

Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes June 9, 2025 Convention Center Board Room 214 - 1:00 pm

The following individuals were in attendance:

Commission and Voting Members – Tourism Commission Chair and Council President, Matt James; Councilman John Gehrig; Councilman Will Savage; Voting Members Sal Fasano, OC Chamber of Commerce; OCDC Joe Wilson. HMRA; Ruth Waters. **Absent:** Mayor Meehan.

Staff members present – Terry McGean, City Manager; Tom Perlozzo, Director of Tourism; Frank Miller, Special Events Director and Brenda Moore, Special Events; Jessica Waters, Director; Erin Jones, Fiona O'Brien, Abigail Yesko, Kathryn Bethard, Marketing & Communications; Kim Mueller, Director of Sales; Nicole Olson, Chip Woytowitz, Ashley Johnson, Tourism Sales; Leslie Raven, Tourism & Business Development.

Also present: Susan Jones, HMRA; Amy Thompson, OC Chamber of Commerce; Zach Bankert, OCDC; Melanie Pursel, Worcester County; Crystal Collins, Art League of Ocean City; Brian Shane, OC Today-The Dispatch.

Tourism Commission Chair and Council President Matt James called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

MOTION to approve Minutes from February 10, 2025 Tourism Commission meeting was made by Councilman Will Savage and seconded by Councilman John Gehrig. The vote was unanimous (6-0) with Mayor Meehan absent.

ZARTICO PACING REPORT PRESENTATION By Bill Obreiter, VP Destinations

Zartico is a data science company that helps understand the tourism economy's impact using big data sets like movement data from cell phone devices, credit card data, and lodging data.

Hotel Data Set: Chain Properties that distribute via Amadeus (21 hotels representing 2757 rooms- ~ 21% sample) *Coconut Malorie not accepting reservations prior to June 1 arrivals. No Independent Hotels Measured in Pacing Group holds don't count until assigned to a traveler. **Vacation Rental Data Set**: 2,795 Direct Source Properties (7,273 overall). With Pacing revenue- The values are the sample size and the percentage trend is the real Insight. This is not a substitute for tax collections: but a leading indicator of chain hotel performance.

- The lodging data will cover historical data through the end of September.
- Data sets are primarily for chain hotels, not independent hotels.
- Data includes transactional data, allowing for comparisons to the previous year.
- Data analysis includes hotels and vacation rentals.
- Early summer is defined as May and June, late summer as July and August, and the shoulder season as September.
- The period analyzed is May 1st through August 31st. News is good! Numbers up in Performance, Revenue, RevPar and Paid Occupancy.

Performance

- Summer pacing is up two points versus a month ago.
- Improvements in Revenue, RevPAR, Rate, and Paid Occupancy.
- May revenue and RevPAR were up double digits with increases in ADR and Paid Occupancy for both vacation rentals and hotels.

Revenue Performance

- Solid line represents revenue performance by day for 2025, and dotted lines represent 2024.
- Blue indicates hotels, and red indicates vacation rentals.
- Revenue was significantly up during the week of Boardwalk Rocks.



Memorial Day Week

• A decrease in pace for performance versus last year was observed after Memorial Day hit. The primary reason for the decrease was weather. Memorial Day week compared to last year had more sun and higher temperatures with less wind, which is important for midweek business. Revenue slowed down at end of month.

May and June Revenue

- May and June revenues together totaled \$26.7 million, which is \$7 million more than last year.
- This is measured by hotel and vacation rental revenues.

RevPAR and ADR

- RevPAR is up a point from a month ago, indicating continued increase for time period.
- There's a slight dip in ADR compared to a month ago, but occupancy is making up for it. Revenue increase is result of that occupancy increase.

Summer Outlook

- Moderate blended revenue increase is expected for the rest of the summer.
- "Not double-digit growth, but there is growth."

