

## New Orleans' 2007 Visitor Numbers Released

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New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau and New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation report success and progress, much work ahead before full resurgence of the city's largest industry

The number of visitors to New Orleans increased from 3.7 million in 2006 to 7.1 million in 2007, according to a survey conducted by the University of New Orleans Hospitality Research Center for the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau and New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, yet the hospitality industry has much work ahead before it returns to pre-Katrina levels.

The 2007 New Orleans Area Visitor Profile report showed:

In 2007, the total number of visitors was 7.1 million and those visitors spent a total of \$4.8 billion. In 2006, the total number of visitors was 3.7 million and those visitors spent a total of \$2.8 billion. During a healthy year prior to Katrina New Orleans hosted 8.5 million - 9 million visitors annually.

Overnight visitors stayed an average of 3.8 nights in 2007.

70 percent of visitors indicated they were here for pleasure, 13.6 percent came for a convention or tradeshow, and 11.5 percent came for a corporate meeting or business.

The percentage of "hurricane related" visitors such as insurance and emergency personnel has decreased greatly from 31.1 percent in 2006, to 4.3 percent in 2007.

66 percent have an income of \$50,000 per year or more.

The proportion of business visitors who extended their stay for pleasure has greatly increased, with an average extension of two nights.

88 percent of respondents indicated they would be likely or very likely to recommend New Orleans as a destination to family and friends, an increase over 2006.

93 percent of visitors reported eating in restaurants in 2007, 86 percent reported visiting the French Quarter, 80 percent saw Bourbon Street, 69 percent visited the French Market and 53 percent took advantage of the city's nightlife.

"Tourism is a multi-billion dollar, perception-driven business that does not just happen -- it takes aggressive promotion," said J. Stephen Perry, president and CEO of the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau. "A strong tourism economy means tax revenue for schools and city services, jobs for our citizens, and accelerated recovery citywide. The hospitality industry is united unlike ever before and dedicated to that recovery as we start to see progress from our significant investments in sales, public relations and marketing. Momentum is returning with multiple recent successes, yet we still have a long way to go to successfully re-image the destination in the minds of millions of visitors, meeting professionals and travel decision-makers worldwide."

"In 2007, we sent our message to come visit in both conventional and unconventional ways," said Sandra Shilstone, President and CEO of the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation. "We learned from research that we needed to reach as many people as possible as quickly as possible to convince them to return post-Katrina. We will continue to use all of our efforts in marketing, public relations, and internet to work with the hospitality community in bringing leisure visitor numbers even higher than before. This research is vital in forming the right message."

The survey was conducted online, utilizing e-mail addresses of those individuals that had inquired about visitation from NOMCVB and NOTMC, as well as those who booked their travel reservations to New Orleans via the Hotels.com and Travelocity links on the NOMCVB and NOTMC web pages. Combined with the online inputs were intercept survey data collected during 2007 events and festivals, which included French Quarter Festival, Mardi Gras, Family Gras and Voodoo Festival. Also included were intercept data from the WWII Museum, and a TNS e-mail panel of visitors to New Orleans. In total, over 6,000 observations were analyzed. In addition, a faxed hotel survey, and a phone survey of residents to determine the number of visiting friends and relatives were conducted.

New Orleans' tourism industry was off to a strong start in the first quarter of 2008, with victories such as the NBA All-Star Game, college bowl games, Mardi Gras, a 20,000-plus-person citywide convention and a lineup of major conventions and festivals through the end of the year.

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