

## BEACH OPERATIONS

**\$4.2 MILLION**

IN DESTINATION IMPROVEMENTS

### MAINTENANCE + CLEANUP



- 20 MILES OF BEACH
- 36 MILES OF PUBLIC ROADS & HWYS
- 9 REGIONAL BEACH ACCESS POINTS  
*Complete with parking, restrooms and lifeguard stations*
- 44 NEIGHBORHOOD BEACH ACCESS POINTS
- 8 BAY & LAKE ACCESS POINTS

### Garbage Collection

Beach maintenance crews removed 518 tons of garbage from approximately 230 garbage collection stations on the beach and bay in 2019. That's the equivalent of 86,328 individual bags of trash! An additional 20,025 leave no trace items were also removed from South Walton beaches.

### Code Enforcement

11 beach code enforcement officers patrol the beach seven days/wk 12-18 hours per day and in 2019 tracked 7,100 interactions, mostly focused on glass containers, beach parking, checking dog permits, vendor-related issues and special events including bonfires.

### Beach Ambassadors

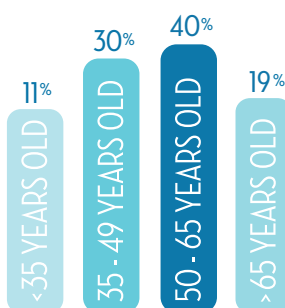
In 2019 South Walton employed 4 full-time and 2 part-time/seasonal beach ambassadors who, along with 208 trained adult volunteers and 35 trained junior volunteer beach ambassadors, assisted visitors to our area with helpful information and polite reminders about required beach etiquette.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

SWFD BEACH LIFEGUARD PROGRAM  
TURTLE NEST MONITORING  
VOLUNTEER BEACH AMBASSADORS  
INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEANUP  
CULTURAL ARTS ALLIANCE (CAA) OF WALTON COUNTY  
LOCAL EVENTS & FESTIVALS  
SOUTH WALTON ARTIFICIAL REEF ASSOCIATION (SWARA)  
STATE PARKS PARKING PROGRAM

VISITSOUTHWALTON.COM

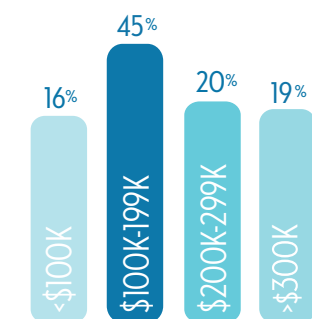
## South Walton 2019 VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS



AGE OF VISITORS



**4.6 PEOPLE**  
AVERAGE PARTY SIZE



HOUSEHOLD INCOME



AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY WAS  
**5.9 NIGHTS**

VISIT  
SOUTH  
WALTON

25777 US Highway 331 South  
Santa Rosa Beach, Florida 32459  
VisitSouthWalton.com



# 2019 TOURISM UPDATE

WALTON COUNTY TDC

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE



In many ways 2019 was very much like the several years proceeding it: Tourism numbers were strong, moderately up from the previous year, boosting the local economy and helping local businesses to prosper. In fact, 2020 was following that pattern as well, until the nation was unexpectedly impacted by COVID-19 which cost lives and shut down economies. Walton County's economy took a heavy hit as well, and as occupancy rates in South Walton fell in a matter of days from the 70-percent range to single digits, many businesses were forced to close their doors, furlough or layoff staff, and make new, hard decisions about the future.

As of this writing we cannot know exactly what will come next, but we are already putting plans into action, making sure we have the tools in place to resuscitate the local economy as quickly as is possible. We know that when it is safe to, our visitor will return, and in the meantime we will work to make sure that South Walton lives up to its brand promise - of being a casual, yet upscale beach destination where friends and family come year after year to make memories they'll cherish for the rest of their lives.

While the experiences they have here no doubt add to the happiness and quality of life of our visitors, it is just as plain to see how those visitors help support the quality of life of locals. Beyond paying the majority of the taxes necessary to fund our county, as patrons of local businesses visitors help keep tens of thousands of Walton County residents employed, and the bed tax that short term visitors pay funds everything from our lifeguard program to our beach accesses, for bike and walking trail creation and maintenance to underwriting the popular events that help make Walton County a special place to live and visit.