Boardwalk Rock and July 4th Impact

- Green represents Boardwalk Rock.
- Purple represents the decrease seen during Memorial Day week due to weather.
- The switch in revenue increase/decrease is due to the week in which July 4th falls for 24 and 25.

August Softness and September Decrease

- Hotel softness is expected the week of August 17, when Maryland schools start. Plenty of time and opportunity to attract out of state visitors.
- September is showing a decrease of 2% for both hotels and vacation rentals.
- Revenue is increasing, but still pacing down versus 2024.

Oceans Calling and Bike Week

- Oceans Calling shows the highest ADR of the entire year for that time period, but Sunday night is slipping.
- People are coming for Thursday/Friday/Saturday but not staying Sunday night.
- Bike Week is pacing down significantly with no Labor Day weekend, contributing to the overall September decrease.

Week of Oceans Calling Event

- Hotel pacing has increased one month for Oceans Calling, with RevPAR going from \$178 to higher.
- ADR has increased to \$380 but is still pacing slightly behind last year.
- Vacation rentals continue to face down, with a \$511 ADR and 20% occupancy. Rates may go down to become a little more affordable.

Upcoming Weekend and Summer Occupancy

- The upcoming weekend shows very strong occupancy.
- Darker areas on the calendar indicate higher paid overnight visitation in paid accommodations. Occupancy falls a little during the week.
- A Tuesday spike in occupancy is noted, possibly due to an event. Firemen and MML are in town that week.

Top 10 Feeder Markets

• Baltimore and Washington were lagging in hotel feeder markets but are starting to align with last year's numbers.



- New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh are pacing ahead for hotels. A lot of growth from eastern side of PA. Allentown significantly.
- Pittsburgh is the strongest feeder market for vacation rentals followed by Berks County (Reading, PA) and Philadelphia.
- Info allows OC to work with ad agency to target these specific areas.

Local Visitor Lens (New from Zartico)

- Local visitors are defined as those traveling 1-50 miles from home. Visitors outside of 50 miles represent 85% of lodging revenue. Different areas across the country travel differently.
- Local visitation is significant in Maryland with counties and locations lss than 50 miles outside Ocean City.
- How visitors relate to attraction, restaurant, and retail revenue was compared in May 2025 and Qtr 1 2025.
- Accommodations are the most important metric looked at, but the visitor economy impacts more than just accommodations from a financial standpoint.

May Data

- Accommodation spending is from those who travel more than 50 miles.
- Restaurant spending is 8% more than local spend.
- 12% of retail spend is from folks less than 50 miles away, but more than one mile away from Ocean City.
- 10% of retail spend comes from year-round residents.
- Above information is view looking at May and going into season.

January, February, March Data

- Local visitors are more important because overall true visitors (people that travel more than 50 miles) are less.
- Local visitors have a higher market share for restaurants and retail during this time.
- Local visitors are coming from Sussex County, southeastern coastal Delaware, Wicomico County, Somerset County, and Kent County.

Local Visitor Lens - Which Counties are Local Visitors From? Where Do They Go?

- Sussex County is the highest feeder market followed by Wicomico County.
- Local visitors are more apt to go uptown, less apt to go to accommodations. They spend more money on restaurants/fast food restaurants, liquor stores, retail, gas, and arts and entertainment.
- Local visitors are more apt to go to outdoor recreation venues, food places, and retail.
- True visitors are more apt to go to grocery stores. Insight on the slide allows the ratios that locals and true visitors spend.

Restaurant Performance in May

• Embers Restaurant had the highest average bill at \$280 followed by Mothers Cantina, Higgins Crab House, Midtown Roadhouse, Guido's Burritos as the top five restaurants for performance. Two Mexican restaurants in top five. Four Seasons Pizza was right up there with average credit card transaction of \$160. Will continue to look at these numbers each month.

SPECIFIC AREAS TO TARGET FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

Bike Week

- There is a need to ensure people come for Bike Week. Talent will help.
- Advertising will increase now that contract is signed.

