

Cape May County Tourism Report

The Economic Impact of Tourism

2024



Is there a “New Normal”

***What can we expect as we
move forward?***

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IS THERE A NEW NORMAL?



As we head into the 2024 summer season, we are all asking ourselves what can we expect moving forward? While 2021 and 2022 were good years with a faster than predicted pandemic recovery, 2023 was very different. Cape May County saw an increase in overall spending of 4.1%, not as great as the 11.9% increase in 2022, but an increase of \$305.5 million in direct tourism expenditures. This was the first year of recovery for all counties with some showing higher growth.

Reports of reservations behind previous years are concerning. Is this part of the 'new normal'? Based on research, the 'new normal' is part throwback to 2019, with a sprinkling of cautious concern for the environment, adventure, health, and wellbeing. Technology is shortening the lead time for booking a vacation with the average time for reservations is 2-3 weeks out. While baby boomers tend to reserve farther, 2-3 months out and prefer human contact, online bookings continue to grow among younger vacation planners. Apps are the preferred tour guide for those seeking new experiences.

Normal is the watchword for 2024 and unfortunately, will include a continued slowdown like 2023. The 'new normal' will be a mix of recovery, innovation, and adaptation. The same old, same old will not bring visitors back or attract new ones. Tourism has proven to be resilient, and the slowdown is not a sign of a weakened industry but an indicator of its strength as things begin to correct itself. Getting back to 'normal' will end up being something very different from the pre-

pandemic 'normal', and we are not there yet. We offer much of what the visitor is looking for in a vacation, we need to push our assets that fit the trends in with our marketing message. Digital marketing allows us to target audiences and change our content to fit individual wants and needs. How does your customer prefer to get their vacation information? Are you delivering it in the way they want to receive it? Do you think print is dead? Do you believe your customers are only using the internet to get information about your property? Are you focusing on the age demographic that best suits your business? We provide a visitor profile based on those who responded to our annual survey, but you should ask your customers before you decide how you will market to them.

As travel trends emerge, marketers need to be aware of them and include them in their message. The beach may be the reason for the vacation, but planners are expecting experiences that are memorable and add to the adventure they are seeking. The Tourism Department's annual visitor survey shows that 44% of our visitors went to farm markets, farms, and farm-to-table restaurants. Are you mentioning that in your content?

Taking the trends into consideration along with our own research compiled through our annual visitor survey and our recent branding exercise, the Tourism Department, and the Southern Shore Region Destination Marketing Organization (SSRDMO) have developed a marketing campaign that expands our reach and incorporates a multi-level approach to reach a wider audience. The underlying focus of the Tourism Department and SSRDMO's message is to include content what we refer to as the 'souvenirs of the soul'. What are visitors looking for and

what part of their vacation experience are they taking back with them? Is it a feeling, an interaction with a local craftsperson, a meal, or a sunset? What will it take to evoke a special memory, what is that souvenir of the soul that they will carry with them long after they leave? Is it a childhood memory they want to relive and share with others?

Taking into consideration travel trends, our visitors' survey, and the results of our branding exercise, we have included those key components in our marketing message. Our content highlights local cuisine - '*from the soil to the sea*', off-the-beaten-path attractions - '*pursue your passion*', local culture - '*escape the everyday*', and local and unique experiences - '*authentically charming, sincerely yours*'. The tags fit the trends and cater to travelers looking for sustainable, personalized, and locally focused trips. The 2024 travelers want to support local businesses and foster community development on both domestic and international travel. They are very conscious of their impact on the environment and while vacationing want to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. Adding itineraries to your marketing collateral that fit trends and their interests and promote sustainability measures you practice at your business is always a good idea.

Travel experts, tourism reports and predictions can be found online and in summary indicate that tourism in the U.S. is expected to thrive in 2024, driven by shorter, and more frequent trips. The appeal of weekend getaways or shortened vacations lies within the destination's offerings, experiences, convenience, and affordability. Mid-week trips that offer value and experiences are not off the table and fit within the visitors' plans for 2024. Capture the mid-week visitor through unique experiences that follow the trends and enriches their experience. Remote work options and summer school breaks make mid-

week vacations and getaways an easier sell. Flexibility and value are the buzzwords as we move forward and test what will be the new normal. The economy will play a dominant role in finding normal.

Cape May County offers pristine beaches, lush natural areas, diverse landscapes, and a rich cultural heritage. We have many opportunities for new adventures and a return to favorites, from beach escapes, nature-based activities, local culture, and camping retreats. Mid-week travel offers smaller crowds and lower rates that will appeal to the traveler that can be flexible to meet their wants and needs. AI can help the marketer develop itineraries that will pique the interest of today's travel planner.

In line with the overall trends toward experiential travel, domestic tourists are also seeking unique, off-the-beaten-path experiences. The American Road Trip is becoming more popular and adds to the adventure. With that, there is a growing trend to take Fido along on vacation. With the 90.5 million U.S. homes with furry friends, 44.5% are dog owners and 29% are cat owners. Approximately 78% of these American pet owners travel with their dogs annually. Pet owners are willing to pay to pamper their pets with the average pet household spending more than \$2000 per year to pamper their pets. What is surprising is 54% of travelers would rather travel with their pet than family or friends, and 75% of luxury, mid-scale and economy hotels/motels accept pets.

There are more than 30 million people within a 300-mile radius or a tank of gas away of the Jersey Cape. Suddenly, not having expanded air service is a good thing for the region. Flight delays and cancelations, higher fares, and disruptions, coupled with TSA requirements and long lines are making air

travel cumbersome and unappealing. This is not likely to improve in 2024 and air travelers are seeking alternative travel modes. As a result, more travel planners are looking for drive destinations and explains the increase in the road trip experience.

Americans set a record in 2023 with driving 3.263 trillion miles. This is an increase of 2.1% since 2019. The appeal of the road trip is flexibility and spontaneity and fits within the trend for more adventure. Road trips allow more control of experiential travel and more stops along the way that add to the adventure. Summer road trips are especially popular when traveling with family and friends. Road trips start and end at the whim of the traveler and allows them to take the roads less traveled and engage with the locals.

Among those planning to travel over the three months of summer, 40% said they will travel more in 2024, 64% said they will travel in their own car, and 42% said they will travel by air. Road trips average about 400 miles round trip and longer for the 18-43 age group. Americans took an average of 2.1 trips in 2023, and 92% said they will travel at least as much as they did in 2023. While 46% said they are very or somewhat likely to change their travel plans due to continued inflation. 72% said they will spend approximately \$2000 per trip for travel in 2024, others are budgeting up to \$5,300. (*Forbes Advisor*)

One tank trips work well with the uncertain economy and for those traveling on a budget and need to watch discretionary spending. For many road trips are impulsive and the lead time for reservations could

be one day or the same day while on the road. Multiple night requirements are difficult, this is where flexibility comes and a 2–3-day itinerary added to your website will serve to encourage a longer stay.

Marketing to the road tripper is all about promoting to them on the road. This can include billboards, ATM kiosks, signage at fast food stores on major highways, and radio. Social media follows drivers as they travel and expands your reach and radius. Sponsored content with travel publications, travel blogs television and radio allow you to piggyback with your message and reach a much wider audience.

Whether it's exploring new hiking, biking, and nature trails, visiting a local winery or craft brewery, boutique shopping, local dining, movies, or concerts on the beach, or attending a community festival, these experiences are what many want, promote these options with your property or event.

Trends to look for in 2024 *(US Travel Association)*

46% will visit family and friends.

36% will take beach vacations.

34% will take road trips.

26% will take camping or outdoor adventures (surfing, skiing, mountain climbing)

20% will take city or urban trips.

15% will take romantic getaways.

13% will take a cruise.

Tourism Direct Spending Overview

The four statewide beach counties continue to show growth and represent 50% of the total visitor spending in 2023. All 21 counties have fully recovered from the pandemic and while 4 counties saw a decrease in visitation, spending is at or above the 2019 levels.

Cape May County remains second in direct tourism spending, with Atlantic County ranking first. Atlantic County's lodging, which includes casino spending, topped all other counties statewide. Casino bricks and mortar spending in Atlantic City was \$2.85 billion.

Spending in Cape May County increased in 2024 by 4.1% or \$305.5 million. Visitor spending is \$7.7 billion from \$7.4 billion in 2022. All sectors measured saw an increase in 2023 over 2022.

Cape May County outpaced all other counties in three of the 5 sectors measured: food & beverage, retail, and recreation spending.

The County saw an increase of 4.7% visitors on day trips and a 1% increase in overnight visitors. Overnight visitors spend on average \$365 per person, per day and the day tripper spends on average \$110 per person.

The total visitors to the county in 2023 was 11.58 million visitors compared to 11.38 in 2022. Keep in mind that the population of New Jersey is 9.2 million.

