

2012 Annual Cape May County Tourism Conference



Mentoring the Marketers

Information, research and concepts compiled to help the countywide tourism industry grow as a regional destination.

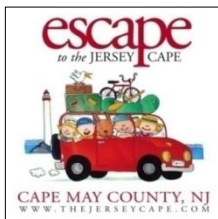
Prepared by
Cape May County Department of Tourism
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Gerald M. Thornton, Freeholder Director
M. Susan Sheppard, Vice Director
Leonard Desiderio
Will Morey
Kristine Gabor

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Welcome to the 15th Annual Cape May County Tourism Conference. This year's conference theme "mentoring the marketers" basically captures the work of the Tourism Department over the past year. Under the direction of Freeholder M. Susan Sheppard, the tourism department has reevaluated its core operating mission and moved to become a stronger countywide umbrella agency. Starting in March 2011, with a Tourism Round Table discussion which included members of countywide tax based tourism organizations; the tourism department was able to access many of the needs of the marketing groups and determine ways to assist them in growing tourism to the individual resorts.

The plan is to build a partnership among the county tourism-related organizations and share marketing advice, research, training and education, in an effort to reduce duplication of efforts, increase overnight stays to the county and build the tourism industry to meet the challenges of a changing economy. The goal was to provide each tourism agency with the tools to develop a thorough, concise and targeted marketing campaign. The assumption was that with changing travel trends and emerging technology, it was difficult for many individual organizations to keep up with the latest research needed to make informed marketing decisions. The Department of Tourism would provide updated information and visitor demographics, which could assist marketers develop campaigns that better targeted Cape May County's visitors, open new potential markets and regain lost market share.

Overwhelmingly, the partners agreed that while they are charged with marketing their own destination and use tourism tax dollars that have specific caveats attached, it was the research that they didn't have time or resources to compile. The tourism department immediately put into action a plan to provide research, conduct surveys in each town and offer educational seminars to 'mentor the marketers' to give them the tools needed to meet their goals and objectives.

During the past summer, and utilizing Department of Tourism staff, travel specialists at the Ocean View NJ Information Center, Cape May County Chamber of Commerce and Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, along with an Intern, intercept surveys were conducted to gather visitor data such as needs, expectations and demographics. This data is available for most of the resort towns. Each summer the Department will dispatch staff to gather data to ensure the county is keeping up with emerging trends that will impact tourism.

Effective September 2011, and in lock-step with the latest vacation trends, Freeholder Sheppard moved the Cape May County Division of Culture and Heritage under the operation of the Tourism Department. While beaches remain the main attraction for visitors to the County, visiting cultural and historic attractions rank second with vacation planners. The marketing power of the Department of Tourism, working with the more than 40 culture and historic organizations throughout the county will serve to promote the attractions beyond the beach.

Additionally, in January 2012, the Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders reorganized the various county departments to allow those with similar objectives to operate under the direction of one Freeholder. Realizing the synergy between Tourism, Park and Zoo, Culture and Heritage, the Museum, Library and Rutgers's Extension Center, Freeholder Sheppard has been holding monthly meetings to cultivate ways to better identify the role of each of those county departments and strategize ways to work together to improve services to the residents and visitors as well share ideas and resources.

Developing a public/private partnership within Cape May County can be compared to being part of a sports team or a marriage. Every partner has its strengths and weaknesses and we may not get along...all the time, but the end result is leveraging resources and building a destination with a diverse list of attractions that can attract more

visitors and keep them longer. Bringing the county operated services together with the marketers and business community will have a long-term affect. As the trends change, Cape May County will have many partners that can be the eyes and ears and report shifts in visitors' needs and wants.

In October, in an effort to bring educational opportunities to the regional marketing partners, the Department of Tourism hosted world-renowned speaker and destination marketing expert, Roger Brooks, CEO of Destination Marketing International, for a two-day seminar. Since that seminar, we have heard the buzz he created in rallying the tourism champions in the county. His five seminars included; The New Age of Tourism; the 20Ingredients of an Outstanding Destination; the 7 Immutable Rules of Marketing; Getting the Team in Place and Playing to Your Team's Strengths: Utilizing the Color Code to learn about the folks on your team. Each of the more than 250 attendees took something away from the seminars that inspired them and gave them ideas to improve their marketing plan. One of the concepts that he stressed was the importance of the public/private partnership in tourism. He outlined how they can accomplish a number of goals: "they can create continuity in the marketing effort, build a stronger brand, reduce duplication in efforts, and make selling the community easier". This reinforced our plan and gave us ideas to strengthen the partnership.

Destination Marketing

Destination Marketing is "a proactive, strategic, visitor-centered approach to the economic and cultural development of a location, which balances and integrates the interests of visitors, service providers, and the community." Cape May County is part of a Destination Marketing Organization and partners with Cumberland County as the Southern Shore Region Destination Marketing Organization (SSRDMO) to receive grant funding from the New Jersey Department of State, Division of Travel and Tourism. Since 2005, the Southern Shore Region DMO has been awarded \$1.89 million to market the region as a destination.

A destination marketing organization, or "DMO," is a stand-alone business entity - governmental, corporate, or nonprofit - that is responsible for leading and coordinating all of the marketing efforts on behalf of a particular destination. If your business is not a member of the Southern Shore Region DMO, and you are interesting in

joining, please call the Cape May County Department of Tourism (609 463-6415). Membership is \$50 annually, benefits are priceless.

