

Tripadvisor names Destin to Top 25 list

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The “beautiful, clear green water” and “extremely fine, soft sand” of Destin’s beaches landed the city on tripadvisor.com’s “Top 25 Destinations in the United States” list.

“When you’re a top 25 destination on a highly respected travel site like Tripadvisor, you immediately earn the respect of people who research vacation destinations,” said Shane Moody, the president and CEO of the Destin Area Chamber of Commerce. “We’re a true family resort, we’re easy to reach via car and our amenities are truly world class.”

Destin placed No. 21 on the site below vacation hot spots such as New York City, Las Vegas, Orlando and Kailua-Kona but above other Southeastern destinations such as Myrtle Beach and Miami Beach.

“I think the beaches and the water are much bigger draws than other beach communities,” Moody said. “And we’re not nearly as large as those areas, but you still get the big city opportunities with our shopping, dining and recreational activities in fishing and golf.”

Mayor Sam Seevers said she believes it’s those things that placed Destin above other cities.

“It’s our water, the East Pass and the harbor,” she said. “Nobody else has that. And we’re the World’s Luckiest Fishing Village.”

Seevers said she believes the rest of the world is finally finding out what locals already know: Destin is the best vacation spot.

“By having this tool in our toolbox, we will be able to get more folks interested in the area,” she said. “Any type of advertising we have to publicize Destin, we need to take advantage of. This will be good for all businesses.”

The mayor commended the Okaloosa County Tourist Development Council for its work promoting the Emerald Coast after the negative impact from the media surrounding the Deepwater Horizon oil spill last year.

“Since day one of the oil spill, they have been proactive putting together the right advertisements at the right time,” she said. “Mark Bellinger and his staff did a great job getting people the right information.”

Tripadvisor also ranked traveler-recommended attractions at each destination. Just Chute Me Para-sail took the top spot in Destin for its “professional and highly experienced captain and crew.”

Owner Kevin Sherman said his employees are the heart of his business.

Just Chute Me, located at 500 Harbor Blvd., has held the No. 1 seat for the past four years.

“We’re honest people, we give people their money’s worth and we don’t hassle them,” Sherman said. “We treat people the way they want to be treated. We want to make them happy.”

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