Cape May County Tourism Economic Impacts

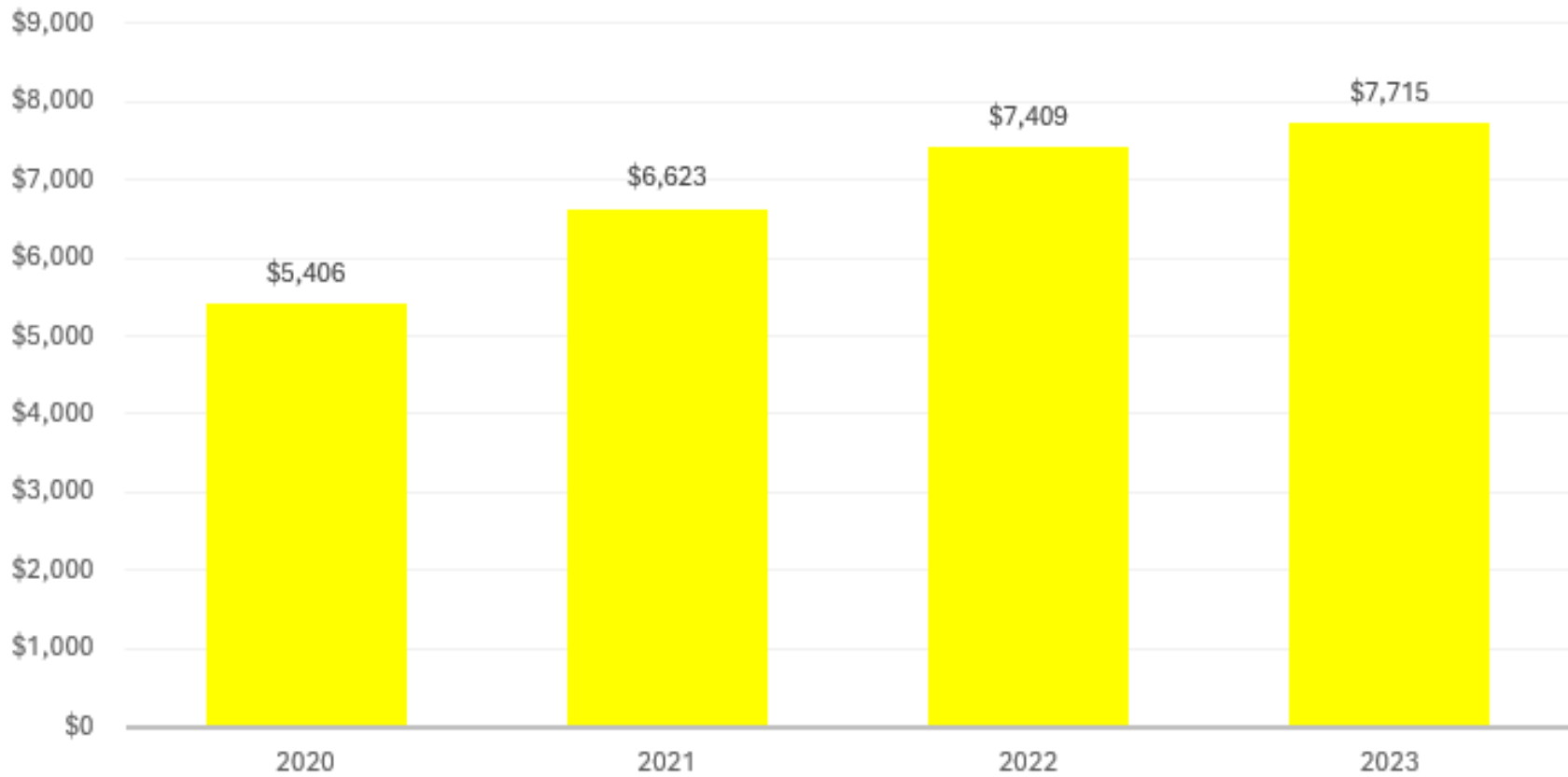
Total Direct Tourism Expenditures in 2023 was **\$7.714 billion**.

This represents a 4.1% or \$305.5 million increase in visitor spending over 2022.

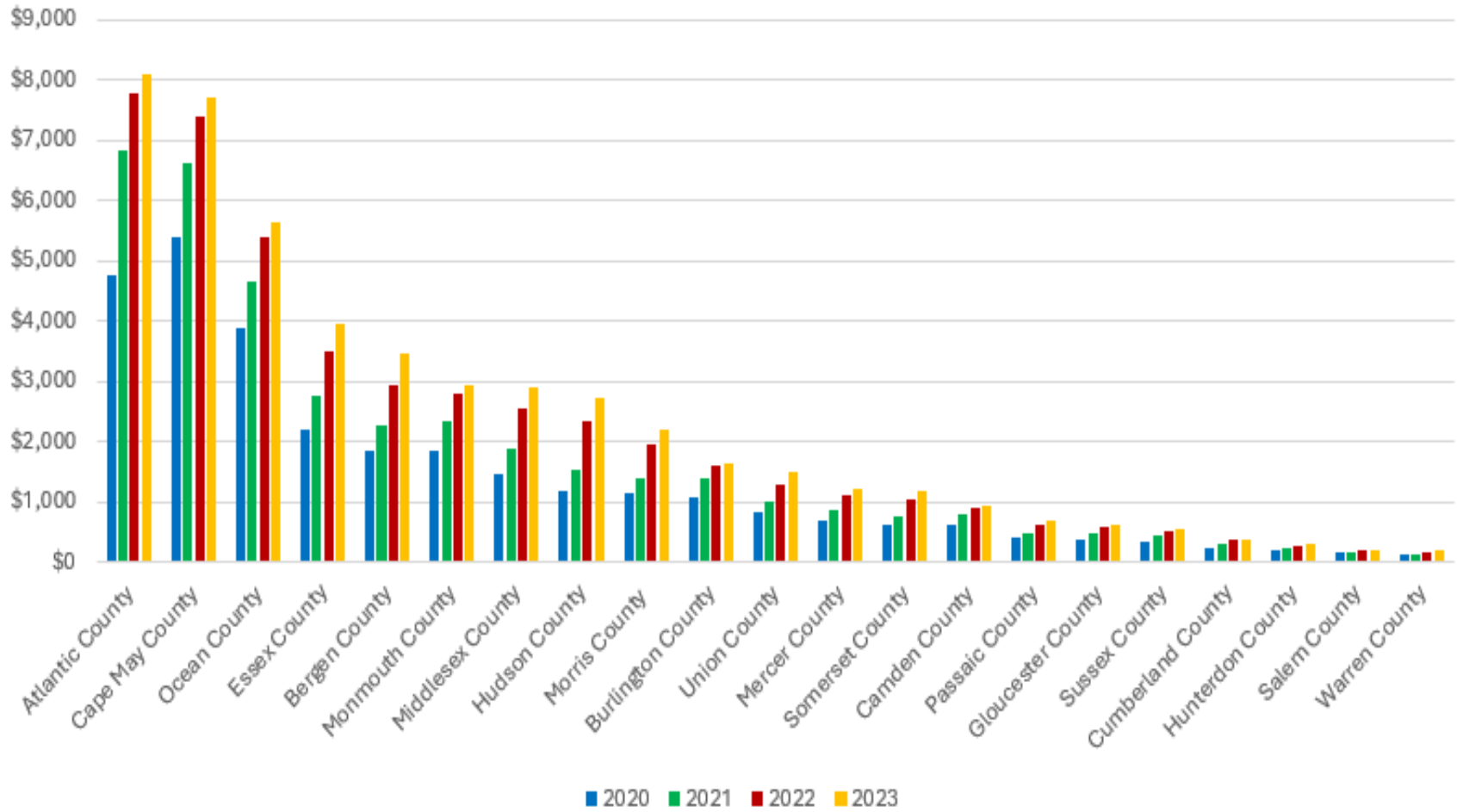
Lodging	Food & Beverage	Retail	Recreation	Transportation
\$3.195 B	\$1.746 B	\$1.441 B	\$797.1 M	\$534.6 M

- ❖ Cape May County ranks second to Atlantic County in total direct tourism spending. *Lodging includes second homes and casino spending. Bricks and Mortar casino spending in 2023 was \$2.85 billion.
- ❖ Cape May County outpaced all other counties in food & beverage, retail, and recreation sectors.
- ❖ All sectors measured experienced growth in 2023 over 2022.
- ❖ Cape May County generated \$637.5 million in State and Local Taxes. (\$1.75 million per day.) Up 0.9%
- ❖ Visitor supported direct jobs 31,325. Increase of 3.2%
- ❖ Visitor supported total jobs 40,557, equals 58.2% of total County jobs.
- ❖ Cape May County visitor volume – 11.58 million (Day trips – 4.40 million, Overnight trips – 7.18 million. Increase of 1.8%
- ❖ 2023 Occupancy Tax generated - \$21,987,421.37 – increase of 13.3% over 2022.

Cape May County Tourism Expenditures Represented by Billions of Dollars



Tourism Expenditures by County Represented by Millions of Dollars



Value Redefined Through Experience

Travelers with a focus on authentic, local experiences can find many options on the Jersey Cape. The shift in mindset towards experiential travel signifies a desire for deeper connections with destinations and cultures. Consider the following ideas when marketing your business or destination. It isn't difficult to incorporate these experiences into your current offerings. Partner with local businesses to cross promote.

- **Culinary Tours** – A culinary expedition is a fantastic way to explore a region's culture. These tours often involve visits to local markets, cooking classes with regional ingredients, and dining experiences at traditional restaurants.
- **Hiking and Trekking** – Outdoor enthusiasts often opt for hiking or trekking expeditions in scenic locations. Biking and water sports are options that fit well within the travel trends.
- **Vineyard Visits** – Wine lovers frequently travel to where they can tour vineyards, learn about wine-making processes, and participate in wine tasting sessions.
- **Historical and Heritage Tours** – Traveling to historical sites connecting travelers with the past.
- **Wellness Retreats** – These have become increasingly popular, with travelers heading to destinations that focus on health and offer yoga, meditation, and wellness therapies. Beach yoga is right up their alley.
- **Festivals and Cultural Events** – Visiting a locale during a traditional festival or event offers a unique cultural immersion.
- **Volunteer Tourism** – Also known as “voluntourism,” this involves traveling to a destination to contribute to a cause, such as wildlife conservation, teaching, or construction projects.

We have a Story to Tell

Storytelling never gets old for visitors, and they are willing to move around to learn more about a destination and connect to the people past and present. Our history connects to their history in unique ways and becomes part of the memories. Culinary travel is big on the list and not only hard-core Foodies are willing to travel to get the best dining experience and sample local dishes. Fishing and agriculture brought our founding families to the county, with a rich whaling and farming history. Our start as a fishing and agriculture community is something that we can and should add to our story. After more than 330 years, people are still drawn to the Jersey Cape for Jersey Fresh vegetables and seafood. Today we refer to it as “fresh from the soil and the sea”.

