

# L.I. @ WORK; A Year-Round Tourist Season? That's the Goal

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JODI JARVAS was driving to work when she found herself facing Hamptons road rage. She and the driver of a car heading the opposite direction were blocking each other as both attempted to turn left on Montauk Highway.



Deirdre Brennan for The New York Times

The tourist industry is trying to spread out the season. Jim Ferrarie of *Long Island Wine Tours* says that fall bookings have jumped.

"She couldn't pass me, I couldn't pass her, and she started making comments out her window," said Ms. Jarvas, 23, a teller at a bank in Montauk. "I rolled down my window and told her I wasn't going to drive into oncoming traffic for her."

When traffic eased, Ms. Jarvas drove on and thought the matter finished. But around noon, she saw the woman she had argued with entering the bank with a male companion. "They started harassing me, demanding to speak to my manager," she said. "A co-worker came over to help me deal with them, and the guy told her to shut up."

At that point, "I told them to go back where they came from," said Ms. Jarvas, who said she presumed they were out-of-towners because she didn't recognize them and found their behavior so rude she could not imagine they were from Montauk.

The fact that Ms. Jarvas works a second job, as a desk clerk at Gurney's Inn, the local resort, did not soften her resentment.

Unpleasantness on the roads and elsewhere is caused by "people from other areas coming here," Ms. Jarvas said.

"It's the way they drive, making illegal U-turns, refusing to use signal lights, things like that," she added. "But it's not just about driving. It's that whole feeling of entitlement they have. It seems like it gets worse every year."

Ms. Jarvas may well speak for many year-round East End residents -- and for a number of second-home owners, who may or may not qualify as tourists. They all contend that tourism has eroded the small-town feeling they once knew on the East End.

But others say that tourism's economic benefits outweigh the inconveniences. Tourism on the North and South Forks collectively brings in more than \$1.2 billion a year in hotel room bookings, restaurant meals, roadside produce purchases and other acquisitions, according to Michael V. Hollander, the president of the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau. That total represents about a quarter of all the tourism revenues on Long Island, he said.

But pressure is building on politicians and business owners themselves to limit growth or at least to limit summer tourism. So it is probably no surprise that those involved in tourist-related activities geared to the spring, fall or winter find their efforts are often welcomed or at least tolerated.

"Our challenge is that summer tourism frazzles the year-round community, and by August the locals are fed up with the industry," said Andrea Gurvitz, the executive director of the Hamptons Visitors Council, which was founded 11 years ago by six East End chambers of commerce and the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau.

As a consequence, "our activities are focused on spring and fall tourism," Ms. Gurvitz said.

Spreading the tourism season further into the spring and fall shoulder seasons and, increasingly, into the winter neutralizes community resistance and also makes tourism more economically viable, some people say.

"If the season goes from June through August, you still have to earn your living in September," said Ingrid Lemme, the marketing and public relations director at Gurney's and a board member of Eastern Long Island Executives, a business group whose members include many who work in tourism. "Not all of us can pick up every winter and relocate to Florida."

In the off season, visitors actually have more ways to spend their money than they do in the summer, said Mr. Hollander of the convention and visitors bureau.

Last year, he noted, fall spending on the East End increased about 16 percent. "You come out here for the day, or the weekend, and you can pick pumpkins on the North Fork, or visit a winery there; you can go kayaking or on a nature walk; or you can do indoor activities like Atlantis Marine World or Tanger mall," both in Riverhead, Mr. Hollander said.

Along with its subsidies to the Hamptons Visitors Council, the bureau has increased its fall and winter advertising budget 12 percent over last year, he said.

The Hamptons International Film Festival is an example of a shoulder-season success. Now in its ninth year, the festival will sell about 20,000 tickets during its run, from Oct. 17 through 21, said Denise Kasell, its executive director. "We bring in film industry people from around the country," she said. "Many would not normally come to the Hamptons, but come specifically for the festival, and end up going out to NV or Pacific East," she said, naming a pair of popular upscale restaurants. "And, of course, they're staying in local inns and hotels, and that benefits the economy."

Dr. Herodotus Damianos, who owns both Pindar and Duck Walk vineyards, said year-round business has grown steadily at each winery, except in January and September. "January is dead here, but it's not mobbed even in Napa Valley," he said. "Valentine's Day is always big, March is good, and in April the regular weekend crowds start returning. Summer, of course, is summer. September slows down, but in October, we put out the pumpkins and the Indian corn, and the crowds start coming back."

Promotions built around holidays build business and help take advantage of the crowds flocking to the nearby farm stands to buy pumpkins, apples and other harvest produce, said Dr. Damianos, who is known in wine circles as Doctor Dan. During the winter, he said, he decks out his vineyards with Christmas and Hanukkah decorations, or he offers tours focused on champagne making and serves his visitors caviar.

Many of the vineyards have entered the wedding reception business, creating an additional year-round revenue stream, he said.

***The appeal of a day spent at the vineyards, with a break for lunch at a local restaurant, is catching on with New York, New Jersey and Connecticut companies, which are offering day tours to employees as performance incentives, said Jim Ferrarie, the president of Long Island Wine Tours. "They want to***

***reward their employees, and a day trip out here is an affordable way to do it," Mr. Ferrarie said. He added that his fall business was growing, but he would not say by how much.***

Jay Schneiderman, the Town of East Hampton supervisor, said that year-round tourism benefited from the holiday attitude that many second-home owners maintain year round. "Second-home people tend to eat out all the time, rather than cook at home," he said. "They go to movies a lot. But they don't think of themselves as tourists."

At the North Fork Promotional Council, Audrey Wigley, the director, said that 90 cents out of every promotional dollar goes into building fall and winter tourism.

"We have a region that's known everywhere as a summer destination," she said. "The work in front of us now is to make it known as a year-round destination. And we're doing it."

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