

DESTIN
FORT
WALTON
BEACH
FLORIDA

Destination Dialog
February 4, 2026



VIDEO CONTENTS

<u>Start</u>	Welcome and open by Jennifer Adams, Director, Tourist Development Department
<u>4:50</u>	Destin-Fort Walton Beach Mission
<u>5:50</u>	Strategic Goals
<u>8:00</u>	Destin-Fort Walton Beach Growth
<u>9:23</u>	Question asked: Where can we find the tax collection report?
<u>10:32</u>	Question asked: Where can I find the list of artificial reefs?
<u>11:22</u>	Paid occupancy inventory, Sarah Peter, Lead Researcher, No Luggage
<u>20:00</u>	2026 Strategic Considerations
<u>23:38</u>	Global trends
<u>27:55</u>	Travel trends
<u>32:08</u>	Gen Z + Millennials demographics and behaviors
<u>44:31</u>	AI Overview by Justin Gibbs, Director of Strategy + Insights at Miles Partnership
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<u>57:38</u>	Question asked: Can you share the prompts that you are tracking?
<u>58:00</u>	AI Study
<u>1:04:00</u>	How businesses can adapt
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<u>1:13:27</u>	FY26 Tactical shifts
<u>1:15:33</u>	Question asked: what the URL for Destin-Fort Walton Beach YT channel?
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<u>1:18:23</u>	Destination Stewardship update + Destin-Fort Walton Beach website goals
<u>1:22:52</u>	What partners can do to support website goals
<u>1:24:12</u>	What's Next?

> Join the Partner Program

**> Emerald Coast Open
Restaurant Week application**

Mission:
Make time spent
here, whether
visiting, living, or
working, more
valuable to all.



A wide-angle photograph of a beach at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with soft clouds. The ocean is dark blue with white foam from waves breaking onto the sandy shore. In the distance, three people are visible in the water, their silhouettes against the bright horizon.

Strategic Goal: Be valuable

Reintroduce **Destin-Fort Walton Beach** as the place that gets kids outside on the water to give their adventurous side room to grow.

Create a more **personal, connected experience for families** in Destin-Fort Walton Beach Florida.

Be a **shared community asset** for both the tourism industry and the residents of Destin-Fort Walton Beach.

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Growth

- 16,670 lodging units: 5% increase in 2 years
 - North Okaloosa expansion & acquisition
 - Over 580 public artificial reef sites
 - FIVE new pilot products
-
- **45% Condos / 43% Hotels**

** Data based on February, 2026 Okaloosa County lodging dashboard



Since 2023: Maintained paid occupancy levels even with increased inventory.

Okaloosa - FL Paid Occupancy %

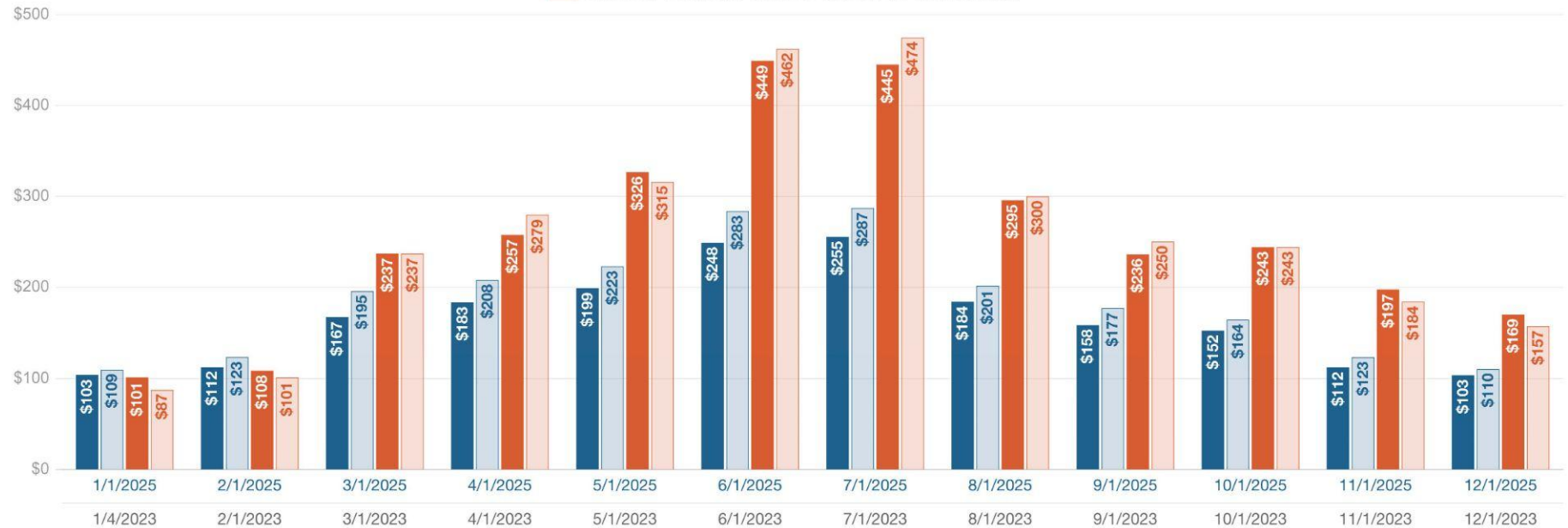
Okaloosa - FL Hotels | 10/1/2023 to 12/31/2025 (as of 01/28/2026) Okaloosa - FL Hotels | 10/2/2022 to 1/1/2025 (as of 01/29/2025) Okaloosa - FL VRs | 10/1/2023 to 12/31/2025 (as of 01/28/2026)
Okaloosa - FL VRs | 10/2/2022 to 1/1/2025 (as of 01/29/2025)



Since 2023: Hotel ADR has decreased. Vacation Rental ADR flat.

Okaloosa - FL ADR

Okaloosa - FL Hotels | 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2025 (as of 01/28/2026) Okaloosa - FL Hotels | 1/4/2023 to 1/3/2024 (as of 01/29/2025) Okaloosa - FL VRs | 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2025 (as of 01/28/2026)
Okaloosa - FL VRs | 1/4/2023 to 1/3/2024 (as of 01/29/2025)



