

# INSIDER

June 2009

## LEISURE TRAVELERS *Surveyed*

by Wendy Bernstein, MBACC research manager

Over the past decade tourism research at the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber/CVB has strived to acquire more targeted research information on the leisure traveler to enhance marketing efforts. In January 2007, the chamber commissioned Equation Research to conduct a survey three times a year with core tracking measures to monitor attitudes and travel preferences for likely travelers to the Myrtle Beach area; it is referred to as the Myrtle Beach Traveler Index. The index has become a vital tool in providing insight into the effects the downturn in the economy has had on leisure travelers and the areas in which the visitors have had to make cuts in their vacation plans.

The Myrtle Beach Traveler Index survey is conducted online and the respondents are individuals who are part of the eRewards survey panel. The survey respondents must be over 18 years old, and live in NY, NJ, OH, PA, VA, KY, WV, GA, TN or MD. The results are not weighted and 400 responses are obtained each time the survey is conducted. The results are monitored to receive an equal number of responses by gender and age group for each state. Basic demographic information is captured and combinations of aided and unaided questions are incorporated with a set of core questions regarding attitudes and travel patterns. The final qualifying participation criteria are that the respondent must have taken at least one overnight trip for leisure in the last twelve months.

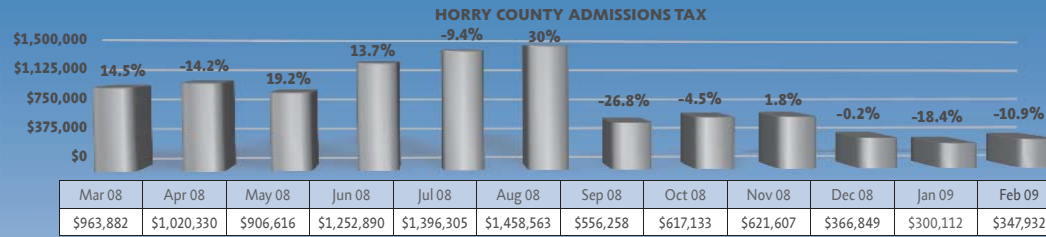
The most recent Myrtle Beach Traveler Index survey was conducted in April 2009. The respondents were provided a list of answers and asked which of the following factors, if any, have impacted or might impact their leisure travel plans in the next twelve months? Of the respondents, 50 percent state a decrease in disposable income would impact their travel plans, while 47 percent stated concern about the economy and time availability. The fourth response showed 33 percent stated rising fuel prices as impacting their leisure travel plans; where as in 2007 and 2008 rising fuel prices were the number factor impacting leisure travel plans.

The respondents were next asked "What, if any, impact economic concerns and fuel prices have on their leisure travel in 2009?" The chart below shows a comparison of the responses to that question from 2009 and 2008. All of the percentages decreased in 2009 compared to 2008, but the most significant decrease of 50 percent was of those who stated they would vacation closer to home.

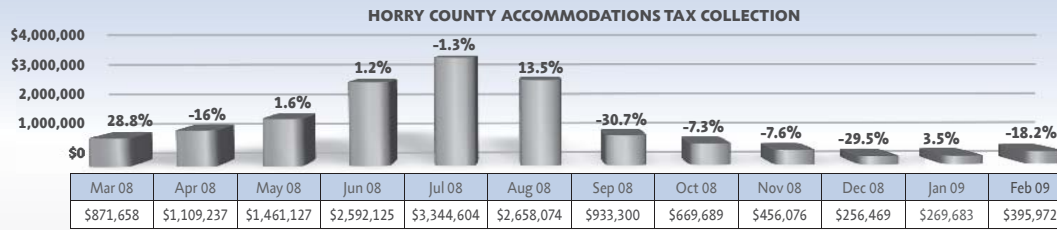
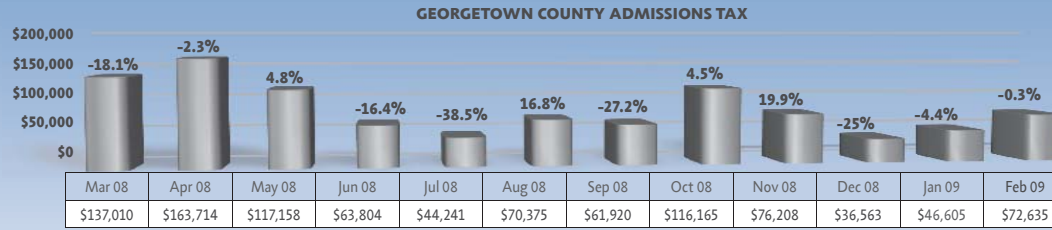
	2009	2008
Will spend less on shopping	42%	49%
Will spend less on food	22%	25%
Will spend less on attractions/entertainment	32%	41%
Will vacation closer to home	26%	52%

