

# TourismMarketing Today

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## Florida Is Strong. Florida Is Resilient

by Kerri Post, CDME, Chair, Destinations Florida



On Monday, September 25, when hurricane preparations were well underway for nearly all

destinations around the state, according to the National Weather Service the two likely scenarios of Hurricane Ian's landfall were the Tampa Bay area and Tallahassee. Ian started shifting to the east and was growing into a monster storm. On Thursday, September 28, Hurricane Ian made landfall near Cayo Costa Island in Lee County as a high-end category 4 storm, plowing a wide path of destruction in SW Florida before slowly moving its way up and across the state bringing heavy rainfall, flooding, and damaging winds. To see the scope and magnitude of the devastating effects statewide was absolutely heartbreaking.

Nearly two-thirds of the state was impacted by Hurricane Ian, but none worse than SW Florida, and particularly Lee County/Fort Myers Beach, Sanibel, Captiva—major tourist areas—and many other popular cities all along the southwest coast.



Those of us who have been involved in Florida tourism for years know for a fact that whatever the crisis—be it hurricanes, wildfires, terrorism, oil spills, floods—we will bounce back. Stronger. Some have already come back, others are on their way, and other areas are going to be in it for the long term. But there are a couple of things I know for sure: Florida is strong. Florida is resilient.

*RESILIENT FLORIDA continues on pg. 4*

## How to Help

by Robert Skrob



The damage caused by Hurricane Ian is record breaking.

DMO leaders within

affected areas have taken an important leadership role in identifying available accommodations, working with authorities to communicate what's happening throughout their industry, and providing updates to the public within their communities and around the world.

We are gutted by what our fellow Floridians are going through—and simultaneously proud of the response from

*E.D.'s MESSAGE... continues on pg. 3*

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**DT Minich**  
**November 22**

**Charlotte Bireley**  
**November 26**

**DESTINATIONS**  
**FLORIDA**  
**TourismMarketing**  
Today

The Official Newsletter of  
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#### On the Cover

Located in the heart of the Space Coast, Brevard Zoo is frequently ranked a top 5 Best Zoo in North America by readers of *USA Today's* 10Best. Here, visitors can kayak past giraffes in Expedition Africa, zipline over gators and crocodiles, and encounter more than 900 animals representing 195 species from across the globe.

## Experience Kissimmee Is Official Travel Destination of the NFL London Series Games

Fall means football, and this fall Experience Kissimmee and the National Football League UK announced a partnership that names Experience Kissimmee the official Travel Destination of the NFL in the UK. The venture, the first of its kind, aspires to promote brand awareness and shine the spotlight on this popular Central Florida destination.

The sponsorship kicked off with three NFL London Games in October, featuring Minnesota Vikings vs. New Orleans Saints, New York Giants vs. Green Bay Packers, and Denver Broncos vs. Jacksonville Jaguars. The deal with the NFL in the UK offers Experience Kissimmee marketing opportunities inside both Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and Wembley Stadium, as well as online digital assets, to showcase Kissimmee as a family-oriented destination, whether it be enjoying the attractions, dining at unique local restaurants or taking part in the American tradition of watching a game from the comfort of a vacation home.

"We are truly excited to partner with the NFL on their London Series," said DT Minich, president & CEO of Experience Kissimmee. "The United



Henry Hodgson, managing director of NFL UK, DT Minich, president & CEO of Experience Kissimmee, and John Poole, executive director of Kissimmee Sports Commission, at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London

Kingdom has been and continues to be our largest international market with more than 800,000 visitors to our destination in 2019. This opportunity will further our reach with our great visitors from the UK but will also enable us to connect with key markets across the United States."

In addition to the NFL London Games, Experience Kissimmee is proud to also support the NFL UK Flag Football program, a non-contact version of American Football that has been gaining popularity in the UK over the past five years. The NFL UK's flag program champions inclusivity, diversity, and teaching of strong values through well-being and character development for school children from the age of 10.

### E.D.'s MESSAGE... continued from pg. 1

our friends within the destination marketing industry.

This will be a long journey back for a lot of people. Will you consider helping out by engaging your tourism industry?

Our team at CoreMessage pulled together a list ([bit.ly/df-ian](http://bit.ly/df-ian)) of local organizations that are providing important supplies, shelter, and support for impacted Floridians. These local organizations, in addition to the American Red

Cross and the Florida Disaster Relief Fund, are critical lifelines for our fellow Floridians.

There's no better time than during the month of Thanksgiving to give your tourism industry the opportunity to demonstrate their support of Floridians impacted by Hurricane Ian.

