



## Report to the Industry

*Apr. 10, 2025*

### **February STR summary**

STR reports hotel data in Lee County.

Average Occupancy Rate			Average Daily Rate			RevPAR		
2024	2025	% Change	2024	2025	% Change	2024	2025	% Change
79.5%	78.6%	-1.1%	\$232.59	\$231.74	-0.4%	\$185.01	\$182.23	-1.5%

### **February Key Data summary**

Key Data reports vacation rental data in Lee County.

Average Occupancy Rate			Average Daily Rate			RevPAR		
2024	2025	% Change	2024	2025	% Change	2024	2025	% Change
89.8%	79.1%	-11.9%	\$301	\$310	+2.7%	\$270	\$244	-9.5%

### **Guests First recognizes newest graduates**

Crystal Wanke, VCB customer service hospitality training specialist, awarded certificates to the newest certified guest service professionals (CGSPs), bringing the total to 1,181 CGSP graduates.

### **Special presentation**

Cynthia Welch, executive director, Pine Island Chamber of Commerce, gave an update on their activities on Pine Island from April through December of 2024, as well as a look ahead to the next few months. Welch shared videos produced with the grant funds received from Lee County highlighting their “Keep it Local” campaign and their “Adopt a Dolphin” wall art auction which was also a fundraiser for the chamber.

### **Bed tax collection**

The preliminary resort tax collected for February 2025 was \$6,080,446, a 6.4% increase over February 2024 preliminary collections of \$5,714,467. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$20,727,579, an increase of 3.4% year-over-year.

### **Airport news**

During February 2025, 1,173,638 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport, a decrease of 4.1% compared to February 2024. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is down 3.9% from the same period last year.

### **Communications update**

Ray Sarracino, VCB communications director, reported that coverage and UVM numbers remained strong with a large spike due to the 26 interviews conducted as part of the Plan for Vacation Day event. Jan. through March 2025 saw eight journalist visits in the destination. 93 articles were published in target markets, resulting in a roughly 40% increase in impressions from the previous quarter. Upcoming media events include planned visits from domestic media, Great Lakes outdoor writers, Brazilian journalists, a United Kingdom familiarization tour, and a Satellite Media Tour commemorating National Seashell Day on June 20.

### **Sales update**

Jill Vance, VCB director of sales, reported that the sales team is close to pace for five of the six goals for FY24-25. She shared highlights of successful Q2 sales activities and a meeting planner FAM. The sales team attended a variety of in-person meeting planner and travel trade shows, including Florida Encounter and Travel & Adventure Shows in Atlanta, Chicago, NYC, and Washington DC. Vance also presented upcoming sales activities for April through June including the East Coast Florida Travel Agency Sales Mission and Client Event, ASTA Travel Advisor Conference, and HelmsBriscoe ABC. Vance congratulated Erin Lester on earning the 2025 Smart Women in Meetings award. Charm Evans, VCB global sales manager, provided an update on international travel to the destination, marketing initiatives and travel trade activities. The international sales team engaged in various trade and consumer events such as Visit Florida's FL Huddle, ITB Berlin in Germany, and hosted a pickle ball sales activation in London. Additionally, Evans presented on upcoming activities such as the Brand USA Italy and Switzerland FAM in May and U.S. Travel Association's IPW international appointment show in June.

### **Visitor services update**

Simone Behr, VCB visitor services director, reported that the VCB's tourism ambassador volunteers assisted a record number of 348,005 visitors and residents during the second quarter of FY25. Additional community support included tourism ambassadors helping at ArtFest Fort Myers, Breeze Airline's inaugural flight, Project Cookie at RSW, as well as staffing the VCB baseball booths at all spring training games. Tourism Ambassadors attended various destination education training sessions compliments of our industry partners. Visitor Services looks forward to hosting the 25<sup>th</sup> annual Elaine McLaughlin Outstanding Hospitality Service Awards on Aug. 22. To learn more or to nominate, visit [EAwards.org](http://EAwards.org).

### **Marketing update**

Lesley-Ann Thompson, VCB director of marketing, shared highlights of media buys implemented Jan-March and gave a preview of upcoming plans and programs for April through July intended to positively impact summer business. Examples of recent projects included the 2025 Digital Guide; participation in a 3-day statewide sale coordinated by Visit Florida on Hopper that generated 177 room nights and \$130k in travel sales; and a Travelzoo broadcast from Sanibel Island telling our destination's recovery story that generated 241M impressions.

Thompson also shared five new TV spots from the launch of the VCB's "Just Feels Right" brand campaign and showcased a soon-to-be-launched Mega Campaign, which will be an integrated effort that combines the power and reach of Dotdash Meredith (i.e. Southern Living, Travel + Leisure and Midwest Living) with VRBO. The goal is to connect inspiration messaging early in the trip planning process with a mechanism later in the consumer decision-making journey that offers travelers the ability to book vacation rentals in our area. She also mentioned integrated packages we have with premier publishers like Conde Nast, New York Times and Tastemade, as well as buys to drive hotel bookings with Hopper and Expedia. Combined, all marketing tactics are expected to yield just over 310M in paid impression for the summer.

### **New business**

Mike Campbell, Lee County Natural Resources, provided an update on the nourishment projects for critically eroded beaches in Lee County, including Gasparilla Island, Captiva Island, Estero Island, Lovers Key, and Bonita Beach.

Nancy MacPhee, VCB product development manager, provided information to the TDC for their review of fiscal year 2025-26 Beach & Shoreline program funding requests. 24 eligible requests were received in the amount of \$29,155,238. Anticipated revenue available for these projects is \$12,509,879. The TDC will conduct their annual beach and shoreline review workshop on April 16 at 2 p.m. and formalize funding recommendations for the Board of County Commissioners at their May meeting.

### **Next TDC meeting**

The next TDC meeting is scheduled for at **2 p.m., Thursday, May 8**, at the Lee County Administration East Building, 2201 Second St., Room 118, Fort Myers. To view a complete tax collections report, visit [www.LeeVCB.com](http://www.LeeVCB.com). Contact: Tamara Pigott, [TPigott@leegov.com](mailto:TPigott@leegov.com), Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.