Following the trends and best practices of the national and international tourism industry, it became obvious the destination marketing concept is the answer to the growing demands of the vacation planner. The New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism has encouraged destination marketing by offering state wide DMO an opportunity to apply for DMO funding. The Southern Shore Region DMO successfully applied and was awarded \$141,000 and matched \$35,250 to bring an additional \$176,250 in marketing money to promote the region. DMO funding works with the Department of Tourism budget to expand the marketing message and advertising reach.

Cape May and Cumberland Counties partner to promote the region under the Southern Shore Region DMO. Since 2005, the SSRDMO had been awarded \$1.89 million in grant funding from the Department of State, Division of Travel and Tourism. In 2005 and in 2012, the Southern Shore DMO has been awarded the coveted New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism Excellence in Tourism Award.

Destination managers worldwide are continually working to reinvent themselves by offering new lures and repackaging core attractions in an attempt to stay ahead of the newest travel trends. According to a 2012 TripAdvisor survey, culture vacations are on the rise. Second to beaches, cultural attractions are up 4% over last year with visitors seeking a better understanding of a region by experiencing the culture and history of the destination. Historic tours, museums and galleries are high on the traveler 'to do' list and those cultural entities should work with accommodations and restaurants to become part of a cultural package.

Some good news for the travel industry in 2012

Overall growth is projected to be slow as consumers continue to be thrifty and cost conscious with precious disposable income. However, in spite of the uncertain economic outlook, leisure travel is expected to increase by five percent, according to a survey by *Travel-Ticker*. In 2011, domestic travel increased by 2.6 percent. Factors contributing to this moderate growth include rising income, stable unemployment and travel spending by baby

boomers. More good news is a recent TripAdvisor survey found travel spending in 2012 will increase for nearly one-third of U.S. travelers. The 2012 Cape May County visitor survey found that 25% of respondents said they will spend more on their upcoming vacation, and 60% said they will spend the same.

TripAdvisor®, the world's largest travel site*, today announced the results of its annual travel trends survey of more than 2,700 U.S. travelers. Despite the current economic climate, 31 percent anticipate they will spend more on leisure travel next year, while 49 percent expect to spend the same amount as they did in 2011.

Seventy-nine percent of respondents plan to spend a minimum of \$3,000 on vacations in the coming year, 57 percent will pay out at least \$5,000 and 21 percent will invest \$10,000 or more on 2012 leisure travel.

Ninety percent of respondents are planning to take two or more leisure trips next year, and 24 percent are planning five or more getaways.

Beach Bums and Culture Vultures: Top Trip Picks Travelers are planning for 2012

1. Beach trip – 44%
2. Cultural trip (e.g., visiting museums or historic sites) – 42%
3. Road trip – 40%
4. City trip – 36%
5. Guys or girlfriends getaway – 24%

Trip-o-Meter: Culture, Cruising and Castaway Experiences on the Rise in 2012

	<i>Took in 2011</i>	<i>Planning to take in 2012</i>
<i>Going Up:</i>		
Cultural trips	38%	42%

Cruises	19%	23%
Island escapes	22%	24%

Going Down:

Amusement/theme park trips	14%	12%
Lake trips	14%	12%
Hiking trips	11%	10%

While one resort can't be all things to all people, Cape May County's combined tourism entities marketing as one destination can offer the visitor an enhanced vacation experience with many diverse options. Some beach resorts with larger marketing budgets tended to exclude attractions and events that had the potential to move the visitor over the bridges and throughout the County. Research indicated that visitors were spending 4-6 hours on the beach and 8 hours in pursuit of activities such as nature, historic and outdoor activities, often found on the mainland. Today many of the resorts are looking to package cultural and historic attractions with lodging and restaurants to offer the visitor an enhanced package and grow overnight stays.

The response at the travel and trade shows the Cape May County Travel Show Cooperative have attended has been very encouraging. Using distribution and interest at the travel shows as a barometer of the upcoming season, shows in the 'tank of gas away' area have shown an increased literature distribution which gives us hope that tourism will be better in 2012. Target markets in Pennsylvania such as Harrisburg and the greater Philadelphia region. Questions regarding special packages and discounts continue to be the norm with potential visitors looking for bargains that will allow them to take extended vacations. Rentals are also high on the list of inquiries at the shows. Families are looking to vacation with extended families to save on lodging costs and stretch the vacation time line. Respondents to the recent Cape May County visitor survey indicated that 28% traveled with extended families in 2011, with 25% traveling with 5 or more in the group.

Summer 2012

Travel tends to be a leading economic indicator, when budgets are tight; travel is usually the first thing to be decreased. As we prepare for the 2012 summer season, we find most industry experts are cautiously optimistic about growth as economy improves. Travel seems to be the last to recover and today's vacation planners are more concerned with paying down debt than planning exotic trips. However, with that in mind, tourism in Cape May County grew by 5% in 2011 and indicators are showing the potential for growth in 2012. The 'tank of gas' marketing theory that has been the mainstay of the County can account for much of the growth.

In Cape May County we're witnessing many changes in the tourism landscape throughout the region. With beaches still the top draw for vacation planners we're also finding new trends emerging that require us to look beyond the primary attraction of the beach to offer the visitor an enhanced vacation experience that will serve to attract new visitors and promote return visits.

As Atlantic City begins its renaissance with new casino options, extended entertainment venues and expanded marketing efforts, the eyes of the nation will be on the region. The NFL Super Bowl being held in New Jersey in 2014 will also serve to bring attention to the State. Cape May County is perfectly situated to benefit from the media attention. With more than 30 million people within a 300-mile radius, the potential for increased business is likely.