Third & Fourth Week of August

 Hoping advertising will target New Jersey and New York for the last two weeks in August as kids go back to school after Labor Day.



Oceans Calling/Country Calling

- One of the big takeaways is restaurants located outside the footprint area of Oceans Calling and Country Calling should advertise more specials targeting surrounding areas like Sussex County, Wicomico County emphasizing traffic concerns are located in the inlet area.
- Question asked if Sussex County still has their key card booklet.

Country Calling Update

- ADR is up 16% overall, on pace vs. last year. Revenue up 14% overall. Revenue currently pacing at 19% Occupancy is down but ADR is strong.
- Country Calling: Sunday night losing versus last year, but the other two nights are up.
- Hotels should try and discount rates for that Sunday night stay in order to entice more overnight stays.

TOURISM and BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - Tom Perlozzo, Director

Catch a Ride Program Update - Jessica Waters, Marketing & Communications Director

- Increased tour stops from 6 in 2024 to 13 stops including 2 new locations. Period: May 24-June 22, 2025.
- Maximizing time with each partner, doing multiple back-to-back events.
- Changed the footprint with a fresh new look. Truck that pulls the VW Smile van is also "Smile" wrapped using it as an added prop.
- Added an influencer component to the event. On the Move with Maddie was phenomenal content promoting Catch a Ride event on all her social channels. She went to the event and engaged with people. Getting a lot of bang for the buck with the influencer program.

Activations

- Partnered with Red Peg and BVK staff for activations held at:
- CFG Bank Arena: 2,150 engagements, 51% opt-in rate for contest.
- Phillies: 13,100 engagements, 50% opt-in rate; inside stadium this year versus outside last year.
- Brew at the Zoo: Third year at the zoo, a favorite activation.
- New element: "My Ocean City Getaway" prize, allows contestant to build an itinerary to win different prize packages. Activations collect email addresses and data. BVK states there are large turnouts for activations.

Feedback and Summary

- Bucket hats are popular.
- Overall, 50% opt-in rate with almost 25,000 sweepstakes entries. Will be able to contact these contestants after the drawing to push Ocean City.
- Recent and upcoming events: Nationals game in D.C., Chesapeake Bay Sox in Bowie, Orioles game and Great Barbecue Battle in D.C on 20th and 21st of June.
- Started local activations with the Marketing team in town at restaurants like Harborside and The Wedge tying in 150th Anniversary and local sentiment.
- Visitors from out of town are seeing the brand and engaging with it in person.
- The Harrison Group is thanked for participating. Seacrets is next activation spot.
- The team is doing a great job and is excited to see things continue through the anniversary year and beyond.

Miscellaneous Projects

- **Smile Sign** on 4th Street. Lots of pictures are being taken and spread throughout social media. Not 100% done, but will be lighted soon for evening pictures.
- Boardwalk Arch: 90% done, corrections being made to the letters. Letters will be lighted and viewed on both sides.
- Tram Digital Signs will be repurposed to replace posters at the base of the Arch. Will roll promotions with them.
- Route 50 Bridge Lighting: Still working on it, testing to be done on a side street (TBD) or at the Convention Center.



CONVENTION CENTER UPDATES - Tom Perlozzo, Director (for Larry Noccolino) Convention Center

- The Convention Center has been busy, with a good past weekend. Upcoming events include Fireman and MML.
- Escalators and elevators are being refreshed. Escalators had some initial issues but are back up and running.
- Work is currently being done on the south side of the building for stair replacement.

