

Report to the Industry

October 10, 2019

August Smith Travel Research Summary

Average Occupancy Rate			Average Daily Rate			RevPAR		
2018	2019	% Change	2018	2019	% Change	2018	2019	% Change
52.9%	55.0%	+4.0%	\$106.88	\$115.45	+8.0%	\$56.51	\$63.49	+12.3%

Bed tax collection

The preliminary resort tax collected for August 2019 was \$1,821,441 a 26.1% increase over August 2018 preliminary collections of \$1,444,873. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$41,114,633, an increase of 1.2% year-over-year.

Airport news

During August 2019, 526,519 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). Figures represent an increase of 5.1% in passenger traffic compared to August 2018. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 8.4% from the same period last year.

The newest CGSP participants of Guests First recognized

Dr. Nicole King-Smith, VCB tourism & hospitality training manager, recognized 27 new certified guest service professionals (CGSP), bringing the total to 805 CGSP graduates in Lee County.

VCB Departmental Reports

Domestic and International Sales update

Jill Vance, VCB director of sales, reported that all but one of the FY2018-19 sales goals were attained/exceeded. Vance also presented the final results of the group market segment production that showed the association market to be our strongest group market segment. She presented highlights of fourth-quarter activities for the domestic group, travel agent and consumer sales. They included Connect Marketplace, the Twins meeting planner client event and Southern Women's Show. Vance also presented upcoming sales activities for the new FY including Connect Medical and the Dream Destinations Travel Show.

Stefanie Zinke, VCB international sales manager, reported that over the summer, the focus in UK and Scandinavia was the growth of our certified users on our e-Learning platform which was achieved with a 12% increase, as well as in-destination hosting of travel agent FAMs. In Canada, we were featured on TV and online media through OpenJaw and a partnership with AirCanada Vacations. In September, we participated in the inaugural Brand USA Travel week in London, and conducted 34 meetings with buyers from nine European markets.

Visitors Services update

Judi Durant, VCB director of visitor services, reported that between July and September, 28,856 visitors were greeted and assisted while traveling through the RSW. Five conferences and events were supported with volunteer Tourism Ambassador teams, four Team Tourism Summer Lecture

Series workshops for tourism partners were completed, and over 500 tourism nominees and 30 winners for customer service excellence were honored at the Elaine McLaughlin Outstanding Hospitality Service Awards.

Communications update

Francesca Donlan, VCB communications director, showed previews to two TV travel shows featuring the destination. “Raw Travel” devotes its Season 7 premiere 30-minute episode to Lee County. The show will air locally Oct. 12 at 6:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. on WXCW CW 46 and 1 p.m. on WINK CBS 11. The show airs in 173 markets nationally. Upcoming episodes of “Weekend Explorer,” seen on PBS and Cox’s YurView, will broadcast two, six-and-a-half-minute spots. Both shows were on-location in July and August. September included FAMs from Canada, China and Germany. A group of U.S. journalists visited during Island Hopper Songwriter Fest and have already produced social media and print coverage.

Strategic Plan Update

Pamela Johnson, VCB deputy director, presented an update on the 2017-2020 strategic plan. The goals remain ambitious and given that the destination experienced a hurricane and water quality issues over the past two years, modifications to the plan have been made. The VCB is committed to the plan’s critical success factors which include an increase in annual visitor spending, growth in revenue per available room and growth in year-round occupancy.

Old Business

A formal letter of support for the reauthorization of VISIT FLORIDA was submitted on behalf of the Lee BoCC and Lee TDC to the President and Speaker of the Florida Senate on August 20, 2019.

New Business

The TDC approved reimbursing the City of Sanibel \$14,748 for a Pilot Red Algae Removal Program from emergency beach cleanup funds.

Next TDC meeting

The next TDC meeting is at 9 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 14, 2019. The meeting will be held in Room 118, 2201 Second St., Fort Myers. To view a complete tax collections report, go to www.LeeVCB.com. Contact: Tamara Pigott, TPigott@leegov.com, Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.