2026 Strategic Considerations



Global Trends

IMPLICATIONS FOR 2026



**COST OF LIVING HIGH -
AFFORDABILITY!**



**PRIORITIZING HEALTH
AND LONGEVITY**



TRADING UP

Travel Trends

IMPLICATIONS FOR 2026



TRAVEL IS A RIGHT



**MORE COMPARISON
SHOPPING**



**KIDS INFLUENCE
DECISION**

Travel Trends

IMPLICATIONS FOR 2026



**INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL TO
REBOUND IN 2029**



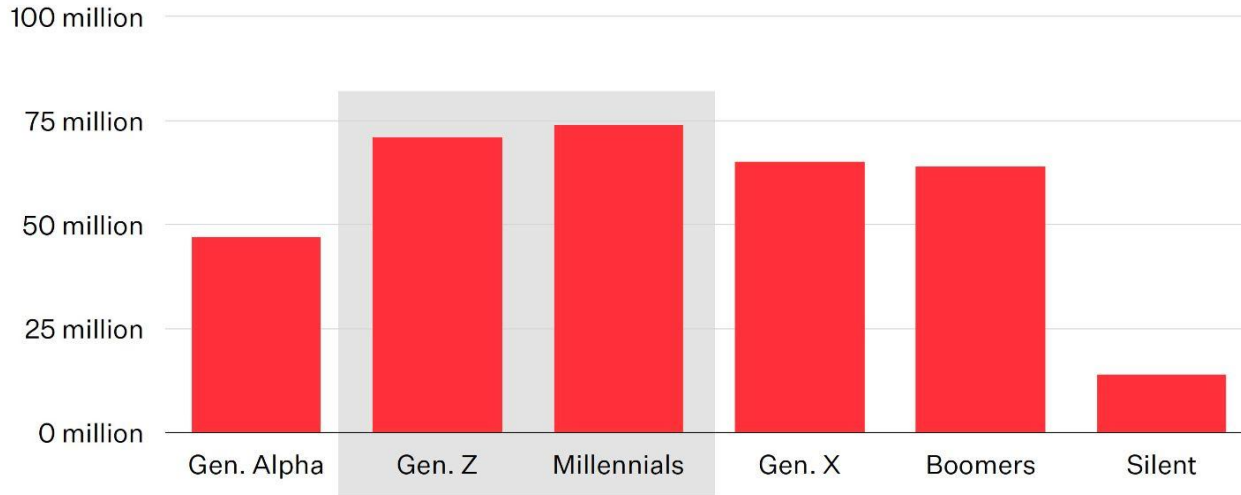
**GEN Z ARE BECOMING
PARENTS**



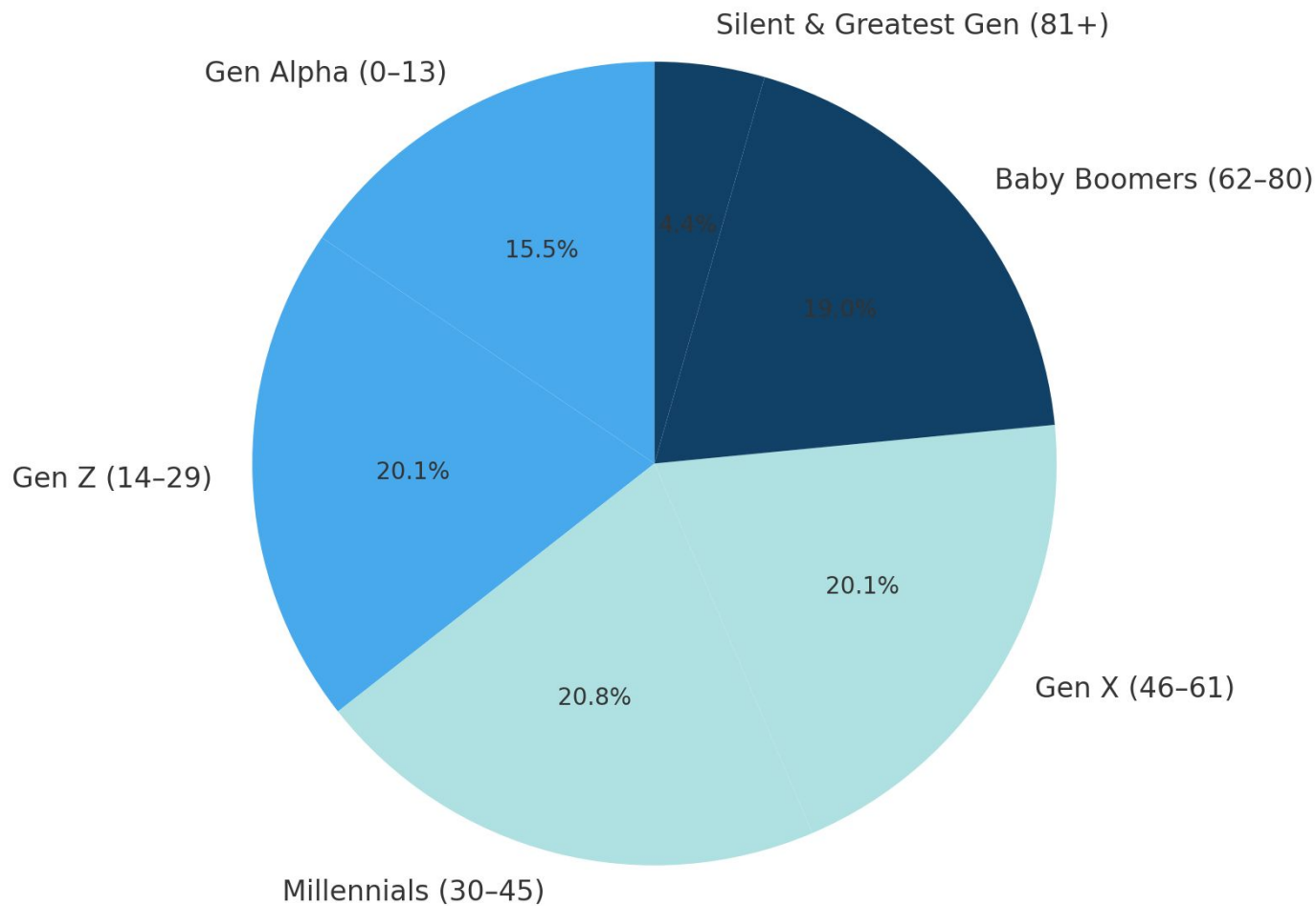
**PLANNING HAS
CHANGED**

Gen. Z and Millennials, ages 13 to 44, represent ~40% of the US population...