CONVENTION CENTER SALES UPDATE - Kim Mueller, Director of Sales

- Sales team is going to shows and meeting with planners and getting good feedback.
- Planners are interested in higher-level hotels and luxury properties due to space accommodations for large meetings.
- Hosted about 15 planners in the market in the past six weeks bringing them to different vendues and locations. Planners have stated that independent properties have exceeded their expectations.
- Working closely with stakeholders with hotel sales teams and restaurant owners.
- Citywide sales are a focus, not just the Convention Center.
- Working with Marketing team on meeting planner sites, incorporating video and testimonials showcasing hotel partners. Ruth Waters expressed a need to have a new event replacing PBR weekend for hotels located in inlet area.
- Discussion on Zartico's numbers and why hotel data only include high-end hotels; i.e., Hiltons, Marriotts, and short-term rentals. Independent hotel owners are feeling squeezed out such as Wyndham and Best Western.
- Kim Mueller explained the sales team sells all hotels, but planners currently lean towards the higher-end brands for their meeting requirements.
- Zartico's data is based on what is available to them through the system. It's not pick and choose.
- Perception study shows meeting planners are looking for higher end products.
- Discussion on STR reports with independent owners' numbers being different from Zartico.

Data Collection Discussion

- There is a need to collect data on properties, possibly through anonymous reporting.
- There are companies that can build software for data collection and analytics.
- Previously, there were attempts to pull zip codes and financial data, but access to credit card data requires permission.
- The idea of sending out emails to properties to request occupancy and ADR data was discussed, with the understanding that participation would vary.

Independent Properties

- Smaller properties may fit in with sports groups, depending on the client's needs.
- The focus has shifted to showing planners that Ocean City properties are better than perceived.
- Highlighting the uniqueness of independent properties and sharing testimonials can help tell a positive story about Ocean City.
- Sports complex would include more of the independent and smaller hotels if sports complex were built.
- Examples of large concerts focus on those businesses inside the footprint.
- Restaurants inside the footprint of events are generally happy, while those outside often complain about business being negatively impacted.
- The visit widget app is used to push notifications and encourage people to come into town during events.

SPECIAL EVENTS UPDATES

Memorial Day Recognition Event

- A Memorial Day recognition event was held on Sunday of Memorial Day weekend with guest speaker, Maj. Gen. Janeen Birckhead, Maryland Army National Guard and a powerful three-aircraft flyover of A-10s from the Maryland Air National Guard. Turnout was very successful. Mayor was very happy.
- Event was effective due to being held on a Sunday, avoiding busier travel days. Looks like it will be adopted as an annual event.



Summer Events

• Summer events have kicked off, including Sundaes in the Park, OC Beach Dance Party, and Sunset Park Party Nights. OCDC Dance Party with Weekly fireworks on the beach starts after July 4th.

Sunfest and Holiday Plans

- Planning for the 150th Anniversary of Sunfest is underway, with lineup announcements coming soon with additional assets.
- Winterfest will have additional components. There is a desire to make Ocean City a special place for the holidays, with town-wide impact and opportunities for hotels and businesses. Would make OC standout for the holidays.

Upcoming Events

- OC Airshow setup is starting, with the Blue Angels having a practice fly over Ocean City on Thursday and Friday, and the event on Saturday and Sunday. Will be a busy weekend.
- Springfest 2026 will keep the same dates in April, with plans to integrate new assets like a street painting festival and a possible redesign of the footprint to keep it fresh.
- The street painting festival is likely to be located within the footprint but not on the boardwalk, based on artist feedback regarding the surface. More information to come as it progresses.

Updates

- Terry signed the Bike Fest contract.
- Matt Odachowski is out doing his own thing as a promoter.
- Director Perlozzo hopes that clientele will increase now that the event is solid.
- Expect to see hotel STR and other related businesses pick up.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Chamber of Commerce – No Report

HMRA - Recently hosted the inaugural Miles of Smiles Service Promise training, featuring speaker John Kennedy. Attached is the official Service Promise, which we encourage businesses to share during employee onboarding and display near time clocks as a daily reminder.

As part of this program, when an owner or manager sees an employee delivering exceptional Miles of Smiles service, they can send that individual's name to us to be recognized as our weekly Facebook **Smile Spotlight**.

At the end of the summer, all Smile Spotlight recipients will be entered into a drawing for a \$500 cash prize!

We've also had the flyer translated into Spanish.

