today's travelers while remaining competitive for the future. The County offers a rare combination of experiences within a compact and easily navigable region, giving visitors the option to enjoy beaches, boardwalks, historic districts, culinary experiences,

outdoor recreation, arts and culture, agritourism, ecotourism, and family attractions all within a single trip. This breadth of product is one of the Jersey Cape's greatest strengths, appealing to a wide range of visitor interests, travel budgets, and trip styles while reinforcing the destination's image as authentically charming and sincerely welcoming.

The Jersey Cape includes 16 distinctive municipalities, each contributing its own character, atmosphere, and visitor experience to the destination. From oceanfront resorts and lively boardwalk communities to quiet bayside towns, historic villages, inland farm areas, and nature-based escapes, Cape May County offers variety that few destinations can match. Visitors can choose from vibrant family-oriented beach vacations, romantic getaways, heritage travel, birding and wildlife experiences, boating and fishing, camping, culinary exploration, shopping, festivals, and cultural events, all within one county. This diversity allows Cape May County to attract repeat visitation, encourage longer stays, and position itself as a destination that offers something meaningful for every type of traveler.

The forecast for 2026 is encouraging, with stakeholders reporting strong summer reservations. Lodging, including rentals, is tracking ahead of last year, and bookings are coming in earlier with fewer last-minute reservations. Business owners remain optimistic that 2026 could be another strong year.

Lower gas prices, larger tax refunds, the 250th celebration, and strong family travel demand are all helping support the season.

2025 Occupancy Tax Collection – Cape May County

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	% Change 2024
Jan	\$131,955.20	\$91,115.13	\$185,209.26	\$318,002.47	\$449,363.46	482,368.04	7.34%
Feb	\$149,140.98	\$110,713.91	\$229,955.47	\$424,966.12	\$502,668.10	504,481.72	0.36%
Mar	\$66,338.94	\$230,452.64	\$322,408.96	\$549,409.91	\$656,919.97	680,858.97	3.64%
Apr	\$3,058.96	\$430,513.47	\$641,567.13	\$807,684.39	\$772,867.88	\$0	
May	\$28,340.70	\$1,145,092.87	\$1,340,917.61	\$1,555,113.96	\$1,675,755.94	\$1,673,969.49	-0.11%
June	\$1,060,131.65	\$2,526,201.65	\$2,973,752.60	\$3,297,817.05	\$3,537,897.67	\$1,991,129.30	-43.70%
July	\$2,633,125.44	\$4,185,844.17	\$4,719,041.68	\$5,288,929.09	\$5,373,561.19	\$3,148,755.42	-40.30%
Aug	\$3,329,102.57	\$4,114,143.24	\$4,811,223.97	\$5,211,879.08	\$5,374,967.74	\$2,342,184.89	-56.40%
Sept	\$1,671,693.29	\$2,004,557.74	\$2,394,749.20	\$2,439,872.30	\$2,298,262.58	\$2,488,769.16	8.29%
Oct	\$549,080.26	\$791,277.33	\$854,630.52	\$941,229.04	\$1,088,286.02	\$881,147.77	-19.08%
Nov	\$188,113.25	\$308,286.30	\$409,804.53	\$485,834.08	\$565,884.08	\$591,369.43	4.50%
Dec	\$163,544.06	\$359,694.20	\$519,014.17	\$666,683.88	\$770,093.95	\$792,226.28	2.87%
Total	\$9,973,625.30	\$16,297,892.65	\$19,402,275.10	\$21,987,421.37	\$23,066,528.58	15,577,260.47	-32.38%
Q1	\$347,435.12	\$432,281.68	\$737,573.69	\$1,292,378.50	\$1,608,951.53	1,667,708.73	3.65%
Q2	\$1,091,531.31	\$4,101,807.99	\$4,956,237.34	\$5,660,615.40	\$5,986,521.49	\$3,665,098.79	-38.78%
Q3	\$7,633,921.30	\$10,304,545.15	\$11,925,014.85	\$12,940,680.47	\$13,046,791.51	7,979,708.47	-38.84%
Q4	\$900,737.57	\$1,459,257.83	\$1,783,449.22	\$2,093,747.00	\$2,424,264.05	\$2,264,743.48	7.04%

Occupancy Tax Summary

The occupancy tax data has traditionally served as a key indicator for tracking overnight visitation, identifying seasonal patterns, and evaluating the effectiveness of marketing initiatives. However, the

efficacy of this benchmark changed significantly in 2025 due to disruptions in the state reporting process. The New Jersey Treasury experienced major delays in releasing occupancy tax data, and the introduction of a new reporting portal created inconsistencies in both the timing and the structure of the monthly reports.

As a result, March collections were affected, and the format of the reports that followed shifted, making month-to-month comparisons unreliable. These irregularities produced totals that diverged sharply from historic collection patterns and did not align with historical trends.

At year's end, the occupancy tax data showed a dramatic 32% decline from 2024, prompting concerns about potential declines in tourism performance. However, the final economic output presented a far more accurate picture of visitor activity. Lodging direct spending increased by 6.8% in 2025, representing a substantial \$246.6 million gain over 2024. This contradicts the negative trend suggested by the occupancy tax data.