The recession has greatly impacted the traditional and secure visitor base we came to expect year after year and has forced the Cape May County Department of Tourism to rethink their marketing efforts. While we continue to enjoy a high visitor return rate, we are finding the need to work harder to attract and keep the overnight vacationer to the county. With limited marketing dollars, the department is matching advertising dollars with a stronger emphasis on public relations efforts. Familiarization trips (FAMs) to the county have resulted in dozens of articles in national and international magazines, newspapers and Blogs. In the past the value of a story about the destination was measured against the purchase of an ad similar in size of the article. Today, the real value is

in the ability to have the article printed with an Internet component. More and more people are reading blogs and gathering vacation information from the Internet. The daily newspaper or monthly periodical is recycled after a short time; articles on the Internet can be googled for years. Today's travel journalists almost all have a personal blog or a part of a larger media site. The Internet reach is impossible to determine and leaves the value on a printed piece in the dust.

One recent example of the power of the Internet is a FAM with Ann Marie Parent, a travel journalist from Montreal. She arrived in Cape May County last spring, wrote her story on birding and outdoor activities. Her article was sold to Canoe (Canada West) the largest multi-media conglomerate in Canada. Her story was published in 5 newspapers and magazines, including Canada's version of TV Guide. Circulation was over 2 million. The story was then posted on the Canoe website. The hits were in the ten thousands. Canoe offered Cape May County an opportunity to run a contest on their website at no cost. We had to offer a prize that included a 5 night getaway. Since the article was about birding, the Cape May Bird Observatory offered the package to include the activities surrounding Autumn Weekend in October. The Grand Hotel in Cape May offered lodging and breakfast for the winning couple. The contest ran for 4 weeks in August. More than 45,000 people logged onto the site to read the article and more than 29,000 entered the contest.

Again we are watching the prices at the pumps and anticipating how those costs are impacting the discretionary income of potential visitors. The discretionary dollars available for vacation spending begin and end with the ability to save money over the year. Fuel and energy costs impact the family budget from every angle. Value is key to attracting customers. We know the charge customer is gone forever, replaced with a more frugal cost conscious debit spender.

The national economy is still struggling with high unemployment and low growth. The marketplace continues to evolve as consumers have sharpened their focus on wanting real value for their dollar. This continued focus is forcing smart destination players to continually rethink what they offer in terms of what consumers needs and want.

Family dynamics have changed over the years, with children having more influence on vacation plans and activities. In today's high stress, two-income, over scheduled families, vacations are still looked upon as a right rather than a luxury. This is especially true with Baby Boomers. At the top of the vacation "deal maker" list, and in line with cost and value, is the vacation "experience." Visitors want activities that they can't get at home.

The economy, Internet, weather, gas prices, air fares and political unrest are all changing the face of tourism. Both the return visitor and the new comer are looking for an enhanced vacation experience that is exciting and diverse for each travel member. Bargain shopping for vacations remains a key element in the hunt for a great family vacation. The value conscience traveler to Cape May County can find a myriad of arts, cultural and historic attractions that will keep them entertained and on budget. Lodging, restaurants, retail and attractions should maintain a brochure rack to pique the interest of the visitors. The more they have to do while on vacation the longer they will stay and the greater chance they will return.

It's all about the experience

The "been there – done that" attitude is deeply rooted in the minds of the traveler who is looking for the next new vacation experience. Economic factors have contributed to the rise and fall of the high adventure vacation seeker. At the top of the vacation "deal maker" list, and in line with cost and value, is the vacation "experience." Businesses need to understand they are not only selling their product but also how it fits into the full experience. Consumers are behaving differently with respect to their attitudes toward value and loyalty. What was considered a great deal pre-recession could be totally off the table today. In the age of DIY, planners want the 'do it yourself' vacation itinerary that fits their lifestyle and they want it within a few clicks on your website. "It is not necessarily so much about the location as it is about the experience offered. Expect that your customer is working with a smaller budget and looking for larger than life vacation experiences." *Roger A. Brooks, Destination Development International (DDI)*

Soft adventure such as birding, kayaking and cultural and historic tours seems to fit better within today's vacation budget. Cultural tourism is quickly becoming one of the top vacations options next to beaches. This has forced

marketers to expand the vacation package to include a diverse offering of attractions that add value to the vacation. In addition to cultural tourism there is a rise in culinary and garden tourism. Families remain the key to visitor growth and in turn will generate increased spending in Cape May County. More than 50% of Cape May County's visitors travel with children. Today's parents are focusing vacation activities around children and are looking for options that include educational and cultural attractions. Museums are the mainstay of cultural tourism and are successful when they tell the story of a town or county. Museums and historic attractions that can tell an exciting and compelling story can keep visitors for many hours.

Eco-vacations remain one of the hottest trends in vacation options.

For more than 20 years the eco movement has been part of tourism and one of the fastest growing factions within the industry, mostly accelerated by globalization. In the past, comfort and luxury played a major role in a traveler's decision-making process; things have very much evolved since then. Today's tourists are willing to pay for the preservation of the natural and social environments they seek to explore.

Nature based travel has grown substantially in the past decade and has become extremely popular with visitors of all ages and gender. We can't stress enough how important the "green" movement has become in the travel industry. Visitors to the region want to feel good about the environment and will patronize those businesses that are incorporating green practices and being more socially responsible when it comes to saving the planet.