- The first J1 Student welcome event is on June 18th at the Residence Inn where we'll supply the pizza and interact with the students. A second event is on June 25th.
- Maryland Tourism Council's meet up during MD Municipal League is on June 23rd at the Princess Royale, everyone is invited: mdtourism.org to register for free.

OCDC - No Report

Worcester County - No report

OC Art League -- "Art of Ocean City" 150 th Commemorative Poster

The Art League has produced a special edition art poster commemorating Ocean City's 150th birthday and the 20th year of the Artists Paint OC festival. The posters will be sold at locations throughout the resort, and at events including the Artist Paint OC (August 13-17), the Seafood festival (Sept 6) and at the MML convention marketplace (June 22). Posters retail for \$15, with \$5 of every poster going to support the Art League's non-profit mission. The Art League will be also be providing artists to demonstrate onsite at the MML convention and at their



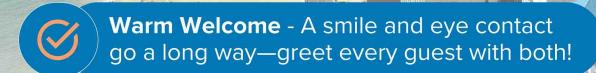
marketplace.

- Community Art Mural -Coordination with We are Limitless Studios has begun to create public art mural commemorating 150 years of OC smiles. This community art project will take place during Sunfest and other OC events. Once completed, the final project with be installed on the Art League's building.
- -Free Saturday Summer Kids Crafts program has begun, and runs through Labor Day. The program will be held outdoors in the art center courtyard weather permitting. 6— children are expected to attend this summer. Additional art outreach programs will be held weekly at the Atlantic Hotel downtown, and the Fenwick Inn.
- -Two outdoor movie screenings on the 94th street tennis courts will be held for the Ocean City Film Festival this summer both programs start at 7PM.
- Sat June 21- The Ocean City Historical Film Challenge block- which was previous screened at the festival in March and includes the Henry hotel film and others created for the 150th anniversary of OC.
- Saturday August 23- The 2025 Ocean City Film Challenge films which will be created in and around Ocean City during the month of July
- -Art Adventure Camp starts June 23 and runs 9 weeks through August 7 in partnership with the Rec Dept. 300 children ages 6-14 are registered to attend.

Councilman John Gehrig made a motion to adjourn meeting; seconded by Councilman Savage. Meeting adjourned at 2:01 p.m.

MILES OF SMILES

SERVICE PROMISE











Go the Extra Mile — Be Our Next Featured Smile!

We're honoring the hospitality heroes who make every visit memorable with our Miles of Smiles Service Promise!

Get noticed by your boss and celebrated by us! You could be featured on our Facebook page—and win a \$500 cash prize at the end of summer!





Explanations/ Caveats

Hotel Data Set: Chain Properties that distribute via Amadeus
(21 hotels representing 2757 rooms- ~ 21% sample)

*Coconut Malorie not accepting reservations prior to June 1 arrivals

No Independent Hotels Measured in Pacing

Group holds don't count until assigned to a traveler

Vacation Rental Data Set: 2,795 Direct Source Properties (7,273 overall)

With Pacing revenue- The values are the sample size and the percentage trend is the real insight!

This is not a substitute for tax collections: but a leading indicator of chain hotel performance



May 1- August 31 Performance

As Of 5/1/25

As Of 6/1/25

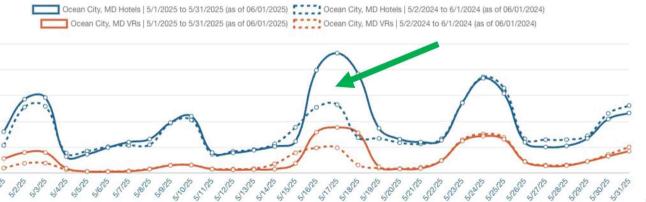




Blended 2.3% Increase in pacing revenue vs 2024

May Final (Zartico Measured Properties)





