

Visitors give advice for boosting MS Coast Tourism

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By Danielle Thomas - [bio](#) | [email](#)

GULFPORT, MS (WLOX) - Tourism leaders are looking to a new study to give slumping tourism in South Mississippi a boost. Revenues for coast casinos took a pretty deep dive in the month of June.

The local gaming industry earned \$84.1 Million in June 2009 compared to \$116.4 Million in June 2008. The latest numbers for coast hotel occupancy show that in May, 23 percent fewer rooms were rented than the same time last year.

Harrison County's Tourism director says over the next few weeks, volunteers will conduct surveys asking tourists questions like where they are from, where they are staying, and what they think would attract more of them to our area.

Leslie Garon and her family spent their Sunday at the beach in Gulfport. The Garons are from Hammond Louisiana and say it's a rare treat these days to go on vacation.

"To get away, it's been a time long coming," said Garon. "We hadn't been able to go to much, money."

Tourists we talked to all said the same thing. Money is tight these days. Most of the visitors lived within driving distance of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. That's important for Spring Woodson and her husband who have five children. They say a trip here is both affordable and enjoyable.

"We like that it's quiet," said Woodson. "We like there are a lot of different restaurants to go to. We like the fact that we can rent the umbrellas and things."

The visitors have suggestions for improvements that they believe will attract more tourists to our area like more beach activities like parasailing and more attractions close to the beach.

Paul Partini knows what he would like.

"I like all the fishing piers. I wish they would open them. I think that would definitely attract a lot of fishermen."

"More stuff kids friendly," said Woodson. "Casinos aren't really kid friendly so something a little more kid friendly around here. "

Visitors says since they're taking fewer vacations than in the past, they want to make the most of their down time. Tourism officials say students from Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College will conduct the surveys.

Video Gallery



Danielle Thomas reports on tourism surveys

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