

VACATION IDEAS

Fall Festivals Feature Florida's Arts And Culture

(NAPSA)—Shopping, dining and cultural activities continue to be high on the itineraries of U.S. travelers. More than 35 million adults say they choose a travel destination based on the arts, cultural or heritage events or activities available, according to the U.S. Travel Association.

In Florida, the Florida Cultural Alliance reports that 7 million tourists visit cultural facilities or attend cultural events as a primary activity on their vacations.

"Many couples and families are celebrating a special occasion this fall and deserve to make it memorable," said Sonny Mares, executive director of the Walton County Tourist Development Council. "The Autumn Tides season is a great time to come to the beach and enjoy a one-of-a-kind event."

Beaches of South Walton, a collection of 15 beach communities along Northwest Florida's Gulf Coast, features a thriving arts community. The Autumn Tides celebration starts Labor Day weekend and continues through November.

In addition to enjoying popular celebrations, such as the Baytowne Wharf Art Expo (Sept. 4-6), a weekend of world-class art featuring artists from leading galleries across the Southeast, visitors will also enjoy spectacular fall sunsets, cooler temperatures and seasonal rates during the autumn.

Other events include:

- First Friday Art Walk at Ruskin Place (Sept. 4, Oct. 2, Nov. 6), a stroll through Seaside, which features special shows at the art galleries combined with live music, food and drink.

- Autumn Tides Month at Silver Sands (Oct. 1-31), where shoppers get the chance to receive a limited-



Beaches of South Walton, along Northwest Florida's Gulf Coast, celebrates its thriving arts community during its annual Autumn Tides festivities.

edition "Autumn Tides" print by local artist and former artist-of-the-year Donna Burgess when presenting \$300 in same-day receipts at shopper services.

- Autumn Playwright Festival (Oct. 7-17), the Seaside Repertory Theatre's annual homage to a major playwright and a full-scale production, this year honoring 2005 Nobel Prize-winner Harold Pinter.

- Flutterby Festival (Nov. 14-15), held in WaterColor this year, an annual family festival hosted by the Cultural Arts Association that celebrates the colorful migration of the monarch butterfly through the region and features talented artists as well as hands-on art projects for children.

New events include A Starry Starry Night at Hilton Sandestin Beach (Sept. 25), featuring intimate tables for two on the beach with fine cuisine, wine, live entertainment and a romantic movie, and Baytowne Wharf Beerfest (Oct. 16-17, 2009), where attendees can sample more than 70 beer styles while listening to live music. To learn more, visit www.beachesofsouthwalton.com or call (800) 822-6877.