



VISIT
SOUTH
WALTON

— 2021 —

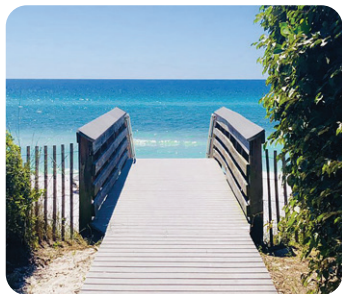
TOURISM UPDATE

WALTON COUNTY TOURISM DEPARTMENT





COUNTY TOURISM UPDATE



As Walton County continues to recover from the impacts of COVID-19, we can't help but celebrate the hardworking and determined men and women who are the backbone of our community. Our residents and business owners faced tremendous uncertainty while navigating a global pandemic, yet they showed incredible resiliency and continued to provide world-class service to our guests.

This speaks volumes to the character of this community.

Our natural beauty and welcoming ways are what draw people to these sugar-white sands. Here, they feel like they are part of Walton County's fabric. For those few days or that week they are here, visitors truly embrace our lifestyle.

And while the pandemic forced us all to slow down a bit, it didn't stop our team from moving forward with important projects. Incredible progress is being made on the new Miramar Beach Regional Beach Access and work is underway on multiple municipal parking projects.

Looking ahead, 2022 is an important year for Walton County and its tourism economy. As travel rebounds around the globe, it's imperative that we thoughtfully find ways to keep Walton County top of mind with travelers. Tourism remains the top economic driver in Walton County and in 2021 tourism supported 47,700 jobs in our community.

As we work our way through the strategic planning process and the creation of a destination master plan, we don't want to lose sight of the community. Planning for future growth and visitation, both north and south of the Choctawhatchee Bay, will require valuable input from our elected leaders, community stakeholders and our residents.

From the Alabama state line to the 26 miles of beach along the Gulf of Mexico, Walton County offers unique opportunities for everyone, whether that's our residents or visitors, looking to create lifelong memories with their families and friends.



The Value of SOUTH WALTON VISITORS



47,700

Walton County jobs supported by tourism

VISITORS SPEND \$1,040 EVERY DAY OF THEIR TRIP

5,365,500 VISITORS SPEND \$4.8 BILLION

\$7.1 BILLION

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

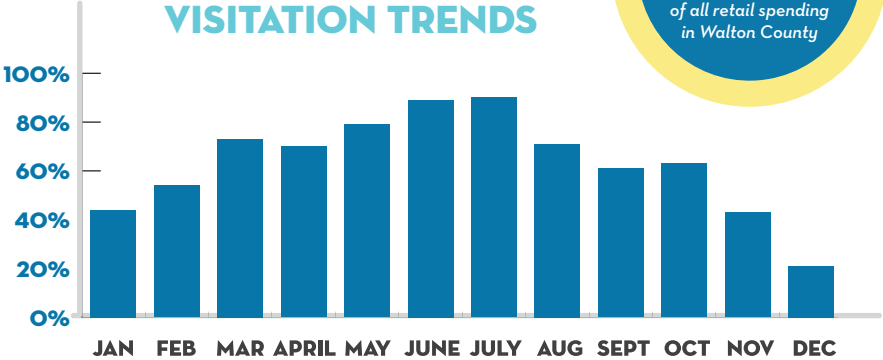


OF ALL TAXES
saving Walton County households
AN AVERAGE OF
\$1,695

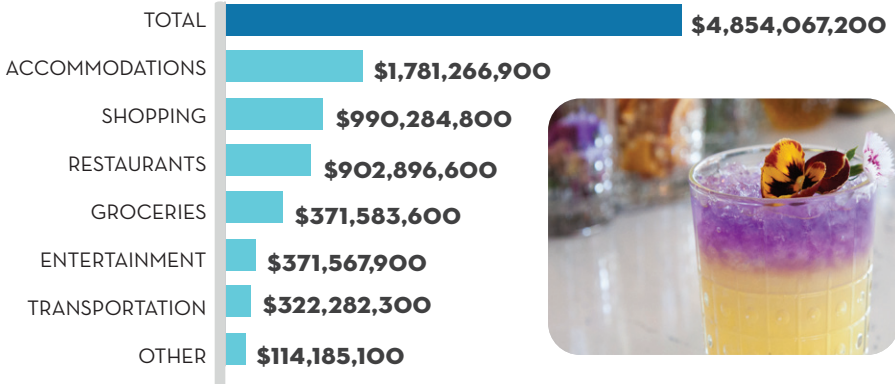


2021

VISITATION TRENDS



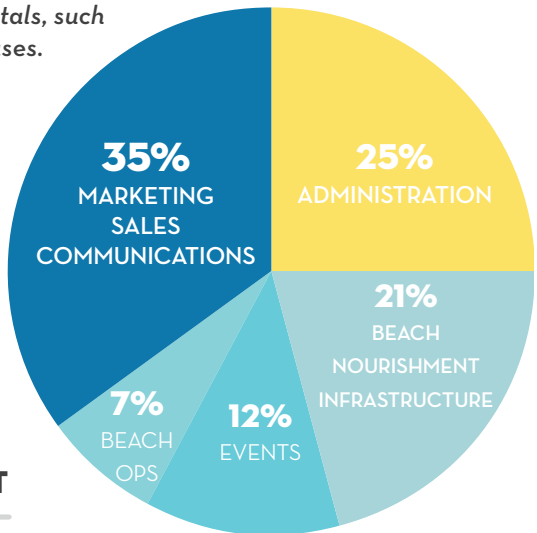
2021 VISITORS DIRECT SPENDING



FUNDED *by* 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 2021 TDC BUDGET