History is everywhere and a big part of the Jersey Cape’s appeal. Authenticity is found in all our municipalities, and history and the arts in each town is unique and offers visitors very different experiences. Cultural tourism refers to the act of travelers visiting specific destinations to experience and learn about a particular culture. It involves activities such as attending events, festivals, visiting museums, and sampling local food and drinks.

The Cape May County Division of Culture and Heritage is under the Tourism Department and manages the New Jersey Regrant Program. The countywide Arts and History organizations can apply for grant funding through the Division of Culture and Heritage. Cultural tourism generates 54% of total visitor interest.

Cape May County Arts and History Regrant Program

The Cape May County Division of Culture and Heritage, a Division within the Cape May County Department of Tourism, applies for grant funding from the NJ State Council on the Arts and the NJ State Historical Commission, both Divisions of the State of New Jersey. The State's grant award is offered to the Division on a three-year cycle.

The Division maintains an annual, competitive, regrant program with the awarded funding; offering Cape May County Organizations opportunities to apply for general operation support, special project support, or general programming support.

- Over the Past 5 years the Division of Culture and Heritage has granted \$731,892.00 to Cape May County arts projects, programs, and operations.
 - Helping an average of 24 Cape May County Arts organizations annually.
- Over the past 5 years the Division of Culture and Heritage has granted \$206,112.00 to Cape May County history projects, programs, and operations.
 - Helping an average of 12 Cape May County History organizations annually.

Grant Information: www.cmcculture.net for grant guidelines and application.

2025 funding process will begin in August of 2024. culture@co.cape-may.nj.us with questions.

Teen Arts Festival

The Division of Culture and Heritage supports the Cape May and Cumberland County Teen Arts Festival. A one-day event for teens to showcase their artistic capabilities through a variety of artistic mediums. The festival is an opportunity for students to collaborate with their peers and learn from professionals in the field through student critique and workshops.

Students gain knowledge, creativity, collaboration skills, and the opportunity to advance to the NJ State Teen Arts Festival. Only selected students may advance to the State’s Festival.

An average of 1,750 teen artists, art teachers, and professional artists from Cape May County have been supported over the last five years through this one-day festival.

Marketing

The Division of Culture and Heritage supports the events, projects, and programs of their regrantees all year long. Whether through a marketing campaign, Facebook or direct email, the Division aids in the marketing efforts of its grant funded organizations, at no cost to them.

2020 Project	Art \$60,946.00	History \$16,200.00
Operations	3	2
Special Project (1 event)	5	1
Programming (series)	11	2
Project Totals	19	5
Total Individual Activities	223	113

2023 Project	Art \$200,000.00	History \$60,781.00
Operations	4	5
Special Project (1 event)	5	5
Programming (series)	13	5
Project Totals	22	15
Total Individual Activities	380	278

2021 Project	Art \$65,946.00	History \$27,014.00
Operations	3	3
Special Project (1 event)	5	3
Programming (series)	13	5
Project Totals	21	11
Total Individual Activities	209	123

2024 Project	Art \$200,000.00	History \$60,781.00
Operations	5	8
Special Project (1 event)	12	2
Programming (series)	19	5
Project Totals	36	15
Total Individual Activities	TBD	TBD

2022 Project	Art \$200,000.00	History \$40,521.00
Operations	3	5
Special Project (1 event)	9	4
Programming (series)	11	3
Project Totals	23	12
Total Individual Activities	301	115

Art Total Projects- 5 years	History Total Projects- 5 years
121	58
Total Individual Activities: 1,113	Total Individual Activities: 629

Adventure Travel

Adventure is in the eyes of the beholder, and it isn't always extreme sports that travelers want. Adventure tourism is moving visitors around outside of their comfort zone to explore or travel to new and exciting places. The benefits are to increase physical fitness, mental health, self-confidence, and cultural awareness. Adventure tourism was a \$483.3 billion industry in 2023 and growing. Global travelers in the 51-60 age group dominated the adventure tourism market, with the 29-40 following close behind. These age groups represent approximately 60% of our visitors according to the 2024 Cape May County visitor's survey.

Passive recreation is an important element for all ages and is on most vacation itineraries. Biking and hiking have worked their way to the top five activities with more people taking bikes on vacation than ever before. Top sports for those on vacation include Basketball, Swimming, Hiking, Cycling, and Surfing. The growth of sports tourism is just one example of what visitors are looking for in vacation and pickleball is taking the country by storm.

Immersion into the local culture is driving the trend to hit the roads and 'see the USA in your Chevrolet'. As a drive destination, our visitors come by vehicles and have no issues about driving around to experience all we have to offer. Cape May County is within a 300-mile radius or a 'tank of gas away' from more than 30 million people. The Jersey Cape fits well into the travel trends and our assets should be part of all our marketing messages. There are nature lovers in

all of us and nature-based trips are becoming a larger part of the vacation itinerary, especially after the lockdowns.

As the pent-up demand to travel waned, and ‘revenge travel’ was satisfied for most, travel trends changed, and the bucket list is back in play. Travel planners are looking for more meaningful experiences and making more conscious decisions on how they will spend their vacation budget without impacting their carbon footprint. Additionally, they are exchanging their quest for more ‘stuff’ with a desire to have more experiences which is now a big part of the ‘new normal’. Beach vacations are the most desirable and the Jersey Cape beaches are among the best in New Jersey and the east coast. The key to marketing is knowing the trends and crafting your message to appeal to the needs and wants of our visitors. No matter if you are located on the beach, in a beach resort or near the beach, include it in your marketing message. Most likely, you are closer to the beach than your customers. Add surrounding attractions and events to help longer overnight stays.

To answer the question, the ‘new normal’ is not totally defined and is still evolving and we must be aware of what travelers are looking for in a vacation and convey that in our content. From our research, Cape May County fits into the emerging travel trends and can offer the 2024 traveler much of what they are looking for in a destination. Local culture or Local Love can be found throughout the Jersey Cape as visitors are looking for a welcoming and cozy feel with

authentic experiences, local culture, charm, and the warmth offered by family-owned businesses. Visitors are seeking real personal experiences where each location is unique and has charm and more importantly is authentic. From a branding perspective, the top selling point of the county is that we are mostly restored and not reconstructed. Without created attractions that are not natural to the county, we are considered by many journalists as a destination that offers 'pure tourism. The Jersey Cape has a long history of returning visitors who come back year after year to be a part of what we offer. The 2024 visitor's survey indicated a return visitor rate of 85%. As trends emerge, Cape May County's authentic charm and diversity fits well within visitor trends, interests, and bucket lists.

Eco-tourism travelers' focus on sustainability weathered the pandemic and is more popular than ever and the trend is still taking center stage. Travel planners are concerned about their footprint and want to do their part on vacation. Eco-friendly accommodations, accessibility, and slow travel are some of the boxes visitors are checking when planning their vacations. Slow travel is part of the sustainable tourism family and emphasizes the traveler's personal awareness by taking time to explore local history and culture and supporting the environment. The slow travel mindset is about the love of travel, learning, and having a real authentic experience rather than just adding another pin to your vacation list.

Nature is top of mind and ties perfectly within our assets. Cape May County is listed as one of the top three birding hot spots in North America. Wildlife migration from sea life to birding and butterflies brings visitors to the area year-round. Agri-tourism fits well within the trends and our farm-to-table options are a huge draw for visitors with 44% of our visitors going to our wineries, breweries, distilleries, farms, and farm markets.

Camping remains a popular activity for US travelers and is one of the most affordable outdoor experiences available, a major reason why the camping market remained stable despite economic and social changes throughout 2023. This leads to a promising landscape for summer 2024, with travelers' excitement for outdoor relaxation higher than ever before. Campers impact tourism sectors including food and beverage, retail, recreation, and transportation. Campers tend to stay longer and expand their stay to a 9-month season. Cape May County is home to 37 campgrounds with more than 17,000 sites.

The Dyrt's 2024 Camping Report:

- An estimated **84.8 million Americans** went camping in **2023**, with **5.5 million** of them being first-time campers.
- The demand for camping has never been greater, technology is making it easier to find camping spots.
- **RV camping** remains popular, with **46.8%** of respondents indicating that RVs or trailers were their primary type of camping.

- **Overland and truck camping** also saw increased interest.
- **Free camping** is on the rise, with nearly two-thirds of campers opting for free camping experiences.

2. **Calm Camping Trend for Summer 2024:**

- Camping is considered one of the most affordable outdoor experiences, which has contributed to its stability despite economic and social changes.
- Travelers' excitement for outdoor relaxation is higher than ever before, making camping an attractive option for summer 2024.

3. **Golden Age of Camping:**

- The popularity of camping, which surged during the pandemic, is still growing.
- Campers now have more options due to expanding campgrounds and improved technology.

The Camping Community Continues to Grow

84.8 million
Americans camped in 2023*
*estimated

5.5 million first-time campers in 2023*

20 million+ first-time campers since 2021*

The portion of campers who list RV or trailer as their **primary camping type** climbed **10.9%** in 2023.



The U.S. Is Very Camp Curious

1 in 4 Americans camped in 2023.

4 out of 5 American adults have been camping at least once in their life.

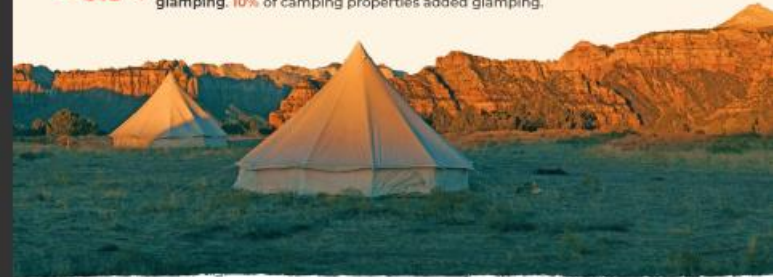
Nearly **2 out of 3** Americans say they are at least somewhat interested in camping in the next 3 years.