The index also tracks how familiar the respondents are with the Myrtle Beach area, 11 percent had visited within the last two years and were very familiar with the area, while 39 percent had heard of Myrtle Beach, but were not familiar with the area. Another 31 percent had visited more than two years ago and were familiar with the Myrtle Beach area. These results emphasize the importance of steady advertising of the Myrtle Beach area to familiarize potential "new visitors" to the area, and serve as a reminder to "past and repeat visitors."

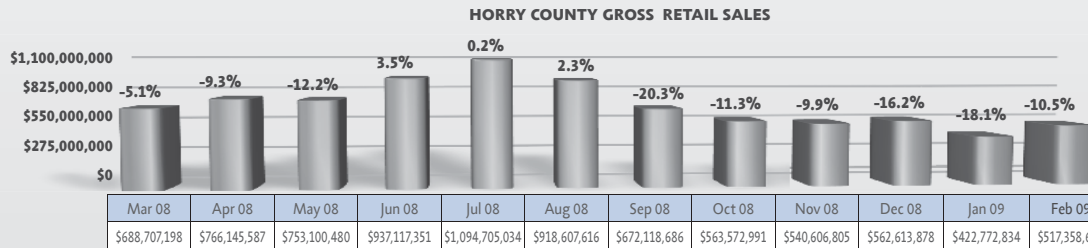
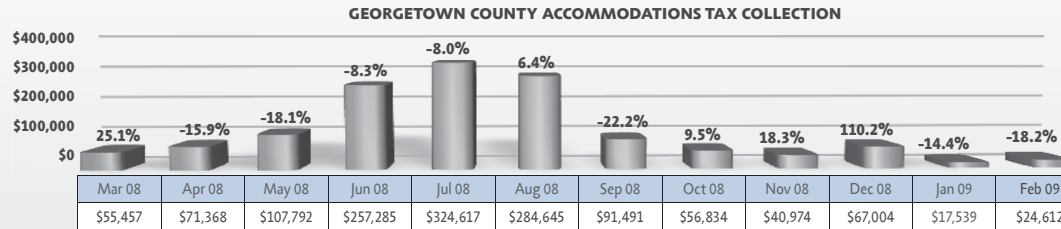
Lastly, the Myrtle Beach Traveler Index survey also provides the chamber to ask the consumer any pressing issue questions pertaining to the area. For the April index, we asked a few questions regarding the building of a new interstate highway connecting Myrtle Beach to I-95. When asked if this new interstate would be beneficial to them in traveling or deciding to travel to the Myrtle Beach area, 50 percent said yes, 20 percent said no and 30 percent were unsure. They were then asked if this new interstate highway had a toll on it, would you be willing to pay a reasonable toll fee, and 60 percent said yes, 18 percent said no, and 22 percent were unsure.