In the new economy, the consumer is looking at a simpler lifestyle and has made a serious shift in not only spending habits but also looking for ways to escape everyday stress and spend quality time with family and friends. Reducing their carbon footprint is a way to make travelers feel they are making a difference. People want to connect with the outdoors; they are using trails, lakes and parks, and attending outdoor events and festivals in record numbers. Being green makes sense and eco-travel continues to score high with vacation planners according to TripAdvisor.

- 47 % percent will take eco-friendly factors in to consideration, such as their carbon footprint or “green” hotel policies, when making travel plans in 2011.
- 20% expect to be more environmentally conscious in their travel decision and choices next year.
- Environmentally conscious travelers want a great vacation experience but do not want to destroy the planet in the process.

Nature based tourism is a \$522 million industry in Cape May County. Nature-based tourism in Cape May County generated \$2.3 million in sales taxes and nearly \$1 million in Occupancy taxes.

- 29.9% of the total land in Cape May County is used for nature base activities.
- Countywide, 54,511 acres of land is currently allocated for eco-tourism.
- Cape May Point has over half of its land in ecotourism resources.
- Nearly 35% of Stone Harbor’s land is devoted to these uses.

2006 Center

for Regional Business Development/ACCC

"Eco" is a fashionable label used widely in the tourism industry. It sounds appealing, but much of what is marketed as "eco" is simply conventional tourism with superficial changes. Many resorts and businesses claim to be “green friendly,” it’s important to understand that today’s traveler knows the difference between “green” and “greenwashed.” If you want to appeal to the “green” traveler and increase business your efforts must be sincere and tangible.

It is important to understand there are levels of being “green.” Determine the level you can provide in your business and ask the professionals in your area for guidance. If your customer is looking for “green travel” it is a good idea to partner with other local “green” or nature-based businesses/organizations to enhance the vacation experience. Be sure to make that information accessible on your website or brochure. You have to work at it,

start by identifying travel trends of “green” travelers and find like activities in your region that might be of interest. Often those interested in nature are also interested in history and the arts.

Also, it is up to you to make sure your partners are practicing what they’re advertising. Work with regional nature-based attractions, and share ideas and information about how your business partners/organizations can profit from being “green.” Make available to your partners and their staff “eco” training and/or check lists. If you are not aware of the birding and nature-based activities in this region, there are many organizations that can help.

“Keep in mind, today’s visitor is looking for enhanced experiences that allow them to participate in a range of activities they would not find at home or in other vacation destinations.” Roger A. Brooks, DDI

- Local nature groups provide programs and events that can be packaged into a weekend or longer. Look for eco-friendly partners who can provide lodging and meals.
- As a hotelier, restaurateur or retail outlet, work with the experts who are providing nature based programming and offer your services.
- Understand the eco opportunities and timing of the events that are available in your area. (Spring/fall migration, fall foliage, growing seasons, scheduled workshops, etc.)
- Visitors are not always looking for discounts, but more often looking for value.
- See if pertinent information can be supplied in other languages.

Green travelers are looking for:

- Waste reduction
- Recycling

- Energy efficiency
- Water conservation
- Wastewater management
- Air quality
- Wildlife and landscape management

And can also include:

- Employing local people
- Buying locally grown and/or produced food & services

The Great Outdoors

Glamping is the new trend in camping and it is not your parents' idea of camping! Glamorous camping offers you the opportunity to expose yourself to the great outdoors while staying in the lap of luxury. Cape May County has one of the largest campground industries in the State with 47 campgrounds and 14,724 campsites.

- Camping is the number one outdoor vacation activity in America. One third of U.S. adults say they have gone on a camping vacation in the past five years and only 6% of people who have gone camping said it was not for them. Camping vacationers tend to be married with children at home. The average age of travelers who go camping is 37 and their median household income is \$43,000. (Adventure Travel Report 2009)
- Over 49 percent of U.S. adult leisure travelers consider their pet to be part of the family and 18 percent of U.S. adult leisure travelers usually take their pets with them when they travel. (travelhorizonsTM,)
- An American Express spending and saving tracker series found that this year consumers are most focused on their financial well being, and are approaching the year with an optimistic but prudent financial outlook. Travel tops the list of pursuits consumers rank most valuable to their livelihood and well being with 72

percent, ahead of home entertaining with friends or family (66 percent) and dining out (60 percent). The survey found that 31 percent of the general population plans to take a vacation between now and the end of March and more so among the affluent (51 percent) and young professionals (54 percent). Among all scheduling a winter vacation, an average of two trips is planned. www.TravelPulse.com

Traveling with pets: Our pets are like our children, and most do not want to go on vacation and leave them behind. It used to be that you had to hunt to find a pet-friendly hotel and, when you found one, it was typically a motor lodge by the side of the highway. This is no longer the case, as pets are becoming more and more welcome in the top hotels of the world. The pet traveling trend increases during the summer when more families travel on vacation. Vehicular travel is the primary mode of transportation topping the list at 76%. Other popular modes of transport include expeditions via recreational vehicles (10%) and airline travel (6%).

Pet travelers stay most frequently with friends/relatives (32%) but the services of pet friendly hotels or motels is not too far behind (29%). The Automobile Association of America (AAA) even provides a guide for pet friendly places to stay.