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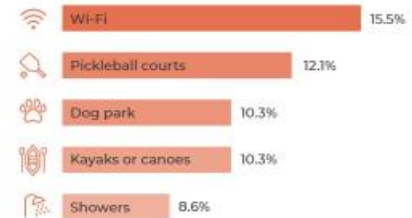
More Campsites, More Expensive



46.9% of properties added a new type of campsite, especially **glamping**. **10%** of camping properties added glamping.



Most common amenities added



About **1/3** of private camping properties added **new amenities** in 2023.



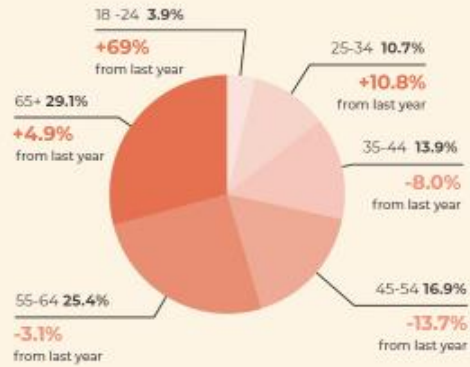
"We expanded last year and again this year. Last year we added a 30-foot yurt, a safari tent and seven RV sites. After seeing the success of the new additions we decided to add 12 more RV sites for the 2024 season. Having more sites also allows us to do more in the way of events, on-site music and amenities for all to enjoy."

— Tim Murphy, founder of Emberglow Outdoor Resort in North Carolina

9

Camping Community

Campers by age group



One third
of first-time campers in 2023 were aged **18-34**

Campers are growing to be **under 35 or over 65**



"It's fantastic that young people are discovering camping at an increasing rate, and that older people are continuing to camp well into retirement."
— Kevin Long, CEO of The Dyrt



Four-legged friends

53.7% camped with dogs. **5.8%** camped with cats.

Campers also reported camping with chickens, box turtles, guinea pigs and parrots.



Camping Challenges



It was **4X** harder to book a campsite in 2023 than it was 2019

Finding available campsites got slightly easier! But it's still hard



45.5% of campers had difficulty booking a site because campgrounds were sold out. This number fell from 58.4% in 2022, but is still four times the rate in 2019 (10.6%).

Technology Is Making it Easier to Find Camping



Private camping is increasingly tech-forward:

59.2% of private camping properties now use at least one booking platform such as The Dyrt.

Most Campers Get Camping Advice Online



Where do you go for advice about camping?



Note: Many respondents chose multiple answers.

Occupancy Tax

Occupancy Tax collection started in 2005 and is levied on hotel, motel, bed and breakfast and online bookings such as Airbnb and VRBO. The tax is 5% of the room rate with some municipalities collecting up to an additional 3% for tourism supported services. This is in addition to the 6.625% sales tax. The total tax on lodging can't be higher than 14%, and this creates some differences in tax rates to meet the cap.

The Cape May County Tourism Tax is the tax charged by the Wildwoods that represents 1.85% and 2% and is used to support the Wildwoods Convention Center and special events and is part of the total 14%. While it is identified as a Cape May County tax, it is only levied on tourism sales in the Wildwoods.

Cape May County generated \$21.98 million in Occupancy Tax in 2023 and received a return of 6% or \$1.3 million in grant funding for Tourism, the Arts, and History. More than \$189 million was generated statewide and approximately \$38 million was disbursed to the three entities the tax was intended.

A review of all 21 counties shows a disparity in funding among the counties. While percentages can be tricky, a look at the actual ROI is staggering. The 3 factors that should be considered for the determination for awards should be the amount of Occupancy Tax collected, the amount of grant funding awarded, and the total visitor spending.

Cape May County generated \$21.89 million in OT, received \$1.3 million in grants and Visitor spending was \$7.7 billion. ROI 6%.

Essex generated \$7.7 million in OT, received \$8.3 million in grants and Visitor spending was \$3.95 billion. ROI 106%.

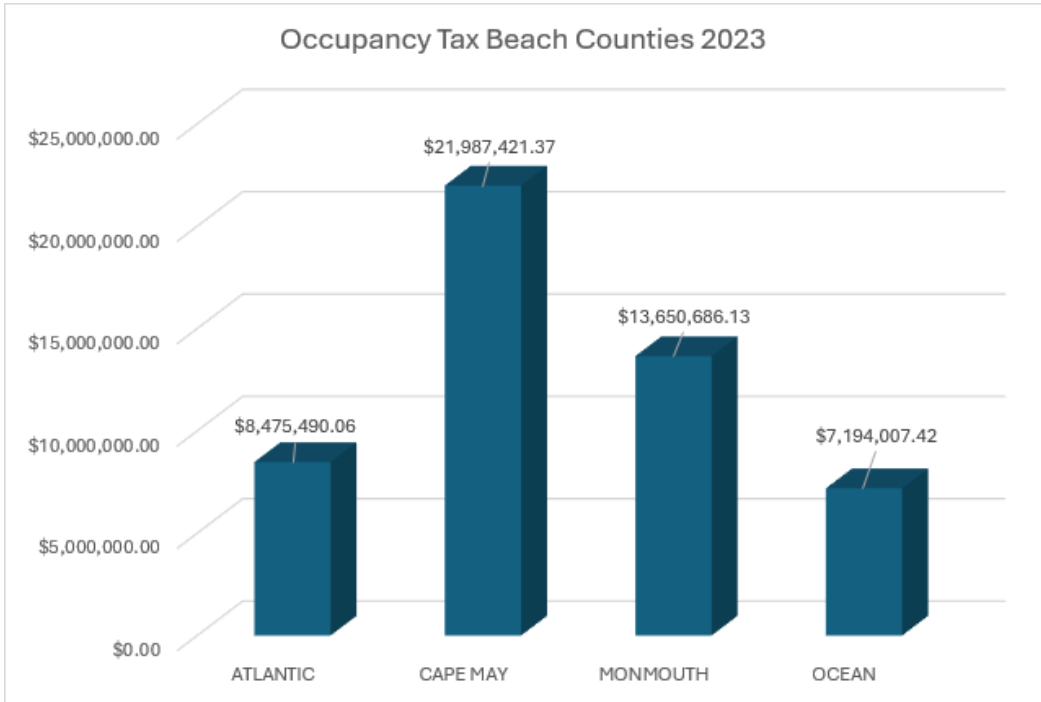
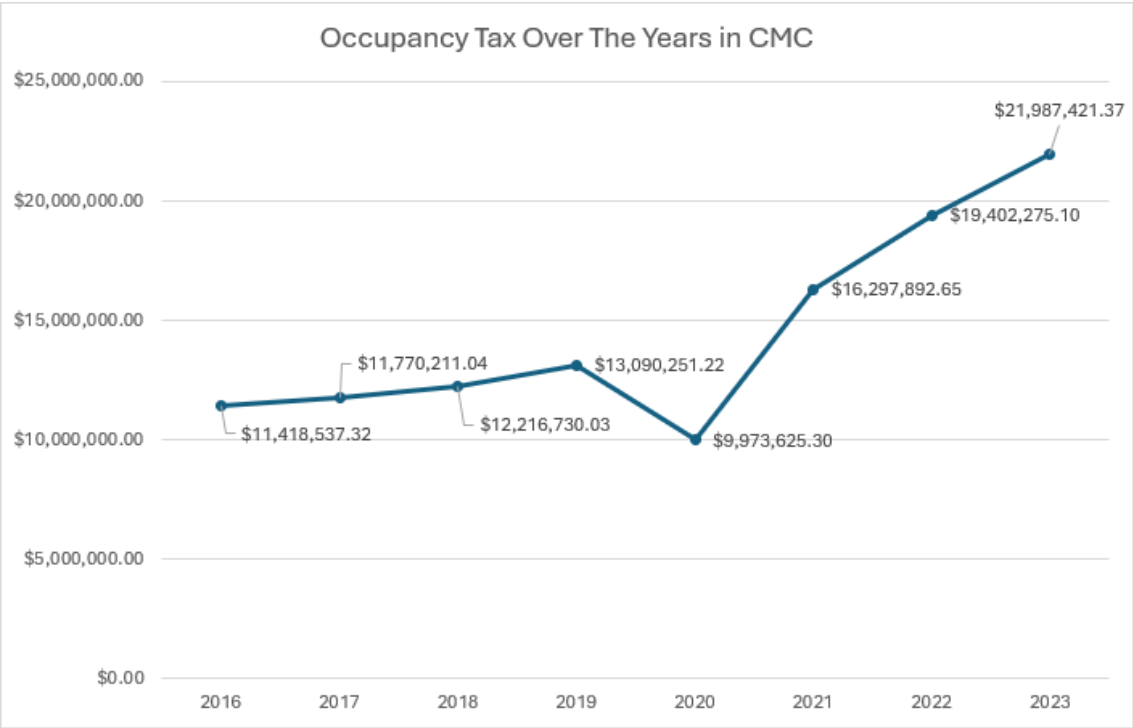
Mercer County generated \$7.58 million in OT, received \$3.17 million in grant funding and Visitor spending was \$1.2 billion. ROI 41.8%.