2025 Occupancy Tax Collection – By County

	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Total
ATLANTIC	496,986.11	490,586.37	610,980.46	\$0	\$870,970.56	\$677,123.50	\$817,797.63	\$431,281.80	\$484,386.40	\$294,986.34	\$280,039.48	\$309,329.40	\$5,764,468.24
BERGEN	1,239,519.06	1,228,825.61	1,716,344.04	\$0	\$4,010,684.02	\$2,199,096.87	\$2,272,433.51	\$2,134,048.14	\$2,418,593.65	\$2,177,665.32	\$1,841,357.73	\$2,472,382.80	\$23,710,950.55
BURLINGTON	534,497.79	572,356.34	700,078.23	\$0	\$1,329,867.97	\$848,839.78	\$816,457.05	\$650,333.41	\$821,385.34	\$757,755.32	\$637,375.89	\$558,439.17	\$8,227,386.13
CAMDEN	243,887.30	277,860.85	351,365.98	\$0	\$748,762.31	\$391,765.80	\$397,097.77	\$290,865.39	\$361,554.34	\$347,275.06	\$438,280.03	\$281,258.10	\$3,738,207.16
CAPE MAY	482,368.04	504,481.72	680,858.97	\$0	\$1,673,969.49	\$1,991,129.30	\$3,148,755.42	\$2,342,184.89	\$2,488,769.16	\$881,147.77	\$591,369.43	\$792,226.28	\$15,577,260.58
CUMBERLAND	99,205.12	107,115.06	155,678.98	\$0	\$236,425.43	\$182,012.99	\$194,397.13	\$224,184.89	\$179,358.87	\$192,454.84	\$141,802.75	\$119,826.26	\$1,832,462.73
ESSEX	428,770.97	420,328.79	587,299.58	\$0	\$723,607.30	\$363,330.34	\$336,718.49	\$216,580.22	\$722,534.23	\$618,409.76	\$559,032.96	\$452,955.49	\$5,429,567.92
GLOUCESTER	176,998.50	212,767.30	260,703.30	\$0	\$525,652.08	\$298,596.94	\$339,224.26	\$239,630.22	\$304,970.15	\$343,387.52	\$224,093.85	\$172,448.30	\$3,098,472.33
HUDSON	848,828.34	786,407.29	1,167,406.50	\$0	\$2,590,781.47	\$1,469,039.22	\$1,431,994.15	\$1,536,159.82	\$1,777,450.85	\$1,637,761.78	\$1,372,728.71	\$487,333.07	\$12,515,109.79
HUNTERDON	82,695.93	102,468.66	100,471.65	\$0	\$235,496.65	\$103,104.96	\$118,225.76	\$107,673.27	\$277,377.43	\$144,578.51	\$110,958.80	\$187,700.25	\$1,570,751.67
MERCER	463,040.97	502,705.45	621,347.47	\$0	\$1,469,738.15	\$808,845.28	\$607,534.28	\$667,029.36	\$718,452.57	\$692,447.20	\$633,186.12	\$583,555.20	\$7,767,882.45
MIDDLESEX	1,388,178.47	1,360,016.86	1,637,732.29	\$0	\$3,375,708.26	\$2,165,114.79	\$1,875,950.84	\$1,484,717.33	\$2,212,691.49	\$1,820,836.56	\$1,823,094.16	\$1,558,722.01	\$18,490,071.64
MONMOUTH	594,230.43	595,118.12	736,930.60	\$0	\$1,728,470.63	\$1,952,777.35	\$1,915,188.67	\$1,839,343.07	\$1,729,004.50	\$973,415.74	\$803,075.33	\$1,192,771.93	\$14,060,326.45
MORRIS	965,943.38	1,013,878.84	1,251,422.13	\$0	\$2,563,653.30	\$1,652,827.07	\$1,915,188.67	\$1,257,037.51	\$1,717,729.79	\$1,578,797.97	\$1,485,460.03	\$1,241,906.51	\$16,643,845.47
OCEAN	180,841.36	233,328.14	287,736.03	\$0	\$554,690.30	\$750,737.15	\$1,355,851.29	\$985,126.26	\$852,719.38	\$261,787.97	\$250,859.63	\$211,583.13	\$5,925,260.86
PASSAIC	217,511.07	226,139.64	290,444.08	\$0	\$620,980.70	\$375,822.24	\$377,149.02	\$375,019.38	\$356,856.62	\$343,724.11	\$297,819.37	\$227,892.95	\$3,709,359.37
SALEM	32,381.45	33,438.17	46,065.21	\$0	\$73,958.21	\$59,697.24	\$43,874.95	\$424,747.60	\$67,287.99	\$50,207.91	\$30,266.66	\$23,771.72	\$885,696.65
SOMERSET	644,324.32	657,640.48	767,088.43	\$0	\$1,576,027.77	\$856,386.35	\$825,096.98	\$810,824.62	\$1,012,368.90	\$959,802.76	\$849,377.08	\$849,553.45	\$9,808,491.39
SUSSEX	275,258.68	321,469.02	225,884.67	\$0	\$507,252.85	\$361,821.13	\$444,645.38	\$516,695.97	\$314,227.26	\$0	\$320,232.38	\$0	\$3,287,488.10
UNION	375,818.53	387,988.27	467,139.10	\$0	\$890,960.77	\$529,455.52	\$579,251.65	\$448,513.33	\$585,823.40	\$539,109.90	\$460,436.22	\$577,688.46	\$5,842,185.36
WARREN	8,997.53	12,514.68	17,102.48	\$0	\$20,918.24	\$15,523.35	\$19,544.27	\$9,449.33	\$21,273.72	\$19,561.51	\$13,083.71	\$11,786.80	\$169,755.90
Total	9,780,283.35	10,047,435.66	12,680,080.18	\$0	\$23,737,794.99	\$17,661,281.37	\$19,832,377.17	\$16,991,445.81	\$17,212,124.55	\$14,635,113.85	\$13,163,930.32	\$12,313,131.28	\$168,055,000.74

How does Cape May County compare to other U.S. Coastal Tourism Economies?

Cape May County's **\$8.44 billion** tourism economy in 2025 places among the strongest coastal destinations in the nation, outperforming or matching several well-known tourism-driven counties across Florida, Virginia, North Carolina, and Delaware.

When compared with competitive destinations:

Lee County, FL

With a **\$5 billion** total economic impact and **\$3.3 billion** in visitor spending, Lee County performs well but remains significantly below Cape May County's **\$8.44 billion** in direct tourism expenditures. Lee County supports **31,000 jobs** (similar to Cape May's **32,568** direct tourism jobs) and generates **\$1.2 billion** in wages. Tourism offsets **\$1,049** in property taxes per household, serving **3.32 million visitors**, far fewer than Cape May County's **12.03 million**.

Collier County, FL

Collier County generates **\$4 billion** in tourism impact—less than half of Cape May County's tourism economy. With **27,500 jobs**, **2.8 million visitors**, and household tax savings of **\$1,688**, it remains a strong but smaller tourism market.

Broward County, FL

Broward County reports **\$16 billion in visitor spending** and **100,000 jobs**, making it a much larger urban tourism destination than Cape May County. However, Cape May's performance is notable given its smaller population, seasonal nature, and geographic size.

Virginia Beach, VA

With a tourism economy of **\$3.9 billion**, **14.3 million visitors**, and **34,076 jobs**, Virginia Beach attracts slightly more visitors but generates **less than half** the economic output of Cape May County. Tourism offsets **\$1,832** in taxes per household.

Outer Banks (Dare County, NC)

Dare County's **\$2.1 billion** tourism economy is substantially smaller than Cape May's, despite attracting **2.75 million visitors**. It supports **12,260 jobs** and provides significant household tax relief—**\$3,860** per household—while generating **\$147.1 million** in state and local taxes.

Sussex County, DE (Southern Delaware Beaches)

Sussex County reports **\$3 billion** in tourism spending and **1,500 jobs**, again falling well below Cape May County's economic scale and employment footprint.

Overall Positioning

Cape May County not only leads New Jersey but also ranks as one of the most productive coastal tourism economies in the eastern United States. Its combination of **high spending**, **strong employment**, and **exceptional visitor volume** highlights the county's unique ability to generate substantial economic impact despite its seasonal nature and geographic constraints.

Tourism shifts (what visitors are doing differently)

Cape May County is experiencing clear shifts in tourism demand and new marketing challenges. A review of trends in previous Department of Tourism data books highlights how visitor behavior has changed over time.

- **More drive-market, “tank of gas” trip behavior:** easier access and flexibility matter more than long-haul travel.
- **More value-sensitive decision-making:** travelers still take trips, but watch total trip cost and trade down/selectively spend.
- **Shoulder-season growth** (spring/fall): travelers avoid peak crowds/prices and look for comfort and better value.
- **Experience-over-stuff mindset:** visitors prioritize memorable experiences (food, culture, nature, events) over “checklist tourism.”
- **Preference for authenticity + sense of place:** distinct town identities, local culture, and heritage become key motivators.
- **More day trips and shorter planning cycles** (common in drive markets): increases the need to win “last-mile” decisions quickly.
- **High repeat visitation** remains a defining dynamic: return visitors are a major share of demand, shaping how you message and where you spend.