Thank you for the important leadership role you serve within your community and the destination marketing industry.

It is time again for all of us to come together as an industry to help those hardest hit get back on their feet, including the tens of thousands of tourism/hospitality employees around the state. Outlined below are destination information updates and specific ways to support our DMO colleagues.

Please consider doing whatever you can, in all the ways you can, and all the times you can, to help prop them up at this difficult time. We are in this together, we will get through this together, and ultimately we will be a stronger destination.



### **Fund Established to Support Fort Myers-Area Hospitality Workers Recover After Hurricane Ian**

The Lee County VCB encourages donations to assist hospitality workers impacted by Hurricane Ian now and for the long-term recovery. Any amount is welcome to the Southwest Florida Emergency Relief Fund,



SUPPORT FORT MYERS

organized through United Way of Lee, Hendry and Glades and the Collaboratory. While the road to recovery will be long and difficult, we're confident in our strength and resilience. Contributions to this fund—designated as Support Fort Myers Hospitality Workers—directly support

local hospitality workers. Find more information at [VisitFortMyers.com](http://VisitFortMyers.com) or click on the QR code.

### **Collier Comes Together Fund Benefits Florida's Paradise Coast – #Paradise Strong**

As Florida's Paradise Coast moves forward from the impacts of Hurricane Ian we are proud to witness the resilient spirit and resolute determination of our first responders, community leaders, hotel operators, business owners, and residents as they repair, rebuild, restore, and rekindle every facet of our community. The biggest need is financial support for a wide variety of services that will aid our residents and businesses. The Collier Comes Together Disaster Relief Fund allows CCF to act immediately in the face of a hurricane to benefit local nonprofit programs and relief efforts, getting funds where they are needed most—quickly and efficiently at no administrative cost. Donations can be made at Collier Community Foundation ([CollierCF.org](http://CollierCF.org)), and volunteer opportunities can be found at Volunteer Florida ([VolunteerFlorida.org](http://VolunteerFlorida.org)). We sincerely thank you for your generosity.

### **Charlotte County Disaster Relief Fund Assists Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Area Residents**

While Charlotte County took its share of destruction from Hurricane Ian, primarily in the form of intense wind damage, we are confident that through our persistent collaboration with our local industry partners, neighboring DMOs, Destinations Florida, and VISIT FLORIDA, the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach area and all of Southwest Florida will emerge better and stronger than ever. We have been amazed at and are grateful for the scope and magnitude of the relief response, particularly from the State, utility workers, and nonprofit disaster relief organizations. Despite these efforts, many industry businesses will be out of commission for a while, which will directly affect the livelihoods of many hospitality workers. If interested in donating to assist our community and local tourism industry, please visit <https://CharlotteCF.org> and click on the Charlotte County Disaster Relief Fund.

### **Bradenton Area Accommodations Partners Host Emergency Crews, Displaced Residents**

In the Bradenton Gulf Islands area, Hurricane Ian rains and winds spared the areas of our destination that people are most familiar with: Anna Maria Island, Bradenton, and Palmetto. However, inland flooding greatly impacted some rural areas and agritourism partners in Myakka City. The Bradenton Area Convention Center hosted power crews along with Army and National Guardsmen who were responding to harder hit areas to our south and to our east. In the coming days and weeks, local accommodations partners are expected to continue hosting emergency response personnel and homeowners who evacuated to our area.

### **United Way and Volunteer Florida Assist Central Florida Residents**

To help Central Florida residents recover from damage caused by Hurricane Ian, Heart of Florida United Way has activated the United Way Recovery Fund ([HFUW.org/recoveryfund-donate/](http://HFUW.org/recoveryfund-donate/)). All donations help residents in Orange, Seminole, and Osceola counties in need of assistance following the storm. A disaster response team is also available to help answer calls and assist as needed. In addition to United Way's initiatives, Volunteer Florida (<https://volunteer.volunteerflorida.org/search>) has several volunteer opportunities for Florida communities impacted by Hurricane Ian.

Destinations Florida will continue to provide updates on hurricane recovery and relief here:

[DestinationsFlorida.org/florida-strong-hurricane-recovery-and-relief](http://DestinationsFlorida.org/florida-strong-hurricane-recovery-and-relief)



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## Visit Tampa Bay Welcomes Director of Partner Development

Visit Tampa Bay welcomes Maggie Webber as its new director of partner development. Webber is contracted to recruit new partners and work to implement Visit Tampa Bay's new partnership initiatives to continue to build a more inclusive partnership community. She previously served as director of development at Tampa Theatre. Webber is a graduate of the University of Florida where she earned a bachelor's degree in public relations. She received a master's degree in public relations and corporate communications from New York University. [VisitTampaBay.com](http://VisitTampaBay.com)



*Maggie Webber*

## Visit Jacksonville Announces Director of Convention Sales

Visit Jacksonville welcomes Jeanne Goldschmidt as director of convention sales. Most recently, Goldschmidt was executive director of the Aspen Institute for Technology. Prior to that she served as executive director at the Pasadena CVB for more than five of her over 11 years at the bureau. She also previously worked at the Connecticut Convention Center, Rhode Island Convention Center, and Providence-Warwick CVB in various senior managerial positions. Goldschmidt received a Bachelor of Science in hospitality sales and meeting management from Johnson & Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island. [VisitJacksonville.com](http://VisitJacksonville.com)



*Jeanne Goldschmidt*

## Greater Miami CVB Makes Five Key Senior-Level Staff Appointments

The Greater Miami CVB has made five key senior-level staff appointments as the organization continues to rebuild from previous staff reductions due to the pandemic and expand on its level of customer service, multicultural promotion and inclusion, and community engagement. The new team members include Senior Vice Presidents Gisela Marti and Connie Kinnard, who will spearhead Marketing & Tourism and expanded Multicultural Tourism Development efforts, respectively. Jennifer Diaz-Alzuri returns to the GMCVB as vice president of marketing communications, as does Director of Meetings & Convention Services Marianne Schmidhofer, and Richard Gibbs has been named director of corporate communications & external affairs. [MiamiAndBeaches.com](http://MiamiAndBeaches.com)



*Gisela Marti*



*Connie Kinnard*



*Jennifer Diaz-Alzuri*



*Marianne Schmidhofer*



*Richard Gibbs*

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- Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Clay County Board of Commissioners
- Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches
- St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitors & Convention Bureau
- Visit Jacksonville

## Clay County Tourism Creates Tourism Strategic Plan

The Clay County Department of Tourism recently partnered with CSL International, an advisory and planning firm specializing in providing consulting services to visitor industries, to create a tourism strategic plan for the county's future tourism needs.

The strategic plan was presented to the Clay County Board of County Commissioners at its most recent meeting on October 11. The tourism strategic plan provides a research-based intentional road map for the future of Clay County. The execution of the plan will be a collaborative effort among local business owners, passionate citizens, community organizations, local government

entities, and various stakeholders. The TDC and Board of County Commissioners will be prioritizing next steps for implementation. Implementation of this plan may result in more entertainment, outdoor adventure, and arts and culture assets for county residents and visitors to enjoy.

"I am excited for the future of tourism in Clay County and look forward to the collaboration that will make the plan a reality," said Kimberly Morgan, Clay County's director of tourism. "This new tourism strategic plan will allow our county to grow in a way that invites new experiences while respecting our heritage."



Clay County looks forward to future growth and collaborating with local government entities and businesses in making its tourism strategic plan a reality.



The Clay County TDC and Board of County Commissioners will now prioritize next steps for implementation of the tourism strategic plan.





## Florida's Historic Coast Is an Eventful Destination

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches is known for attracting generations of visitors to its exceptional events. Traditional events like THE PLAYERS® Championship at TPC Sawgrass at Ponte Vedra Beach and Nights of Lights in St. Augustine have made the destination world-famous.

Additionally, events like Taste of St. Augustine, St. Augustine Lions Seafood Festival, and the St. Augustine Greek Festival help celebrate the story of Florida's Historic Coast. Over the years these celebrations have grown, with more successful music and food events making their home there.

The destination's restaurants and food events continue to be featured on "the best of" lists in major publications. The growth continues with the addition of events like the St. Augustine Food & Wine Festival (*USA Today* named 2021 Top 10 Florida Food

event); Whiskey, Wine and Wildlife; The Battle of the Datil; and the St. Augustine Seafood and Art Festival.

Along with celebrating food, there are myriad music events at St. Augustine Amphitheatre, the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall, and Colonial Oak Music Park. Music events continue to pop up throughout the year, including the Sing Out Loud Music Festival free concerts in September, the monthly Gamble Rogers Concert Series at the Waterworks, and Sundays at Stetson's at Beluthahatchee Park, a monthly folk music concert series.

Florida's Historic Coast is a indeed a destination full of ways to celebrate history, culture, music, and food.



The Flavors of Florida's Historic Coast are celebrated at food events throughout the year. The St. Augustine Food & Wine Festival is a Top 10 Florida Food Event.



St. Augustine's Sing Out Loud Festival celebrates the region's up and coming musicians at a series of free concerts in September.  
Photo: Tucker Joenz

## Amelia Island CVB Has Record-Setting Year

At its recent annual meeting, the Amelia Island CVB reported yet another record-setting year, with lodging revenue and Tourist Development Tax collections at all-time highs. President & CEO Gil Langley and his team highlighted the CVB's award-winning strategic marketing tactics executed to set Amelia Island apart from the competition amid an anticipated resurgence in travel.

"In achieving our goals, excellence is the standard, not the exception," said Langley. "Except for the pandemic year of 2020, lodging revenue has set new records each year. We're fortunate

to have a marketing team recognized by peers nationally and internationally; and the support of the community and local tourism industry."

Compared to 2021, 2022 metrics show a 9.6% increase in occupancy; a 9.4% increase in ADR (\$288.97 to \$316.22); a 19.9% increase in RevPAR (\$175.64 to \$210.57); and a 26.6% increase in revenue (\$89.7 million to \$113.6 million). According to Langley, since the CVB's inception in 2008, visitation has grown from 982,500 to 1,297,400 visitors, more than doubling lodging revenue from \$87 million to \$230 million and driving TDT collections from \$1.7 million to \$11.4 million in 2022. Most notably, the economic impact from tourism in Nassau County has doubled from \$499 million to \$1 billion (2021).



The Amelia Island CVB team gathers at its recent tourism industry meeting.



Fernandina Harbor Marina at Amelia Island





## Visit Jacksonville Begins 10-Year Contract as Official Tourism Office

On the heels of continued tourism growth in 2022, Visit Jacksonville began the first year of a new 10-year contract as the official tourism office for the City of Jacksonville on October 1. This is the first time in more than 25 years that Visit Jacksonville has a single-source, multi-year contract with the city for marketing, convention sales and services, and destination experience efforts.

"During the past few years, we've had a goal of achieving a long-term contract with the city to attain greater efficiency," said

Michael Corrigan, president & CEO of Visit Jacksonville. "Now that we have that, we look forward to setting and achieving more goals so we can continue growing tourism in Jacksonville for many years to come."

So far this year, Jacksonville is on pace to best the 2018 record for the average daily rate throughout the area, especially at the Beaches. This also equates to record room revenue for Jacksonville.



The Downtown Jacksonville skyline  
Photo: Visit Jacksonville



Music fans watch a show at Seawalk Pavilion in Jacksonville Beach.  
Photo: Visit Jacksonville

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## AGO 2019-13: Privately Run Museums

by Steven M. Hogan

If an aquarium or a museum is publicly owned but is operated by a private company, can TDT funds be used to repair or improve it? The Florida attorney general weighed in on this issue in 2019 and advised that the answer is no. Op. Att'y Gen. Fla. 2019-13 (2019).

The Tourist Development Tax statute allows TDT funds to be used, among other things, to "acquire, construct, extend, enlarge, remodel, repair, improve, maintain, operate, or promote one or more" types of facilities. § 125.0104(5)(a), Fla. Stat. Among these facilities are aquariums or museums that are "publicly owned and operated" or that are "owned and operated by not-for-profit



If an aquarium or a museum is publicly owned, but is not operated by the government or a not-for-profit organization, then TDT funds cannot be used to repair or improve it.

organizations and open to the public." § 125.0104(5)(a)1.c., Fla. Stat.

In Opinion 2019-13, the Florida attorney general read these provisions together to find that if an aquarium or a museum is publicly owned, but is not operated by the government or a not-for-profit organization, then TDT funds cannot be used to repair or improve it.

Though Opinion 2019-13 does not address it, the same logic would apply to using TDT funds for "zoological parks" that are mentioned in section 125.0104(5)(a)2., which must also be publicly owned and operated or publicly owned and operated by a not-for-profit in order to qualify for TDT funds. If such parks are operated by a for-profit entity, then TDT funds cannot be used for their repair or improvement under Opinion 2019-13.

This dynamic should be kept in mind when considering who is operating a publicly owned aquarium, museum, or zoological park.

*Steven M. Hogan is a shareholder with the Ausley McMullen law firm in Tallahassee. Destinations Florida has retained Mr. Hogan to consult with our members on the Tourist Development Tax and related legal issues. You can contact Mr. Hogan at [shogan@ausley.com](mailto:shogan@ausley.com). Nothing in this article constitutes legal advice. Please seek counsel of your own choosing before making decisions that impact yourself or your organization.*



Steven M. Hogan

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## Visit Sebring Hosts Atlanta Radio Promotion

Visit Sebring partnered with VISIT FLORIDA to host Dallas & Amanda from the New Country 101.5 (WKHX-FM) morning show, the top Atlanta country radio station. The promotion showcased the Sebring area by sending Dallas & Amanda to the destination to highlight their experiences through social media and on-air chatter. After their visit, they give their listeners a chance to win their own Sebring vacation. The partnership provided 10.5 broadcast hours, \$728,000 media value, and nearly 4 million impressions for the destination. [VisitSebring.com](http://VisitSebring.com)



## Levy County Celebrates National Seafood Month

On September 20, the Levy County Visitors Bureau, with the support of UF/IFAS Shellfish Aquaculture Extension, presented a Proclamation to the BOCC to declare October 2022 as National Seafood Month. To celebrate National Seafood Month, a presentation on the recently updated Big Bend Shellfish Trail Brochure was provided to the BOCC members and the public. The brochure identifies 98 shellfish-related vendors, including restaurants, seafood markets, marinas, bait and tackle shops, and boat tours. The brochure also provides information on where to eat, buy, and sometimes harvest local shellfish. [VisitLevy.com](http://VisitLevy.com)



Shellfish enthusiasts in Levy County can learn where to find local shellfish at <http://floridashellfishtrail.org>.

## Columbia County Receives First Round of Approvals for Large-Scale Sports and Rec Park

The Columbia County TDC recently approved plans for the development of Columbia County Regional Park, a 467-acre large-scale sports and recreation park that will serve as an outdoor destination for locals and tourists alike. The proposal now moves to the Board of County Commissioners. "With preservation kept in mind during the design and development of the park, this allows park-goers to immerse themselves in the natural outdoor habitat of Columbia County and all its beauty," said Paula Vann, executive director of the TDC. [LakeCityFL.com](http://LakeCityFL.com)



When completed, Columbia County Regional Park will feature 10.2 miles of trails, fields for a variety of sports and sports tournaments, a zipline and ropes course, an RV park for tournament guests, a playground, and other facilities.

## Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Hosts IFWTWA FAM

The Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB hosted a preconference FAM for the IFWTWA in mid-September with food and wine writers from across the country. Culinary highlights included The Perfect Caper, The Captains Table, Peace River Seafood, Perch 360, Magnolias on the Bay, and Farlow's on the Water—unique local establishments. Adventures included partner businesses Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens, King Fisher Fleet, Lemon Bay Dolphin Tours, and Alligator Bay Rum Distillery. It was a fun-filled experience with smiles all around. [PureFlorida.com](http://PureFlorida.com)



The IFWTWA group at Stump Pass





## Visit South Walton Focuses on Leisure Shows

The South Walton marketing team continues to make leisure shows a focus in 2022. During September, the Walton County Tourism Department sponsored Chicago Gourmet, a four-day foodie event in Millennium Park. With presence at four of the weekend's five events, South Walton came to life for attendees with a front porch-themed experiential area, fresh Gulf seafood dishes from Chef Phil McDonald of Black Bear Bread Company, and branded Corkcicle giveaways in South Walton bags. [VisitSouthWalton.com](https://www.visitsouthwalton.com)



Katherine Andry, Venessa Armenta, Chef Phil McDonald, Kelli Carter, and Rebekah Paul gather at Chicago Gourmet, where potential future visitors received a piece of South Walton to take home with them and especially loved Chef Phil's jumbo lump blue crab tartine.

## Clay County Dedicates Florida Historical Marker at Augusta Savage Home

Clay County and the City of Green Cove Springs recently dedicated a Florida Historical Marker at the childhood home of sculptor and civil rights activist Augusta Savage. An open house was held at the Augusta Savage Museum and Mentoring Center, home to free youth classes in performing arts and tutoring. The historical marker was made possible through a partnership with the Historical Preservation Board, the State Division of Historical Resources, and the Board of County Commissioners. [ExploreClay.com](https://www.exploreclay.com)



Clay County leaders gather to dedicate a Florida Historical Marker at the childhood home of Augusta Savage.

## Florida Keys' Old Seven Restoration Wins Phoenix Award

The Florida Keys' Old Seven Mile Bridge is one of three global 2022 Phoenix Awards winners by the Society of American Travel Writers. Restoration of a 2.2-mile span of the bridge, creating a linear recreational park stretching over the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, was honored as a sustainable and cultural tourism initiative. "We are proud our beloved Old Seven Mile Bridge won recognition for sustainable tourism," said Stacey Mitchell, director of the Keys tourism council. [Fla-Keys.com](https://www.fla-keys.com)



The Florida Keys Old Seven Mile Bridge  
Photo: Florida Keys News Bureau

## Visit Sarasota County, in Collaboration With EDC of Sarasota County, Launches New Blog Series

Visit Sarasota County, in collaboration with the Sarasota County Economic Development Corporation (EDC), recently launched Careers on the Suncoast, a national, week-long blog series to encourage relocation tourism to Sarasota County. Careers on the Suncoast comes as Sarasota County ranked #3 on *U.S. News & World Report's* list of 2022/2023 Fastest-Growing Places in the nation. It features innovative Sarasota County amenities and profiles residents by highlighting their careers and quality of life living in Sarasota. [VisitSarasota.com](https://www.visitsarasota.com)



A blog series highlights workforce opportunities for visitors and prospective Sarasota County residents.





## Orlando North, Seminole County Releases New Gameshow YouTube Series

Orlando North, Seminole County recently released *The Ultimate Athlete ON Top*, a new YouTube series that takes UCF Knights athletes Isaiah Bowser and Jade Barkett head to head in a variety of challenges to see who has what it takes to bring home the title of Orlando North's Ultimate Athlete ON Top. This series features challenges at the Oviedo Mall and Elev8Fun Sanford. [DoOrlandoNorth.com](http://DoOrlandoNorth.com)



UCF Knights athletes Isaiah Bowser and Jade Barkett are featured in a gameshow series that can be viewed at [youtube.com/doorlandonorth](http://youtube.com/doorlandonorth).

## Experience Kissimmee Holds Annual Meeting, Collects Hurricane Relief Supplies

Nearly 250 partners from Kissimmee gathered October 6 for Experience Kissimmee's annual meeting. During his remarks, President & CEO DT Minich highlighted the resilience of the community after Hurricane Ian's landfall and celebrated that most of Kissimmee's attractions had opened. Minich also committed to continue helping those still navigating the aftermath and encouraged everyone to donate to the Salvation Army. Partners donated enough to fill a van with baby supplies, food, toiletries, and more. [ExperienceKissimmee.com](http://ExperienceKissimmee.com)



Experience Kissimmee staff pose after the organization's annual meeting.

## Visit Central Florida Sponsors Trip West With the Detroit Tigers

VCF, in partnership with the Detroit Tigers, organized, sponsored, and conducted a "Trip West with the Tigers" to Arlington, Texas, for more than 40 stakeholders and industry partners. This annual event is part of VCF's strategic plan to maintain and strengthen the relationship with the Tigers organization and to show them support from community leaders. VCF staff and business leaders networked with the Tigers front office staff while touring the area and attending a MLB game between the Tigers and the Texas Rangers. This annual trip is one reason the City of Lakeland and Polk County have such a strong relationship with the Tigers organization. [VisitCentralFlorida.org](http://VisitCentralFlorida.org)



Trip participants visit AT&T Stadium (home of the Dallas Cowboys football team) while in Texas.

## Jacksonville Beach Pier Opens for Fishing

After sustaining damage from hurricanes Matthew and Irma, the Jacksonville Beach Pier opened in stages late this summer, once again offering up close views of the Atlantic Ocean and a different perspective of the coastline. The quarter-mile-long attraction first opened to pedestrians only, and has since opened for fishing. The pier is open seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and closes for dangerous weather conditions. [VisitJacksonville.com](http://VisitJacksonville.com)



People fish off the recently refurbished Jacksonville Beach Pier. Photo: Visit Jacksonville





## Amelia Island Is a Condé Nast Traveler Top Island in the United States

Amelia Island was recently recognized as the #3 Top Island in the U.S. by *Condé Nast Traveler's* 2022 Readers' Choice Awards. "Recognition such as this keeps Amelia Island top-of-mind and attracts visitors to our 13 miles of coastline," said Gil Langley, president & CEO of the Amelia Island CVB. "This is an accomplishment for the entire community and tourism industry. Together, we've created an award-winning destination and visitor experience, which compelled visitors to vote for Amelia Island." [AmeliaIsland.com](https://AmeliaIsland.com)



Amelia Island is the #3 Top Island in the U.S. according to *Condé Nast Traveler*.

## Visit Orlando's Unbelievably Real International Rollout

The Central Florida region's new global brand, Unbelievably Real, recently rolled out internationally in Canada, UK, Ireland, and Latin America markets of Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, and Chile. The international campaigns follow Visit Orlando's first announcement in May, made in collaboration with Orlando Economic Partnership with the rollout of the U.S. campaign. Unbelievably Real creative highlights experiences found only in Orlando through television, social, and digital advertising, along with art murals and billboards in popular areas like UK's Piccadilly Lights, Canada's Yonge-Dundas Square, and more. [VisitOrlando.com](https://VisitOrlando.com)



The Unbelievably Real themed mural designed by Orlando-based artist Clark Orr is pictured here in the UK.

## Visit Lake Celebrates Aviation Week in Lake County

Visit Lake participated in Aviation Week by highlighting local aviation partners within Lake County. The week included Ride the Wind Day, perfect for highlighting Paradise Airports, a hang gliding destination in Groveland. The day included tandem hang gliding rides, single hang gliders, a fly-in from private biplanes, a private helicopter fly-in, and free frozen custard from a local business. Plus, an aviation-loving young student took his first flight. [VisitLakeFL.com](https://VisitLakeFL.com)



Tourism Marketing Manager Jenn Clutts of Visit Lake and Operations Manager Victoria Nelson of Paradise Airports

## Bradenton Area CVB Hosts Travel Writers

The Bradenton Area CVB team was pleased to host six writers from across the country September 16–18. The visit was a preconference FAM tour ahead of the International Food and Wine Travel Writers Association conference held in St. Petersburg. The group stayed at Compass Hotel and enjoyed their time exploring Anna Maria Island's most beautiful beaches, cultural attractions, and (of course!) culinary delights. After a great FAM trip, the writers created a real buzz for the Bradenton Area during the conference! [BradentonGulfIslands.com](https://BradentonGulfIslands.com)



Travel writers gather at Ana Maria Island Beach Café as part of their FAM tour.



## Crystal River Hosts Florida Outdoor Writers Association Conference

Seeking an "Old Florida" adventure, OutCoast.com recently sent two ambassadors to Crystal River and Homosassa to profile the area for their digital magazine and travel blog promoting LGBTQ-friendly destinations in Florida. They enjoyed kayaking, fishing, scalloping, and a manatee tour, and dined at several local waterfront restaurants. A highlight of their trip was lunch at Wild Sassa, owned and operated by an LGBTQ+ couple. After the visit, OutCoast.com produced a wonderful YouTube video showcasing this "one-of-a-kind vacation." [DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com](https://www.discovercrystalriverfl.com)



Two new OutCoast.com Ambassadors discover Crystal River.  
Photo: OutCoast.com

## Space Coast Office of Tourism Opens New Visitor Information Center

The Space Coast Office of Tourism has opened a new Visitor Information center in Cocoa Beach and welcomes Elsie Radle, tourism information support specialist; Angela Essing, tourism office coordinator; and Tricia Henson Consulting and Rukhsana Timmis as sales and travel trade marketing representation in key European markets including United Kingdom and Ireland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and The Netherlands. The Space Coast continues the streak of 17 straight "best month ever" TDT numbers from April 2021 through August 2022. [VisitSpaceCoast.com](https://www.visitSpaceCoast.com)



The Space Coast Visitor Information Center is now open in Cocoa Beach.

## Visit Panama City Beach Wins Destiny Award for Social Media Campaign

Visit Panama City Beach recently won the esteemed Destiny Award at the 2022 U.S. Travel Association's ESTO awards ceremony. Through the Real Fast to the RealFun.Beach social media campaign, Chicago residents were encouraged to book a flight to Panama City Beach and experience alternatives to popular activities in Chicago. The destination sought to create increased brand awareness for new audiences by spotlighting the best of the destination and its many vibrant personas. [VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](https://www.VisitPanamaCityBeach.com)



Visit Panama City Beach's Sr. Vice President & CMO Jayna Leach (center) accepts Destiny Award.

## Greater Miami CVB Spotlights Visitor Industry

During its October annual meeting, the GMCVB introduced new board members to the nearly 700 stakeholders gathered and shared industry-leading performance indicators and a preview of 2023 destination marketing efforts. Event registration fees were donated to Easterseals South Florida. Earlier in the month, the GMCVB partnered with Easterseals and the Miami Beach Convention Center to host a mini job fair kicking off National Disability Employment Awareness Month, opening additional avenues for inclusiveness with tourism industry hiring opportunities. [MiamiAndBeaches.com](https://www.MiamiAndBeaches.com)



GMCVB President & CEO David Whitaker addresses participants at the annual meeting. A webcast of the meeting can be viewed at [GMCVBAnnualMeeting.com](https://www.GMCVBAnnualMeeting.com).