Estimated US population by generation



U.S. Population by Generation - 2026 (Projected)



Best opportunity for volume: Families with children age 3-10

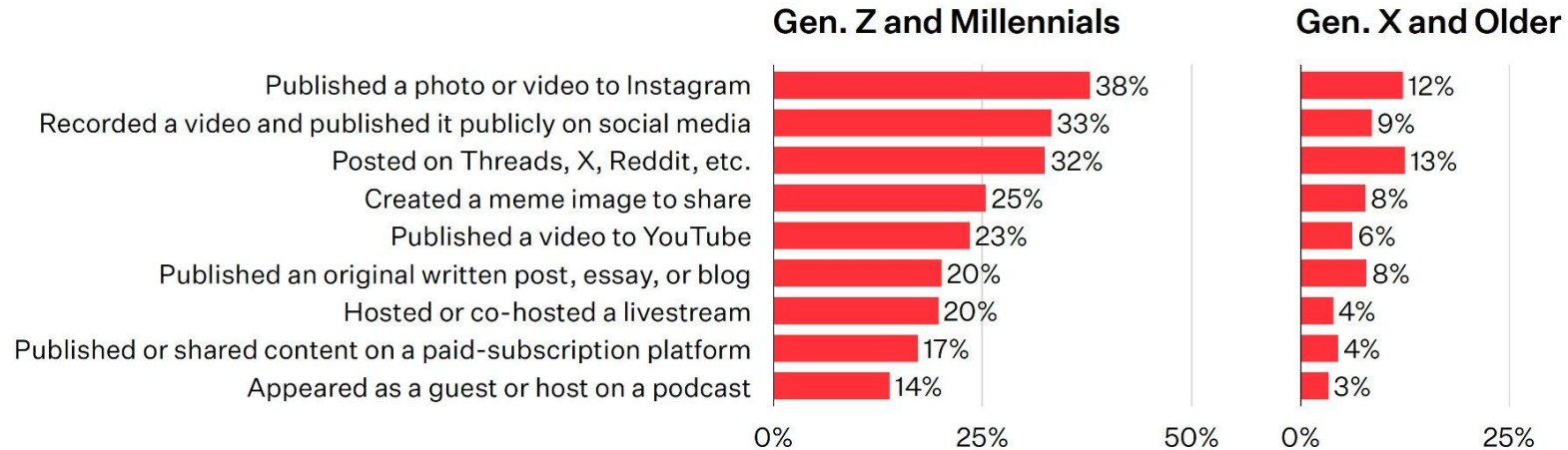
- “Millennial” parents shifting to “Gen Z” parents
(Shift from 40-50 younger to 30-40)
- 70% of parents pick destinations based on kids interest
- “Place of initiation” sparks deeper value. On-the-spot confidence jolt.
- Learn new things and take on new challenges
- 88% tried something new - or believe they can find something new in Destin-Fort Walton Beach
- More likely to consider Spring and Fall
- Repeat visitation

**Data based on August 2025 benchmark still in field



...and as digital natives, they live life differently, frequently creating online

Percentage of responses: Which of the following activities have you personally done in the past month?



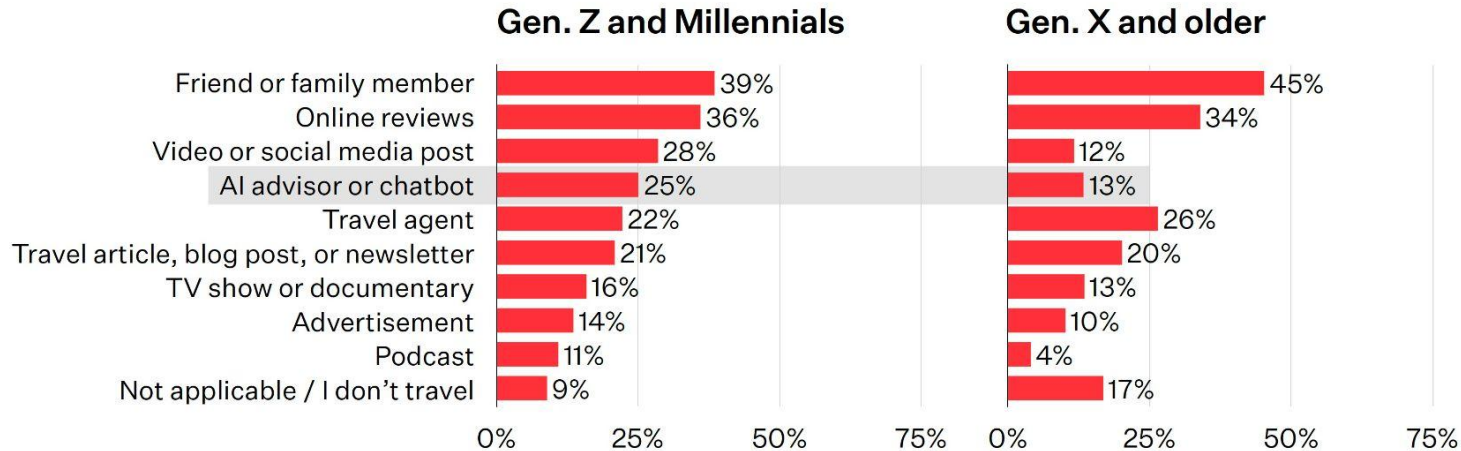
A young girl with dark hair is swimming underwater, looking upwards with her eyes closed. She is wearing a blue swimsuit and a beaded necklace. Bubbles are rising from her mouth, and several small fish are visible in the background. The water is clear and blue.

**We get kids outside
on the water to give
their adventurous
side room to grow.**

**DESTIN
FORT
WALTON
BEACH**
FLORIDA

Younger consumers are more likely to trust AI tools while planning a vacation

If you were planning a vacation, which recommendation sources would you be most likely to follow? (Up to three.)



Families aware of Little Adventures are more interested and motivated **AND** They also are earlier to adopt AI tools

- 50% say they use AI tools more now than one year ago
- 74% say they've used ChatGPT to plan a vacation
- 90% say they use AI tools to compare destinations more easily
- 75% say they trust or completely trust AI tools during the planning process

** Data based on August, 2025 benchmark



AI Overview



TRENDS

DMOs and Hospitality/Attractions websites face unique challenges

DMOs



DMOs

Largely being the inspiration side, have lost a lot of traffic due to Google's implement of AI Overviews in Search. Informational queries (think 'things to do in...') are some of the most impacted queries in AI Overviews

Hospitality/Attractions



Hospitality/Attractions

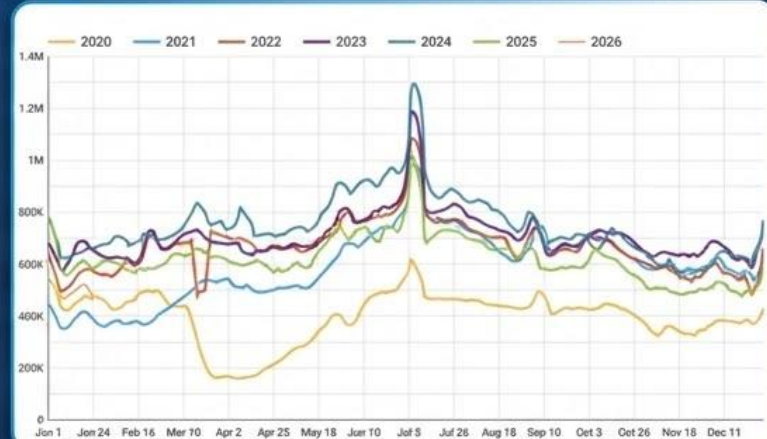
Often see incorrect information reflected in LLMs due the LLMs inability to access a lot of booking engines

Miles and Simpleview reported a **-25% decrease** in organic search traffic in 2025

