



2026 National Blueberry Festival Visitation Summary

Purpose

This summary provides a high-level look at visitation during the 2026 National Blueberry Festival using Placer.ai data. The analysis covers August 6–9, 2026, compared with the corresponding Thursday–Sunday festival period in 2025. The report looks at overall South Haven visitation and activity in the Central Business District, Riverfront Park, Stanley Johnston Park, Huron Street Pavilion, North Beach, and South Beach.

Data Note

Placer.ai is useful for understanding visitation trends, but there are nuances in how the data is collected and interpreted. For that reason, this summary focuses on year-over-year percentage changes and visitor behavior rather than specific visitor counts.

Overall Festival Visitation

Overall South Haven visitation was lower than the comparable 2025 Blueberry Festival weekend. Out-of-market visits decreased approximately **4%**, while unique out-of-market visitors decreased approximately **8%**. Despite the overall decline, several locations hosting major festival activities experienced significant year-over-year growth. Saturday was the busiest day of the festival and the strongest visitation day across most locations studied.

Riverfront Park

Riverfront Park showed the strongest year-over-year growth among the primary festival locations, with visits increasing approximately **38%**. The park served as a major festival hub, hosting the main stage, beverage garden, food trucks, and other activities. Visitation peaked on Saturday, and average dwell time decreased from **53 minutes in 2025 to 45 minutes in 2026**. The combination of substantially higher visitation and shorter dwell time suggests more people moved through the park while participating in activities elsewhere in the festival area.

Stanley Johnston Park and Craft Fair

Stanley Johnston Park visits increased approximately **21% year over year**. The Craft Fair was held Saturday and Sunday, and the visitation pattern closely followed that schedule. Average dwell time decreased from **74 minutes in 2025 to 66 minutes in 2026**.

Similar to Riverfront Park, the increase in visitation paired with a shorter dwell time may indicate visitors were incorporating the Craft Fair as one stop within the larger festival.

Central Business District

Central Business District visits decreased approximately **2%**, while unique visitors declined approximately **7%**. Average dwell time increased from **99 minutes in 2025 to 105 minutes in 2026**.

While downtown visitation was slightly lower, visitors who came downtown stayed longer. Downtown activity was strongest on Saturday.

Huron Street Pavilion

Huron Street Pavilion visits increased approximately **3%**, while unique visitors increased approximately **6%**. The pavilion hosted multiple activities throughout the festival, with visitation reaching its highest level on Saturday. Average dwell time decreased from **51 minutes in 2025 to 44 minutes in 2026**.

The shorter dwell time may reflect visitors moving between pavilion programming and other nearby festival activities.

Beach Activity

North Beach and South Beach showed different year-over-year patterns during the festival. North Beach visits increased approximately **21%**. Average dwell time also increased substantially, from **70 minutes in 2025 to 91 minutes in 2026**. South Beach visits decreased approximately **5%**, while average dwell time remained nearly unchanged at **77 minutes in 2025 and 76 minutes in 2026**.

Although the beaches were not primary festival venues, their visitation provides additional context for how visitors used South Haven during the festival weekend.

Visitor Profile and Origins

Blueberry Festival visitation remained strongly regional. The largest visitor market was **Grand Rapids–Kalamazoo–Battle Creek, representing approximately 44% of visits**, followed by **Chicago at 16%, South Bend–Elkhart at 9%, and Detroit at 8%**. Together, these four markets accounted for approximately three-quarters of measured visitation.

Visitor demographics varied somewhat by festival location. Riverfront Park visitors had a median household income of approximately **\$72,000**, with **37% holding a bachelor's degree or higher** and a median age of **37**. Central Business District visitors showed a somewhat higher household income and education profile, while Huron Street Pavilion attracted a younger audience.

The differences suggest that festival activities and locations reached somewhat different segments of the overall visitor audience.

Key Takeaway

Overall South Haven visitation was softer during the 2026 National Blueberry Festival, with out-of-market visits down approximately **4%** and unique out-of-market visitors down approximately **8%** compared with the 2025 festival period.

At the same time, locations hosting major festival programming performed well. **Riverfront Park visits increased approximately 38%, Stanley Johnston Park increased approximately 21%, and Huron Street Pavilion increased approximately 3%**. Riverfront Park and Stanley Johnston Park experienced substantial growth despite the decline in overall South Haven visitation.

Downtown visits were relatively close to 2025 levels, and visitors stayed longer, while North Beach also recorded a significant year-over-year increase.

Saturday was the strongest visitation day across most locations. Overall, the data shows a softer citywide festival weekend than 2025, but strong performance at several locations directly associated with Blueberry Festival programming.