For women only: Girl Getaways are booming and are another fast growing trend in travel. The phenomenon is not just about bachelorette parties or 20-somethings on spring break. The phenomenon of girlfriends' getaways and women traveling alone represents a cultural shift that has grown since the 1990s. Thirty years ago, women didn't vacation without their families, said Susan Eckert, founder and president of AdventureWomen, a travel company for women ages 30 and over. A woman who did travel without her husband was asked whether there was something wrong in the marriage. With more women traveling alone, more hotels will be adding floors for women only. The rooms are popular with women business travelers as well. They appreciate the security and the extras such as curling irons, high-power blow dryers, nail polish and yoga mats.

It's all about the amenities

[TripAdvisor](#) has released the results of its first-ever 360 degree survey, and the results are in – amenities are king, particularly when those amenities include WiFi and breakfast included with the room rate.

Of the travelers surveyed, 54% said they have canceled a lodging reservation because they found better amenities at a different property.

According to travelers, the five most important amenities are:

1. WiFi
2. Breakfast Included
3. Loyalty Points
4. Restaurant
5. Shuttle Service to Local Attractions/ Airport

Internet is king

Some fun stats:

- 88% of travelers expect Wi-Fi Internet access to be free of charge in all lodging types
- 41% of travelers have never paid for Wi-Fi Internet access.
- 65% said they have used free Wi-Fi Internet in an accommodation's lobby or common areas to avoid paying for in-room access.
- 93% of accommodations report offering some form of free Wi-Fi Internet access to their guests.

More than 1,000 U.S. travelers and more than 600 U.S. hotel representatives were polled

The competition is Growing

According to Roger A. Brooks, CEO of Destination Development International, there are 45,000 cities, towns, townships and counties in the U.S., fifteen hundred cities across the country turned to tourism to supplement their core industry in the past year.

Spending on travel and tourism increased at an annual rate of 2.6% in the second quarter of 2011 with an anticipated growth of 5% in 2012. Tourism outpaced growth in real gross domestic product (GDP), which increased 1% in the second quarter of 2011. As travel trends emerge, tourism opportunities expand in locations that never considered it as an economic engine. Cultural and ethnic festivals as well as historic tours and museums attract visitors and impacts lodging, restaurants and retail.

- The growth in real spending on tourism primarily reflected increases in total transportation, recreation & entertainment.
- Travelers think less of the airline industry than they do of driving their vehicle or riding a bus.
- Baby Boomers make up 80% of travel spending in the U.S.
- Tourism destinations are all looking for a 'second act'
- Second homeowners are key to growing tourism beyond the summer season.

Tourism destinations can no longer survive on seasonal business and are expanding and/or developing secondary lures to bring customers back. To grow tourism and expand the season communities and businesses must focus on *whatever* it takes to make them different or better – specialize! You can't be all things to all people; find your niche and promote it.

Been there, did that and got the tee shirt

Bragging is always better when someone else is doing it for you. Saying you're the best is one thing, being awarded that designation through a 'people's choice' or similar contest is the game changer when it comes to bragging rights.

Public relations is a way to complement advertising and in some cases is better than advertising. Studies show that 10% of vacationers choose a trip as a result of an ad they saw, 40% as a result of an article they have read and 50% because of word or mouth or recommendations made by friends or family. (Roger Brooks, Your Town: A Destination) The 2012 Cape May County visitor survey shows 23% heard about the region in a magazine or newspaper and 43% from recommendations of a friend or family member.

Over the years, the resorts and attractions in Cape May County have been among many 'top ten bests' in contests that run from 'coolest beach town' to world's best beach and boardwalk. While these designations are a great source of pride, they also bring attention to the area beyond the traditional marketing efforts of the resort, county or state. To be listed in National Geographic Traveler or TripAdvisor as a top destination gives a sense of status and is better and more effective than any amount of advertising. Today, with most marketers experiencing reduced and limited advertising budgets it is more important than ever to use that designation as a marketing tool.

Consumers tend to want the hottest trends in fashion, automobiles and electronics, vacation planners are not different. Being part of the 'best of' list will bring attention and tip decision makers to look your way.

TripAdvisor's Top Vacation Hotspots on the Rise for 2012:

1. Nashville, Tennessee
2. Austin, Texas
3. Fort Myers, Florida
4. Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

5. Pensacola, Florida
6. Louisville, Kentucky
7. Branson, Missouri
8. Scottsdale, Arizona
9. Saint Augustine, Florida
10. Charleston, South Carolina
11. Albuquerque, New Mexico
12. Wildwood, New Jersey
13. Asheville, North Carolina
14. Park City, Utah
15. Santa Cruz, California

TripAdvisor Dives into America's Top 10 Water Parks

1. Sensational Soaking: Holiday World & Splashin' Safari, Santa Claus, Indiana
2. Wondrous Waves: Typhoon Lagoon, Orlando, Florida
3. Splashy Scene: Noah's Ark Water Park, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin
4. Beachfront Bonanza: Morey's Piers, Wildwood, New Jersey
5. Dunking Delight: Kahuna Laguna, North Conway, New Hampshire
6. Thrills and Spills: Water Country USA, Williamsburg, Virginia
7. Spectacular Slides: NRH20 Waterpark, North Richland Hills, Texas
8. Divine Dip: Adventureland, Des Moines, Iowa
9. Watery Wonderland: Aquatica (SeaWorld's Waterpark), Orlando, Florida
10. Poolside Pleasures: Wild Water & Wheels, Surfside Beach, South Carolina

The best 10 beaches for 2012 in the world as ranked by Travel Channel are:

#1 Beach: Lahaina Beach, Maui

Best Party Beach: Paradise Island, Bahamas

Best Family Beach: Cape May, New Jersey

Best Romantic Beach: Matira Beach, Bora Bora, Tahiti

Sexiest Beach: Copacabana Beach, Rio, Brazil

Best Beach Bars: Tropicana Beach Bar, Mykonos, Greece

Best Beach You Haven't Heard of Yet: Llandudno Beach, South Africa

Best Beach for Adventure: Cave Diving in Whangarei, New Zealand

Best Exotic Beach: Anse Source d'Argent, Seychelles

Best Scenic Beach: Zlatni Rat, Bol, Brac Island, Croatia

Best Beach Boardwalk: Ocean City, MD

Top 5 Trends in Vacation Types

1. **Experiences:** Consumers in pursuit of the “E Factor” remains a primary driving force in travel, particularly among Baby Boomers. Experiences topping the list include culinary and culture, with interest noted in nature, adventure, photography and golf.
2. **Mystery Trips:** Within the budget travel category, “Mystery Trips” are projected to be one of the fastest growing trends for 2012. There are so few surprises left in life that travel suppliers are finding that consumers are increasingly interested in booking a trip to an “unknown destination” – provided that the destination is guaranteed to offer experiences that match their personal interests and travel budget. That’s great news for suppliers who are now better able to move excess inventory without having to heavily discount rates.

3. **Ancestry/Heritage Travel:** Top luxury suppliers cite “tracing your roots” trips as popular in the luxury segment.
4. **Tourism Dollars Matter:** Across market segments, travel to destinations impacted by natural and political disasters, as well as destinations where cultural sites depend on tourism dollars for preservation, is on the rise. Travelers are becoming more educated about where their visitor dollars have the greatest impact.
5. **Cruising and Island Getaways On The Rise:** Cruising and island escapes can expect a resurgence in popularity while amusement/theme park trips, lake trips and hiking trips are expected to decline in 2012.

Additional Factors Impacting Travel

Lodging: An increase in vacation rentals, B&B's, inns and all-inclusive resorts is predicted, while hotel stays and staying with family/friends is anticipated to decline slightly. In 2012, 12% of travelers will select their lodging based on “green” or environmentally conscious credentials.

The internet remains the leading source for travel planning information in the US

According to the Traveler's Road to Decision 2011 by thinktravel with Google. The report found that 85% US personal travellers (up from 79% in 2009) used the internet as travel planning sources, against 78% among business travellers.

Travel planning sources:

- Internet: 85% among personal travellers / 78% among business travellers
- Family, friends, or colleagues: 60% / 38%
- Information brochures: 32% / 28%
- Magazines: 24% / 25%

1. Online Content Marketing

In the Information Age, the more information you can provide to potential customers, the more likely they are to learn from you, and find you to be a credible, reliable source. Credibility is the first step to earning confidence. Customer confidence leads to increased sales. Focus on delivering QUALITY content about your business and your services, and your public perception will increase...as will your sales.

2. Video Marketing

Cisco predicts that 80% of all internet traffic will be video by 2015. If you're not learning about how to use video to grow your business online, it's time to get started. Consider video presentations about your business and services. Go for quality and differentiate yourself from your competition early in the game. Video brochures, video newsletters, and regular video communications on your web site will identify your business as progressive and "in touch". Become friends with your local video production company and get a leg up on your competition.

3. Social Media Marketing

Facebook will reach 1 Billion members in late 2011 or early 2012. That's almost one quarter of the world's population as members on one web site. If you don't have a Facebook page, now is the time to get one. Social media isn't just for idle workers. Businesses are using social media to connect to a larger world of customers. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and others are leading the way. But don't just be a follower. Lead the way by using these great business applications that take social media one step further: Chatter by Salesforce.com, Jabber... Show and Share...and Quad...all by Cisco. From webcasting, and video sharing to cutting edge business networking applications, our world is going Social. Don't get left behind. Be an early adapter and get a "leg up" on your competition.

"The Big 5-Oh"

We can't stress enough the power of the Baby Boomer. There were approximately 4,000,000 babies born each year from 1946 to 1964. That translates into 10,958 born per day; 456 per hour; and 7 per minute. Fast forward to today...that means another boomer turns 50 every 7 seconds every day since 1996. Conversely, the first baby boomers turned 65 on January 1, 2011, and 7,000 will reach that golden age everyday for the next 19 years.

A projected 72 million - about one fifth of the U.S. population - will be 65 or older by 2030. By force of numbers alone, they will redefine old age in America, just as they made their mark on teen culture in the 1960's and young adult life and middle age in the 1980 and 90's. Boomers are renowned for their tendency to throw themselves into work, play and travel, and to take on new responsibilities with a sense not just of duty, but of ambition and even joy. Boomers have an estimated annual spending power of more than \$2 trillion. They spend their money on their children and grandchildren, mortgages and travel.

Boomers travel for pleasure, for business needs, and to reconnect with scattered friends and family members, and because they seem to truly love it. It is estimated that of the overall travel habits of Americans, baby boomers account for 80% of leisure travel domestically and to foreign destinations.

More and more seniors have bucket lists, and they are traveling at record rates (over 50 per cent of all travelers!); with limited years, baby boomers are prioritizing the places they want to see and traveling as much as possible.