Marketing realities (what makes promotion harder / different now)

- **Competing in a value era:** marketing has to prove “worth it” (what you get for the cost), not just promote beauty.
- **Growth isn’t just “more people”:** success shifts from volume to **value**—longer stays, off-peak visits, and higher-quality spend.
- **Digital-first trip planning is non-negotiable:** your website functions as the planning and conversion hub (itineraries, events, listings).

- **Storytelling wins:** visitors respond to real narratives—history, community character, local traditions—over generic shore messaging.
- **Season-extension requires coordination:** shoulder-season demand depends on partners aligning offers, events, hours, and messaging.
- **Spillover opportunities from regional mega-events** marketing must package Cape May County as an add-on stay, not a standalone beach week.

New Market Realities — Aligned to Cape May County

1. Affordability and Ease of Access - Drive Destination Choice

Travelers are increasingly sensitive to fuel and travel costs, favoring destinations that are easy to reach and cost-effective. Cape May County's location within a single-tank drive of major population centers positions the region as a smart, accessible choice for today's traveler.

2. Regional and Drive-Market Travel Is Outperforming Long-Haul Trips

As many consumers postpone international or long-distance travel, regional destinations are capturing demand. Cape May County benefits directly from this shift, attracting visitors seeking rewarding getaways without the complexity of air travel.

3. Value Matters More Than Distance or Prestige

Travelers are prioritizing experiences that feel “worth it” rather than far-flung or expensive. Cape May County delivers strong value through diverse communities, walkable downtowns, historic charm, and varied experiences within a compact geography.

4. Shoulder-Season Travel Is Increasing

Visitors are intentionally traveling outside peak summer months to avoid crowds and reduce costs.

Cape May County's year-round appeal—heritage tourism, arts, dining, outdoor recreation, and events—supports extended visitation beyond the traditional season.

5. Authenticity Is a Primary Motivator

Today's travelers are seeking places with a strong sense of identity. Cape May County's distinct municipalities, preserved history, and vibrant local culture align closely with this demand for authentic, place-based experiences.

6. Experiences Are Valued Over Attractions Alone

Travelers want to participate, not just observe. From historic neighborhoods and cultural events to local cuisine and outdoor activities, Cape May County offers immersive experiences that encourage deeper visitor engagement.

7. Closer-to-Home Travel Still Delivers Discovery and Escape

Road trips and short-distance travel are meeting travelers' desire for relaxation and enrichment. Cape May County offers a sense of escape for visitors seeking without the need for long travel times or extensive planning.

8. Tourism Growth Is Shifting from Volume to Value

Success is no longer defined solely by visitor numbers. Cape May County's strategy emphasizes quality experiences, longer stays, repeat visitation, and economic impact that supports local businesses and communities.

9. Storytelling and Community Character Influence Travel Decisions

Visitors respond to compelling narratives rooted in real places and people. Cape May County's history, architecture, and community stories provide powerful content for experience-driven marketing.

10. **Preserving Local Character Is a Competitive Advantage**

Travelers increasingly value destinations that protect what makes them unique. Cape May County’s commitment to historic preservation, local culture, and community identity strengthens its appeal in a crowded marketplace.

11. **Collaboration Across Communities Strengthens the Visitor Experience**

Travelers experience the Jersey Cape as a connected region. Coordinated promotion among municipalities, businesses, and attractions enhances trip planning, encourages exploration, and extends the length of stay.

12. **External Regional Events Create Spillover Opportunities**

Major events in nearby markets are generating additional interest in the region. Cape May County is well-positioned to capture extended stays and supplemental visitation tied to these broader travel patterns.



Emerging U.S. Travel Trends

Aligned to Cape May County Tourism Assets & Offerings

1. Drive-Market & Regional Travel Continues to Outperform

National Trend

Rising fuel costs, airfare pricing, and travel complexity are pushing U.S. travelers toward destinations that are **easy to reach by car**. Road trips and short-haul vacations are replacing long-haul and international travel for many households.

Cape May County Alignment

- Over **30 million people live within a 300-mile drive**
- No air travel required; accessible for weekend and spontaneous trips
- Ideal for families, couples, and repeat visitors seeking convenience

Assets Activated

- Beach towns from Ocean City to Cape May
- Walkable downtowns and compact geography
- Easy navigation between multiple communities in one trip



2. Value-Driven Travel Decisions

National Trend

Travelers are not giving up vacations—but they are becoming **more value-conscious**, carefully weighing cost, experience, and perceived return on investment.

Cape May County Alignment

- Offers a wide range of price points across lodging, dining, and attractions
- Multiple experiences can be enjoyed in one destination without additional travel costs
- Strong value compared to long-haul or resort-only destinations

Assets Activated

- Diverse accommodations (motels, B&Bs, rentals, hotels, campgrounds)
- Free and low-cost activities (beaches, downtowns, nature, events)
- Dining and shopping districts that encourage extended stays



3. Growth of Shoulder-Season Travel

National Trend

Travelers are intentionally avoiding peak crowds and prices by traveling in **spring and fall**, prioritizing comfort, value, and authenticity.

Cape May County Alignment

- Strong appeal beyond summer months
- Less crowded, more relaxed visitor experience
- Ideal climate for outdoor, cultural, and culinary activities

Assets Activated

- Festivals, events, and seasonal programming
- Historic tours and heritage tourism
- Outdoor recreation (birding, biking, walking, nature)



4. Authentic, Experience-Based Travel Is Replacing “Checklist Tourism”

National Trend

Travelers want to **participate, not just observe**. They are seeking authentic, place-based experiences that reflect local culture, history, food, and community life.

Cape May County Alignment

- Strong sense of local identity across distinct municipalities
- Preserved history and architecture
- Experiences rooted in real communities, not manufactured attractions

Assets Activated



- Historic districts and landmarks
- Local cuisine and regional food culture
- Arts, culture, and community events

5. Close-to-Home Travel Still Delivers Discovery & Escape

National Trend

Many travelers are finding satisfaction through **closer-to-home trips** that still offer a sense of escape, enrichment, and renewal.

Cape May County Alignment

- Feels like a true getaway despite proximity
- Water, nature, history, and distinct towns create variety
- Familiar yet always offering something new to discover

Assets Activated

- Multiple towns with unique personalities
- Bay and ocean environments
- Scenic routes, neighborhoods, and hidden gems



6. Tourism Success Is Shifting from Volume to Value

National Trend

Destinations are increasingly focused on **quality visitation**, longer stays, repeat visitors, and sustainable economic impact—not just raw visitor counts.

Cape May County Alignment

- Long history of loyal, repeat visitors

- Emphasis on preserving community character
- Strong alignment with sustainable tourism principles

Assets Activated

- Extended-stay accommodations
- Repeat seasonal visitation
- Small, locally owned businesses that benefit from longer stays

7. Storytelling Influences Travel Decisions

National Trend

Travelers respond to **real stories**—history, people, culture, and sense of place, rather than generic destination marketing.

Cape May County Alignment

- Rich historical narrative from early settlement to modern shore culture
- Architectural heritage and preserved communities
- Authentic stories rooted in real people and places

Assets Activated

- Victorian history and heritage tourism
- Maritime and coastal traditions
- Arts, culture, and community identity

8. Travelers Want Destinations That Protect What Makes Them Unique



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National Trend

Preserving local character, authenticity, and livability is increasingly important to travelers choosing where to visit.