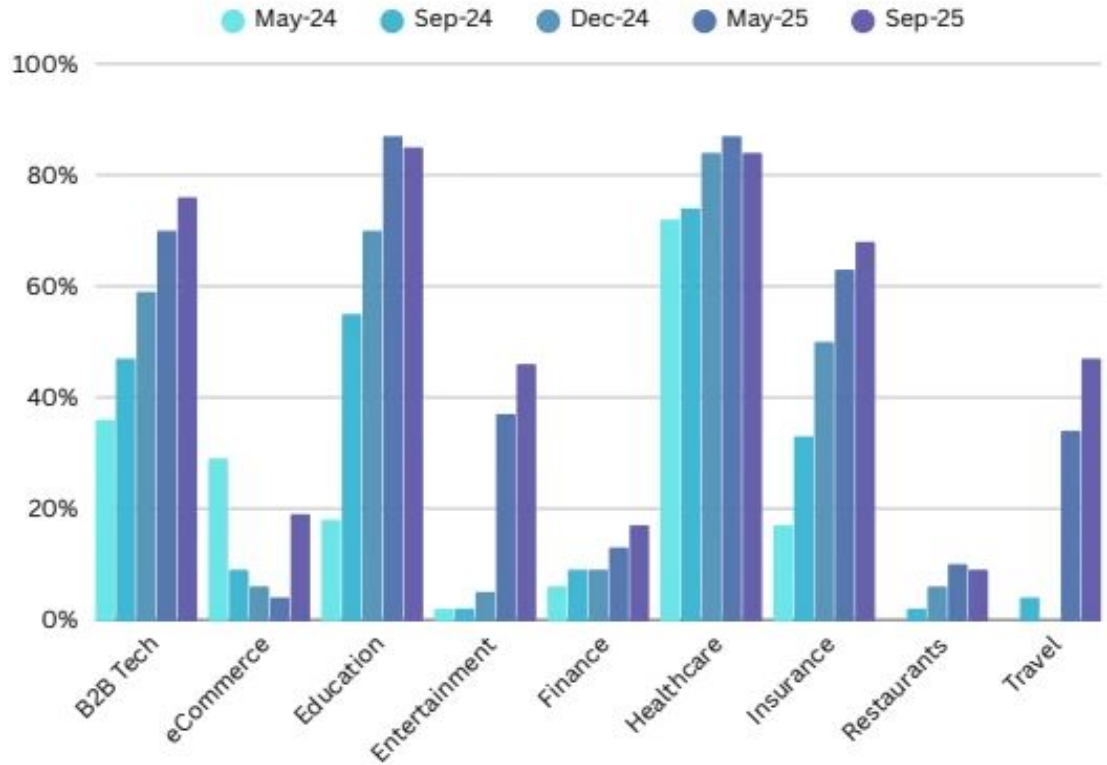
Miles Partnership



SimpleView

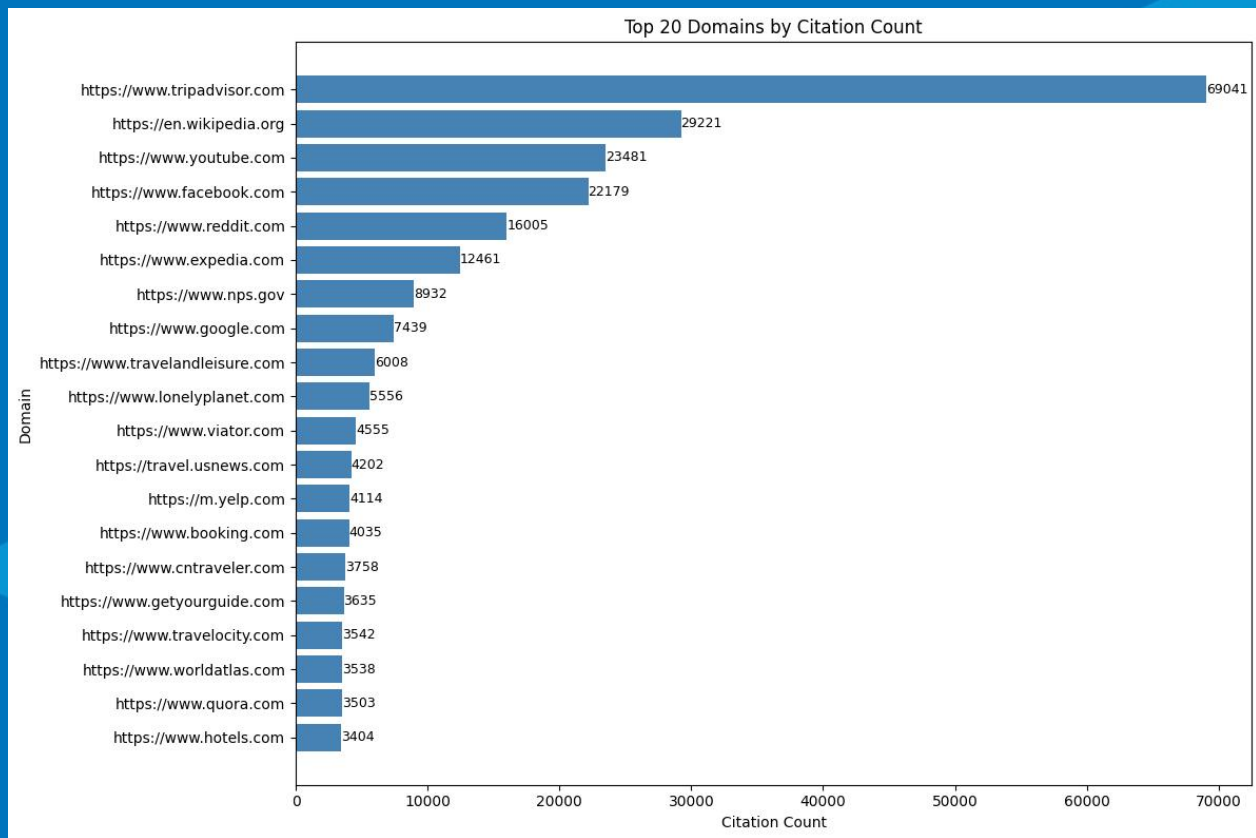


According to Brightedge's latest research, **AI Overviews are present for nearly 50% of all travel-related queries**



What sites are
LLMs citing the
most often for
travel related
prompts?

(industry)



What sites are
LLMs citing the
most often for
travel related
prompts?

