



## 2026 Memorial Day Weekend Visitation Summary

### Purpose:

This summary provides a high-level look at Memorial 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. The focus is on year-over-year comparisons, with particular attention to beach activity and the first day of the new lifeguard program on Memorial Day Monday.

### Overall South Haven Visitation

South Haven experienced a strong Memorial Day Weekend compared to last year. Citywide, **out-of-market visitors were up 21.6% year over year**, and **out-of-market visits were up 25.3% year over year**. Monday stood out as the highest activity day in the citywide comparison.

### Downtown Activity

Downtown activity in the Central Business District(CBD) remained relatively steady, though slightly softer than last year. Visits to the Downtown South Haven CBD were down approximately **2.7% year over year**, and average dwell time was down about **5%**.

One possible explanation is that Memorial Day Monday appeared to be especially beach-driven this year. While beach activity increased significantly on Monday, downtown traffic softened compared to the weekend pattern. This may suggest visitors spent more of their available time at the waterfront rather than circulating through downtown in the same way. That does not necessarily indicate weak downtown performance; rather, it may reflect how visitors chose to spend the holiday based on weather, timing, beach conditions, or the natural draw of the lakefront.

### North Beach vs. South Beach

The beach comparison is the most notable takeaway from the weekend. **South Beach remained the busier beach overall**, drawing roughly **75% more visits than North Beach** across the full Memorial Day Weekend comparison period. However, the year-over-year growth story was much stronger at North Beach.

South Beach visitation was relatively steady, increasing approximately **2.9% year over year**. North Beach, by comparison, increased approximately **110% year over year**. In short, **South Beach remained the higher-volume beach, but North Beach saw the much larger jump in activity**.

### Memorial Day Monday Beach Activity

Monday's beach activity stands out as the most important data point, especially because it was the first day of the new lifeguard program.

Both beaches saw their strongest daily activity on Memorial Day Monday, but the increase at North Beach was especially sharp. **North Beach's Monday activity increased approximately 260% year over year**, while **South Beach increased approximately 94% year over year**. South Beach was still busier in total, but North Beach experienced the more dramatic spike.

The data does not tell us whether lifeguards influenced visitation. However, it does show that the first lifeguard day coincided with unusually strong beach activity, particularly at North Beach. This gives us a useful baseline as we continue evaluating beach usage throughout the summer.

Weather may have also contributed to the sharp increase in Monday beach activity. Memorial Day Monday appears to have been more beach-friendly than the prior year's holiday Monday, when rain and drizzle were reported in South Haven. The weather difference likely helped support stronger beach visitation and may partly explain why beach activity increased significantly while downtown activity softened that day.

### **Beach Dwell Time Trends**

Visitors also appeared to stay longer at both beaches compared to last year. North Beach's average dwell time increased approximately **57% year over year**, while South Beach's average dwell time increased approximately **46% year over year**. This suggests that the increased beach activity was not only about more people arriving, but also about visitors spending more time at the beaches.

### **Additional Observations**

The visitor journey data shows continued connections between the beaches, Downtown, Riverfront Park, the lighthouse areas, and nearby businesses. This reinforces that beach visitation does not happen in isolation; visitors move between the waterfront, downtown, parks, restaurants, and other community assets.

### **Key Takeaway**

Memorial Day Weekend visitation was strong overall, but the most meaningful shift was at the beaches — particularly **North Beach** and particularly on **Memorial Day Monday**. South Beach remained the busier beach overall, but North Beach experienced the most significant year-over-year growth. As the new lifeguard program begins, this data provides a helpful baseline for understanding where beach activity is increasing, when demand is peaking, and how visitor behavior may be shifting.