Revenue by Day vs 2024



\$1,000,000

\$600,000 \$400,000 \$200,000

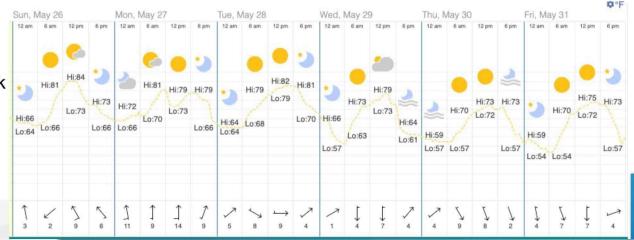
Memorial Day Weather - 2025 vs 2024



Memorial Day Week 2025



Memorial Day Week 2024





May & June 2025 Pacing Revenue

As Of May 1

ADR ①			RevPAR ①			
\$255 primary	↑5%	\$243 compare	Hotel	\$123 primary	↑10%	\$111 compare
\$311 primary	↑14%	\$272 compare	VR	\$72 primary	↑8%	\$67 compare
Paid Occupancy % ①			Revenue ①			
48.1% primary	↑5%	45.7% compare	Hotel	\$20.6M primary	↑10%	\$18.6M
23.1% primary	↓6%	24.5% compare	VR	\$12.2M	↑1%	\$12.1M

As of June 1



July + August 2025 Pacing Revenue

As Of May 1

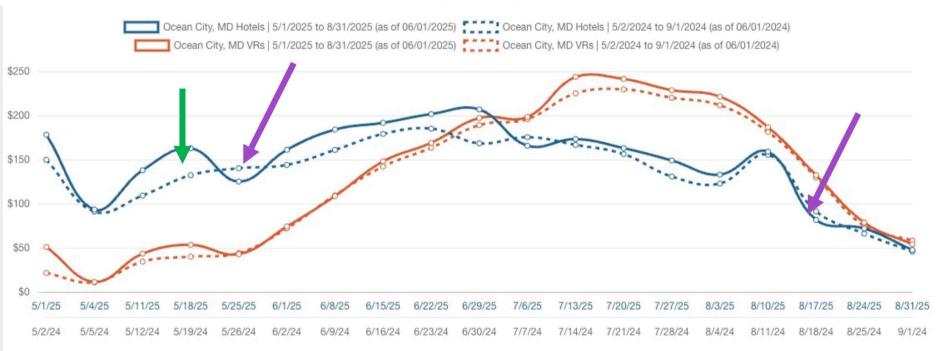
ADR ①			RevPAR ①			
\$377 primary	↓1%	\$380 compare	Hotel	\$113 primary	↑2%	\$111 compare
\$414 primary	↑9%	\$378 compare	VR	\$172 primary	↑5%	\$163 compare
Paid Occupancy % ©			Revenue ①			
30.0% primary	↑3%	29.1% compare	Hotel	\$19.3M primary	↑2%	\$18.9M
41.5% primary	↓4%	43.2% compare	N N	\$29.7M	↓2%	\$30.3M