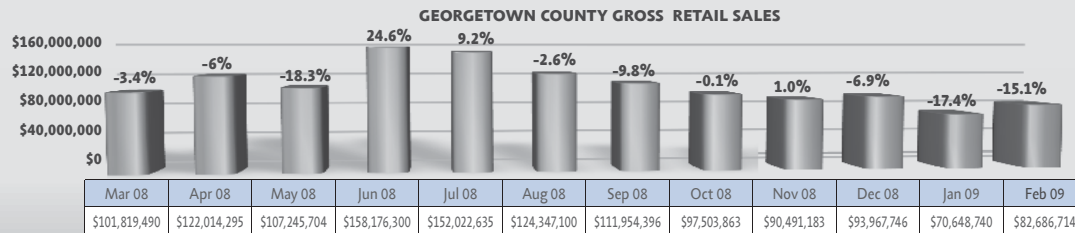
Percentages Shown Are Percent Change From Previous Year



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For more information regarding additional research conducted by the chamber, contact Wendy Bernstein at [Wendy.Bernstein@VisitMyrtleBeach.com](mailto:Wendy.Bernstein@VisitMyrtleBeach.com)

Source: S.C. Departments of PRT and Revenue

### UNIQUE *User Sessions*



	2008	2009	Change
<b>JAN</b>	217,261	269,285	23.95%
<b>FEB</b>	215,092	283,597	31.85%
<b>MAR</b>	279,302	388,477	39.09%
<b>APR</b>	336,043	374,741	11.52%

### ADVERTISER *Referrals*



	2008	2009	Change
<b>JAN</b>	347,720	406,873	17.01%
<b>FEB</b>	358,112	459,712	28.37%
<b>MAR</b>	426,144	588,396	38.07%
<b>APR</b>	505,598	525,240	3.88%

### YEAR OVER YEAR

YTD Referral Click % Change\*

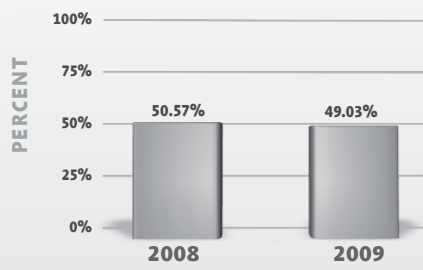
Category	% Change
Lodging	+27.97%
Amusements	-8.62%
Theaters	+6.85%
Dining	+51.57%
Shopping	+55.21%
Watersports	+95.20%
Weddings	+20.75%
Golf	+22.73%
Additional Services	+50.09%

\* Jan. 1 - Apr. 30

For more information, contact: [Bill.Rosenthal@VisitMyrtleBeach.com](mailto:Bill.Rosenthal@VisitMyrtleBeach.com)

### OCCUPANCY PERCENT PER ROOM WEEK\*

(March 19, 2009 - April 30, 2009)



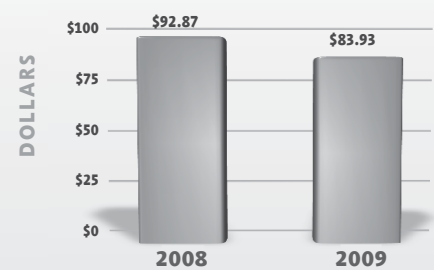
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<b>2009</b>	29.54%	40.09%	49.82%			
<b>2008</b>	32.12%	49.96%	55.21%	60.00%	58.93%	72.96%
<b>2007</b>	34.01%	53.01%	64.18%	69.10%	60.85%	74.59%

	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>2009</b>						
<b>2008</b>	83.39%	73.73%	52.17%	55.87%	39.88%	25.22%
<b>2007</b>	82.94%	75.78%	62.40%	54.25%	39.86%	24.74%

### AVERAGE DAILY RATE PER ROOM WEEK\*

(March 19, 2009 - April 30, 2009)

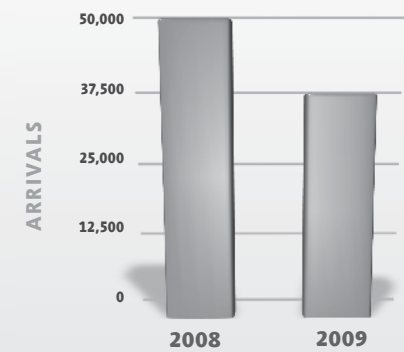


	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<b>2009</b>	\$55.45	\$67.68	\$81.07			
<b>2008</b>	\$58.54	\$73.02	\$82.28	\$95.87	\$111.84	\$145.72
<b>2007</b>	\$55.95	\$71.90	\$83.84	\$98.29	\$116.61	\$144.34

