

Panama City Beach in top five for winter travel destinations worldwide

[PAT KELLY / News Herald Writer](#)

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PANAMA CITY BEACH — Panama City Beach has been named one of the top five winter travel destinations by [CNN.com](#), along with such notable vacation spots as Paris and Costa Rica.

The website's editors talked to experts on value vacationing from such publications as STA Travel, Student Universe and Smarter Travel for recommendations on the best deals designed to put the winter blues in the rearview mirrors of tourists seeking the best bang for their buck.

The Panama City Beach/Panama City area logged in at No. 3, just behind Costa Rica and Lima, Peru, but ahead of Boston and London/Paris.

“Panama City and neighboring Panama City Beach aren’t just for spring breakers,” according to CNN.com. “Indulge in shopping, helicopter tours or spend a day at Ripley’s Believe It or Not! Museum. With highs in the 60s even during winter, there’s always something to do in the area.”

Dan Rowe, executive director of the Bay County Tourist Development Council, said he was thrilled at the recognition, coming as it does on the heels of recent comments by First Lady Michele Obama that Panama City Beach and the beaches of Northwest Florida were “a national treasure.”

“We are thrilled they have recognized Panama City Beach,” Rowe said. “This is a great beach that is worth coming to and checking out.”

The recognition comes in the wake of recent popular events that pulled large numbers of visitors to the area, including Ironman Florida, where 2,851 athletes registered for the competition, and Taste of Bay, which included a free Clint Black concert. The always well-attended Emerald Coast Cruizin’ car show arrives this weekend at Frank Brown Park, with its classic autos, muscle cars and “street rods.”

In a related development, the Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau has received five 2010 Adrian Awards, including two gold, for public relations excellence from the Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI).

The awards recognized the CVB for its marketing campaign on the opening of the new Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport and crisis communications during the BP oil rig disaster, as well as news coverage in the Miami Herald, Southern Living and on CNN.

“The strength of the awards this year was very important,” said Rowe, who also serves as president and CEO of the CVB. “It showed the effectiveness of our campaigns and outreach.”

The HSMIAI Adrian Awards are considered one the most prestigious advertising and public relations competitions in the world for the travel industry, officials said. More than 1,100 entries from more than 30 countries were submitted to this year's competition.