You are here  Gateways and Wayfinding

Good signage by far is one of the most important assets of any destination. More often than not, that is one of the biggest complaints from visitors when they try to navigate throughout any destination. Gateways are a

welcome to your community, create good first impressions and give residents and visitors a feeling of having 'arrived'. Proper signage can move vehicles away from dangerous or busy intersections and avoid traffic congestion. Signage can be made to assist the driver as well as pedestrians. Maps in town centers can be color coded or zoned to direct people to attractions, parking, restaurants and municipal buildings such as libraries or beach tag offices.

Gateway signs should showcase what you have that is special, but does not have to be at the entrance of the town. The best use of gateway signage is to direct people to your downtown or best attraction. Once the town decides what it wants to showcase, the image and location should be part of the gateway plan. The Wildwoods sign at the beach on Rio Grande Avenue is good example of how their Gateway sign serves as the 'entree' to their best known attractions, the beach and boardwalk. It can be seen as you travel over the bridge and has become an iconic gathering place for residents and visitors.

An estimated 19 million visitors come to Cape May County annually. Of those visitors, one in four is in the County for the first time. Improper, poor or cluttered signage can confuse residents and new visitors as well as those who come on a regular basis. Signage should be easily identified by color or shape and clear enough for those who don't speak the language to understand.

Wayfinding systems go hand in hand with gateway signage. Signage style should be uniform and complementary throughout a town or city and create a positive feeling for tourists and residents. Signage should include government and public entities as well as social organizations and amenities. The gateway signage on Avalon Boulevard into Avalon is an example of keeping the information concise and recognizable. Wayfinding plays an important role in branding a community and they often fulfill the needs of special uses groups.

They should show community pride in addition to providing directions and educate locals and visitors about what you have and where it is located. An effective signage and wayfinding system is an investment and not an expense. It can reinforce a positive visitor experience, build community pride. They should be directional and

help people navigate public spaces and serve to educate locals and visitors about what you have and where it is located.

Proper Wayfinding :

- Identifies a destination
- Links a community/county as one
- Reduces traffic congestion
- Increases local spending
- Is as much a science as it is an art
- Becomes an icon and ties in with your marketing efforts
- Plays a role in branding efforts

A wayfinding system includes more than signage. It may also include:

- Landscape architecture, foliage, site topography
- Interior & exterior design and lighting, color and textures
- Maps, directional signage for public buildings and amenities as well as attractions.

When properly developed, the core elements of a wayfinding program work to assist users to:

- Know where they are.
- Identify their destination and follow the best route.
- Recognize their destination upon arrival.
- Safe return back to their point of origin.
- Becomes an iconic gathering place and enhances the experience.

The Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders is embarking on a Wayfinding system for county roads throughout Cape May County. With the County Engineer Dale Foster and the Department of Tourism the ground work has begun to institute a wayfinding and signage system that will help residents and visitors navigate the county. Working with each municipality, Freeholder Sheppard is encouraged by the cooperation to integrate compatible signage throughout the County. This initiative will work to incorporate each resort town as well as the mainland communities to not only assist in navigating around the county but will also serve to identify the county as one destination through attractive signage.

2012 Cape May County Visitor Profile

Top 5 Visitor Markets

Pennsylvania	34%
New Jersey	32%
New York	12%
Canada	9%
Maryland	6%

77% are Return Visitors

approximately 1 in 4 are first time visitors

34% stay 7 days -bucking the national trend of 3.5 days

12% stay longer than one week

25% will spend more in 2012

60% will spend the same as in 2011

51% travel with Children

91% went to the beach

84% went to the boardwalk

26% went to a special event

51% visited historic/cultural attractions

43% of vacation planners are women

38% have a combined household income of between \$75K - \$125K

2012 Cape May County Visitor Survey

Did you come to Cape May County in 2011? Yes 74% No 26%

Was this your first visit to Cape May County? Yes 23% No 77%

Where do you reside? New Jersey 32% Maryland 5%

 Pennsylvania 34% Connecticut 2%

 New York 12% Virginia/DC 1%

How many years have you vacationed in Cape May County?

 First time visit 23% 11-15 years 10%

 1-5 years 22% 16-20 4%

 6-10 years 11% More than 20 years 30%

What Cape May County resort did you stay?

Ocean City 26% The Wildwoods 34%

Sea Isle City 4% Cape May(s) 16%

Avalon 5% Other 10%

Stone Harbor 4%

How long was your vacation in Cape May County?

1 week	34%	3 days	11%
6 days	8%	2 days	5%
5 days	14%	Day trip	3%
4 days	13%	More than 1 week	12%

Did you visit other resorts other than where you stayed while on Vacation in Cape May County?

Yes	69%	No	31%
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Accommodations	Hotel/Motel	56%	Campground	13%
	Condo/House Rental	28%	Family/Friends	4%

How did you hear about Cape May County? (Multiple answers allowed)

Television	13%	Internet	29%
Radio	8%	Family/Friend	43%
Newspaper	23%	Return Visit	40%

Compare vacation spending from 2011 to 2012

Will spend more in 2012	25%
Will spend less in 2010	14%
Will spend the same as 2011	60%

Number of people in vacation group in 2011

Two	32%	Five	9%
Three	14%	Six	7%
Four	19%	Over 6	19%

Travel companions (Respondents took more than one trip to Cape May County)

Spouse only	29%
Spouse & children	47%
Children only	4%
Friends	16%
Extended Family	28%

What activities did you participate in while on vacation in Cape May County? (Multiple answers)

Beach	91%	Golf	9%
Boardwalk	84%	Special Events	26%
Shopping	90%	Birding	11%
Dining	93%	Water Sports	34%
Fishing	14%	Historic/Cultural	51%
Boating	12%	Other	14%

What factors help you to decide on a vacation in Cape May County? (Multiple answers allowed)

Quality of Life	40%	Friendly	58%
Family Oriented	57%	Safe	57%
Close to home	41%	Family tradition	42%
Romantic	20%	Special events	10%
Value	31%	Other	7%
Quiet	42%		

What were the most important attraction options in choosing Cape May County as your vacation destination?

