



HAILEY HOFFMAN/THE ASTORIAN

Bridgewater Bistro and other restaurants on the North Coast have stayed busy this summer.

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the year, so it's an economic driver."

Reid said this was the summer of demand without supply.

"There were lots of customers and lots of money being spent, and businesses were hit with the challenge of meeting the demand for both services and goods," he said. "We don't see much change on the horizon for either of those."

Restaurants and hotels had waiting lists throughout the summer and faced staffing challenges and supply shortages.

Demand is not as high during the weekdays now, but it's still high on the weekends.

Reid said he expects this winter to be good for local businesses, too.

"The community has adapted to offer more things to do indoors during the off-season, like entertainment and arcades," Reid said.

Peninsula sees a tourism boom

Andi Day, the executive director of the Long Beach Peninsula Visitors Bureau, said tourism numbers were off the charts during the busy summer months.

"Our lodging tax collections countywide were up 94% year-over-year from 2020," Day said. 2020's numbers were about even with those of 2019, which had held the record until now.

"We're nearly doubling our best year ever," Day said. "A lot of credit is due to all our amazing tourism industry frontline workers and business owners for keeping it all rolling and doing it safely and supporting our communities."

Overnight visitors predominantly came from Clark, Pierce and King counties in Washington state.

Hotels, vacation rentals and RV/campgrounds were all full throughout the summer

on the peninsula.

Day predicts a strong fall and winter, as the clam digging is particularly good this year.

She added the peninsula is seeing the same challenges as much of Pacific County, with shortages in the workforce, housing and supply.

"It's important we continue to support these tourism businesses through their challenges with workforce shortages, so we encourage folks to consider getting a part-time job," Day said.

Hotel labor crunch issues persist

Todd Montgomery, the coordinator of the hospitality management program at Oregon State University-Cascades, said the No. 1 challenge has been the labor crunch.

Montgomery has been monitoring labor trends since 2014 and has seen hotels cutting back hours and the number of rooms available, adapting to different cleaning approaches because they don't have enough staff.

He said the coast has been an especially attractive destination because of the amount of outdoor space for visitors to spread out. He predicts another strong fall season.

"Businesses are excited about the demand of people coming back and traveling when the market is generally down, but if they don't have staffing or are able to stay open during certain hours that can be a challenging time," Montgomery said.

He said another challenge has been the stop-and-go nature of the coronavirus pandemic and related restrictions.

Questions remain on what the spring will look like and how soon elementary school-aged children can get vaccinated, as their parents have held back on traveling, Montgomery said.

"When we get to spring and summer, the traditional peak period," he said, "is there going to be labor, and is demand going to be even higher than it was before?"



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