Cape May County Alignment

- Strong commitment to historic preservation
- Distinct municipal identities
- Tourism growth balanced with community values

Assets Activated

- Historic preservation districts
- Locally owned shops and restaurants
- Community-led events and experiences



9. Regional Events Create Spillover Travel Opportunities

National Trend

Large-scale events in nearby markets drive **extended stays and secondary destination travel.**

Cape May County Alignment

- Proximity to Philadelphia and other major markets
- Ideal for pre- or post-event stays
- Attractive alternative to urban lodging

Assets Activated

- Lodging capacity for extended stays
- Year-round dining and attractions
- Easy drive access to major events



Bottom Line for Cape May County

The dominant U.S. travel trends—drive-market travel, value, authenticity, shoulder seasons, and experience-based visitation—are not emerging challenges for Cape May County. They are existing strengths.

Cape May County is not chasing the future of travel.
It is already aligned with it.



Emerging U.S. Travel Trends — and How the Jersey Cape Is Perfectly Aligned

The U.S. travel market is shifting toward drive access, value, authenticity, and experience-based visitation. These are not future opportunities for Cape May County—they are existing strengths. The table below shows why the Jersey Cape is already aligned and how businesses can activate each trend.

1. Drive-Market & Regional Travel Is Outperforming Long-Haul Trips

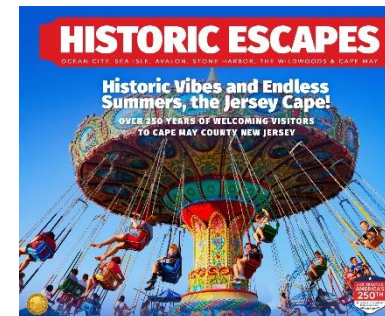
National Trend

Travelers are favoring destinations that are easy to reach, flexible, and affordable—especially within a day’s drive.

Why Cape May County Wins

- More than 30 million people within a 300-mile drive
- No air travel required
- Compact geography with multiple towns in one trip

What This Means for...



- **Lodging:** Weekend and midweek stays, repeat visits, short-lead bookings
- **Dining:** Higher frequency visits, casual and experiential dining
- **Attractions:** Increased day trips and add-on experiences

2. Value-Driven Travel Decisions

National Trend

Travelers are prioritizing perceived value over distance or prestige.

Why Cape May County Wins

- Wide range of accommodations and price points
- Free and low-cost experiences across the county
- Multiple activities without additional travel expense

What This Means for...

- **Lodging:** Demand for value packages and extended stays
- **Dining:** Interest in local, authentic, reasonably priced experiences
- **Attractions:** Strong appeal for bundled and multi-experience visits

3. Shoulder-Season Travel Is Increasing

National Trend

Visitors are actively avoiding peak crowds and pricing by traveling in spring and fall.

Why Cape May County Wins

- Year-round appeal beyond summer
- Mild shoulder-season climate



- Strong events, history, food, and nature offerings

What This Means for...

- **Lodging:** Growth opportunities outside peak summer
- **Dining:** More relaxed, experience-driven dining traffic
- **Attractions:** Higher engagement during off-peak months

4. Authentic, Experience-Based Travel Is Replacing “Checklist Tourism”

National Trend

Travelers want to participate, not just observe.

Why Cape May County Wins

- Distinct towns with real communities
- Preserved history and architecture
- Experiences rooted in local culture

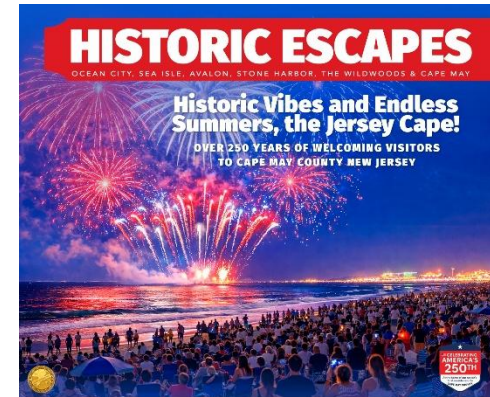
What This Means for...

- **Lodging:** Guests seeking story, charm, and sense of place
- **Dining:** Demand for local food, regional flavor, and storytelling
- **Attractions:** Higher interest in tours, history, arts, and culture

5. Close-to-Home Travel Still Delivers Discovery & Escape

National Trend

Travelers want the feeling of escape without long travel times.



YOU KNOW the Jersey Shore, but do you know the Jersey Cape? Plan now for an historic and memorable getaway. Visit authentically charming attractions like our famous free zoo! Enjoy our beautiful beaches and bustling boardwalks, and also our tons of free events, 250th celebrations and more!
Visit us online at www.escapetoth jerseycape.com, 800.227.2297



Escape
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Why Cape May County Wins

Coastal setting creates a “far away” feeling

- Variety of towns offers discovery within one destination
- Familiar yet always new

What This Means for...

- **Lodging:** Repeat visitation and loyalty
- **Dining:** Visitors exploring different towns and neighborhoods
- **Attractions:** Cross-county exploration



6. Tourism Success Is Shifting from Volume to Value

National Trend

Destinations are prioritizing quality visitation, longer stays, and sustainable growth.

Why Cape May County Wins

- Strong base of loyal repeat visitors
- Emphasis on preserving community character
- Locally owned businesses benefit from longer stays

What This Means for...

- **Lodging:** Longer stays and repeat bookings
- **Dining:** Higher per-visit spend
- **Attractions:** Deeper engagement, not rushed visits



7. Storytelling Drives Travel Decisions

National Trend

Travelers respond to real people, real places, and real stories.

Why Cape May County Wins

- Rich maritime, Victorian, and cultural history
- Strong local identities across municipalities

What This Means for...

- **Lodging:** Heritage, charm, and personality matter
- **Dining:** Local sourcing and story add value
- **Attractions:** History and culture are major motivators

8. Preserving Local Character Is a Competitive Advantage

National Trend

Travelers prefer destinations that protect what makes them unique.

Why Cape May County Wins

- Commitment to preservation and authenticity
- Distinct municipal identities

What This Means for...