Beach	85%	Historic Attractions	34%
Boardwalk	54%	Golfing	4%
Shopping	36%	Fishing	11%
Nature and Outdoors	42%	Other	13%
Dining	46%		

How many vacations do you take on average per year?

One	27%	Four	6%
Two	39%	Five	4%
Three	19%	More than 5	5%

What factors will influence your future vacations to Cape May County?

Travel/Fuel costs	58%	Employment status	14%
Increased Vacation costs	72%	Lack of diversity/appeal	4%
Change of venue	15%	Other	7%

What is the gender of the vacation planner in your home?

Female	43%
Male	18%
Combined Decision	39%

What is your age?

18-24	1%	45-54	45%
25-34	4%	55-64	21%
35-44	16%	over 65	13%

What is your employment status?

Full-time	54%	Retired	22%
Part-time	6%	Homemaker	5%
Self-employed	9%	Military	0%
Unemployed	2%	Other	2%

Annual Household Income?

Under \$45k	13%	\$75k-89k	17%	No response	14%
\$45k-59K	15%	\$90k-\$125k	21%		
\$60K-74K	13%	More than \$125k	7%		

Ocean City – 2011 Visitor Survey

What is your residence?

New Jersey	33%
Pennsylvania	31%
New York	7%
Maryland	6%
Connecticut	6%
Delaware	5%
Canada PQ	2%
Other	10%

Was this your first visit to Ocean City?

No	91%	Yes	9%
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How long have you been coming to Ocean City?

20 year or more	32%
11-19 years	16%
10 years	11%
6-9 years	22%
5 year and under	19%

How long is your visit?

30 days or more	6%
2 weeks	7%
1 week	26%
6 days	19%
5 days	14%
4 days	12%
3 days	6%
2 days	2%
Day trip	8%

What type of Accommodations?

Hotel/Motel	27%
Rental	32%
Condo	7%
Family/Friend	13%
Campground	5%
2 nd Home	14%
Day trip	2%

How did you hear about Ocean City?

Return Visit	44%
Family/friend	31%
Internet	10%
Newspaper	6%
Television	9%

Cape May County 2011 Facts & Figures

Demographics		Population		
256 Square Miles	13,115 Available Land Acres	YEAR	WINTER	SUMMER
210 Miles County Roads	16 Municipalities	2000	102,326	667,400
22 Bridges	16 Local School Districts	2003	104,837	624,397
5 Toll Bridges	1 Regional High School	2005	106,512	634,532
3,869 Businesses	1 Technical School District	2006	99,286	634,532
48,331 Labor Force	1 Special Services District	2007	98,149	624,654
54,511 acres	eco-tourism/open space	2008	95,650	766,228
		2009	96,392	767,708

2010 97,265 763,940

Utilities

2011 N/A 763,112

YEAR	WINTER	SUMMER	YEAR	WINTER	SUMMER
2000	103,250	103,356	2007	100,942	107,620
2003	102,255	103,177	2008	106,558	110,525
2005	100,082	105,726	2009	110,784	112,828
2006	100,948	106,482	2010	109,567	112,383
			2011	108,877	112,067

Accommodations

Campgrounds

YEAR	# OF BLDGS	UNITS & ROOMS	YEAR	#	Sites
1990	2,335	29,820	1990	48	15,014
2000	2,358	23,729	2000	47	15,432
2003	2,374	24,009	2003	47	15,432
2006	2,270	18,877	2006	46	15,394
2007	2,268	18,725	2007	45	15,672
2009	2,269	18,749	2008	47	15,504
2010	2,269	18,749	2009	47	15,238
2011	2,269	18,747	2010	47	15,154

2011 47 14,724

Restaurants

YEAR	YEAR RD.	SEASONAL	YEAR	YEAR RD.	SEASONAL
2000	607	909	2007	634	743
2003	581	935	2009	660	765
2004	620	835	2010	670	773
2005	623	793	2011	522	783
2006	629	762			

Atlantic City International Airport (ACY) is located off of the Atlantic City Expressway (exit 9), just 12 miles from Atlantic City. Owned and operated by the South Jersey Transportation Authority, ACY sits on 5,300 acres of land and serves more than 1.4 million passengers annually.

ACY has consistently been home to the lowest fares in America since October 2009*

The airport serves the residents and businesses of southern New Jersey from Ocean, Monmouth to Cape May counties, and the greater Philadelphia region.

Commercial carriers operate flights to Atlanta (beginning -5/17/12), Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Myrtle Beach and several destinations in Florida with over 40 easy connections to the Caribbean Islands, Latin America and Mexico.

In 2010, ACY held a groundbreaking for the \$25 million Terminal Expansion & Federal Inspection Station. The 75,000 square-foot expansion of the airport will include a Customs and Border Patrol Facility, an expanded baggage claim area for customs to process international passengers, apron reconstruction, new passenger boarding bridges, and relocated aircraft parking. The expansion will allow airport officials to pursue international air carriers and air service routes. Visit us at: www.acairport.com FLY ACY!!!

*as reported by the DOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics