

INCREASED TOURISM AND JOBS



When most people hear about an increase in tourism, they often believe that there will be an increase in available jobs as well. If there are tons of tourists spending nights at hotels, the price for the different hotel rooms will increase, helping the county so that they can increase their revenues. One would think that this would translate into more job opportunities, especially for the unemployed who are still actively seeking employment. However, according to the monthly report from the Labor Department, the increase in tourism is not translating to more jobs, causing many economists to question the data that has been made available. At this point in time, plenty of hotels are starting to see an improvement on the number of people spending nights which means that room rates are also increasing. The general manager for the DoubleTree Hotel by Hilton in the Palm Beach Gardens area, Manny O'Neill, has said, "Everybody is enjoying an increase in business even through June, July and August, which are traditionally down times." He has also warned that just because there are more people spending the night at hotels and business seems to be booming, it does not necessarily mean that more jobs are going to be created. In fact, bed tax collections, which is the name for the tax that is put on hotel rooms, has even increased by a whopping 27.5 percent during the month of June alone. Even with an increase in tourism and more people spending their nights in hotels in the area, jobs in the leisure and hospitality sector have actually dropped since the month of November, especially when compared to the previous year during the same exact month. The Labor Department reported that there were 4,600 fewer jobs in the hospitality sector during the month of June 2012 than there were during the same month of June in 2011. A resident of Boynton Beach, Cathy Hart, feels as though this sector has been particularly worse throughout the year. Hart has been running housekeeping services for nearly two decades but has been unemployed for an entire year. She says that she has had to lower her standards and requirements to even be able to find work. Prior to the recession, it was much easier to find jobs in the leisure and hospitality sector but at this point, the number of jobs available within the sector has declined by a total of 12.5 percent. Many hotels have also had to downsize as a method of survival after dealing with the struggling economy.