At the TDC, we are committed to ensuring quality of life for locals by continuing to support efforts to help our local economy thrive - as a community we are truly all in this together, and we look forward to bright days ahead for Walton County.

**JAY TUSA**

Executive Director  
Walton County Tourist Development Council

## 2019-2020 BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

**William "Bill" Chapman**, Chairman, District 1 Commissioner  
**Tony Anderson**, Vice-Chair, District 5 Commissioner  
**Danny Glidewell**, District 2 Commissioner  
**Melanie Nipper**, District 3 Commissioner  
**Trey Nick**, District 4 Commissioner

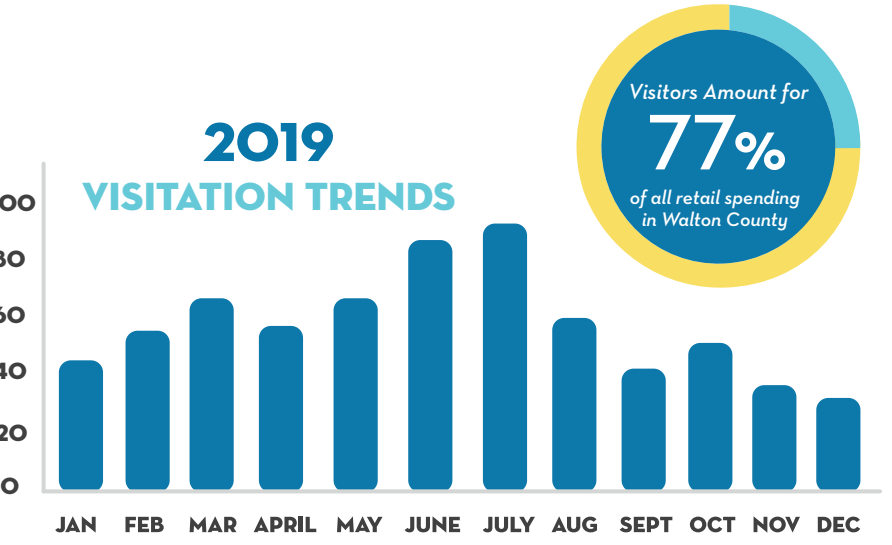
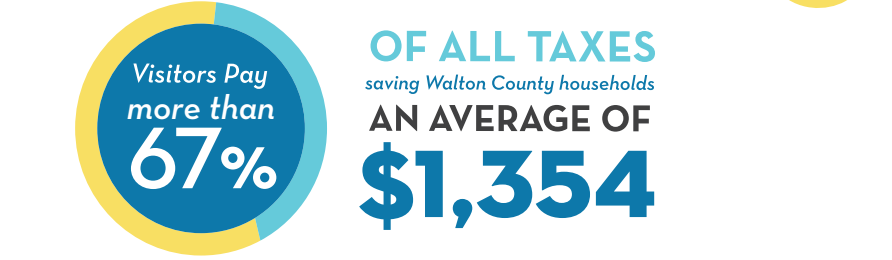


# The Value of SOUTH WALTON VISITORS



VISITORS SPEND \$853 EVERY DAY OF THEIR TRIP

4,305,700 VISITORS SPEND \$3.5 BILLION



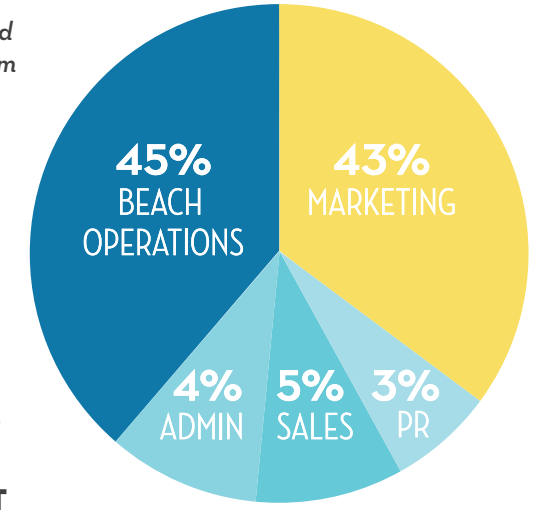
## TOURISTS fund TOURISM

The Tourist Development Tax is paid only by visitors staying in short-term rentals, such as hotels, condos and beach houses.

