

Mound House Attains VCB Top Three!

FMB Historic Site Receives Third-Most Inquiries

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During 2021's final three months, the Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) fielded over 61,000 visitor inquiries, with the iconic Mound House on Fort Myers Beach receiving the third-most interest out of all Southwest Florida attractions!

From October through December 2021, the VCB handled 61,605 visitor information requests. It is no surprise that the two highest were for our sugar-sand white beaches as well as our various shopping destinations, but under "Attractions," the Mound House received more interest than all Southwest Florida tourism and historic destinations, trailing only the J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge and the Thomas Edison & Henry Ford Winter Estates.

Educational, Fun & Entertaining

"These exciting VCB statistics definitely tell me the Mound House staff and volunteers are serving our local community and off-island visitors in an educational, fun and entertaining manner," said Alison Giesen, Director of Culture Resources, Parks & Recreation for the Town of Fort Myers Beach and Mound House Executive Director. "We offer quality and unique programming that effectively reaches our core community and visitors. People sometimes forget that while the Mound House is the oldest standing structure on Fort Myers Beach, we are open to the public as a museum complex and cultural and environmental learning experience for just six years and it takes time, talent, and hard work to first create, then constantly update our site and events. It is not enough for someone to come to the Mound House just once. We must engage our visitors in a friendly and informative manner so that they not only return time and again but tell their family and friends about the Mound House as well."

The COVID-19 pandemic created uncertainty for historic and tourism destinations all over the nation during the past two years, but the Mound House turned that into an outlet for growth and improvement. "We are fortunate that the Mound House is a unique tourism experience," stated Alison. "Our staff and volunteers started from there, then thought out of the box on how to safely spread the word about the Mound House, our history, and environmental programs. An excellent example is our kayak tours, where we serve no more than 12 people at a time, all outdoors, to learn about our environment, conservation efforts, archaeology and history in an intimate experience, because you get all of those things at one site at the Mound House! I said it before and I will say it again – the Mound House is more than just a museum; we are a cultural and environmental experience you must see to believe, to fully understand and comprehend Fort Myers Beach, Lee County and Southwest Florida."

Best Visitor Experience Anywhere!

For those who have yet to visit the Mound House, “you must come,” Alison emphasized, “as we are truly special, as you see and experience exhibits and programs here that you cannot find anywhere else. For those who came here just once or twice, you should return as we have several new staff members and volunteers who bring a wealth of knowledge and a brand new perspective to our site and programs. You can take one of our Guided Beach Walks, for example, and will never examine the same animals and topics twice, as the beach conditions literally change every day and that is a wonderful thing! The Mound House staff are all Certified National Interpretive Guides, meaning that they provide a wonderful variety of skills and knowledge to make your trip here the best possible visitor experience anywhere!”

As to if the VCB numbers are a pleasant surprise, “I expected these results since the first day I began at the Mound House 7 years ago, even before we opened to the public,” admitted Alison. “Every time the VCB releases quarterly figures, I scan them in detail to see how we are doing and how to improve our level of service to the community. Now that we are in the Top Three Visitor Attractions, I am extremely proud to see people asking about us in such strong numbers, but we must work even harder to not only maintain that position but improve.”

One of Southwest Florida’s most-beloved historic attractions and accepted to the National Register of Historic Places in November 2019, the iconic Mound House traces its roots to the ancient Calusa of over 2,000 years ago. As the oldest standing structure on Estero Island, the Town of Fort Myers Beach operates it as a museum complex and cultural and environmental learning experience that offers roughly 25 nature and educational programs each week, with many for kids. It is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., enforces Social Distancing guidelines and requests that all unvaccinated visitors wear masks. The Mound House is at 451 Connecticut Street with overflow parking at 216 Connecticut. Admission is \$10 for ages 13 & up, \$8 for students with IDs, \$5 ages 6 to 12, and 5 & under free, with Fort Myers Beach residents receiving a 50% museum admission discount. For information, reservations, and a monthly programs schedule, call 239-765-0865 or see www.moundhouse.org.

Alison is cognizant that no organization succeeds in a vacuum. “The Mound House cannot achieve this type of recognition without the Town of Fort Myers Beach, our Estero Island community, Lee County, the VCB, our professional staff and incredible volunteers, as well as the Friends of The Mound House who supported us for years – we even have one volunteer who does a great deal of our publicity! All these people and groups are so supportive and combine their time and talents so the Mound House can attain this level of achievement and recognition. For me personally, it is an honor and privilege to work with everyone and I look forward to continuing to do that, so my special thanks to them all and now let’s move on to bigger and better things at the Mound House!”