



## Tourism

**Yes,** on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

### *Cruisin' the Coast Drives the Economy*

Along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, from Waveland to Pascagoula, more than 4,000 antique, classic and hot rod car owners participated in the 12th Annual Cruisin' the Coast, a weeklong car show that continues to grow exponentially each year.

Cruisin' the Coast was started in 1996 by the Mississippi Gulf Coast Gaming Association with hopes to attract more visitors to the area. In its inaugural year, the event drew only 374 registered cars from neighboring states. But, within its first five years, the economic impact of the event grew from approximately \$1 million to \$7 million.

This year, Cruisin' the Coast welcomed more than 4,300 registered car enthusiasts from across the country and Canada and over 100,000 attendees. The economic impact for 2008 is estimated at \$15 million.

The growing popularity of Cruisin' the Coast has been recognized with numerous honors and awards over the years. Cruisin' the Coast received the Governor's Excellence in Tourism Award as Festival/Event of the Year in the State of Mississippi. It was also the recipient of the "Shining Example Award" for Best Festival/Event of the year by the Southeast Tourism Society, one of the "100 Events of the Year of 2001" by the American Bus Association, and was named a Southern Travel Treasure by AAA's magazine, AAA Southern Traveler.

Highlights of this year's Cruisin the Coast included scheduled entertainment and activities for the cruisers and spectators. Coast cities and casinos took turns hosting 50s and 60s entertainment, including Vince Vance and the Valiants and an Elvis impersonator. Automobile auctions, swap meets and drag racing let the automotive enthusiasts show off their prized possessions. Both visitors and locals set up tents and chairs on the beachfront to watch the continual parade of cars along Highway 90.

Overall, the 2008 Cruisin' the Coast was a huge success. By the last day, event officials said that hundreds of participants had already preregistered for next year's Cruisin' the Coast, which will take place October 4-11. To find out more about Cruisin' the Coast, visit [www.cruisinthecoast.com](http://www.cruisinthecoast.com).



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