While the State of Florida has strict rules governing how those funds can be spent, many of the activities and amenities they support - such as bike trails, public beach accesses, lifeguards, and special events - enhance the lives of residents as well as visitors.

TOTAL 2019 TDC BUDGET \$26 MILLION

SHORT-TERM VISITORS FUND the Tourist Development Council through a 4% BED TAX OR TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX



## MARKETING

Targeted advertising keeps South Walton top-of-mind with our loyal visitors, strengthens our brand, and reaches out to new markets to help create balanced and robust demand.



## SALES + VISITOR SERVICES

19,889 PEOPLE CAME INTO THE VISITOR CENTER IN 2019

- 7 MEETING TRADE SHOWS reaching 148 meeting planners
- 3 MEETING PLANNER EVENTS reaching 100 planners
- 4 MEETING PLANNER SPONSORSHIPS reaching 235 planners

## PR + COMMUNICATIONS

Public Relations efforts result in South Walton's inclusion in media outlets such as: Coastal Living, National Geographic, Southern Living, Time Magazine, USA Today and many more!

Communications works to develop the South Walton story and help connect our community partners with opportunities that strengthen their business.

Check our online South Walton Expert Guide for tons of helpful info visitsouthwalton.com/southwaltonexpert

## BEACH OPERATIONS

BEACH CODE ENFORCEMENT • BEACH AMBASSADORS  
BEACH MAINTENANCE • BEACH SAFETY PROGRAM

Regional Beach Access Additions  
Years of hard work came to fruition in late 2019, as Walton County was able to celebrate the opening of a new regional beach access in Dune Allen Beach, with two more regional beach accesses on the way. Prior to these additions, it had been more than a decade since a new regional beach access was added to the county's collection.



### New Regional Beach Access Locations and Expected Opening Dates

- Dune Allen Regional Beach Access:** Located at 5999 W. County Highway 30A, the newest regional beach access offers parking, bike racks, restroom facilities and a lifeguard station at the beach. The 1.51-acre property has 220 feet of beachfront and was purchased in 2016. *Now Open!*
- Miramar Beach:** Located at 907 Scenic Gulf Drive, this will be the second regional beach access in Miramar Beach. Major hurdles in the permitting and design phase have been cleared, and construction is scheduled to begin in late 2020. *Groundbreaking in 2020!*
- Seagrove Beach:** Although considerable permitting challenges have lengthened the timeline for bringing a new regional beach access to Seagrove Beach, progress is being made and construction is expected to begin in late 2020. *Groundbreaking in 2020!*

Neighborhood Beach Access Renovations  
The Walton County TDC has been hard at work renovating and sometimes replacing entire neighborhood beach accesses, with the goal of keeping them in good condition and making upgrades before the integrity or appearance degrades due to wear and tear.



### Managed Beach Vendor Program

In 2019, the Walton County TDC partnered with the South Walton Beach Service Association to test a pilot program aimed at eliminating "ghost chairs" (unattended chairs left on the beach as placeholders) at three popular public beach accesses (Inlet Beach and Ed Walline Regional Beach Accesses, and the Grayton Dunes Neighborhood Beach Access). Under the program, on-duty beach attendants only set up chairs when the guest arrives, and then they are taken down when no longer in use. The program proved so successful that the Walton County Board of County Commissioners voted to expand the program to all regional beach access points in South Walton for the 2020 season.

Park Renovations  
Following damage sustained in Hurricane Michael, the Walton County TDC worked to renovate two bayside parks, including Thomas Pilcher Park (on the south side of US 331 underneath the Clyde B. Wells Bridge) and the Bayside Ranchettes (327 E. Mitchell Ave). Renovations on both parks are now complete.

South Walton Fire District  
The Beach Safety Division, which is funded by the Walton County TDC, saw its budget increase from \$887,000 in 2018 to \$1,592,152 in 2019, allowing five additional lifeguards to be hired and enabling year-round coverage of South Walton's beaches for the first time. This increase also enabled an additional 45 days of fully-staffed service through the month of October and capital expenditures to upgrade and maintain rescue equipment. In total, 62 lifeguards were employed during 2019, the majority of whom worked to keep beaches safe during the busy spring and summer months.