2023 Cape May County Occupancy Tax

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	% Change 2022	2024	% Change 2023
Jan	\$98,007.52	\$131,955.20	\$91,115.13	\$185,209.26	\$318,002.47	71.70%	\$449,363.46	41.31%
Feb	\$128,585.65	\$149,140.98	\$110,713.91	\$229,955.47	\$424,966.12	84.80%	\$502,668.10	18.28%
Mar	\$192,916.18	\$66,338.94	\$230,452.64	\$322,408.96	\$549,409.91	70.41%		
Apr	\$347,885.17	\$3,058.96	\$430,513.47	\$641,567.13	\$807,684.39	25.89%		
May	\$879,397.47	\$28,340.70	\$1,145,092.87	\$1,340,917.61	\$1,555,113.96	15.97%		
June	\$1,988,500.76	\$1,060,131.65	\$2,526,201.65	\$2,973,752.60	\$3,297,817.05	10.90%		
July	\$3,393,974.11	\$2,633,125.44	\$4,185,844.17	\$4,719,041.68	\$5,288,929.09	12.08%		
Aug	\$3,602,147.72	\$3,329,102.57	\$4,114,143.24	\$4,811,223.97	\$5,211,879.08	8.33%		
Sept	\$1,424,277.38	\$1,671,693.29	\$2,004,557.74	\$2,394,749.20	\$2,439,872.30	1.88%		
Oct	\$515,546.71	\$549,080.26	\$791,277.33	\$854,630.52	\$941,229.04	10.13%		
Nov	\$227,542.23	\$188,113.25	\$308,286.30	\$409,804.53	\$485,834.08	18.55%		
Dec	\$291,470.32	\$163,544.06	\$359,694.20	\$519,014.17	\$666,683.88	28.45%		
Total	\$13,090,251.22	\$9,973,625.30	\$16,297,892.65	\$19,402,275.10	\$21,987,421.37	13.32%		
1st Quarter	\$419,509.35	\$347,435.12	\$432,281.68	\$737,573.69	\$1,292,378.50	75.22%		
2nd Quarter	\$3,215,783.40	\$1,091,531.31	\$4,101,807.99	\$4,956,237.34	\$5,660,615.40	14.21%		
3rd Quarter	\$8,420,399.21	\$7,633,921.30	\$10,304,545.15	\$11,925,014.85	\$12,940,680.47	8.52%		
4th Quarter	\$1,034,559.26	\$900,737.57	\$1,459,257.83	\$1,783,449.22	\$2,093,747.00	17.40%		
Jun-Aug	\$8,984,622.59	\$7,022,359.66	\$10,826,189.06	\$12,504,018.25	\$13,798,625.22	10.35%		
April-Oct	\$12,151,729.32	\$9,274,532.87	\$15,197,630.47	\$17,735,882.71	\$19,542,524.91	10.19%		

2023 Occupancy Tax – All Counties

	23-Jan	23-Feb	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Total	% +/-
ATLANTIC	416,932.56	444,742.11	539,046.58	591,847.70	737,545.76	949,631.65	1,268,324.70	1,159,418.23	783,049.12	570,050.30	538,655.62	476,245.73	8,475,490.06	0.15%
BERGEN	1,248,147.51	1,285,970.50	1,691,683.19	1,937,325.55	2,282,870.68	2,266,356.27	2,315,564.30	2,315,911.96	2,564,124.15	2,470,618.01	1,930,693.88	2,114,191.26	24,423,457.26	17.35%
BURLINGTON	573,098.05	584,054.12	723,377.69	737,363.21	908,674.29	952,295.74	891,087.68	860,807.72	843,065.38	828,300.79	716,063.41	609,325.95	9,227,514.03	2.27%
CAMDEN	257,496.59	307,371.71	335,742.18	351,251.83	432,557.19	461,411.45	416,729.62	400,312.14	396,823.80	416,729.31	360,633.20	296,104.23	4,433,163.25	6.14%
CAPE MAY	318,002.47	424,966.12	549,409.91	807,684.39	1,555,113.96	3,297,817.05	5,288,929.09	5,211,879.08	2,439,872.30	941,229.04	485,834.08	666,683.88	21,987,421.37	13.32%
CUMBERLAND	85,920.37	91,141.49	131,291.50	135,291.55	146,692.69	175,799.57	169,721.44	161,902.45	170,593.77	150,296.84	133,866.17	99,433.61	1,651,951.45	0.56%
ESSEX	435,994.70	443,608.93	563,963.27	589,868.65	692,856.95	762,032.87	735,457.29	701,662.77	788,854.53	787,162.85	650,881.54	643,452.99	7,795,797.34	15.98%
GLOUCESTER	198,237.85	210,578.73	263,493.09	266,377.75	311,934.90	331,209.33	296,545.95	282,675.06	308,461.92	321,931.35	270,573.79	228,818.93	3,290,838.65	2.38%
HUDSON	756,788.94	742,624.58	1,002,120.02	1,258,040.77	1,475,817.16	1,364,629.18	1,443,394.55	1,367,056.90	1,680,936.31	1,581,427.07	1,275,429.51	1,522,781.57	15,471,046.56	27.10%
HUNTERDON	84,645.72	94,790.05	121,208.63	129,448.48	162,214.17	199,464.78	197,381.44	188,121.86	173,844.09	185,406.90	151,756.64	134,008.13	1,822,290.89	8.13%
MERCER	392,981.90	408,668.84	527,303.11	576,104.21	841,708.76	764,378.82	767,606.80	813,891.81	718,225.26	750,987.50	575,517.07	447,746.59	7,585,120.67	6.57%
MIDDLESEX	1,270,043.65	1,285,883.78	1,660,764.11	1,729,499.44	2,253,424.94	2,227,246.95	2,172,383.74	2,342,961.71	2,324,081.49	2,208,762.69	1,815,000.36	1,553,381.99	22,843,434.85	29.30%
MONMOUTH	579,511.77	586,133.17	744,610.21	991,169.36	1,205,274.21	1,573,526.87	2,091,858.78	2,002,258.01	1,444,180.49	985,965.18	741,467.71	704,730.37	13,650,686.13	9.40%
MORRIS	825,471.85	829,490.41	1,138,651.04	1,169,161.46	1,456,645.41	1,571,357.36	1,442,223.20	1,472,595.34	1,528,488.80	1,529,387.81	1,265,715.61	1,141,463.44	15,370,651.73	17.30%
OCEAN	190,344.08	213,601.44	271,980.59	346,960.11	591,871.44	983,963.90	1,669,271.72	1,550,214.51	663,112.13	306,634.58	219,200.39	186,852.53	7,194,007.42	-5.65%
PASSAIC	211,997.93	215,728.37	266,999.94	283,829.45	324,378.46	349,462.51	347,949.34	336,667.12	355,217.46	354,080.91	290,701.72	304,706.97	3,641,720.18	20.47%
SALEM	40,080.61	41,694.54	53,920.23	72,004.94	69,220.60	69,471.35	59,113.70	56,171.61	57,214.71	72,965.01	50,608.28	38,880.35	681,335.93	-4.90%
SOMERSET	540,572.00	483,543.95	620,408.03	675,813.84	909,614.79	981,079.02	940,084.17	1,023,220.65	952,555.52	1,014,935.36	786,196.28	704,142.42	9,632,166.03	17.98%
SUSSEX	218,913.15	300,163.69	223,685.47	306,517.92	281,948.69	341,189.19	384,098.96	428,100.90	328,566.81	325,703.96	259,879.60	268,500.64	3,667,268.98	3.46%
UNION	368,203.80	371,715.06	425,274.81	423,298.45	535,589.50	607,355.12	578,665.73	532,458.23	595,894.19	598,148.50	463,489.43	470,971.75	5,971,064.57	13.41%
WARREN	11,818.68	9,760.33	14,240.93	13,961.66	16,977.76	19,260.35	19,651.21	17,619.85	18,325.99	18,714.18	17,157.69	13,642.05	191,130.68	11.47%
Total	9,025,204.18	9,376,231.92	11,869,174.53	13,392,820.72	17,192,932.31	20,248,939.33	23,496,043.41	23,225,907.91	19,135,488.22	16,419,428.14	12,999,321.98	12,626,065.38	189,007,558.03	13.73%



County Incentive Grant Program

The **County Incentive Grant program S-159**, establishes a “County Tourism Incentive Grant Fund”, within the Department of Treasury to provide funding for grants to counties to support tourism advertising and promotion.

New Jersey Senate Bill No. 159, introduced in the 2024-2025 regular session, establishes the “County Tourism Incentive Grant Fund” within the Department of the Treasury. Here are the key points:

1. Purpose: The bill aims to provide funding for grants to counties in order to support tourism advertising and promotion.
2. Fund Creation: The bill establishes a special, non-lapsing fund known as the “County Tourism Incentive Grant Fund” within the Department of the Treasury.
3. Funding Source: The fund will be funded by excess State hotel and motel occupancy fee revenues. These are revenues collected from hotel and motel occupancy fees during the preceding State fiscal year that exceed the revenue anticipated to be collected from such fees.
4. Administration: The State Treasurer will administer the fund.
5. Grant Distribution: The State Treasurer will issue annual tourism incentive grants to counties from the fund. These grants will provide financial assistance to counties for tourism advertising and promotion.
6. Status: Pending Review

The eligibility criteria for counties to receive the County Tourism Incentive Grants under New Jersey Senate Bill No. 159 include the following:

1. County Participation: Counties must actively participate in tourism promotion and advertising efforts within their jurisdiction.

2. **Application Process:** Counties need to submit an application to the State Treasurer or the designated authority responsible for administering the grants. The application should outline their proposed tourism promotion activities and how the grant funds will be utilized.
3. **Demonstrated Need:** Counties must demonstrate a need for financial assistance in promoting tourism. This could include factors such as low tourism revenue, limited advertising budgets, or specific tourism-related challenges.
4. **Compliance with Guidelines:** Counties must adhere to any guidelines or requirements set forth by the State regarding the use of grant funds. This may include restrictions on the types of advertising, reporting obligations, and transparency in fund utilization.
5. **Reporting and Accountability:** Counties receiving grants will likely be required to submit periodic reports detailing their promotional activities, outcomes, and financial expenditures. Accountability and transparency are essential.
6. **Priority Considerations:** While not explicitly stated in the bill, priority may be given to counties with a higher volume of tourism, those with unique attractions, or those facing economic challenges related to tourism.

