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EAST

Gulf Coast Report

Conservation, cuisine and casinos

Guy Harvey has a knack for combining marine conservation and preservation in a commercially engaging way. Now Harvey's backing a cool, boutique-style hotel with chic, nautical amenities at the Guy Harvey Outpost, a TradeWinds Beach Resort, on St. Petersburg Beach, Florida. This Outpost is the antithesis of some tacky motel with smelly alleys, tired fabric and annoying timeshare pitchmen. It's classy, relaxed and tastefully colorful, with Guy Harvey art and comfy marlin blankets in every room. Water sports and topical education programs are aimed at mariners to absorb all the naturally rich resources of Tampa Bay.

A true environmental resort, the Outpost's September symposium lineup includes the latest oil spill research, findings and restoration efforts presented by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) scientists and research institutes. A portion of proceeds from the Harvey-inspired "Save Our Gulf" T-shirts underwrite part of the spill symposium.

"It will be decades before the consequences of the spill are known, as there's a lot that is unseen and dismissed out of our consciousness," says Ned Stone, Director of Program Development for the Outpost. "But the fishing opportunities are incredible here, with record catches for tarpon, snapper, grouper, and kingfish. This is a great family destination."

guyharveyoutpost.com

Parrothead alert: Margaritaville Biloxi

As we observe the seventh anniversary of Hurricane Katrina on August 29th, Katrina's best legacy—if there actually is one—is ushering in an era of land-based gaming on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, forever changing its landscape. Now considered a top gaming destination with marina dockage, 12 luxurious casinos with world class entertainment and superb restaurants line Mississippi's Gulf Coast from Bay St. Louis to Biloxi.

The newest casino, Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville Biloxi, debuted May 22nd with 20,000 guests and 5,000 margaritas

served within the first 24 hours of the throw down grand opening.

Margaritaville, the first casino built in the United States since 2010, brings Buffet full-circle, providing 1,000 new jobs to the city that launched his now legendary singing career in the 1960s.

Located on the eastern tip of Biloxi's Back Bay, Margaritaville's massive glass interior provides a stunning view of the post-Katrina

MARGARITAVILLE/BLOW PHOTO



Biloxi Bay Bridge. This waterfront casino offers a marina, gift shop, and whimsical restaurants and bars with live entertainment and Gulf Coast cuisine. It reflects the lyrics and lifestyle of Jimmy Buffet, but there's no reason to wait until it's actually 5 o'clock to hit the 5 O'Clock Somewhere Bar located on the casino floor.

That's the latest addition to a completely reinvigorated East Gulf Coast. If you avoided this region during 2010 and 2011, fearful of the effects of the spill in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida's panhandle, it's time to head back and have a cheeseburger (dressed with crayfish étouffée and hollandaise sauce) in paradise.

By LISA OVERING