As of June 1



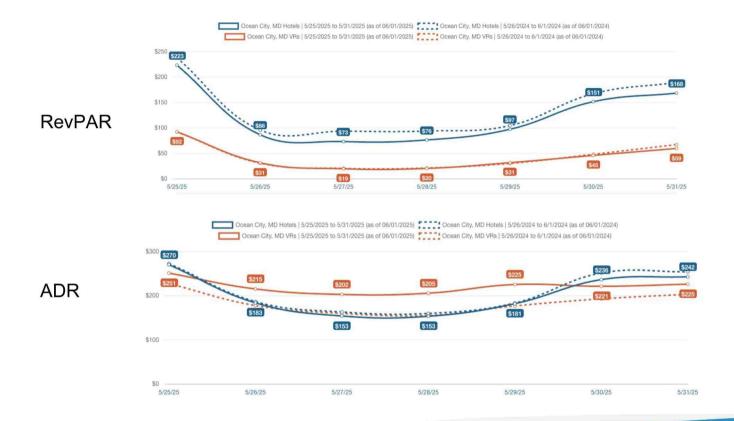
Demand Compare by Week

RevPAR





Memorial Day Week





September Pacing Performance

As of May 1

ADR ①			RevPAR ①			
\$278 primary	↓3%	\$287 compare	Hotel	\$60 primary	↓ 2%	\$61 compare
\$302 primary	↑21%	\$250 compare	VR	\$37 primary	↓7%	\$40 compare
Paid Occupancy % ©			Revenue ①			
i did c	occupancy %	o U		ŀ	Revenue 0	
21.6% primary	1%	21.3% compare	Hotel	\$4.9M	Hevenue ⊕	\$5M compare

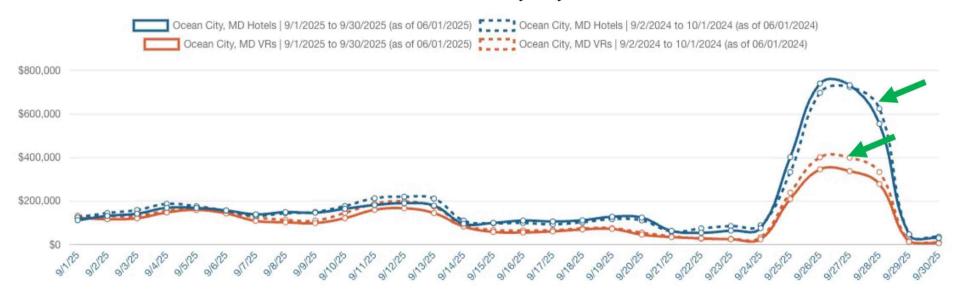
As of June 1





September Pacing Performance

Revenue: By Day





Bike Week Pacing Performance

As Of May 1

ADR ①			RevPAR ©				
\$233 primary	↓7%	\$249 compare	Hotel	\$49 primary	↓12%	\$56 compare	
\$253 primary	↑18%	\$215 compare	VR	\$42 primary	↓11%	\$48 compare	
Paid Occupancy % ①				Revenue ①			
21.2% primary	↓6%	22.5% compare	Hotel	\$679.7K	↓12%	\$772.2K	
16.7% primary	↓24 %	22.1% compare	VR	\$591.8K	↓15%	\$697.3K	

As of June 1





Oceans Calling Pacing Performance

As Of May 1

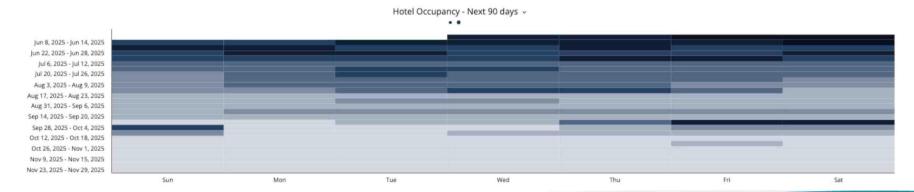
As Of June 1





Demand by day insight in ZDOS

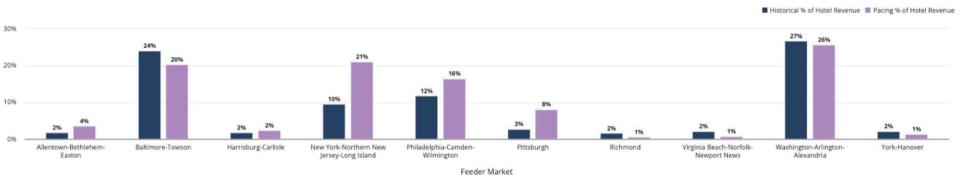






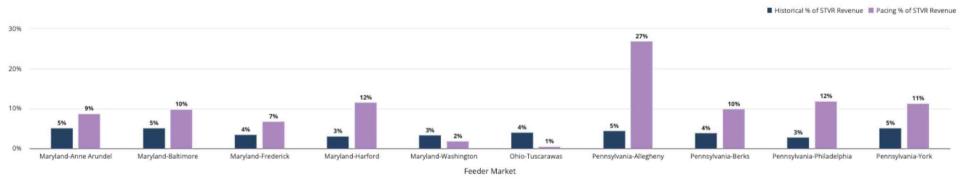
Feeder Market Pacing Performance: Hotels