(Destin
Fort-Walton
Beach)

Top Domains Cited



 destinfwb.com	6,640	4%
 tripadvisor.com	5,003	3%
 facebook.com	3,253	2%
 visitflorida.com	3,083	2%
 wikipedia.org	3,026	2%
 Other	129,061	86%

AI Study: Method and Early Findings

Tracking 80 branded and non-branded prompts
Social platforms, Search volume, LLM's
35 national sites, 30 local sites

100% Branded Presence
27% Non-branded Presence

8% Branded Citation
1% Non-branded Citation





AI Study: Method and Early Findings

General Tourism Attributes

Attribute \ Destination	Benchmark average	Destin-Fort Walton Beach
Safety	7.2	7
Price (affordability)	7.3	6
Accessibility (air/drive)	6.8	8
Ease of travel (getting around/traffic)	6.8	6
Family friendliness	7.9	9
Variety of things to do	7.3	8
Beach quality & natural attractions	8.4	9
Cultural attractions	6.3	6
Food & dining experiences	6.9	8
Nightlife & evening entertainment	5.9	7
Environmental / sustainability appeal	6.9	6
Overall beach / crowd atmosphere	8.0	8
Total (sum of scores)	86.3	88

AI Study: Method and Early Findings

Branded attributes: Little Adventures

Attribute 	Benchmark Average	Destin-Fort Walton Beach
Beaches	8.5	10
Charter Fishing	7.3	10
Surf Fishing	6.8	8
Snorkeling	6.5	7
Paddle Boarding	8.3	9
Surfing	6.6	6
Kids Activities	8.1	9
Scuba Diving	6.9	6
Dolphin Excursions	7.6	9
Artificial Reefs	7.3	10
Crystal-Clear Water	8.2	10
Best Family Friendly Beaches	8.6	10
Family Spring Break	7.9	8
Best Summer Vacations	8.7	10
 Total Score	122.7	138

How businesses can adapt:



Ensure technical viability / accessibility

(LLMs can't crawl your content if they can't access your website)



Online reputation management

LLMs will pull information about your brand from more places than just your website



Content is still king

But focus more on industry facts and less on inspiration

An underwater photograph showing a school of small, silvery fish swimming in clear, turquoise water. The water's surface is visible at the top, with ripples and light reflections. The bottom of the frame shows a sandy seabed with some coral or rock formations.

FY26 Strategic Shifts

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FLORIDA

A wide-angle photograph of a beach at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with soft clouds. The ocean is calm with gentle waves lapping at the shore. In the distance, three people are visible in the water, their silhouettes against the bright horizon. The foreground shows the wet sand of the beach.

Multi-year shift in Strategy

Create **interest** and help more families **commit** to Destin-Fort Walton Beach during their **inspiration and research phase**.

Drive more **quality volume** by remarketing to “intenders,” testing new markets and promoting new products.

Stimulate repeat visitation and begin to build ongoing relationships with the most loyal visitors.

FY26 Strategies

Continue Core Market Focus + National Intenders

Atlanta
Chicago*
Dallas/Ft. Worth
Houston*
Orlando
Cincinnati
Detroit
Indianapolis
Minneapolis
Nashville
New Orleans
Memphis
St. Louis
Washington DC*

Linear TV Markets
8% US

Connected TV Markets
20% US

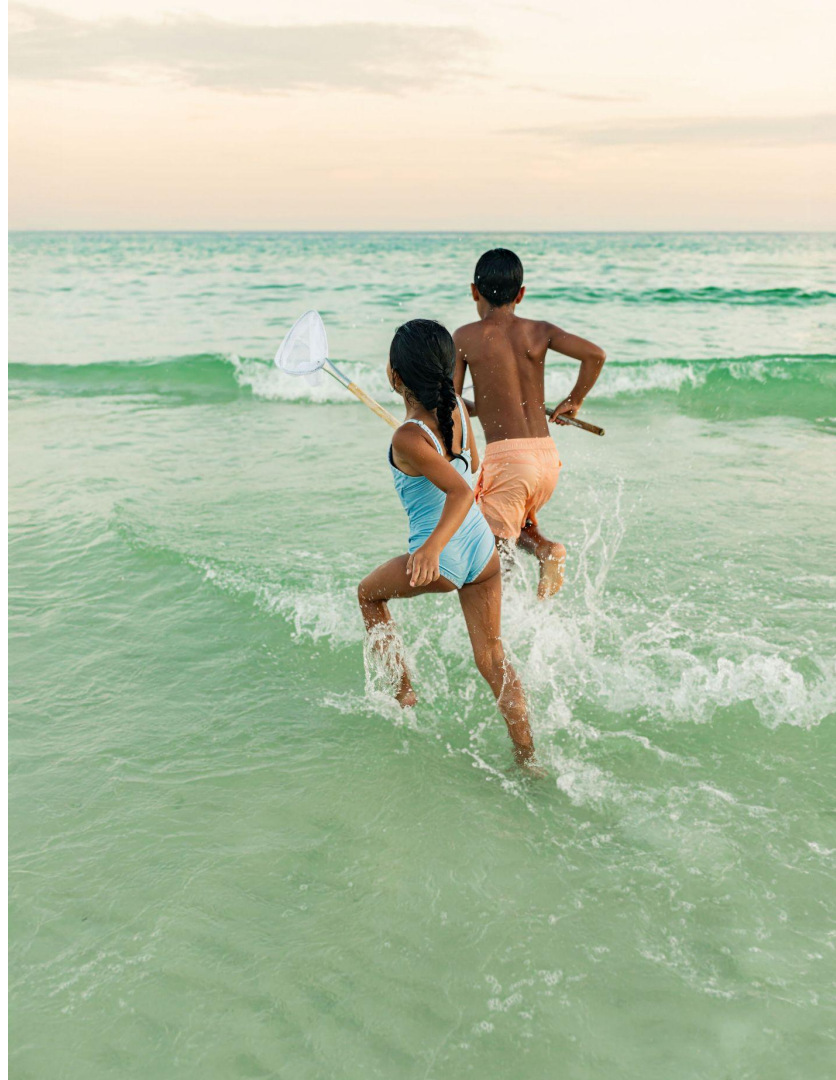
Digital Markets
100% US

~80-90%
Budget

National Intenders

~10-20%
Budget

*Test messaging in high-divide-index markets



FY26 Tactical Shifts

Set the stage for the next five years as young Millennials and older Gen Z have children

Podcasts and YouTube

Create content for machines and for people

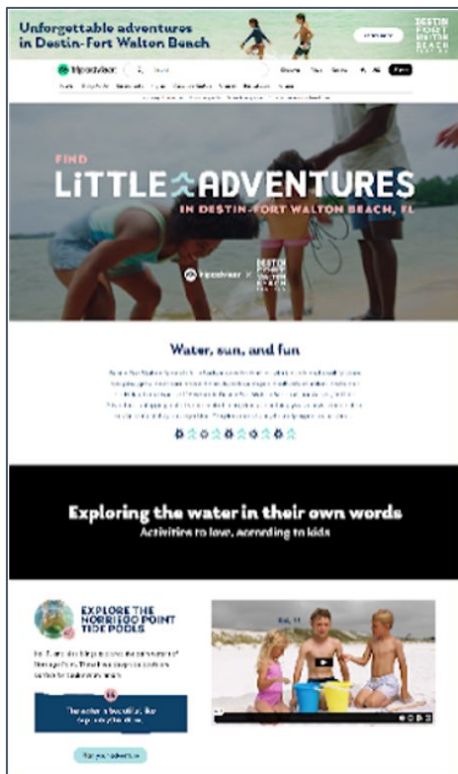
Entice and capture repeat visitation with the spirit of “cool. That’s new.”