	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>2009</b>						
<b>2008</b>	\$159.59	\$125.09	\$83.14	\$77.98	\$69.80	\$59.92
<b>2007</b>	\$162.96	\$129.77	\$93.15	\$76.80	\$68.82	\$59.20

### FEBRUARY AIRPORT ARRIVALS



	2008	2009	Change
<b>Arrivals</b>	48,676	37,174	-23.63%

\*Dr. Taylor Damonte, Director • Clay Brittain, Jr.  
Center for Resort Tourism • Coastal Carolina University  
tdamonte@coastal.edu  
**Source:** Horry County Department of Airports

**HELP US HELP YOU**  
Provide data to CCU

By sending in your weekly numbers, you will be providing valuable data that helps us to keep updated information. For more information, please contact Dr. Taylor Damonte, director of Clay Brittain, Jr. Center for Resort Tourism at Coastal Carolina University, [tdamonte@coastal.edu](mailto:tdamonte@coastal.edu).

# Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

## *big boost for early May*

by Danna Lilly, CMP, Myrtle Beach Area CVB director of sales

In the midst of constant news of cancelled events, low attendance and budget cuts, it's great to be able to report positive news for the meeting and convention industry in Myrtle Beach. On April 29, 2009, approximately 3,700 members of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority from South Carolina, Georgia and Florida arrived in Myrtle Beach to plant a huge economic footprint on our local economy. The 56th South Atlantic Regional Conference of AKA held three days of events at the Myrtle Beach Convention Center and filled rooms at many of the area hotels, including Sheraton Myrtle Beach Convention Center Hotel, Anderson Ocean Club & Spa, Holiday Inn Express and Fairfield Inn at Broadway at the Beach.

Attending the conference was the sorority's international president, Barbara A. McKinzie, who said, prior to the conference, that the large number of expected attendees in Myrtle Beach is a show of support to South Carolina and an example of the organization's theme – Economics, Service and Partnership. "During our stay in Myrtle Beach, Alpha Kappa

Alpha expects to contribute substantially to the city by dining at various restaurants, shopping and by supporting the convention center and its surrounding tourism attractions." And contribute they did! Based on estimated spending habits for convention attendees, the AKA attendees spent approximately \$2,075,700 in area businesses.

In addition to the economic impact of this group, Alpha Kappa Alpha also held community service events that were open to the public. A celebration recognized outstanding community leaders who have made significant contributions to our community while also honoring the Historic Myrtle Beach Colored School Museum and Education Center. A Health Fair was held which offered free mammogram screenings, for underinsured or uninsured residents of Horry County.

On another positive and final note, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority was previously booked in the Myrtle Beach area for their South Atlantic Conference in 2000. In the fall of 1999, the group was forced to cancel their contract because of the confederate flag debate and the boycott against the state of South Carolina by the NAACP. Case in point that time changes all and issues are resolved. We look ahead to the overall turnaround of the economy and the continued growth of the group market for the entire Grand Strand.

## CVB package information *available shortly*

Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce membership renewal invoices were mailed to all members on May 4. These invoices do not include CVB package participation. Specific CVB packages are being developed for lodging members, dining members, and activities and services members. Package information will be mailed shortly.

### *Where in the world is the CVB?*

June 1-5	Travel Alliance Partners LLC	Rapid City, SD
June 13-16	Healthcare Convention & Exhibitors Association	Tampa, FL

The CVB is busy this month welcoming  
18 groups with 2,560 attendees.

**Myrtle Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau Insider** is published monthly by the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, 1200 N. Oak St., Myrtle Beach, SC 29577. If you have story ideas or questions, please contact Pat Creed, membership programs manager and CVB member liaison, at Pat.Creed@VisitMyrtleBeach.com or (843) 916-7225. Printed by Inlet Printing Co.