- **Lodging:** Demand for character-driven accommodations
- **Dining:** Preference for local over chain experiences
- **Attractions:** Community-based experiences resonate



Escape

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Bottom Line

**Cape May County is not chasing travel trends.
It is already aligned with them.**

By focusing on **drive market, value, authenticity, shoulder seasons, and experience-based travel**, the Jersey Cape is positioned to **win now—and into the future.**



Celebrate America's 250th in Cape May County — Summer 2026 Campaign Plan

Campaign Vision:

- Core concept: A countywide, season-long celebration of America's 250th anniversary designed to unify Cape May County's shore towns under one marketing umbrella
- Dual purpose: Honor the milestone while driving summer tourism, local spending, and community pride
- Tagline: "**All Season Long. Every Shore Town. One Celebration.**"

Target Audience & Objectives:

- Demographics: Families, couples, and multigenerational groups aged 36–70 with household incomes of \$75K–\$150K, interested in beaches, dining, history, and events
- Key objectives: Boost awareness of America 250 celebrations, encourage early July trip planning, increase traffic from feeder markets, and provide consistent messaging across municipalities
- Geographic focus: Drive markets include Greater Philadelphia, Southern NY/Staten Island, Baltimore–DC corridor, Northern Virginia, and Connecticut — approximately 3 million people within a 30-mile radius

Media Strategy & Timeline:

- Approach: A layered, multi-channel strategy moving audiences from awareness → trip planning → visitation, combining broadcast, mobile, out-of-home, radio, and PR
- June phase: Build momentum with FIFA-driven visibility in Philadelphia, early America 250 messaging, Phillies tie-ins, and digital/streaming rollout

- July phase: Peak frequency across all channels with heavy 250th branding, July 4 as the headline celebration moment, promotion of weekly municipal events, and geo-targeting for in-market visitors

Budget & Investment:

Total projected 250th budget:

\$128,371, representing 42.5% of the annual advertising allocation (\$257K total)

- Channel mix: Intentionally balanced across awareness, engagement, and conversion channels — TV, streaming, digital display/video, mobile geo-targeting, OOH billboards, radio, and PR

- Expected impact: An estimated 3.5 million new visitors to the area, with significant boosts to economic activity and long-term growth for hospitality and tourism sectors

Measurement & Accountability:

- Tracking: Performance monitored across all paid and earned media channels — impressions, reach, engagement, video completion rates, website traffic, and referral sources

- Optimization: Real-time creative and placement adjustments based on performance insights

- Deliverable: Comprehensive post-campaign wrap-up with results, insights, and recommendations for future countywide initiatives

Key Takeaways:

- Unified destination branding is central — visitors should experience Cape May County as one destination with many towns, not a collection of competing municipalities

- The FIFA tie-in provides a strategic springboard in June, leveraging Philadelphia-market visibility to build momentum heading into peak July celebrations

- Nearly half the annual ad budget is committed to this campaign, signaling a major institutional bet on the 250th anniversary as a tourism catalyst
- Multi-touchpoint layering ensures the America 250 message reaches audiences repeatedly across multiple channels, reinforcing both awareness and conversion
- Long-term payoff is anticipated — beyond summer traffic, the campaign aims to establish lasting brand visibility and growth for the county's tourism economy

Plan now for your historic and memorable getaway to the Jersey Cape! Visit authentically charming attractions, beautiful beaches, bustling boardwalks, boatloads of free events, 250th celebrations and much more. All only minutes away!

Escape the everyday, pursue your passions at escapetothejerseycape.com or 1.800.227.2297



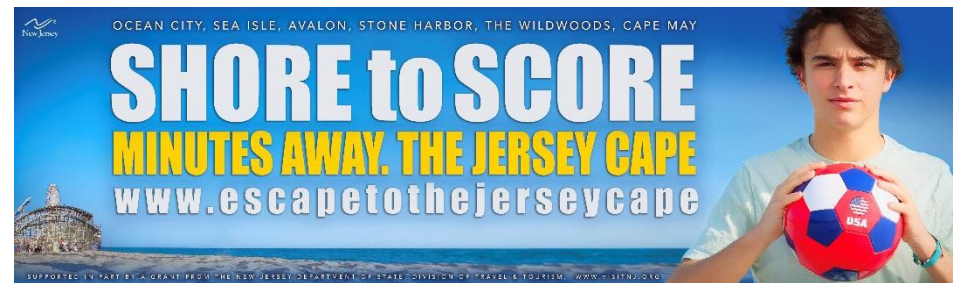
Escape
TO THE JERSEY CAPE



Plan now for your historic and memorable getaway to the Jersey Cape! Visit authentically charming attractions, our beautiful beaches, bustling boardwalks, boatloads of free events, 250th celebrations and much more. Create your own history here, all only minutes away!

Escape the everyday, pursue your passions at escapetothejerseycape.com or 1.800.227.2297

Escape TO THE JERSEY CAPE



250th Marketing Plan

FIFA & 250th Anniversary

Campaign Overview

Goals: Bring shore towns together for a season-long celebration of history and patriotism, boost tourism, support local businesses, foster community pride, and strengthen county partnerships.

Promote the County's 250th anniversary, increase awareness, draw visitors from target markets, and create lasting benefits.

Countywide multi-channel marketing campaign

- Supports America 250 and summer tourism
- Unified message across every shore town
- Designed to drive visitation and spending

Objectives and Target Audience

Objectives:

- **Boost Awareness of America 250 Celebrations**
- Raise public knowledge about America 250 and its significance, reaching diverse communities.
- **Promote Early July Trip Planning**
- Encourage travelers to plan early and extend stay for maximum participation during the celebrations.
- **Increase Traffic from Key Feeder Markets**
- Attract visitors from targeted regions with high attendance potential.
- **Provide Consistent Messaging for Municipalities**
- Help local governments maintain clear, unified communication across all promotional efforts.

Target Audience

Families, couples, multigenerational groups

- Ages 36–70
- \$75K–\$150K household income
- Beaches, nature, dining, history, events



Media Channels Outcomes and Goals

Campaign Goal	Media Channels	Expected Outcome
Increase awareness of America's 250th celebrations	 TV (Broadcast & Streaming)  Digital Video  PR	Strong regional awareness of America 250 as a major, countywide reason to visit Cape May County
Encourage early July trip planning	 Streaming TV  Digital Display & Video  Mobile	Travelers see messaging early enough to plan July trips, book stays, and schedule visits
Drive visitation from key feeder markets	 TV  OOH (Billboards)  Radio	Increased travel intent and visitation from NJ, Philadelphia, Southern NY, and Baltimore–DC
Reach high-intent travelers already nearby	 Mobile Geo-Targeting  Digital	Messaging reaches visitors at stadiums, hotels, and in-market locations to encourage immediate visits and extended stays
Promote July 4 as a headline moment	 TV  Digital Video  PR	July 4 stands out as the centerpiece within a multi-week America 250 celebration
Highlight weekly municipal events	 Digital  Mobile  PR	Local events gain amplified visibility within a unified countywide campaign
Reinforce a unified countywide identity	    All Paid Channels	Visitors experience Cape May County as one destination with many towns
Maximize marketing investment	 Weekly Optimization	Spend is adjusted toward placements driving the strongest engagement and travel signals

June–July Campaign Timeline

JUNE

FIFA + Early 250 Messaging

- Goal:** Build momentum and encourage July trip planning
- FIFA-driven visibility in the Philadelphia market
 - Phillies and early-summer travel messaging
 - Broadcast and streaming TV for early reach
 - Digital display and video introducing America's 250th
 - Mobile geo-targeting at stadiums and hotels
 - Rollout of countywide America 250 branding
 - PR amplification focused on *"Plan your July getaway"*

JULY

Peak America 250

- Goal:** Maximize visitation and local spending
- Heavy America 250 branding
 - Broadcast and streaming TV at peak frequency
 - High-impact OOH billboards
 - July 4 promoted as the headline celebration moment
 - Promotion of weekly municipal events and itineraries
 - High-frequency digital, mobile, and radio advertising
 - Continued geo-targeting to reach in-market visitors
 - PR amplification tied to July 4 and ongoing celebrations.