Continue to align with sources of trust

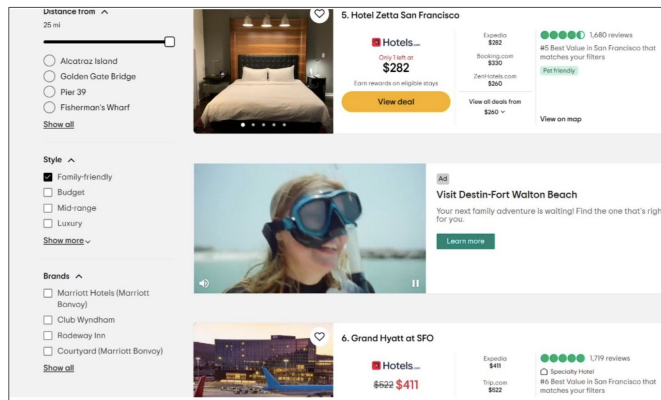


Off-Site Exposure: Tripadvisor Indexable DFWB Content

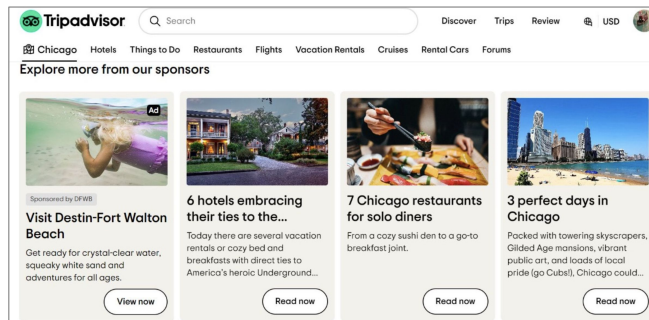
Custom Hub



Explorer Video: 300x250



Native Shelf Card



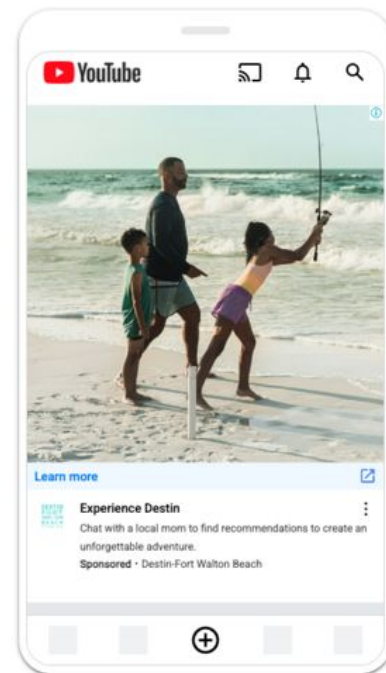
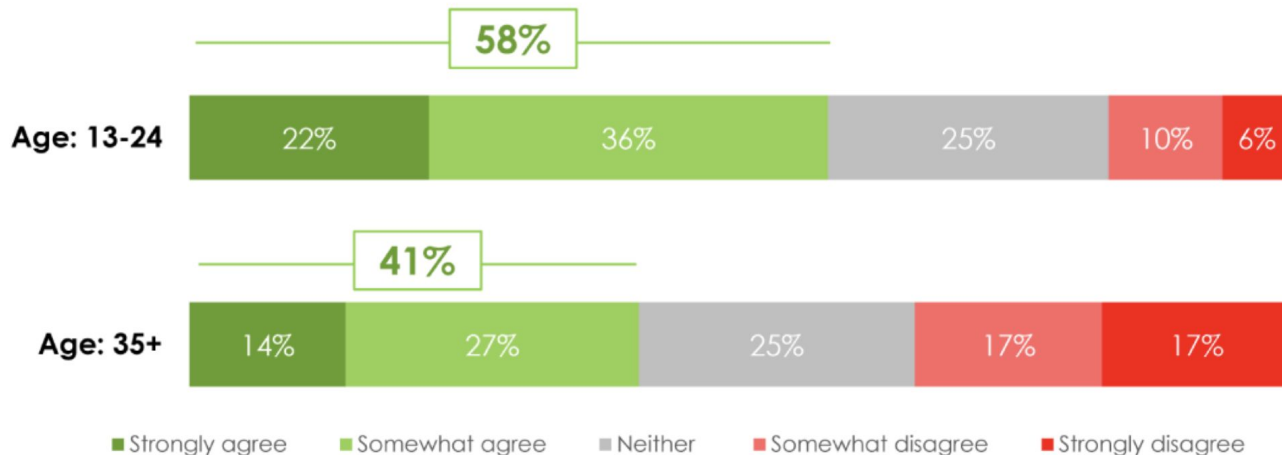
TripConnect (Co-branded Meta)



Optimize Toward Young Family Media Usage: YOUTUBE



"Watching short YouTube videos on a TV is just as fun as watching longer TV shows and movies"



Implication: Increase exposure on YouTube
Focus on Shorts

Optimize Toward Young Family Media Usage: AUDIO

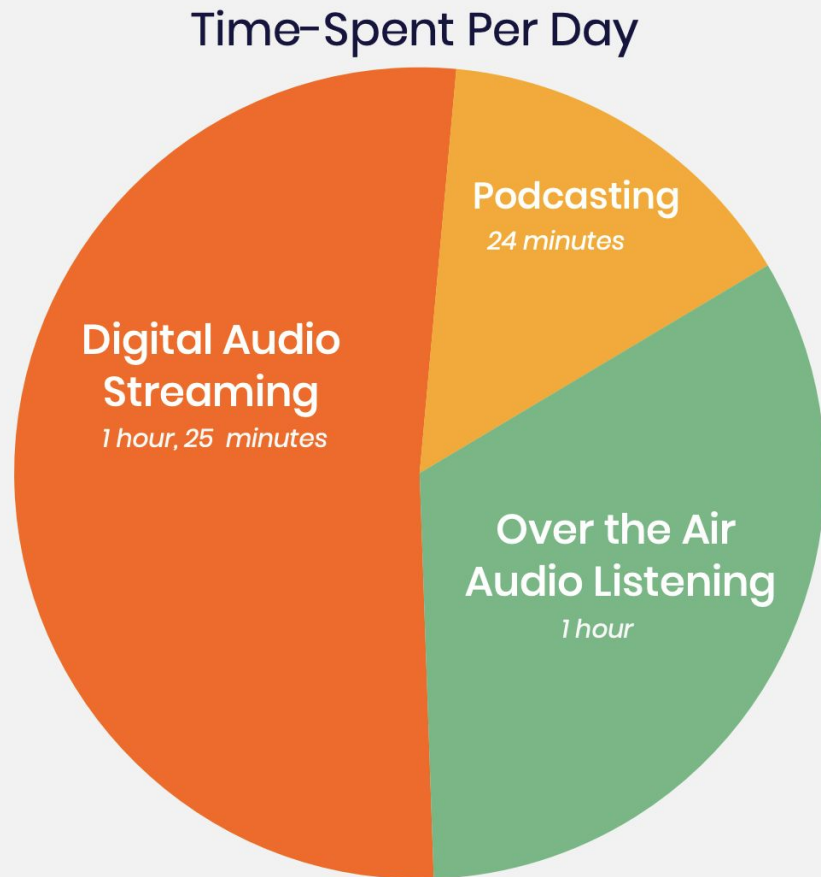
67% of all audio listening is now done digitally