Remember that the specific details and requirements may vary based on the administrative rules and guidelines established by the State Treasurer. If you need further information, I recommend checking official government resources or consulting with relevant authorities.

The program would be managed by the NJ Treasury to use a portion of the excess Occupancy tax to fund a grant program eligible to counties that currently have a county funded tourism department. The grant would not replace the county funding but would be in addition and used for marketing and promotion. Those counties that do not have county supported tourism departments would not be eligible to apply or receive funding from this program. There are only a handful of counties in New Jersey that fund a tourism department, Cape May County is one of them. We are waiting for this bill to pass this year. Contact your legislators to pass this bill.

Lights, Camera, Action!

New Jersey is banking on the film industry to help municipalities and counties tap into a new revenue potential by making the state an appealing destination for filmmakers and digital media creators. The New Jersey Film Commission is developing a database of 'film ready' locations throughout the State to assist counties and municipalities to become film ready if they choose to be part of the project.

The first film production company was built by Thomas Edison in West Orange, New Jersey in 1892. He needed a constant flow of films to keep his invention of the movie camera popular and the public interested in motion films. The *Black Maria*, as the studio was called because it looked like a black police wagon, operated until 1901. Edison moved the studio to New York to a glass enclosed facility situated on a roof top. California was the next move and remains the home of the motion picture industry. The New Jersey Film Commission is cashing in to bring film making back home. New technology can recreate and incorporate any location to fit within the story line. There are several studios being built in the state, with one in Atlantic City and another proposed in Cape May County.

Through tax incentives and sales tax exemptions used directly and primarily to produce film and television projects, the state is investing in film ready destinations help find untapped revenue potential by accommodating location filming in their destinations via attractive economic development incentives for the film industry.

Billed as the next frontier in economic development in the Travel and Tourism industry, Deborah Bass of the Cape May County Department of Tourism is working together with Barbara Jones, President of the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce, and the New Jersey Motion Picture & Television Commission to become certified as a Film Ready destination. As we complete the phases of becoming film-ready, which includes uploading to the film commission's website photos, video and description of possible locations, the county will work with the South Jersey Film Co-op too as they pitch locations to producers.

According to the commission's website, www.film.nj.gov, "with a growing film industry presence in New Jersey, the Film Ready program is designed to support municipalities and counties as they work to accommodate location filming and market their communities as filming destinations, positioning the state as a top production destination."

Becoming a film-ready destination means money in the coffers of the destination and its business community as well as a boost to the destination's marketing initiatives. Imagine stepping into the worlds of your favorite on-screen characters and experiencing the magic of those settings firsthand! This is called Set-jetting, and it is a fascinating trend that has gained popularity among travelers.

According to HootBoard.com, "set-jetting, a term coined to describe traveling to locations featured in movies and TV shows, will persist as a significant trend in 2024. The intrigue of it involves visiting the actual locations where movies or TV shows were filmed. The appeal lies in the chance to connect with beloved characters and experience the magic of fictional worlds in real-life settings.

Set-jetting enthusiasts are inspired by the shows and movies they watch. After binge-watching their favorite series during COVID-19 pandemic. People were eager to explore the real-world locations associated with those shows. Approximately 39% of travelers have booked vacations to places they saw in movies or streamed shows, according to Expedia's 2023 travel trends report.

Set-jetting is a great way to liven up our visitors' itineraries. It's a unique way to combine travel with pop culture and create memorable adventures. If you're a fan of movie locations, exploring the area might reveal more hidden gems from the silver screen. The trend attracts a diverse demographic of tourists who are drawn to various locations. These can include historical sites and iconic buildings featured in films; charming villages that served as backdrops for memorable scenes; picturesque beaches or rural areas seen in movies and TV series.

Examples of Set-Jetting destinations include New York City (The Big Apple): Fans of **Sex and the City** can visit Carrie Bradshaw's West Village brownstone and even take pictures in front of it. **The**

Marvelous Mrs. Maisel enthusiasts can explore the show's settings, guided by a background actor who shares insights into the character's wardrobe.

HoodBoard.com sites other popular places:

- **King's Landing from Game of Thrones** – Fans flock to Dubrovnik, Croatia, which served as the setting for the Westeros capital.
- **The Lord of the Rings Trilogy Locations** – New Zealand's breathtaking landscapes were transformed into Middle Earth, attracting a swarm of Tolkien fans every year.
- **Downton Abbey's Highclere Castle** – Located in England, this historic structure draws fans eager to experience the grandeur of the Crawley family's home.
- **Breaking Bad's Albuquerque** – The New Mexico city, where the influential series was shot, offers guided tours to the show's key locations.
- **Harry Potter's Hogwarts** – The Wizarding World of Harry Potter in Universal Studios (Orlando, Florida, and Hollywood, California) allows fans to step into the famous school of witchcraft and wizardry.

Cape May County's picturesque landscapes and unique charm have attracted filmmakers over the years. One such movie was "Wetlands" about a young couple on a weekend getaway which features scenes filmed in the county.

Just think, sometime soon, we can tell our visitors what streets and where the movie's star Timothee Chalamet walked, where he ate and what neighborhood houses were in a scene in the Bob Dylan biopic tentatively called "A Complete Unknown" currently being filmed in Cape May.

Will the Economy Impact Vacations in 2024

According to a survey by IPX 1031, 90% of American plan to travel as some point in 2024 and 50% plan to travel more than they have in previous year. Of that number, 85% plan out-of-state travel. Travel is the remedy to deal with the high cost of living, demanding jobs, and negative news.

The survey revealed that more than half (54%) of the respondents said the economy has impacted their travel plans and 15% said they have postponed or canceled a trip due to cost. 60% of US travelers are budgeting \$5,300 for travel costs. 46% of respondents are opting for a staycation to reduce the number of vacations they take this year. Vacation affordability is a determining factor when budgeting and making financial decisions. Cuts in spending across the board throughout the year are part of making a vacation possible.

The Department of Tourism Annual Visitor Survey found that 47% of respondents indicated that the economy impacted their 2023 vacation plans and 48% indicated the economy will impact their vacation plans in 2024. When asked if they reduced vacation spending, 60% said they did while 39.7% said they did not reduce spending. Changes in spending varied with 8% saying they canceled their vacation, almost half of those in the national survey.

Other cost saving measures travelers took in 2023 included 11% were taking a Staycation; 25% were taking weekend or getaways, 27% took day trips, and 32% said they shortened the length of their vacation. We can expect similar adjustments in 2024 as we face an uncertain economy.

Department of Tourism Partnership with SSRDMO

The Cape May County Department of Tourism works with the SSRDMO to market the destination that includes Cape May and Cumberland Counties. Funding for the joint marketing plan comes from the Department of Tourism budget supported by the County Board of County Commissioners. The liaison to the department is Commissioner Director Leonard C. Desiderio. The County Tourism budget is \$360,000 and covers advertising and promotion, travel shows, print and reproductions, graphic design, Canadian PR consultant, Travel Writer expenses and the annual fishing contest. Most of the budget is allocated to advertising and promotion. The department has applied for and has been successful in receiving Cooperative Marketing Program grants from the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism for the past 21 years. These competitive grants have ranged in amounts between \$18,000 and \$22,000.

The SSRDMO receives grants from the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism annually to support marketing the region and state. The grants fund approved DMO throughout the State and are also competitive. The SSRDMO has been among the top recipients of funding and receives on average \$250,000 annually. The mission of the SSRDMO is to market the great destination of the New Jersey Southern Shore through a multi-level campaign.

The benefits of the cooperative marketing between the county and the DMO is the ability to leverage our funding to expand our marketing opportunities and to grow tourism to the region. The combined budgets have served to keep Cape May County ranked as the second largest tourism destination in the State.

Sample of Ad Summer, Winter, Spring & Fall



CAPE MAY COUNTY NEW JERSEY: OCEAN CITY, SEA ISLE, AVALON, STONE HARBOR, THE WILDWOODS, CAPE MAY

AUTHENTICALLY CHARMING
Sincerely Yours.

WELCOME to a place that's real... and really charming. An area that stays vibrant long after summer. Quiet beach walks in the cool air, Quaint small towns filled with seasonal events for every interest, charming lodging, world class birding, active pursuits, and the freshest food from our local fields and waters.

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OCEAN CITY, SEA ISLE, AVALON, STONE HARBOR,
THE WILDWOODS, AND CAPE MAY

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JERSEY CAPE



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YOU KNOW the Jersey Shore, but do you know the Jersey Cape? It's a place that's real... and really charming. Filled with authentically charming attractions like our famous free zoo! An area surrounded by quaint small towns, beautiful beaches and bustling boardwalks.

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CAPE MAY COUNTY NEW JERSEY: OCEAN CITY, SEA ISLE, AVALON, STONE HARBOR, THE WILDWOODS, CAPE MAY

AUTHENTICALLY CHARMING BEACHES
Sincerely Yours.



NEW JERSEY
SOUTHERN SHORE
CAPE MAY @ CUMBERLAND COUNTIES
SUPPORTED IN PART BY A GRANT FROM THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF STATE, DIVISION OF TRAVEL & TOURISM. WWW.VISITNJ.ORG

Escape Experience Fall at the Jersey Cape, charming towns with food straight from the sea and soil...

