



## State honors Keys

*Hawk's Cay, Maltz lauded at tourism summit*

Gov. Jeb Bush joined more than 900 representatives of Florida's tourism industry Monday as they gathered for the 38th annual Governor's Conference on Tourism in Hollywood.

Bush kicked off the first general session by highlighting the robust Florida tourism sector, industry trends and future challenges.

"Each year, Florida continues to set new records in tourism as the world's premier travel destination," he said. "From contributing \$57 billion in taxable sales to playing a vital role in maintaining our quality of life, tourism is Florida's top economic sector and its positive impacts are far reaching."

In 2004, Florida hosted approximately 79.8 million tourists (73.5 million domestic visitors, 6.3 million international), setting an all time high and maintaining the state's position as the top travel destination in the world. This number was up seven percent from the 74.6 million tourists who visited in 2003 and 73.9 million in 2002. In 2004, tourism to the state generated \$57 billion and employed 912,700 Floridians during the year.

Hosted annually by Visit Florida, the Governor's Conference on Tourism brings together key members of Florida's tourism sector to discuss the latest industry trends, conditions and business practices. This year's theme, "Beyond the Blue Horizon," captures the focus of the conference, which includes forward thinking trends and challenges facing the tourism industry.

Today is the finale of the three-day gathering, during which attendees participate in a myriad of exhibitions, breakout sessions, symposiums and lectures highlighting cutting edge marketing strategies for tourism-related industries.

Visit Florida, a direct support organization of the Florida Commission on Tourism, is the state's official source for travel planning ([www.visitflorida.com](http://www.visitflorida.com)). Bush serves as chairman of the commission.

For a copy of the governor's record on tourism, [http://visit www.myflorida.com](http://visitwww.myflorida.com).

### **New record set**

Visit Florida spokeswoman Vanessa Welter said state officials are optimistic about this year's tourism outlook since last year's hurricane-stricken season didn't keep record numbers of visitors away.

"Despite last year's hurricanes, we broke the tourism record," she said. "We had almost 80 million people and we didn't even do that when the economy was booming. There were certain areas in Florida that suffered from last year's four hurricanes, but given the situation and the fact that we still pulled ahead, it speaks a lot about the strength of our tourism product and where we're headed in the future."

Welter said when something happens that effects the tourism industry worldwide, other destination areas look to the Sunshine State for advice.

"We get calls to get Florida's tourism perspective," she said. "Because we're a model for how to do it right."

### **Keys take awards**

During the opening ceremony on Sunday, a new round of inductees were entered into the Florida Tourism Hall of Fame and awards were given for outstanding work.

Hawk's Cay won the Flagler Award for marketing at the summit, boasting best in show for their financial category.

Alan Maltz, Key West photographer, unveiled his new book at the summit, which shares its title with the summit's theme - "Florida...Beyond the Blue Horizon."

"He really raised the visibility for Florida," Welter said. "He's a treasure for this state."

For two decades, Maltz has been capturing Florida's beaches, starry nights and flora. But this original new book of images captures the state's hidden treasures and reveals familiar scenes more vividly than could be imagined. Maltz's art serves as a tour guide to the natural wonders that are Florida.

"Maltz's unique style and interpretation inspired us to proclaim him the official fine art photographer for Visit Florida in October 2003," said Bud Nocera, president of Visit Florida. "'Florida...Beyond the Blue Horizon' is the fruition of this innovative marketing partnership. Maltz's images can also be seen in our award-winning Colors of Florida advertising campaign and have been used by journalists writing travel articles about the state."

The Alan S. Maltz Gallery is located on Duval Street in Old Key West.

For more, visit [www.alanmaltz.com](http://www.alanmaltz.com).