Winter Population

Town	Population
Avalon	1,243
Cape May	2,768
Cape May Point	305
Dennis Township	6,285
Lower Township	22,057
Middle Township	20,380
North Wildwood	3,621
Ocean City	11,229
Sea Isle City	2,104
Stone Harbor	796
Upper Township	12,539
West Cape May	1,010
West Wildwood	540
Wildwood	5,157
Wildwood Crest	3,101
Woodbine	2,128
TOTAL	95,263

Summer Population

Town	Population
Avalon	35,028
Cape May	45,874
Cape May Point	4,100
Dennis Township	37,339
Lower Township	99,786
Middle Township	71,321
North Wildwood	70,118
Ocean City	139,654
Sea Isle City	44,820
Stone Harbor	22,528
Upper Township	45,940
West Cape May	8,590
West Wildwood	7,468
Wildwood	67,258
Wildwood Crest	54,633
Woodbine	9,483
TOTAL	763,940

Cape May County Commercial Fishing Industry

Cape May County's Commercial Fishing Industry ranks second in economic impact, next to tourism. The Port of Cape May/ Wildwood is the largest port in New Jersey and 2nd second largest on the Eastern Seaboard. The port of Cape May/Wildwood ranks in the top 5 in Landings and top 20 in dollar value in the nation. (128 Ports in the U.S.)

Port of Cape May/Wildwood Ex-vessel activity includes \$90 million in sales with 94.5 million pounds landed. Local income/economic impact is \$700 million.

The Cape May/Wildwood port is the center of fish processing and freezing in New Jersey, and the Cape May/Wildwood fleet is the homeport to some of the largest fishing vessels on the Atlantic coast. The commercial fishing industry has led the way in developing new fisheries and new domestic and international markets for New Jersey seafood.

Major Cape May fisheries focus on squid, mackerel, flounder (fluke), sea bass, bluefish, striped bass, tautog, porgies, lobsters, and menhaden. In addition to this, Wildwood boats are also in the surf clam/ocean quahog fisheries.

The scallop industry in Cape May County is an additional \$440 million-a-year industry, despite its challenges.

The resident population increases by an average 8x during summer, with second homeowners using their vacation homes. Individual resort town summer populations increase by as much as 20x.

An estimated 47% of the 99,606 dwellings in Cape May County are considered second homes or vacation homes. Of these, 53% rent them at some time during the season, the balance is used for personal vacation homes only.

12.03 million Visitors in 2025, generating \$8.440 billion in visitor spending.

Cape May Lewis Ferry Traffic

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Passengers	1,048,637	499,610	917,251	987,022	1,023,451	1,024,595	735,584
Total Revenue	\$13,742,439	\$6,872,757	\$12,145,318	\$13,341,779	\$13,882,937	\$13,984,599	\$14,038,560.51

Garden State Parkway- Cars passing mm 19.7 Southbound

Jan	308,614
Feb	305,835
March	383,466
April	429,700
May	599,746
June	729,749
July	893,370
Aug	883,318
Sept	544,707
Oct	454,508
Nov	372,412
Dec	380,373
Total	6,285,798

Cape May County Open Space and Farmland Preservation

On November 9, 1989, the voters of Cape May County approved by a 2-1 margin a ballot question endorsing the establishment of a trust fund to preserve open space and agricultural land.

The trust is funded by a county property tax of 1 cent per \$100 of assessed valuation and currently generates approximately \$10 million a year. Presently, nearly 5,1000 acres of open space have been preserved.

The program was expanded to include Parks and Recreation, and Historic Preservation grants.

- Open Space Preservation - \$33,300,000 and 1,466.8 acres
- Farmland Preservation - \$34,400,000 and 3,663.7 acres
- Parks and Rec Grants - \$54,100,000 and 63 Projects
- Historic Preservation - \$4,082,000 and 47 Projects

2025 Cape May County Clerk's Office Transactions

	2025 Cape May County Clerk's Office Monthly Transaction Totals												
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total Y-T-D
New Mortgages / Collateral Assignment Rents	536	438	480	602	575	577	498	491	503	695	514	653	6,562
Discharge & Cancel Mortgages	437	383	404	425	489	444	473	370	496	582	495	637	5,635
Deeds / Property Transfers	757	625	742	888	912	996	759	818	963	1,025	696	960	10,141
Notice of Real Estate Settlement	370	360	460	524	468	495	517	524	586	590	440	467	5,801
Assignment of Mortgage	41	54	43	42	40	52	52	84	37	59	38	95	637
Condo or HOA	13	25	14	13	15	6	9	10	16	9	18	11	159
Uniform Commercial Code Filings	71	92	57	96	109	59	58	92	77	90	47	59	907
Federal Tax Liens & Releases	12	32	10	31	30	34	23	27	30	7	39	15	290
Notices of Lis Pendens / Related Documents	38	17	38	32	32	21	35	28	33	36	22	27	359
Notary Public Oaths & Filings	19	20	21	22	20	23	27	20	27	27	15	28	269
Business Trade Name Filings	7	11	17	1	9	4	5	5	9	8	6	7	89
Veterans ID	1	3	2	3	1	4	2	0	1	5	2	0	24
All Other Recordings & Transactions	493	561	443	557	472	444	427	412	454	530	358	619	5,770
Transaction Totals	2,795	2,621	2,731	3,236	3,172	3,159	2,885	2,881	3,232	3,663	2,690	3,578	36,643
											Total Y-T-D	36,643	
	2025 Cape May County Clerk's Office Monthly Revenue												
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total Y-T-D
County Clerk Recording Fees (9 & 21)	51,455.20	47,668.80	49,419.40	58,897.75	59,626.05	60,835.00	52,944.25	53,295.95	59,830.25	69,460.35	51,701.85	64,678.57	\$679,813.42
Fee Increase Effective 2/1/2002 by S553 (10)	51,654.30	45,231.60	48,027.10	58,798.60	59,492.40	62,549.80	51,936.10	52,316.20	60,268.50	71,785.10	52,815.60	67,182.70	\$682,058.00
28.6% Realty Transfer Fee - County Portion (7)	304,249.00	213,683.00	243,828.00	332,559.50	360,771.50	503,836.50	211,335.00	277,006.00	430,960.00	579,498.00	430,160.50	332,579.50	\$4,220,466.50
Other Realty Transfer Fees - County Portion (8)	139,093.50	100,755.25	114,591.50	147,103.25	167,237.00	228,528.50	97,284.00	124,963.75	195,513.25	270,472.75	199,177.25	150,585.50	\$1,935,305.50
Homelessness Trust Fund (19)	7,950.00	7,225.00	7,215.00	8,670.00	8,720.00	8,885.00	7,965.00	7,335.00	8,685.00	10,315.00	7,855.00	10,315.00	\$101,135.00
eRecording Convenience Fee (20)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00
Interest on Recording Account	8,204.29	7,813.27	9,218.65	10,208.09	11,999.21	12,971.53	12,588.35	12,115.77	14,365.10	31,431.07	21,655.23	18,338.46	\$170,909.02
Records Management Fees	238.07	141.17	141.17	141.17	141.17	141.17	110.17	110.17	110.17	110.17	110.17	110.17	\$1,604.94
Revenue Total	562,844.36	422,518.09	472,440.82	616,378.36	667,987.33	877,747.50	434,162.87	527,142.84	769,732.27	1,033,072.44	763,475.60	643,789.90	\$7,791,292.38
											Total Y-T-D	\$7,791,292.38	