TO THE JERSEY CAPE

ESCAPE THE EVERYDAY. PURSUE YOUR PASSIONS



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CAPE MAY COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Authentically Charming

Sincerely Yours

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TO THE JERSEY CAPE

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CAPE MAY & CUMBERLAND COUNTIES

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2023 – Cape May County Visitor Profile – Based on 26% Survey Response Rate

Visitor Return Rate	85%
How many in travel group?	
1-2	42.4%
3-4	27.15%
5-6	21.59%
7 or more	9.42%
Who did they travel with?	
SPOUSE-NO CHILDREN	32.5%
CHILDREN ONLY	0%
FAMILY (SPOUSE & CHILDREN)	29%
COUPLE AND/OR FRIENDS	5.68%
EXTENDED FAMILY (PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, SIBLINGS, ETC.)	21.45%
GROUP	2.27%
TRAVEL ALONE OR SOLO	6.82%
Other	2.27%
Length of Stay	
DAY TRIP	6.82%
1 NIGHT	3.41%
2-4 NIGHTS	27.41%
5-6 NIGHTS	21.59%
7 NIGHTS	21.45%
8-10 NIGHTS	1.14%
2 WEEKS	5.34%
MORE THAN 2 WEEKS	6.55%
Other	8.64%
Did the Economy impact your Vacation Spending?	
Yes	46.59%
No	53.41%

Age	
18-35	4.58%
36-45	18.68%
46-53	25.9%
54-71	38.09%
72 AND OVER	12.73%
Travel Season	
SUMMER	81.82%
FALL	44.32%
WINTER	15.91%
SPRING	36.36%
Top Markets	
New Jersey	30%
Pennsylvania	31%
New York	20%
Maryland/DC	8%
Other	11%
Vacation met expectations.	
YES	89.16%
NO	10.84%
Years vacationing in CMC?	
FIRST TIME	15.41%
1-2 YEARS	3.40%
3-4 YEARS	6.82%
5-6 YEARS	2.27%
7-8 YEARS	3.45%
9-10 YEARS	4.55%
11-15 YEARS	5.68%
16-20 YEARS	13.8%
20 YEARS Plus	45.6%

Vacation Spending	
\$100 - \$300	3.49%
\$300 - \$500	6.98%
\$500 - \$700	4.65%
\$700 - \$1,000	14.28%
\$1,000 - \$1,500	10.47%
\$1,500 - \$2,000	24.42%
\$2,500 - \$3,000	18.28%
MORE THAN \$3,000	17.44%
Top Reasons for Vacationing in CMC	
SAFETY & SECURITY	81.82%
VALUE	77.27%
QUIET	47.73%
ROMANTIC	14.77%
FAMILY ORIENTED	47.73%
RELAXATION	65.91%
CLOSE TO HOME	15.91%
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES	22.73%
CHARMING	50%
Other	10.23%
Top Attractions	
BEACH	84.09%
SHOPPING	68.18%
RESTAURANT/DINING	78.41%
CULTURAL/HISTORIC	34.09%
BOARDWALK	69.32%
ECO/NATURE/BIRDING	18.18%
FISHING/BOATING/WATERSORTS	20.05%
CAMPING	3.41%
ZOO	33.82%
ARTS/THEATER/MUSIC	18.77%
FARM MARKET/FARM 2 TABLE	10.55%
WINERIES/BREWERIES/DISTILLERIES	28.41%
Other	10.23%

Cape May County Facts and Figures

Tourism Supported Employment		
	Direct Jobs	Indirect Jobs
2018	26,570	37,174
2019	26,981	37,718
2020	23,265	31,670
2021	28,304	36,837
2022	30,352	39,430
2023	31,325	40,557

2023 Garden State Parkway Vehicle Count							
Great Egg Harbor				Cape May County			
Jan	406,007	Jul	944,973	Jan	305,629	Jul	853,120
Feb	393,820	Aug	928,016	Feb	291,340	Aug	811,735
Mar	463,915	Sept	639,060	Mar	342,860	Sept	545,790
Apr	506,070	Oct	522,319	Apr	395,280	Oct	414,966
May	658,688	Nov	450,090	May	533,262	Nov	335,580
June	800,130	Dec	455,514	June	640,020	Dec	331,700

Cape May County Zoo Gate Attendance									
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
JANUARY	4,270	7,683	5,655	5,179	5,176	622	15,160	3,664	13,637
FEBRUARY	2,827	10,858	1,280	9,354	7,737	540	6,572	15,037	15,594
MARCH	12,065	36,232	10,757	15,042	20,799	0	40,427	20,314	18,092
APRIL	49,766	36,051	63,637	39,999	57,468	0	64,540	67,314	75,604
MAY	73,911	55,041	50,482	55,107	60,669	0	64,579	57,575	83,877
JUNE	75,142	88,810	86,056	84,677	87,000	48,809	87,335	95,979	97,021
JULY	117,442	110,466	115,822	111,452	60,841	67,372	111,228	105,072	109,921
AUGUST	134,461	127,387	79,262	110,946	124,747	82,619	101,841	120,963	140,757
SEPTEMBER	62,835	55,337	27,210	48,866	58,203	74,260	62,464	61,286	53,659
OCTOBER	26,527	30,536	27,425	24,662	9,567	42,749	35,665	32,937	40,229
NOVEMBER	18,398	19,246	14,354	13,678	4,457	28,107	20,798	24,625	40,108
DECEMBER	10,426	5,825	4,446	7,911	7,950	5,794	12,481	10,215	11,093
TOTALS	588,070	583,472	486,386	526,873	504,614	350,872	623,090	614,981	699,592
Zoo Counter Out / Gate									

Alcohol Establishments	2023 Cape May Lewes Ferry Passenger Count				Open Space Program
19 Wineries/Breweries/Distillers					Established in 1989 via ballot question - 1 cent per
131 Establishments	Jan 31,114	Jul 173,80	\$100 assessed value dedicated trust fund.		
38 Liquor Stores	Feb 32,244	Aug 179,423	Farmland Preservation – 3,664.7 acres - \$34.4million		
Restaurants	Mar 41,798	Sept 104,462	Open Space Preservation: 1,341.9 acres- \$33.3 million		
1268 total retail food facilities	Apr 73,712	Oct 75,844	Since Program Expansion in 2013		
593 year-round	May 85,563	Nov 55,534	Park/Recreation Development: 50 Projects - \$37million		
675 seasonal	June 121,584	Dec 48,366	Historic Preservation: 45 Projects - \$4 million		

Cape May County Commercial Fishing Industry

The commercial fishing industry in Cape May County, New Jersey, has a rich history and continues to be a significant contributor to the local economy. Here are some key statistics from 2019, latest data available:

- **Port of Cape May/Wildwood Ex-vessel Value:** \$90 million for 94.5 million pounds of fish. The ex-vessel value represents the amount paid by dealers to fishermen for their catch.
- **Local Income:** Approximately \$270 million. This value includes wages, goods, and services related to the fishing industry, benefiting the community.
- **Multiplier Effect:** To understand the broader impact, a common multiplier of 3 is applied to the ex-vessel value. This accounts for additional economic activity generated by the industry.

Cape May County’s commercial fishing industry is robust and holds a prominent position nationally. The combined port of Cape May/Wildwood ranks **fifth** in the country for commercial fishing landings. It is the largest commercial fishing port in New Jersey and one of the largest on the East Coast. The 2019 ex-vessel value for Cape May/Wildwood was **\$90 million**, with a local income impact of approximately **\$270 million**.

The scallop industry in Cape May County, New Jersey, is still a **\$440 million-dollar a year industry** despite its challenges. It’s a significant contributor to the local economy, and the ports of Cape May and Wildwood together constitute the largest commercial fishery in New Jersey.

The main fish species caught in Cape May County includes Summer Flounder (Fluke), Bluefish, Black Sea Bass, Weakfish, Striped Bass, Tautog (Blackfish), and Scup (Porgy).

Cape May County at a Glance

- 94,610 year-round residents with an estimated summer population of 763,940
- 4.2 percent of the people are under the age of 5.
- 29.5 percent are over 65 years old.
- Median household income is approximately \$83,870.
- Of the 99,422 housing units, nearly half (47%) remain vacant for seasonal/recreational use only.
- 93.9% percent of persons 25+ are high school graduate or higher.

GEOGRAPHY

- Encompassing 252 square miles of land area located at the southern tip of the State bordered by Atlantic County to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the east and south and the Delaware Bay to the west.
- Made up of 16 municipalities.
- 30 miles of white sandy beaches on the barrier islands with thousands of acres on the mainland preserved for open space, farmland, and natural conservation.
- Middle Township, with over 70 square miles, is geographically the largest of all the municipalities.
- Lower Township, with approximately 23,000 people, is the most populated.

ECONOMY

- Total civilian labor force of 53,235 people
- Tourism represents the number one industry generating over \$7.4 billion a year in revenues.
- There are 12,364 total firms including self-employed persons and 3,764 of those firms are employer establishments.
- The County's largest employment component is leisure and hospitality which includes lodging, food services, recreation, and amusements.

- The next largest employment sector is health care and social assistance.
- The average annual unemployment rate is 7.4 percent.