\$59.2 MILLION



SHORT-TERM VISITORS FUND
the Tourism Department through a
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX

5%

BED TAX IN
SOUTH WALTON

2%

BED TAX
NORTH OF THE BAY

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.

\$1 SPENT = **\$480**
on tourism marketing in visitor spending



SALES & VISITOR SERVICES

16,311 PEOPLE EXPLORED OUR
VISITOR CENTER IN 2021

13 MEETING TRADE SHOWS reaching 480 meeting planners

5 MEETING PLANNER EVENTS reaching 120 planners

7 MEETING PLANNER SPONSORSHIPS reaching 1,000 planners

PR + COMMUNICATIONS

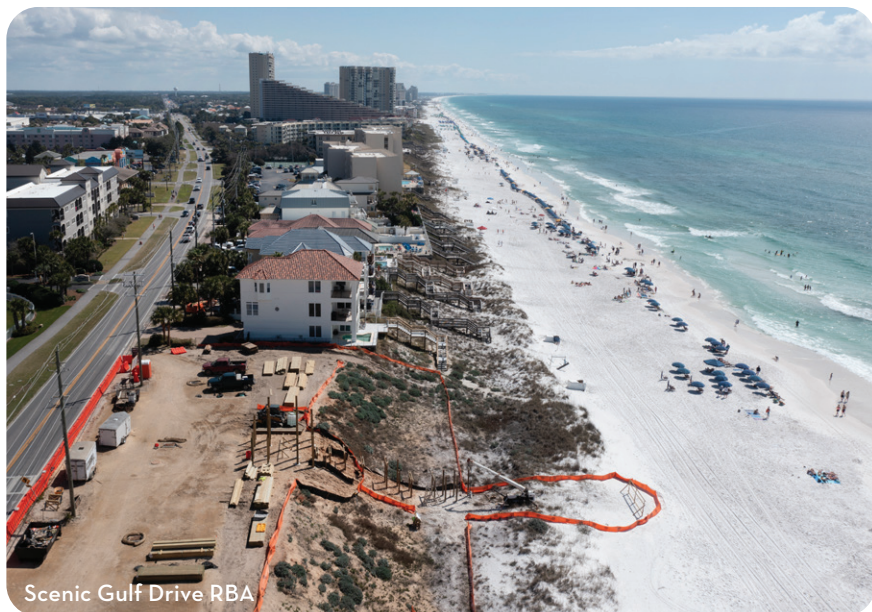
Public Relations efforts result in Walton County's inclusion in media outlets such as: **Reader's Digest, Forbes, The Daily Beast, AFAR, Condé Nast Traveler,** and many more!



Communications works to develop the Walton County 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



Regional Beach Access Updates and Expected Opening Dates

- **Scenic Gulf Drive RBA:** Located at 907 Scenic Gulf Drive, this will be the second regional beach access in Miramar Beach. BCC approved the construction bid and awarded the construction contract to RBM Construction, Inc. Construction started Sept. 7, 2021. *Expected to open June 2022!*
- **Seagrove Beach RBA:** Design and permitting is almost complete and a development order application is under review. *Construction expected to start in Summer 2022!*
- **Walton Dunes RBA:** This new RBA will be located on Beachfront Trail in Santa Rosa Beach. It will have parking, restrooms and an ADA accessible boardwalk. *Design/Permitting efforts expected to be complete by Summer 2022!*

Neighborhood Beach Access Renovations

The Walton County Tourism Department 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 from wear and tear.





South Walton Fire District

The Beach Safety Division, which is funded by the Walton County Tourism Department, had a budget of about \$1.5 million in 2021. In total, 55 lifeguards were employed during 2021, the majority of whom worked to keep beaches safe during the busy spring and summer months. A full-time staff of 15 people included one beach safety director, four lieutenants, four beach safety officers and four full-time lifeguards.

Beach Ambassadors

In 2021 South Walton employed 2 full-time and 15 part-time/seasonal beach ambassadors who, along with 231 trained adult volunteers and 14 trained junior volunteer beach ambassadors, offered visitors helpful information and polite reminders about required beach etiquette. Volunteers served a combined 8,011.75 hours which averaged 1,001 hours per month, saving Walton County \$114,167.44.

