

# Gulf Shores News

While some Gulf Shores visitors said rising gas prices hadn't affected their holiday plans, others said they had chosen a more local getaway to save money.

"We figured with rising gas prices, this weekend we'd stick closer to home and stay in a condo in Orange Beach," said Mason Austin of Fairhope. "What would you call this?" he asked his wife, Mary. "A staycation," she answered.

Brent McSpadden said driving from Atlanta cost about \$200, but the trip was still a practical outing. "If we flew, the airfare was going to be close to \$1,000," he said. "I really didn't mind the gas prices. It kept some of the people off the road and the trip to Gulf Shores was not too bad."

He said the family was also able to economize by staying with relatives. "We've got people in Mobile, so we could stay there and come over here, so that worked out," he said.

McSpadden and his wife, Amy, watched as their daughter, Anna Kate, dug in the sand with a small plastic shovel.

"She's 18 months old," he said. "This is her first time at the beach. She loves it, so I'm sure we'll be back."

At The Hangout, business was good Sunday as lunch crowds wandered in from the nearby beach, said Summer Sanders, restaurant manager.

"Business has been great," she said. "Of course, we could have done without the rain Friday night, but so could everyone, but Saturday was good and today's been good. People are finding out that we're here."

She said the economy has had an effect on the weekend turnout.

"I think gas prices have made an impact this weekend," Sanders said. "I grew up here and for a Memorial Day weekend, it's not as big as some I remember, but the crowds are still good."

At the Alabama Gulf State Park, beaches and accommodations were filled, Hugh Branyon, park director, said Sunday.

"The crowds are good," he said. "The campgrounds all are full, all 496 sites and the beaches have been busy."

On Dauphin Island, crowds on the beaches had picked up Sunday, said William Harper, a volunteer with the Dauphin Island Chamber of Commerce.

"The crowds yesterday were a little lighter than would be expected, but there are more people today," he said Sunday. "I'd say it's moderate to heavy down at the beach and there are a lot of people on the island right now."

Harper said both motels and condos had good bookings for the weekend and upcoming week.

He said gas prices could help local tourism if people in Mobile and to the west looked for beach locations closer than Baldwin County or Florida.

"My gut feeling is we're going to be a little busier this year as people from Harrison County, Jackson County, Miss., look for somewhere closer than Gulf Shores or Pensacola Beach," he said. "People in Mobile, too, might not want to drive as far."

Dauphin Island's holiday weekend was marred by the death of Eric Stegall, 12 of New Orleans. He was seen swimming off Dauphin Island Saturday evening. His body was discovered in the water Sunday morning after an all-night search by Dauphin Island and Mobile County authorities.

## BEACH REPORT

Water temperature: 75 degrees.

Wave conditions: Waves along the Gulf Coast were choppy Sunday. The National Weather Service predicts a moderate risk of rip currents along Alabama and the western Florida Panhandle beaches today.

Water conditions: There have been no reports of stinging jellyfish infestations or higher-than-normal

shark counts, according to state officials.

UV report: Experts predict an extreme ultraviolet index, so wear a hat and don't skimp on the sunscreen. For any questions you may have concerning the Gulf Shores are, please contact [Aaron Pugh](#)

Thank you for trying Soda PDF