



Independence Day Weekend Visitation Summary

Purpose:

This summary provides a high-level look at Independence Day Weekend visitation patterns in South Haven using data from **Placer.ai**, a location analytics platform that helps estimate visitation trends and visitor movement patterns. Because South Haven's fireworks show is held annually on **July 3**, this summary looks at both the full holiday weekend and July 3 specifically.

Data Note:

Placer.ai is a helpful tool for understanding visitation trends, but there are many nuances in how the data is collected, filtered, and interpreted. For that reason, we generally do not make a practice of sharing specific visitor counts outside of our annual visitation reporting. This summary focuses on year-over-year comparisons, directional insights, and visitor behavior patterns rather than raw visitor totals.

Overall Weekend Visitation

Independence Day Weekend was strong overall, though slightly softer than the comparable holiday weekend last year. For the full weekend comparison, **out-of-market visitors were down 5.1% year over year**, and **out-of-market visits were down 2.1% year over year**. Even with that slight decline, visitor activity remained well above earlier-year comparisons and showed continued strength for the holiday period.

The day-of-week calendar matters here. In 2026, **July 3 fell on a Friday**, leading directly into a Saturday, July 4, and Sunday, July 5 weekend. In 2025, July 3 fell on a Thursday, meaning the fireworks occurred before the Friday-Saturday weekend period. That likely affects how visitation clustered: 2026 activity appears more concentrated around a true long holiday weekend, while 2025 may have spread differently across Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

July 3 Fireworks Activity

July 3 remains the major visitation driver. On July 3 specifically, **out-of-market visitors were up 17.2% year over year**, and **out-of-market visits were also up 17.2% year over year**. This

reinforces what we already know operationally: the fireworks show is South Haven's biggest annual demand generator, and when July 3 falls on a Friday, it can create an especially strong kickoff to the holiday weekend.

Downtown also showed strong July 3 activity, with Central Business District visits up approximately **27.2% year over year**. This is notable because the citywide and downtown July 3 numbers were both up substantially, suggesting that the fireworks day brought people into town broadly, not just to one location.

Weather and Visitor Movement

Weather appears to have played an important role in how people moved throughout town on July 3. There was rain around **4:00 p.m.**, followed by another round of rain and thunderstorms around **10:30–11:00 p.m.**, near the end of the fireworks show.

The hourly activity patterns suggest that visitors adjusted rather than disappeared. Beach activity built during the day, softened around the mid-afternoon rain, and then activity shifted more strongly toward the Central Business District and Riverfront/Lighthouse areas as people positioned themselves for the fireworks. After the rain cleared, movement returned toward the waterfront and viewing areas before the late-evening weather likely shortened or disrupted some post-fireworks lingering.

In short: the rain likely changed the rhythm of the day, but it did not erase the demand. It appears to have pushed people between the beaches, downtown, Riverfront Park, and the lighthouse corridor depending on timing, shelter, food, shopping, and fireworks viewing plans.

Beach Activity: North Beach and South Beach

The beach activity is one of the most noteworthy parts of the report. On July 3, both beaches increased year over year, but South Beach remained the busier beach overall.

North Beach visits were up approximately 23.9% year over year on July 3, while **South Beach visits were up approximately 22.8% year over year**. The similar growth rates suggest that the fireworks day lifted beach activity broadly across both sides of the river.

South Beach remained the higher-volume beach on July 3, but North Beach also performed very strongly and showed meaningful growth. Visitor journey data shows North Beach activity was closely tied to Stanley Johnson Park, North Beach concession areas, nearby lodging, the lighthouse, and Captain Lou's. South Beach activity was especially tied to Riverfront Park, Huron Street Pavilion, downtown restaurants, and the lighthouse/fireworks viewing corridor.

Downtown and Waterfront Connection

The strongest movement pattern is the connection between downtown, the waterfront, Riverfront Park, and South Beach. For the Central Business District, Riverfront Park and the South Beach appeared prominently in both prior and post-visit behavior. For South Beach, Riverfront Park and the Central Business District were the leading prior and post-location connection on July 3.

This supports the idea that Independence Day activity is not isolated to one district. Visitors appear to move fluidly between the beach, downtown restaurants and shops, Riverfront Park, South Beach and fireworks viewing areas. The mid-afternoon rain likely accelerated that movement, with some beach visitors moving into downtown or nearby businesses before returning toward the waterfront later in the evening.

Visitor Origins and Demographics

The primary visitor markets remained regional. For the full weekend, the top origin areas included **Grand Rapids/Kalamazoo/Battle Creek, Chicago, Detroit, South Bend-Elkhart**, and **Indianapolis**. Grand Rapids/Kalamazoo/Battle Creek represented the largest share of visits, followed by Chicago.

Demographically, the Independence Day Weekend visitor profile remained relatively consistent with prior years. The weekend visitor audience had a median household income of approximately **\$91K**, with **46.9% holding a bachelor's degree or higher**. The most common ethnicity was **White at 70%**, and average household size was **2.43 persons**. For July 3 specifically, the visitor profile was slightly lower in median household income, approximately **\$85.4K**, with **43.2% holding a bachelor's degree or higher**.

Key Takeaway

Independence Day Weekend was slightly softer than last year overall, but **July 3 was very strong**, with citywide, downtown, North Beach, and South Beach visitation all up year over year. The Friday timing of July 3 likely helped concentrate activity into the holiday weekend, while the rain appears to have influenced how people moved throughout town rather than eliminating visitation.

The biggest story is the movement between the beaches and downtown. Visitors came for the fireworks, adjusted to the weather, moved through town, and returned to the waterfront.