Parking Projects

393 Parking Project: This capital improvement project will feature more than 90 parking spaces, which will include dedicated RV, golf and bicycle parking areas, public transportation, and restroom facilities. The finished project will also have landscape, hardscape and lighting. *Construction expected to start in Fall 2022!*

Miramar Beach Municipal Parking Project: A 4.5-acre parcel in Miramar Beach will be used for a beach-related municipal parking project. Property development will be included in overall design/permit efforts for the Driftwood Road/Ellis Road corridor. Task Order for master planning of property has not been issued pending coordination with Public Works Engineering efforts.

Grayton Beach Parking Project: Located on Co. Hwy 283, design/permit efforts are underway and expected to be complete in late spring of 2022. When finished, this parking area will include more than 120 parking spaces, restrooms, landscape, hardscape and site lighting. Some parking spaces will be dedicated RV, golf cart and bicycle parking. *Construction expected to be postponed until Fall of 2022 to not disrupt Summer Season.*



BEACH OPERATIONS

\$2.1 MILLION

IN DESTINATION IMPROVEMENTS

MAINTENANCE + CLEANUP



- **20 MILES OF BEACH**
- **20.5 MILES OF MULTI-USE PATH**
- **9 REGIONAL BEACH ACCESS POINTS**
Complete with parking, restrooms and lifeguard stations
- **42 NEIGHBORHOOD BEACH ACCESS POINTS**
- **10 BAY & LAKE ACCESS POINTS**

Garbage Collection

Beach maintenance crews removed 662.19 tons of garbage from approximately 200 garbage collection stations on the beach and bay in 2021. That's the equivalent of 117,177 individual bags of trash! An additional 27,868 Leave No Trace items were also removed from South Walton beaches. These items often include beach chairs, umbrellas, towels and other beach gear.

In 2021, South Walton High School student Hannah Smith started a new pilot beach basket program. With help from Beach Operations, six baskets now hang at the Grayton Beach public beach access near the trash collection area. Beach goers are encouraged to grab a basket and use it to pick up trash, dispose of it in the nearby bins and return the basket when they are done. The program will run until May 2022, when the success of the program will be evaluated. If the program is successful, it might have a future at other South Walton beach accesses.

2021-2022 BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

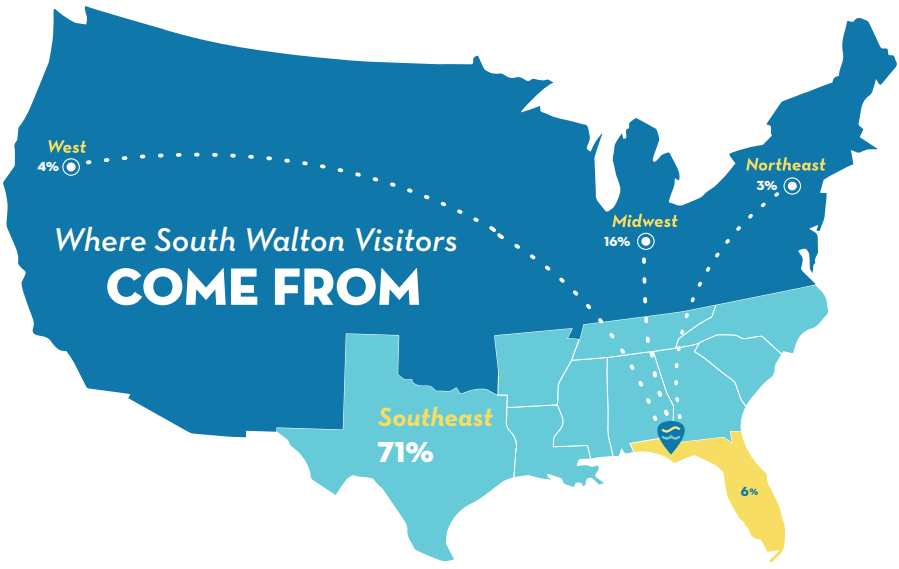
Michael Barker, Chairman, District 3 Commissioner
Danny Glidewell, Vice Chair, District 2 Commissioner
William "Boots" McCormick, District 1 Commissioner
Trey Nick, District 4 Commissioner
Tony Anderson, District 5 Commissioner

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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

South Walton 2021

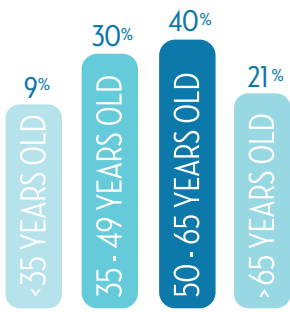
VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS



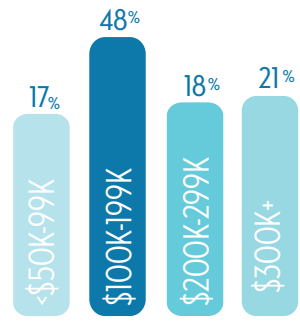
17%
FLY



83%
DRIVE



AGE OF VISITORS



HOUSEHOLD INCOME



5.2 PEOPLE
AVERAGE PARTY SIZE



AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY WAS
5.7 NIGHTS