Culture and Heritage – Grant Programs

Grants:

Over the past eight years, the Cape May County Division of Culture & Heritage ReGrant Programs for Art and History have demonstrated significant and sustained growth, greatly expanding both their financial impact and community reach. Since 2019, art funding has increased by more than 228%, rising from \$60,946 to a consistent \$200,000 annually, while history funding has grown by nearly 369%, increasing from \$16,200 to \$75,978 in 2026. This investment has translated into expanded access and opportunity, with funded art applicants more than doubling—up 121% from 14 to 31—and history awardees increasing by 114% from 7 to 15. These gains reflect a strong commitment to supporting local arts and history initiatives, ensuring these programs continue to thrive and enrich the community. Funding for the Cape May County Local Arts Program is provided through a grant from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, while the County History Partnership Program is supported by the New Jersey Historical Commission. Importantly, funding from these programs is exclusively available to support projects, programs, and operational needs within Cape May County, ensuring that all resources directly benefit the local community.

Teen Arts:

The Teen Arts Festival continues to experience remarkable growth across Cape May County. In 2024, 66 students from four schools advanced to the state level, followed by 77 students in 2025. This year, participation surged to 172 students representing eight schools, more than doubling both student involvement and school participation. Overall, the program has grown by over 160% since 2024, reflecting expanded access and increasing student engagement in the arts.

Grant Information: www.cmcculture.net for grant guidelines and application. The 2026 funding process will begin in August of 2025. culture@co.cape-may.nj.us with questions.

Cape May County Visitor Profile

Visitor Return Rate	87%
How many in travel group?	
1-2	50%
3-4	28%
5-6	9%
7 or more	11%
Who did they travel with?	
SPOUSE-NO CHILDREN	29%
CHILDREN ONLY	1%
FAMILY (SPOUSE & CHILDREN)	25%
COUPLE AND/OR FRIENDS	16%
EXTENDED FAMILY (PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, SIBLINGS, ETC.)	15%
GROUP	1%
TRAVEL ALONE OR SOLO	4%
Other	2%
Length of Stay	
DAY TRIP	12%
1 NIGHT	4%
2-5 NIGHTS	43%
6-7 NIGHTS (1 week)	26%
8-10 NIGHTS	4%
2 WEEKS	5%
MORE THAN 2 WEEKS	4%
Other	6%
Did the Economy impact your Vacation Spending?	
Yes	39%
No	60%
Vacations planned for 2026	
1	45%
2	31%
3	8%
4 or MORE	6%
Other	7%

Age	
18-27	1%
28-44	15%
45-60	24%
61-79	68%
Travel Season	
SUMMER	74%
FALL	39%
WINTER	10%
SPRING	37%
Top Markets	
New Jersey	34%
Pennsylvania	33%
New York	19%
Maryland/DC	6%
Other	7%
Vacation met expectations.	
YES	89%
NO	10%
Years vacationing in CMC?	
FIRST TIME	11%
1-2 YEARS	5%
3-4 YEARS	9%
5-6 YEARS	5%
7-8 YEARS	2%
9-10 YEARS	4%
11-15 YEARS	6%
16-20 YEARS	10%
20 PLUS YEARS	41%

Vacation Spending	
\$100 - \$300	4%
\$300 - \$500	4%
\$500 - \$700	11%
\$700 - \$1,000	11%
\$1,000 - \$1,500	17%
\$1,500 - \$2,000	17%
\$2,500 - \$3,000	14%
MORE THAN \$3,000	18%
Top Reasons for Vacationing in CMC	
SAFETY & SECURITY	77%
VALUE	75%
QUIET	46%
ROMANTIC	16%
FAMILY ORIENTED	44%
RELAXATION	72%
CLOSE TO HOME	28%
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES	23%
CHARMING	59%
Other	9%
Top Attractions	
BEACH	81%
SHOPPING	75%
RESTAURANT/DINING	81%
CULTURAL/HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS	34%
BOARDWALK	62%
ECO/NATURE-BASED (eg. Whale Watching Excursion)	18%
BIRDING	5%
FISHING/BOATING	16%
GOLFING	4%
WATERSPORTS	10%
CAMPING	4%
ZOO	31%
SPECIAL EVENTS	21%
AGRI-FARM MARKET- FARM T2TABLE	8%
WINERIES, BREWERIES, DISTILLERIES	21%
ATLANTIC CITY	15%

2026 Department of Tourism Visitor's Survey

Response rate 22.3%

1. Did you take a vacation to Cape May County in 2025?

YES	68%
NO	31%

2. What is your age group?

18-27	0%
28-44	5%
45-60	24%
61-79	64%
80 AND OVER	4%

3. Total number of people that traveled with you, including yourself?

2	50%
4	28%
6	9%
8	2%
10	5%
Other	4%

4. Who is most likely to travel with you when vacationing in Cape May County?

SPOUSE-NO CHILDREN	34%
CHILDREN ONLY	2%
FAMILY (SPOUSE & CHILDREN)	20%
COUPLE AND/OR FRIENDS	16%
EXTENDED FAMILY (PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, SIBLINGS, ETC.)	15%
GROUP	0%
TRAVEL ALONE OR SOLO	4%
Other	5%

5. Was this your first vacation/trip to Cape May County?	
YES	12%
NO	87%

6. MANDATORY QUESTION: How many nights did you stay?	
DAY TRIP	9%
1 NIGHT	4%
2-4 NIGHTS	43%
5-6 NIGHTS	15%
7 NIGHTS	11%
8-10 NIGHTS	4%
2 WEEKS	1%
MORE THAN 2 WEEKS	3%
Other	6%

7. MANDATORY QUESTION: How many years have you been coming to Cape May County for a vacation?	
FIRST TIME	11%
1-2 YEARS	5%
3-4 YEARS	9%
5-6 YEARS	5%
7-8 YEARS	2%
9-10 YEARS	4%
11-15 YEARS	6%
16-20 YEARS	10%
MORE THAN 20 YEARS	41%
Other	3%

8. MANDATORY QUESTION: Which Cape May County Resort is your vacation destination? Select all that apply.	
CAPE MAY	58%
WILDWOODS	43%
STONE HARBOR	6%
AVALON	6%
SEA ISLE CITY	6%
OCEAN CITY	24%
MAINLAND (Outside of the Island resorts)	6%
Other	5%

9. MANDATORY QUESTION: What time of year did you vacation at the Jersey Cape in 2025? Check all that apply.	
SUMMER	74%
FALL	38%
WINTER	10%
SPRING	31%

OPEN QUESTION
10. What reasons affected the time(s) of year that you vacationed in 2025?
Summer and fall vacation
Family vacation when the children are out of school.
Getaway with friends.
Came down to attend a concert at the OCTabernacle in the fall and to visit a relative in the fall and spring.

