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## Pensacola Tourism Decline Impacts Florida Businesses

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– *Categories: Economics*

Pensacola, Florida, a city known for its white-sand beaches and coastal attractions, is facing a measurable decline in tourism in 2025. According to data from Visit Pensacola, visitor numbers fell in June by approximately 18,000 compared to the same month in 2024. The decline is most visible among international travelers, which has added pressure to the local economy.

### Spending Habits Changing Along the Gulf Coast

Local business owners report that the challenge is not only fewer tourists, but also reduced spending from those who do arrive. Kirk Newkirk, owner of Key Sailing, has been renting water sports equipment in Pensacola for more than 50 years. He said that while summers in previous decades could bring as many as 100 rentals a day, in 2025 the business has often reached only half of that level.

Newkirk explained that visitors appear more cautious with discretionary spending on vacation activities. Businesses like his, which rely on high turnover during peak season, are recording revenue declines. He compared current conditions unfavorably to previous downturns such as the years following the 2010 BP oil spill, noting that rentals and customer volume were stronger during that recovery period.

### Local Restaurants and Hospitality

Restaurants and hospitality businesses along Pensacola Beach are also experiencing slower sales. Staff have reported fewer peak nights and lower tips. Visit Florida data show

that Canadian tourism statewide has fallen about 3% compared to 2024, reducing a segment of international visitors who typically contribute to Florida's tourism market.

While domestic visitors from nearby Southern states continue to travel to Pensacola, business owners say many are opting for budget-conscious activities and lower dining expenditures. This pattern has created financial strain for restaurants and service workers who depend on seasonal income.

## Seasonal Outlook

Community leaders and businesses are preparing for the winter tourism season, when visitors from colder regions of the United States often travel to Florida. Visit Pensacola officials have stated that winter months historically generate stronger visitor numbers, though they caution that current economic conditions may influence overall spending patterns.

Florida State Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis has also commented on the region's outlook. In a statement to local media, he expressed confidence that the Gulf Coast's tourism sector can recover, citing its resilience after the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Adapting for the Future

Business owners are considering strategies to manage the downturn. Some have introduced cost-cutting measures, while others emphasize long-term customer loyalty and Pensacola's established reputation as a Gulf Coast destination.

Industry observers note that Pensacola's tourism recovery will depend largely on broader economic trends, currency exchange rates that affect international travel, and the pace at which visitor spending stabilizes. For now, local businesses are adjusting operations while monitoring travel data for signs of improvement.