54% of Gen Z families have listened to streaming audio in past 7 days

35% have listened to a podcast in past 7 days

Test in 2 markets

Sources: Katz Digital 2025 & MRI/Simmons



Out-of-Market Content Creator Collaborations

To raise awareness of the Little Adventures programs and spotlight key destination partner offerings, the team partnered with **8 out-of-market creators** from priority regions, including cities in Texas and Georgia. These influencers **highlighted the destination's family-friendly experiences through authentic storytelling and engaging video content.**

A key objective was to capture compelling video assets optimized for high-impact platforms like Instagram.. The creators showcased a variety of adventures, which led to a significant boost in national awareness for Destin-Fort Walton Beach and its local partners.

The collaborations collectively delivered the following results:

305
published pieces
of social media
content

1M+
social media
impressions

528K+
social media
video views

44.8K+
social media
engagements

319
high-quality assets
obtained for
marketing use

2
long-form blog
posts



At a Glance

2025 SCORECARD

- 1 65 Scouts**
Successful in-house operations and extension
- 2 750+ Classes**
40% volume increase
- 3 Scout Recommendations**
Website content and in-market promotions
- 4 adventuredfwb.com upgrade**
Login, CMS, 26 experts featured, conversion
- 5 Live Reel Time tournament**
30 participants in app



Insights

100% of those who interacted with Scouts said they felt more welcome.

94% would take a different Little Adventure.

Scouts and Classes change the perception of Destin-Fort Walton Beach in a positive way.

Scouts: Reddit + FB Groups



Alli Fischer

18h · 🌐

Recommendations on your favorite place in Destin for a good sea food boil!?



2

9 comments



r/florida · 7 mo. ago
RudysMom1016

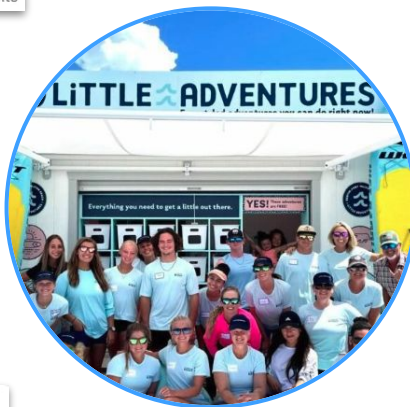


What's your favorite Gulf beach in Florida for families?

AskFlorida

My husband and I want to take our 4yo son to one of the Gulf beaches in Florida. We'd like to go in June. However, we can't choose which one to visit! I'm also concerned about recent hurricane damage in places like Anna Maria Island and Siesta Key (which were originally at the top of our list).

We'd like to book an Airbnb with a pool if we can, and we're looking for somewhere with a (mostly) quiet, laid-back vibe. (We went to the OBX last year and found it to be super congested—that's not what we want this time around). At the same time, it's important for us to have some restaurants and a few things to do nearby (beyond the beach). Any suggestions? TIA!



Karen Lentini

Yesterday at 11:07 AM · 🌐

Planning to visit Destin beaches on the first week of October, and was wondering if anyone can recommend if that's still a good time to go? Im concern the water might already be cold to swim 🙄 I have a 6 yo with special needs and cold water bothers him so Im hoping that time is kind of close to summer time so maybe it's not too cold yet? We're driving from Texas so driving 9 hours only to have cold waters is risky. Appreciate no judgement please, I can google but it's different and more reliable to ask folks who actually live there or been there at this period. Thank you!:)



7

28 comments



Jennifer Hill

18h · 🌐

Any places / suggestions on a place to rent in Destin for a week in October ???



3

42 comments



r/AskFlorida · 8 mo. ago
Lonely_Career_1177

Big Family Vacation Help - KIDS CLUB AND FAMILY FRIENDLY

We go to Florida every year - always Siesta Key in September for a week.

As our family is growing we are finding it harder to find a condo that works for us in siesta and are thinking about going somewhere else as we want to stay in the same place.

Typically who goes is my mother and father in law, two brother in laws, one sister in law, my husband and I and our two kids (totaling 4-5 bedrooms needed).

We are looking for somewhere not too expensive that has resort style options like beach chairs and umbrellas on the beach and kids club for the kiddos.

We are willing to get different condos but want them to be close to each other. Please help!!!

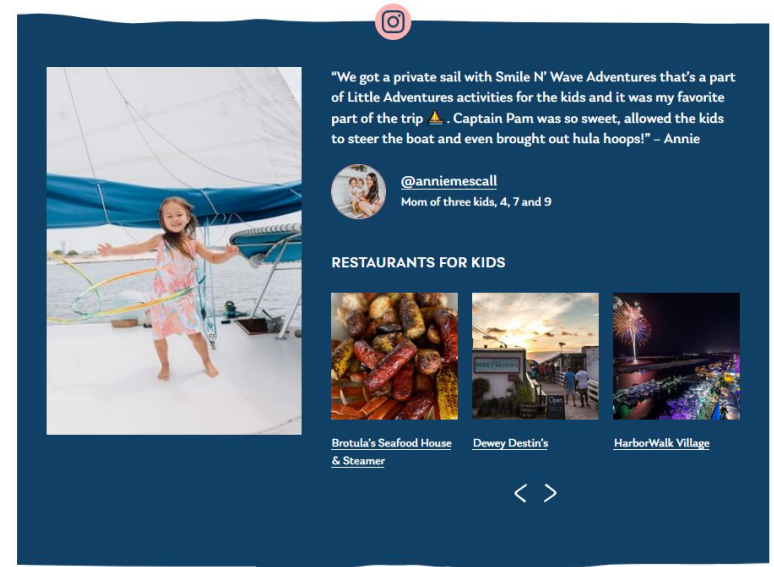
Insights

76% of those who interacted with Reel Time content said it made them more interested in learning about a vacation to Destin-FWB.

91% of those participants that had visited said adventuredfwb.com made them want to return.