11. What attractions brought you to Cape May County in 2025? Check all that apply.	
BEACH	83%
SHOPPING	45%
RESTAURANTS/DINING	74%
CULTURAL/HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS	35%
BOARDWALK	56%
ECO/NATURE BASED ACTIVITIES (eg. Whale Watching Excursion)	18%
BIRDING	5%
FISHING/BOATING	18%
GOLFING	4%
WATER SPORTS	11%
CAMPING	1%
ZOO	30%
ART EXHIBITS/THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES	7%
SPECIAL EVENTS	24%
ATLANTIC CITY	14%
ATHLETIC EVENT: RUN OR RACE	0%
MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT/THEATER	13%
AGRI-FARM MARKET - FARM TO TABLE	7%
WINERIES, BREWERIES, DISTILLERIES	28%
Other	8%

12. MANDATORY QUESTION: How many attractions did you participate in while visiting Cape May County in 2025? Check all that apply.	
BEACH	81%
SHOPPING	75%
RESTAURANT/DINING	81%
CULTURAL/HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS	34%
BOARDWALK	62%
ECO/NATURE-BASED (eg. Whale Watching Excursion)	18%
BIRDING	5%
FISHING/BOATING	16%
GOLFING	4%
WATERSPORTS	10%
CAMPING	4%
ZOO	31%
ART EXHIBITS/THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES	8%
SPECIAL EVENTS	21%
ATLANTIC CITY	15%
ATHLETIC EVENT: RUN OR RACE	0%
MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT/THEATER	10%
AGRI-FARM MARKET- FARM TO TABLE	8%
WINERIES, BREWERIES, DISTILLERIES	31%
Other	10%

13. What style of dining was the most popular choice during your visit in 2025? Check all that apply.	
FINE DINING	31%
CASUAL DINING	86%
TAKE OUT & GRAB AND GO	25%
PREPARED/ATE IN-HOUSE	16%

14. Did you visit one of our agri tourism attractions? Check all that apply.	
WINERY	47%
BREWERY	29%
DISTILLERY	14%
FARM/FARM MARKET	44%
RESTAURANT THAT OFFERS LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE/PRODUCTS	46%
Other	11%

15. Where else did you travel in 2025? Check all that apply.	
PENNSYLVANIA	59%
NEW YORK	27%
DELAWARE	21%
MARYLAND	26%
NEW ENGLAND	13%
VIRGINIA	10%
NORTH CAROLINA	15%
SOUTH CAROLINA	11%
FLORIDA	29%
THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS	10%
EUROPE	10%
Other	16%

16. MANDATORY QUESTION: What type of accommodations will you most often choose while on vacation in Cape May County?	
MOTEL	21%
HOTEL	30%
BED & BREAKFAST	5%
CONDO RENTAL	16%
APARTMENT/HOUSE RENTAL	10%
CAMPGROUND	2%
OWN HOUSE	2%
RELATIVE/FRIEND	1%
AIRBNB, VRBO, HOMEAWAY.COM	2%
DAY TRIP	5%
Other	1%

OPEN QUESTION
What influenced your choice of accommodations in 2025? Please explain in the box provided.
It works for us better than a motel or hotel.
We travel with our children and grandchildren.
A B&B is the only way to go in Cape May.
Price and time of year
We like an apartment with a kitchen

17. MANDATORY QUESTION: How did you hear about Cape May County? Check all that apply.	
FAMILY/FRIEND	39%
RETURN VISITOR	61%
PRINT AD	9%
TELEVISION	5%
INTERNET/WEBSITE	21%
TRAVEL GUIDE	25%
TRAVEL/TRADE SHOW	4%
TOUR OPERATOR/BUS TRIP	0%
SOCIAL MEDIA	9%
Other	6%

18. MANDATORY QUESTION: Where did you get the information that helped you choose Cape May County as your vacation destination? Check all that apply.	
PRINT AD	10%
RADIO/TV	2%
INTERNET	41%
SOCIAL MEDIA AD	12%
BROCHURE/TRAVEL GUIDE	39%
FRIEND/FAMILY	28%
RETURN VISIT	56%
Other	2%

19. MANDATORY QUESTION: How do you prefer to get your vacation information? Check all that apply.	
INTERNET/WEBSITE	70%
DIRECT MAIL	59%
EMAIL	50%
PRINT AD	19%
TELEVISION	4%
FAMILY/FRIEND REFERRAL	20%
SOCIAL MEDIA	17%
Other	1%

20. Approximately how much do you spend while on vacation?	
\$100 - \$300	4%
\$300 - \$500	4%
\$500 - \$700	11%
\$700 - \$1,000	11%
\$1,000 - \$1,500	17%
\$1,500 - \$2,000	17%
\$2,500 - \$3,000	14%
MORE THAN \$3,000	18%

21. What do you spend on average per day, per person while on vacation?	
\$100 - \$150	37%
\$150 - \$200	21%
\$200 - \$250	10%
\$250 - \$300	10%
\$300 - \$350	5%
\$350 - \$400	5%
\$400 - \$450	2%
\$450 - \$500	1%
\$500 - \$550	0%
\$550 - \$600	2%
OVER \$600	1%

22. MANDATORY QUESTION: Factors that are important when choosing your vacation destination in 2026? Check all that apply.	
SAFETY & SECURITY	77%
VALUE	75%
QUIET	46%
ROMANTIC	16%
FAMILY ORIENTED	44%
RELAXATION	72%
CLOSE TO HOME	28%
NUMBER OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES	23%
CHARMING SURROUNDINGS	59%
Other	5%

23. How many vacations do you plan to take to Cape May County in 2026?	
1	45%
2	31%
3	8%
4 or MORE	6%
Other	7%

24. Will you plan your vacation to Cape May County around a special event in 2026?	
YES	23%
NO	76%

25. Did your vacation in Cape May County meet your expectations in 2025?	
YES	89%
NO	10%

26. If you answered No, please explain in the box provided.	
Prices	
Have not traveled to Cape May yet	
Health	
Can't afford to go	
We love the beach	
Didn't visit in 2024.	

27. How can we make your stay in Cape May County more enjoyable? Please explain in the box provided.

Don't change a thing!!

Nothing, Cape May is perfect.

Nothing, we love Cape May

The prices of accommodations are much too high.

Free vacation n all expenses paid

Send information about condo rentals

28. MANDATORY QUESTION: Did the economy impact your vacation plans in 2025? If no, skip to question #33.	
YES	39%
NO	60%

29. Did you reduce your vacation spending?	
YES	57%
NO	42%

30. Did you change your vacation plans due to the economy? Check all that apply.	
CANCEL YOUR VACATION	14%
TAKE FEWER VACATIONS	40%
TAKE A STAYCATION	11%
TAKE A WEEKEND OR SHORT GETAWAY	25%
TAKE DAY TRIPS	29%
REDUCE THE LENGTH OF YOUR STAY	46%

31. If yes, how did you reduce spending on your vacation to the Jersey Cape? Check all that apply.	
CUT SPENDING FOR MEALS	51%
CUT SPENDING FOR ATTRACTIONS	32%
CUT SPENDING FOR SHOPPING	56%
CUT SPENDING FOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES	21%
CHANGE LODGING OPTIONS TO FIT YOUR BUDGET	38%
OTHER	10%

OPEN QUESTION
32. Will the economy impact your vacation plans in 2026? If yes, please explain.
Not sure with the cost of gas.
NO
We are making plans but not sure if we are coming
Can't afford to go
No