Feeder Market Pacing Performance: STVR

% STVR Revenue by Market - Historical vs. Pacing





New: Local Visitor Lens

May 2025







Q1 2025







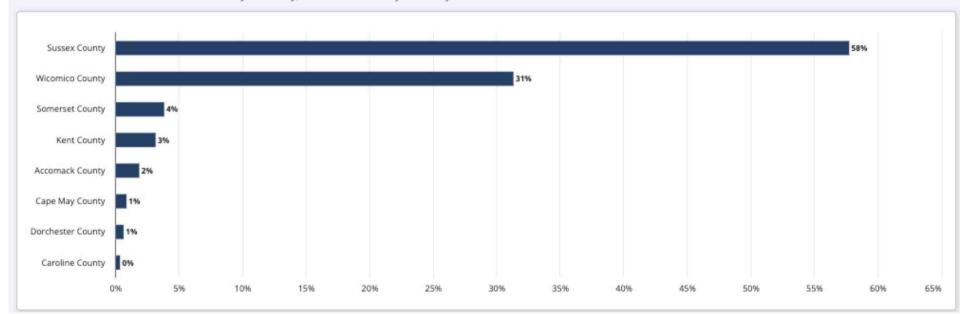


New: Local Visitor Lens

Which Counties Are Local Visitors Coming From?

Source: Zartico Location Data

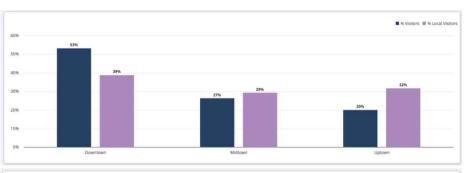
Local Visitors: Individuals from within 50 miles of your county, but not residents of your county

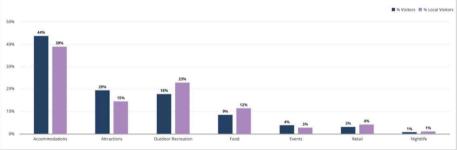


Where did they come from?

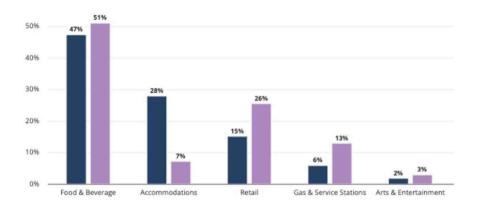


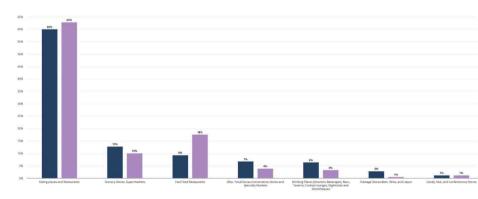
New: Local Visitor Lens





Where did they go?

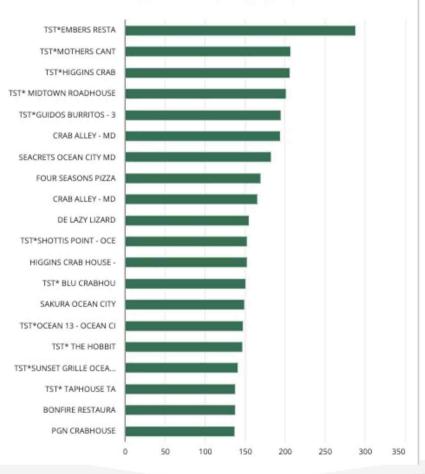




How did they spend?



Eating Places/ Bars (Average Spend)



Just for fun...

Which restaurant in Ocean City had the highest average bill in May?



Thank You