2024 Cape May County Visitor Survey

Measuring 2023 Tourism Season

Starts **1336**

Submits **349**

Submission rate **26.19%**

Contact submissions	289
Anonymous submissions	60

Desktop	33%
Mobile	66%

1. Did you take a vacation to Cape May County in 2023?

YES 71.59%

NO 28.41%

2. What is your age group?

18-24	1.04%
25-35	3.54%
36-45	18.68%
46-53	25.9%
54-71	38.09%
72 AND OVER	12.73%

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

1-2 42,4%

3-4	27.15%
5-6	21.59%
7-8	1.14%
9-10	2.27%
Other	6.02%

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

SPOUSE-NO CHILDREN	32.5%
CHILDREN ONLY	0%
FAMILY (SPOUSE & CHILDREN)	29%
COUPLE AND/OR FRIENDS	5.68%
EXTENDED FAMILY (PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, SIBLINGS, ETC.)	21.45%
GROUP	2.27%
TRAVEL ALONE OR SOLO	6.82%
Other	2.27%

5. Was this your first vacation/trip to Cape May County?

YES	14.77%
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NO 85.23%

6. How many nights did you stay?

DAY TRIP 6.82%

1 NIGHT 3.41%

2-4 NIGHTS 27.41%

5-6 NIGHTS 21.59%

7 NIGHTS 21.45%

8-10 NIGHTS 1.14%

2 WEEKS 5.34%

MORE THAN 2 WEEKS 6.55%

Other 8.64%

7. How many years have you been coming to Cape May County for a vacation?

FIRST TIME 15.41%

1-2 YEARS 3.40%

3-4 YEARS 6.82%

5-6 YEARS 2.27%

7-8 YEARS 3.45%

9-10 YEARS	4.55%
11-15 YEARS	5.68%
16-20 YEARS	13.8%
MORE THAN 20 YEARS	45.6%

8. Which Cape May County Resort is your vacation destination? Check all that apply.

CAPE MAY	54.64%
WILDWOODS	47.91%
STONE HARBOR	11.36%
AVALON	9.09%
SEA ISLE CITY	15.91%
OCEAN CITY	36.68%
Other	7.95%

9. What time of year did you vacation at the Jersey Cape in 2023?

SUMMER	81.82%
FALL	44.32%
WINTER	15.91%

SPRING 36.36%

10. What reasons affected the time(s) of year that you vacationed in 2023?

Work schedules and limited paid time off per year.

Wanted to see certain events and catch the sights.

School out

We always take summer vacations.

We own a home and come often during the year and love every time we come.

11. What attractions brought you to Cape May County in 2023? Check all that apply.

BEACH	85.23%
SHOPPING	54.55%
RESTAURANTS/DINING	73.86%
CULTURAL/HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS	35.23%
BOARDWALK	62.5%
ECO/NATURE BASED ACTIVITIES (Nature Walks, Whale, etc.)	11.36%
BIRDING	10.23%
FISHING/BOATING	10.23%
GOLFING	4.55%

WATER SPORTS	5.68%
CAMPING	4.55%
ZOO	37.5%
ART EXHIBITS/THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES	5.68%
SPECIAL EVENTS	19.32%
ATLANTIC CITY	15.91%
ATHLETIC EVENT:RUN OR RACE	1.14%
MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT/THEATER	12.5%
AGRI-FARM MARKET - FARM TO TABLE	8.82%
WINERIES, BREWERIES, DISTILLERIES	30.68%
Other	7.95%

12. How many attractions did you participate in while visiting Cape May County in 2023? Check all that apply.

BEACH	84.09%
SHOPPING	68.18%
RESTAURANT/DINING	78.41%

CULTURAL/HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS	34.09%
BOARDWALK	69.32%
ECO/NATURE-BASED (e.g. Whale Watching Excursion)	11.36%
BIRDING	6.82%
FISHING/BOATING	10.23%
WATERSPORTS	9.82%
CAMPING	3.41%
ZOO	33.82%
ART EXHIBITS/THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES	9.68%
SPECIAL EVENTS	21.59%
ATLANTIC CITY	18.18%
ATHLETIC EVENT: RUN OR RACE	1.14%
MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT/THEATER	9.09%
AGRI-FARM MARKET- FARM TO TABLE	10.55%
WINERIES, BREWERIES, DISTILLERIES	28.41%
Other	10.23%

13. What style of dining was the most popular choice in Summer 2023? Check all that apply.

FINE DINING	31.27%
CASUAL DINING	88.64%
TAKE OUT & GRAB AND GO	35.23%
FARM TO TABLE	10.23%

14. Did you visit one of our Agri tourism attractions? Check all that apply.

WINERY	34.09%
BREWERY	25%
DISTILLERY	10.23%
FARM/FARM MARKET	44.32%
RESTAURANT THAT OFFERS LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE/PRODUCTS	37.5%
Other	19.32%

15. Where else did you travel in 2023? Check all that apply.

.PENNSYLVANIA	68.18%
NEW YORK	35.23%
DELAWARE	19.32%
MARYLAND	27.27%

NEW ENGLAND	18.18%
VIRGINIA	12.5%)
NORTH CAROLINA	12.5%
SOUTH CAROLINA	13.64%
FLORIDA	25%
CARIBBEAN ISLANDS	13.64%
EUROPE	5.68%
Other	22.73%

16. What type of accommodations will you most often choose while on vacation in Cape May County?

MOTEL	31.59%
HOTEL	25.82%
BED & BREAKFAST	5.68%
CONDO RENTAL	7.95%
APARTMENT/HOUSE RENTAL	13.64%
CAMPGROUND	3.14%
OWN HOUSE	4.55%

RELATIVE/FRIEND	0%
AIRBNB, VRBO, HOMEAWAY.COM	2.27%
DAY TRIP	5.68%
Other	3.68%

17. How did you hear about Cape May County? Check all that apply.

FAMILY/FRIEND	38.86%
RETURN VISITOR	57.09%
PRINT AD	9.41%
TELEVISION	8.71%
INTERNET/WEBSITE	19.09%
TRAVEL GUIDE	14.77%
TRAVEL/TRADE SHOW	1%
TOUR OPERATOR/BUS TRIP	3.41%
SOCIAL MEDIA	9.82%
Other	5.09%

18. Where did you get the information that helped you choose Cape May County as your vacation destination? Check all that apply.

PRINT AD	11.55%
RADIO/TV	10.14%
INTERNET	29.9%
SOCIAL MEDIA AD	7.68%
BROCHURE/TRAVEL GUIDE	30.68%
FRIEND/FAMILY	38.64%
RETURN VISIT	52.27%
Other	5.68%

19. How do you prefer to get your vacation information? Check all that apply.

INTERNET/WEBSITE	64.77%
DIRECT MAIL	53.41%
EMAIL	48.86%
PRINT AD	21.36%
TELEVISION/RDIO	15.82%
FAMILY/FRIEND REFERRAL	27.27%
SOCIAL MEDIA	19.32%
Other	1.14%

20. Approximately how much do you spend while on vacation?

\$100 - \$300	3.49%
\$300 - \$500	6.98%
\$500 - \$700	4.65%
\$700 - \$1,000	14.28%
\$1,000 - \$1,500	10.47%
\$1,500 - \$2,000	24.42%
\$2,500 - \$3,000	18.28%
MORE THAN \$3,000	17.44%

21. What do you spend on average per day, per person while on vacation?

\$100 - \$150	36.37%
\$150 - \$200	20.93%
\$200 - \$250	13.95%
\$250 - \$300	11.63%
\$300 - \$350	6.98%
\$350 - \$400	2.0%
\$400 - \$450	2.33%

\$450 - \$500	0%
\$500 - \$550	1.16%
\$550 - \$600	0%
OVER \$600	4.65%

22. Factors that are important when choosing your vacation destination in 2024? Check all that apply.

SAFETY & SECURITY	81.82%
VALUE	77.27%
QUIET	47.73%
ROMANTIC	14.77%
FAMILY ORIENTED	47.73%
RELAXATION	65.91%
CLOSE TO HOME	15.91%
NUMBER OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES	22.73%
CHARMING SURROUNDINGS	50%
Other	10.23%

23. How many vacations do you plan to take to Cape May County in 2024?

1	45.45%
2	29.45%
3	9.09%
4 or MORE	14.77%
Other	1.23%

24. Will you plan your vacation to Cape May County around a special event in 2024?

YES	26.44%
NO	73.56%

25. Did your vacation in Cape May County meet your expectations in 2023?

YES	89.16%
NO	10.84%

26. If you answered No, please explain in the box provided.

We felt as though we were being discriminated against/pushed out of the CMC "vacationing market" both in terms of age and salary range. With the increased lodging/restaurant prices and having to DOWNLOAD AN APP in SH to pay for parking was maddening.

have not been yet.

Others in condo were openly smoking pot.

Getting way too expensive to afford the boardwalk and restaurants.

I have been going to Wildwood for years and I find it expensive and not family friendly. The sights and language are disgusting.

Parking is a problem in Cape May and when you can find a spot the meters are expensive. They must not want people to shop and spend money.

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

PUT THE METERS/PAY STATIONS BACK to allow flexibility in paying for parking! Organized sightseeing tours and cultural events.

We love the SH Wetlands Institute, CM Whale Watcher, CM Tours, Lighthouses, and towers.

Make Special Events more known about, broadcasted and easy to search for. Also provide more year-round events.

Traffic and parking! Ugh

Parking is aggravating and expensive. We are no longer going down in the summer because of the crowds and costs.

More Jitney service to get people around without driving.

28. Did the economy impact your vacation plans in 2023? If no, skip to question #33.

Yes 46.59%

No 53.41%

29. Did you reduce vacation spending?

Yes 60.23%

No 39.77%

30. Did you change your vacation plans due to the economy? Check all that apply.

CANCEL YOUR VACATION	7.95%
TAKE FEWER VACATIONS	44.32%
TAKE A STAYCATION	11.36%
TAKE A WEEKEND OR SHORT GETAWAY	25%
TAKE DAY TRIPS	27.27%
REDUCE THE LENGTH OF YOUR STAY	31.82%

31. If yes, how did you reduce spending on your vacation to the Jersey Cape? Check all that apply.

.CUT SPENDING FOR MEALS	38.64%
CUT SPENDING FOR ATTRACTIONS	26%
CUT SPENDING FOR SHOPPING	40.91%
CUT SPENDING FOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES	21.59%
CHANGE LODGING OPTIONS TO FIT YOUR BUDGET	31.82%
Other	13.77%

32. Will the economy impact your vacation plans in 2024? If yes, please explain.

Yes	48.2%
No	51.8%

.
Most definitely - will again need to seek out more affordable lodging instead of staying at our preferred B&B

No I don't believe so.

Not so far

We know we will need to watch our spending while on vacation.

We shopped around and found a cheaper motel and still going to Wildwood Crest in August.