## Destin-Fort Walton Beach and Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park Partner to Educate the Public About Sea Turtle Conservation

Destin-Fort Walton Beach's Coastal Resource team and the Gulfarium have partnered to introduce a new educational experience, "C.A.R.E."ing for Turtles. The hour-long program brings awareness to sea turtle conservation with a tour of the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center and gives participants a behind-the-scenes look at their current sea turtle patients, as well as a mock intake of an injured sea turtle. The program is wrapping up its inaugural year on November 1 but will return next sea turtle season. [DestinFWB.com](http://DestinFWB.com)



Coastal Resource Coordinator Jessica Valek educates guests on sea turtles' behaviors and what beachgoers can do to protect them.

## Florida's Historic Coast Reports Continued Tourism Growth

St. Augustine | Ponte Vedra and all of Florida's Historic Coast is a tourist destination that continues to experience successful growth. Following damages from hurricanes Mathew and Irma, followed by the effects of the COVID shutdown, this Northeast Florida destination has bounced back and continues to experience growth. As of July 2022, St. Johns County Tourist Development Tax collections FYTD were up 60% compared to the same period in 2021, which was also a record year for tourism growth in the county. [FloridasHistoricCoast.com](http://FloridasHistoricCoast.com)



Visitation to St. Augustine and all of Florida's Historic Coast continues to grow.

## Alachua County Holds Agritourism Conference

This September, Alachua County held a successful Agritourism Conference at the UF/IFAS Alachua County Extension Office. The county offers a wide variety of agritourism experiences and is one of Florida's top agricultural producers generating \$99 million in agricultural products in 2017. Presenters included Alachua County Commissioner Anna Prizzia, Florida Agritourism Association President Alan Hitchcock, Florida Agritourism Association staff, UF/IFAS Director Dr. Cynthia Sanders, and Alachua County Tourism Development Manager Jessica Hurov. [VisitGainesville.com](http://VisitGainesville.com)



Commissioner Anna Prizzia delivers updates and statistics about the business opportunities and the economic impact of agritourism in Alachua County at the new state-of-the-art education building for the Alachua County Agricultural Fairgrounds and UF/IFAS Extension Office.

## Florida's Paradise Coast – #Paradise Strong

Emerging from the impacts of Hurricane Ian, Florida's Paradise Coast has displayed a resolute determination to reignite its business sector and to restore vital services to those in need. Attending IMEX, just days post-storm, was an intentional move to ensure meeting professionals are fully aware the destination is ready for their business. The DMO also attended Sophisticated Weddings Bridal Fashion Week in New York City in October to reinforce the message that Florida's Paradise Coast will continue to be a premier location for destination weddings and events. [ParadiseCoast.com](http://ParadiseCoast.com)



Lisa Chamberlain, CMP, attends IMEX—thankful for all the industry support.





## Quick Trips!

### Concerts Under the Stars Take Center Stage This Fall in the Heart of the Capital City

Visit Tallahassee brought a variety of headlining musical acts to the Capital City Amphitheater at Cascades Park. The Fall Concert Series launched with a sold-out performance by Earth, Wind & Fire on September 21, a date immortalized by the band and known to fans as Earth, Wind & Fire Day. Shows continued into October rocking with JJ Grey & Mofro, Gov't Mule with special guest Mike Campbell and also Trombone Shorty with Big Freedia. Nearly 15,000 fans attended these exciting concerts bringing significant economic impact to the community. [VisitTallahassee.com](http://VisitTallahassee.com)



Earth, Wind & Fire at the Capital City Amphitheater on Earth, Wind & Fire Day



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## Legal Resource for Your DMO

As a member benefit for you, Destinations Florida has retained Steven M. Hogan with the Ausley McMullen law firm to provide insight into the operation of the TDT and related issues to Destinations Florida.

There are several situations where it would be helpful for you to have a legal opinion for your community. As a member benefit, you can speak with Mr. Hogan about the facts and laws at a general level.

To take advantage of this program, feel free to reach out to Steve Hogan at the information below:



**Steven M. Hogan**

Ausley McMullen

850/224-9115

*shogan@ausley.com*



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INSIDE: Florida Strong – Tourism industry comes together for Florida.

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Destinations Florida



Destinations Florida serves as the single unifying voice for all of Florida's DMOs, providing continuing insight and direction as we face an increasingly competitive tourism marketplace. Organized in 1996, Destinations Florida strives to increase the overall effectiveness of Florida DMOs' destination marketing efforts through industry education, legislative outreach, enhancing professionalism and facilitating communication.

Destinations Florida represents the 55 official county DMOs that promote their communities throughout the world. Tourism promotion activities help to attract 131.4 million visitors to Florida, adding \$96.5 billion to Florida's economy and supporting more than 1.6 million jobs. These activities are made possible by Tourist Development Taxes provided by Florida Statutes Section 125.0104. Statistics: VISIT FLORIDA Research