

Vacation Escapes

A Jewel Of A Getaway

(NAPSA)—A number of vacationers have found that Florida destinations have successfully weathered this year's hurricane season. For instance, the Emerald Coast—located on Florida's upper Gulf Coast and encompassing the southern sea towns of Destin, Fort Walton Beach and the island of Okaloosa—boasts some of the most breathtakingly beautiful beaches, even after the string of Florida hurricanes.

To ensure that guests experience a safe and enjoyable visit, the Emerald Coast has tested the water, cleaned the beaches of debris and ensured that all roads are free of damage. In addition, the dune system is being replaced with additional sea oats, landscaping is being pruned and signage is getting touched up. The Emerald Coast is open and accommodations currently offer off-season discounted rates ranging from 30 percent to 45 percent lower than the normal price.

Fishing

The Emerald Coast and the seaside town of Destin are often referred to as the "World's Luckiest Fishing Villages." Perhaps proving that nickname true is the fact that as a result of the storm, the area has experienced an increase in fishing success. The ocean has been carrying the fish further inshore.

Attractions

Attractions including the Emerald Coast Science Center, the island of Okaloosa fishing pier, the Track Recreation Center, the newly opened Destin Commons shopping center, numerous golf courses and 98



Florida's Emerald Coast has bounced back from this year's hurricane season.

percent of the area's restaurants are open for the public to enjoy.

Safety

When Hurricane Opal struck northwest Florida almost a decade ago, the area enacted several precautions for future storms, such as new building codes and enhanced sand dune systems. With current building codes in place, today's inland buildings are able to withstand 110 mph wind loads. Gulf-front buildings can withstand even higher wind loads.

"All in all, we were very fortunate to have sustained fairly minimal damage during the hurricane and much of this is a direct result of preventative measures," said Darrel Jones, president and CEO of the Emerald Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau, Inc.

Famous for 24 miles of sugar-white sands and emerald-green waters, the Emerald Coast, located on Florida's northwest Gulf Coast, "has bounced back from storms in the past, and this will be no different," Jones said.

For more information, call the Emerald Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau at (800) 322-3319 or visit www.destin-fwb.com.