

| the USA |

THE JERSEY SHORE A DAY AT THE BEACH

Vacanze al mare, American style: divertimenti esagerati e (parecchio) kitsch, montagne di junk food e lifeguards severissimi. Questa è Seaside Heights, dove si gira il reality di MTV Jersey Shore. Parla il sindaco Bill Akers, che non ama lo show ma ne riconosce i benefici economici per la città.

BY LORENZA CERBINI | B2 UPPER INTERMEDIATE

Seaside Heights is 90 minutes from New York City and this makes it a popular resort. With just 3,000 inhabitants, it is a quiet place during the winter months, but it comes to life in the summer. The influx of tourists pushes the population up to 30,000 and, on some days, 50,000. The town's boardwalk¹ becomes packed², and the same can be said of its massive amusement park and many hotels.

Seaside Heights' beaches, pizza joints³ and bars are a magnet for middle-class Americans who can't afford the luxury of The Hamptons on Long Island.

Seaside Heights' mayor⁴, Bill Akers, thinks that the price is right: "Until 4th July you'll mainly find teenagers and college kids on our beaches, but later families take over⁵. They find that Seaside Heights is less ex-

pensive than other resorts in the area." Parking costs about \$7 a day, for example, as opposed to \$20 in other resorts.

THE EAST COAST

Family entertainment tends to be the name of the game in Seaside Heights and on the East Coast in general. Here parents like to organise barbecues and picnics and let their children play in the sand, whereas on the West Coast in general and California in particular the emphasis is more on activities like surfing.

In recent years, however, life has changed dramatically⁶ in Seaside Heights. It has become a popular location for film crews⁷ and one day it could rival more glamorous resorts in California like Santa Monica and Malibu. The reason is very simple: Seaside Heights is the setting ☺

Seaside Heights has become popular, thanks to the TV show, *Jersey Shore*, which is set there. Right: the boardwalk.

GLOSSARY

- 1 boardwalk:** passeggiata principale
- 2 packed:** gremita
- 3 pizza joints:** pizzerie
- 4 mayor:** sindaco
- 5 take over:** prendono il sopravvento
- 6 dramatically:** in modo eccezionale
- 7 film crews:** troupe televisive

LIFE ON THE BEACH

- 1 hawkers:** venditori ambulanti
- 2 on patrol:** in perlustrazione



🔍 LIFE ON THE BEACH, AMERICAN STYLE

The beach season in the United States is clearly defined. It begins with **Memorial Day weekend** at the end of May and ends with **Labor Day weekend** at the start of September. Between September and May the beaches are empty. There are some free beaches on

"the Jersey Shore" where you can go surfing and kite surfing. **Lifeguards** are very much in evidence along the Jersey Shore, as the currents can be strong, but a word of warning: the lifeguards tend to go home at 5 o'clock. The **beach rules** tend to be strict: there are no kiosks selling food

and drinks and no hawkers¹ selling sunglasses and other products. If you want to buy something you have to go to the boardwalk. On many beaches drinking **alcohol** and **smoking** are prohibited. And don't try and break the rules: the **police** are constantly on patrol!²



for the controversial reality TV show that everyone loves to hate: *Jersey Shore*.

MTV AND GTL

The show first **aired**⁸ on MTV in December 2009 and has completed five seasons, with a sixth coming soon. It has been a massive hit for MTV and some observers believe that it has saved the network. It follows a group of Italian American kids for whom life is simply "GTL": "gym, tan, laundry⁹." If Italian Americans previously hated *The Sopranos* for portraying them as mafia hitmen¹⁰, they now hate *Jersey*

Shore for another stereotype: gym fanatics with too much hair gel.

Yet this image doesn't worry Mayor Akers, even if he admits that he doesn't actually¹¹ watch *Jersey Shore* (see interview). He is more concerned about making Seaside Heights a place that will provide entertainment for visitors on days "when the weather isn't great." He's hoping to see more quality shops and restaurants, rather than simple hamburger and pizza joints. In spite of *Jersey Shore*'s kitsch image, the future of Seaside Heights could be "slow food," rather than "fast food."

The cast of the popular MTV show *Jersey Shore*. Top: the *Jersey Shore* house (which is now a tourist attraction) and some kitsch souvenirs.

GLOSSARY

8 aired: andò in onda

9 gym, tan, laundry: palestra, abbronzatura, lavanderia

10 hitmen: sicari

11 actually: in realtà



INTERVIEW ON THE MAP

What happens when you live in a small town that suddenly becomes the setting for a hit TV show? We put the question to Bill Akers, the mayor of Seaside Heights. This is a resort on the New Jersey coastline, or “Jersey Shore,” and that is the name of the controversial reality TV show that has put the town on the map¹:

Bill Akers (Standard American accent)

I don't think it's affected the overall day-to-day² because in Seaside Heights we always have a large number of daily visitors during what we call our summer season, which is Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. What it has done is put us on the map of people wanting (to) come and shoot programmes within our town, whether they be films, documentaries and so forth. In 2009, when *Jersey Shore* first shot here, we had one shooting permit: as of 2011, we've had over 30 shooting film permits, within the borough³ of Seaside Heights, which is extraordinary for a small 16-block town⁴.

ITALIAN STALLIONS

Jersey Shore has been a massive international hit, but not everyone likes it. New Jersey's Governor, Chris Christie, has denounced it for giving his state a negative image, while many people are offended by its portrayal of young Italian Americans as ignorant sex maniacs. But what does the mayor think of the show?

Bill Akers

I know that I should watch the show because it is filmed in my community,

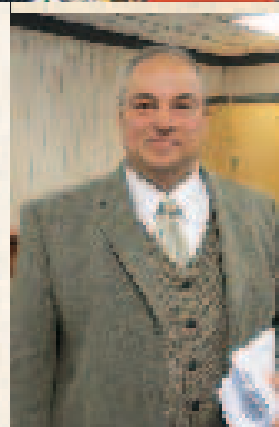


but I don't watch the show. I tried to watch the first episode and I couldn't get through it⁵. You know, I try to tune in⁶ from time to time, but it seems to me what the show's about is pretty much what you can see up and down the East Coast, or pretty much anywhere in America where you have a town that has bars: you have a bunch⁷ of young people going in, getting drunk, hooking up with somebody⁸, going home, and then getting up the next day and getting a sun tan⁹. That seems to be the recipe¹⁰ that they've used to promote the show. But if you go in any community in America that has a beach and has bars, this is what young people are doing.

Yet he doesn't feel that *Jersey Shore* offers an accurate portrayal of life in his town:

Bill Akers

I think what you get from *Jersey Shore* is what you're supposed to get from *Jersey Shore*, that you have a group of people that act one way when the cameras are off, and then, when the cameras are on, they're supposed to act another way. I think what you're getting is typical TV and any of these types of shows that you see on TV are all this way. They're supposed to generate controversy, and to make people watch. If you saw everyday life on the TV show, you wouldn't watch it, and the show would be cancelled. ☒



Seaside Heights Mayor Bill Akers, who doesn't actually watch *Jersey Shore*. Top: Stillwalk Manor, which is part of the town's Casino Pier.

GLOSSARY

- 1 **has put the town on the map**: ha reso famosa la città
- 2 **the overall day-to-day**: la vita quotidiana nel complesso
- 3 **borough**: distretto
- 4 **16-block town**: città di 16 isolati
- 5 **I couldn't get through it**: non sono riuscito a guardarlo fino alla fine
- 6 **I try to tune in**: provo a guardarlo (lett. a sintonizzarmi)
- 7 **a bunch**: un gruppetto
- 8 **hooking up with somebody**: rimorchiare qualcuno
- 9 **getting a sun tan**: prendere il sole
- 10 **recipe**: ricetta

Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. Dalla fine di maggio fino all'inizio di settembre. Negli Stati Uniti l'estate inizia col *Memorial Day weekend* (una festa nazionale per onorare i soldati caduti in tutte le guerre) e finisce con il *Labor Day weekend* (la festa dei lavoratori). Da notare l'utilizzo della parola *through* (letteralmente “attraverso”) per indicare “fino a”, che è molto americano. Gli inglesi tendono a dire *until* oppure *up to and including*.

If you saw everyday life on the TV show, you wouldn't watch

it and the show would be cancelled. Se vedessi la vita quotidiana nel programma televisivo non lo guarderesti e il programma sarebbe cancellato. Qui Bill Akers ci offre un perfetto esempio del *second conditional*. Rivediamo la frase con il *first conditional* (che è più diretto): *If you see everyday life on the TV show, you won't watch it, and the show will be cancelled*, e con il *third conditional* (che si riferisce a una situazione nel passato): *If you had seen everyday life on the TV show, you wouldn't have watched it and the show would have been cancelled*.

Speak Up
EXPLAINS