Website goals

- Showcase how family-friendly Destin-Fort Walton Beach is
- Make the decision making process easy for parents planning their family vacation
- Balance inspiration with actionable tools for faster decision making and planning with confidence
- Drive more traffic to partners



Check-in to paradise

Whether it be a vacation home, luxury resort or a family-friendly hotel, find the perfect place to spend your vacation in Destin-Fort Walton Beach



Hotels

[Learn more](#)



Condo Rentals

[Learn more](#)



Luxury Resorts

[Learn more](#)



Vacation Homes

[Learn more](#)



Website goals

How?

- Enhance current filter options to include more useful trip planning options - like kid-friendly amenities and specify what makes it kid-friendly.
- Include visual cues (icons, quick badges) to showcase family amenities at a glance - for all partners.
- Highlight family-specific offerings (crib availability, kids' menus, shuttle services).
- Showcase Scout, influencer quotes, or trusted guest reviews to build credibility and connection.
- Explore refreshed profile page designs with stronger visuals, clear amenity icons, and family-friendly highlights.

The screenshot displays a hotel website interface. On the left, a grid of nine hotel listings is shown, each with a thumbnail image, the hotel name, and a 'QUICK VIEW' button. The hotels listed are Baymont Inn, Beachside Inn, Beal House Fort Walton Beachfront, Best Western of Crestview, Candlewood Suites, and Comfort Suites Niceville Near Eglin Air Force Base. On the right, a detailed profile for 'Best Western of Crestview' is featured. It includes a descriptive paragraph about the hotel's location and amenities, a list of amenities (Exercise/Fitness facilities, Outdoor pool, Electric vehicle charging station, Free parking, Free WiFi), contact information (address, phone number), and buttons for 'VISIT WEBSITE' and 'Learn more'. A red circular icon with a speech bubble is visible in the top right corner of the profile section.

LOCAL SCOUT TIP

"Camille's has great breakfast smoothies to fuel you up for a morning paddleboard adventure on the Gulf. The beach is right across the street." - Samantha, Little Adventure Scout

How partners can support a family-friendly experience

- **Share your family-friendly story:** Highlight the unique experiences, services, or offerings that make your business welcoming for families and help visitors envision their trip.
- **Keep photos fresh and inspiring:** Provide updated, high-quality imagery that showcases your space, activities, and family-focused features.
- **Maintain accurate business details:** Regularly confirm that your business description, location, and key information are current and correct.
- **Promote your family-friendly amenities:** Let us know what amenities you offer—such as kids' menus, play areas, lodging options, or accessible features—so we can feature them prominently on your partner profile.



Parlor Doughnuts

 191 Miracle Strip Parkway Southeast, Fort Walton Beach, FL, 32548

 (850) 374-3776

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

Parlor Doughnuts craft doughnut and coffee shop offering an array of unique bakery items, including our original layered doughnuts; vegan, gluten-friendly, and keto-friendly products; artisanal breakfasts; and specialty coffee. Our goal is to efficiently deliver a superior product, at a moderate price, with exceptional service, in a comfortable setting.

What's Next?



DESTIN
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FLORIDA




Upcoming web enhancements

Enhance filters to build confidence:

- Enhance current filter options to include more useful trip planning options - like kid-friendly amenities and specify what makes it kid-friendly.
- Include visual cues (icons, quick badges) to showcase family amenities at a glance - for all partners.
- Drive more traffic to accommodations partners

HOTELS IN DESTIN-FORT WALTON BEACH ARE SHOWN BELOW, USE THE FILTERS TO NARROW YOUR SEARCH!

VIEW  LIST  MAP

CATEGORIES  REGIONS  AMENITIES 

☐ Restaurant / Lounge bar on site

☐ Golf on Site

☐ Indoor Pool

☐ Lazy River

☐ Electric Vehicle Charging Station

☐ Covered Parking

☐ Boat Ramps / Rentals and or Slips

☐ Mobile Check-in

☐ Kitchenette

☐ Exercise Fitness Facilities on Site

☐ Tennis on Site

☐ Outdoor Pool

☐ Splash Pad

☐ Pet Friendly

☐ Free Parking

☐ Bicycles For Rent

☐ Free Wifi

☐ Room Service

☐ Spa on Site

☐ Sport Court

☐ Hot Tub

☐ Gulf Front

☐ Airport Shuttle

☐ Valet Parking

☐ 24/7 Reception

☐ Full Kitchen

☐ Pack and Play

FILTER RESULTS

Upcoming web enhancements

Utilize partner profiles:

- Enhance partner profiles with detailed amenity data to power stronger filter functionality.
- Highlight family-specific offerings (crib availability, kids' menus, shuttle services).
- Showcase Scout, influencer quotes, or trusted guest reviews to build credibility and connection.
- Explore refreshed profile page designs with stronger visuals, clear amenity icons, and family-friendly highlights.



HENDERSON
BEACH RESORT

Henderson Beach Resort

 200 Henderson Resort Way, Destin, FL 32541

 855-741-2777

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

Experience the timeless romance of Henderson Beach Resort on Florida's Emerald Coast. Where Southern charm meets modern luxury. A place to create joyful memories and be welcomed home. Generations have chosen Henderson Beach Resort as a place to reconnect, discover, and unwind. Surround yourself with the beauty of nature and shape memories that will last a lifetime.

Share 

RESOURCES

Web URLs

destinfwb.com

adventuredfwb.com

destinfwb.com/reel-time

meetindestinfwb.com

youtube.com/@DestinFortWaltonBeach

Okaloosa Bed-Tax Collection Reporting

okaloosaclerk.com/board-services/tourist-development-tax

Click Tourist Tax Collection Report on bottom of page – click through tabs

Email Contacts

marketing@destinfwb.com (Marketing Team)

littleadventures@destinfwb.com (Destination Stewardship)

dscott@myokaloosa.com (Dakota Scott, Community Relations Coordinator)

Social Media Handles

Destin-Fort Walton Beach: IG: [destinfwb](#) / FB: [Visit Destin-Fort Walton Beach](#)

Meetings + Events: IG: [Meetindestinfwb](#) / FB: [Meet In Destin-Fort Walton Beach](#)

QUESTIONS + ANSWERS

Question: (9:23): Where can we find the tax collector report?

Answer: Directly linked in the deck and can be found - <https://okaloosaclerk.com/board-services/tourist-development-tax/>

Question: (10:32): Where can I find the list of artificial reefs?

Answer: Directly linked in the deck and can be found - <https://www.destinfwb.com/explore/water-adventures/diving/>

Question: (57:38): Can you share the AI prompts you're tracking?

Answer: We plan to share a list of these prompts in the next 30 days.

Question: (1:12:20) Are there any new plans for advertising and promoting meetings and conventions?

Answer: Yes, there is more to come!

Question: (1:15:33) What is the Destin-Fort Walton Beach YT channel?

Answer: Directly linked in the deck and can be found - go.destinfwb.com/youtube