

Natural Wonder Tourism: Mother Nature's Gift



Cape May County, New Jersey - Our diversity is a gift and our mission is to be good stewards of the environment.



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Cape May County, New Jersey

Located at the Southern most tip of New Jersey, between the Atlantic Ocean and Delaware Bay.

- ▶ 16 Municipalities – 12 with beaches
- ▶ Winter Population – 94,430
- ▶ Summer Population – 767,157
- ▶ Visitors – 12.8 million annually.
- ▶ Total Dwellings – 99,382 - 47% are Second Homes
- ▶ Open Space for Eco-Tourism – 54,511 acres
- ▶ Size – 267 square miles
- ▶ Atlantic Ocean Coast – 38 miles
- ▶ Delaware Bay Coast – 44 miles
- ▶ 10 – Nature/wildlife areas; 3 county parks; and, 3 State Parks
- ▶ County Zoo – 85 wooded acres – 250 species- 550 animals
- ▶ 43.7% - Total direct employment from tourism – 60.5% indirect
- ▶ Economic Impact of Tourism - \$6.7 Billion
- ▶ Cape May County ranks 2nd in the State in tourism expenditures.
- ▶ Economic Impact of Eco-Tourism - \$600 million annually
- ▶ Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation - \$704.7 million



What are your natural wonders?

Do you have spectacular sites that attract visitors?

- ▶ 89% of our visitors to Cape May County come for the beach.
- ▶ 78% are return visitors.
- ▶ 41% of our visitors return in the fall.
- ▶ 16% of our visitors return in the winter.
- ▶ 42% come for wineries
- ▶ 35% come for birding.
- ▶ 14% participate in other nature based activities.
 - ▶ Horseshoe crab phenomenon
 - ▶ Monarch Butterfly migration
 - ▶ Hawk watch and banding
 - ▶ Shell collecting
 - ▶ Cape May Diamonds
 - ▶ Whale and Dolphin watching



Working with the Experts to help preserve and protect. “It isn’t easy being green.” *Kermit the Frog*

- ▶ Education comes before marketing.
 - ▶ Partner with the local experts who provide programs.
 - ▶ Work with local businesses and share information about programs and guidelines regarding the protection of natural areas.
 - ▶ Know the eco opportunities and timing of natural events available in your area. (Spring/fall migration, fall foliage, growing seasons)
- ▶ Understand and explain the science behind the activity.
- ▶ Signage is key – 95% of visitors will follow the rules if they know them.
- ▶ Good fences make good tourists.
- ▶ Today’s traveler knows the difference between ‘green’ and ‘greenwashed’ - your efforts must be sincere and tangible.
- ▶ Environmentally conscious travelers want a great vacation experience and do not want to destroy the planet in the process.



Cape May County is one of the top 3 Birding 'hot spots' in North America

- Nearly one half (49%) of our visitors participate in watchable wildlife activities.
- Located along the Atlantic Fly-way, Cape May County attracts migratory birds, butterflies, dragonflies and fish.
- 249 species of birds were registered in one day during the 2018 World Series of Birding.
- NJ Audubon and Cape May Bird Observatory provide birding platforms, trails and docents to educate the visitor to inform and respect the habitat.
- Horseshoe Crab and Red Knot Migration - The Delaware Bay is the final and most critical rest stop for these migratory birds.
- Nature Conservancy of New Jersey owns several nature preserves along the Delaware Bay, created specifically to protect crucial stopover habitat for migrating shorebirds like the Red Knot.
- Monarch butterfly migration – Monarch Monitoring Program.
- Dolphin and whale watching.



New Experiences are as important as the location.

- ▶ Know emerging travel trends and how they fit with your destination's offerings and customer demographic.
 - ▶ You don't have to be an exotic or remote location to attract visitors to your destination.
 - ▶ Identify your attractions and target visitors who can't get that experience at home.
 - ▶ Natural beauty can be found everywhere.
 - ▶ You don't have to build it.
- ▶ Experiential Travel is trending with Millennials taking the lead.
- ▶ Adventure Travel is more about experiencing the local culture than an adrenaline rush.
- ▶ Wellness Travel is on the rise – Yoga on the beach.
- ▶ Culinary Travel - The power of the 'foodie'.
- ▶ Heritage Travel – one of the fastest growing trends for all demographics – Make your history their history.



Make no assumptions...describe each component of the experience.

If you are going to take them to lookout point - tell them what they're looking at...

- ▶ Educate your customer on the 'what' and 'why' of each attraction included in your sell.
- ▶ Steer your customer toward guided tours or areas that have designated trails and security personnel.
- ▶ Provide a scale as to degree of difficulty for each element of the experience.
- ▶ Provide other options when possible – nearby attractions, lodging, food, equipment – the more they have to do the longer they stay.
- ▶ Suggest appropriate attire.
- ▶ Allow for special needs.
- ▶ Provide for trash disposal and recycle containers.
- ▶ Provide a list of **rules and expectations**.
 - ▶ Take only pictures, leave only footprints.
 - ▶ Provide black out dates.



Expanding the traditional season with natural and nature based attractions.

- ▶ Fall has proven to be the best opportunity to expand the traditional summer season for Cape May County.
- ▶ “Natural Wonders” are for the most part available year round, use them as the draw to build shoulder season events.
- ▶ Special events drive new and return visitors for long weekend getaways.
- ▶ Encourage businesses to stay open in the evenings – 70% of visitor spending takes place after 6 p.m.
- ▶ Themed weekends are on the rise Girl/Guy Getaways.
- ▶ Food is the best entrée to bring visitors your destination.
 - ▶ Farm to table
 - ▶ Specialties from your region
 - ▶ Local wine, chocolate, honey, etc.
 - ▶ Emersion into local culture



Tourism Impacts – Baby Boomers

Will you still need me, will you still feed me when I'm 64?

- ▶ Baby Boomers still have a firm grip on travel and spending growth, they tend to take more vacations and spend more.
 - 27% of our visitors are between the ages of 55 – 64.
 - 19% are 65 and over
 - 15% are multi-generational visitors
 - 9% are Millennials
 - 29% are 35-54 (Families)
- 73% of our visitors come for relaxation
- 49% of Baby Boomers take vacation to relax and rejuvenate
- 62% stay in hotels or motels (AARP)
- 55% of our **fall** visitors are age 55 plus
- 28% of our visitors are 'couples', this includes empty nesters.
- Boomers expect to take 4-5 leisure trips per year, spending on average \$6,400.
- Know your customer and provide for their needs.
 - Seating
 - Shade
 - Wi-Fi



Creative Marketing

Tell your own story and control your message.

- ▶ FAMs with media are a good start in telling your story.
- ▶ Share stories with businesses to share and engage with customers – create a buzz. Everyone loves a great story.
- ▶ Social Media reviews rank higher than ads.
- ▶ Videos and podcast help sell the attraction/destination.
- ▶ Word of Mouth – engage visitors on social media to talk about your destination and attraction.
- ▶ Track visitation – visitor surveys – economic impacts, etc.
- ▶ Create “IT” destinations – travelers want to go to ‘hot’ attractions.
- ▶ Find ways to drive visitors to lesser known spots – Geocaching.
- ▶ Highlight the attraction – promote the destination.
- ▶ Follow the trends and build on what people want to do and more importantly will spend money to do.

