

TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of Destinations Florida | www.DestinationsFlorida.org | March 2023



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Susan Phillips Named President/CEO of St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches VCB

The St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches VCB recently announced the appointment of Susan Phillips as president and CEO. Phillips joined the VCB in January 2018 as director of tourism promotion and strategic alliances. She has been responsible for the VCB's strategic planning; involved in brand development; and provided marketing agency supervision and oversight of the VCB's advertising agency, interactive website marketing agency, Hispanic PR media agency, and fulfillment and distribution agency.

As she assumes leadership of the VCB, Phillips says her short-term and long-term goals are the same: to encourage and engage the entire tourism community in how they market their destination.



Susan Phillips, president and CEO of St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches VCB (center), is pictured with Kimberly Wilson, VCB board chair; Richard Goldman, retired president and CEO; and VCB board members Cindy Stavely, Charles Robles, and Samantha Palmer.

"There is already a foundation of trust within our organization and in our community that will serve us well," she said. "There are a multitude of talented and brilliant people here that we plan to engage in the further development and promotion of the unique visitor experiences

SUSAN PHILLIPS continues on pg. 4

Unprecedented Times

by Robert Skrob



While politics feels more fractured and divisive than ever, there's one thing that many elected officials

appear to agree upon.

Businesses and corporations are to blame for many of our problems.

Some conservatives blame corporations and businesses for uncompetitive practices, political correctness, and controlling government policies through political influence.

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

Support from our partners makes Destinations Florida's industry & legislative representation possible

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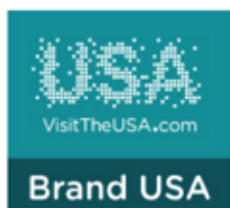
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Connect People to Places

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GOLD PARTNERS



PARADISE



Tourist Development Tax Laws Explained

Robert Skrob, executive director of Destinations Florida, created a 27-minute video explaining Florida Tourist Development Tax Laws for Destinations Florida members so you can understand the law and explain it to individuals within your community. Members can log in at DestinationsFlorida.org/tdt-laws to download the video.



DESTINATIONS FLORIDA TourismMarketing Today

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Robert Skrob,
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MaryLu Winchester,
Member Database

On the Cover

The 2023 Florida Legislative Session runs from March 7 through May 5. Throughout the 60-day session, Destinations Florida will be promoting the value of tourism marketing at the State Capitol. Thank you to our many members who will make the trip to Tallahassee to help tell our story.

Miami and Miami Beach to Host Florida Huddle & Encounter

Florida Huddle and Encounter 2024 will take place July 29-31, 2024, at the Miami Beach Convention Center, hosted in partnership with the Greater Miami CVB. Florida Huddle is the Sunshine State's official travel trade show, showcasing the best of Florida to international and domestic tour operators, wholesalers, and media.



The Miami Beach Convention Center is the host facility for Florida Huddle and Encounter 2024.

VISIT FLORIDA President & CEO Dana Young said, "With Miami as a hub for domestic and international visitors, we are looking forward to hosting travel professionals from around the globe at Florida Huddle and Encounter to facilitate new business possibilities to drive visitation to every region of the Sunshine State."

Florida Encounter, one of the longest running appointment trade shows in the MICE industry, takes place in conjunction with Florida Huddle 2024 and features appointments with fully hosted, qualified meeting planners.

"We proudly welcome VISIT FLORIDA and this important group of tour operators, wholesalers, and media," said President & CEO David Whitaker of the Greater Miami CVB. "Located in the heart of South Beach, the delegation will be inspired by the history, art, and culture of our meetings campus while enjoying our new, reimagined Miami Beach Convention Center."

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

Some progressives blame corporations and businesses for income inequity, unfair labor practices, and controlling government policies through political influence.

The fact that both sides agree that business leaders have undue influence on government policies creates unique challenges when advocating job creation programs such as tourism marketing for Florida and its communities.

It has never been more important for us to explain the benefits of tourism marketing to all Floridians. During the Legislative Session (March 7-May 5), you'll see us telling the story about the services, the amenities, and the huge tax savings Floridians experience from the tourism industry.

The hospitality industry solves many of the problems faced by Floridians today. Thank you for your help in carrying this message.

that can be found on Florida's Historic Coast. We will also promote sustainable aspects of tourism in St. Johns County with a focus on raising the affluence of visitors, supporting air service development and mobility initiatives, and leveraging and promoting new touristic assets throughout the entire county, and not just in the already busy Historic District.

"Longer term, we are committed to working with our county, city, and other agencies to facilitate the diversification, range, and type of destination experiences, with a focus on leveraging assets to improve economic development for St. Johns County. All of this will help to create community pride and economic opportunity, and will enhance the quality of life for all St. Johns County residents."

Phillips views the coming year as one filled with opportunities as the industry transitions to a new world of travel after the pandemic.

"While COVID has changed our business model, we all still focus on the marketing basics of price, product, and promotion," she said. "Looking to the future, I'm especially excited and focused on expanding the promotion of our destination's rich heritage, cultural diversity, incredible architecture, world-renowned golf, luxury accommodations and spas, amazing food scene, beautiful beaches, and a multitude of vibrant experiences."

Phillips is no stranger to Destinations Florida, and she values her involvement with the association.

"The opportunities to engage and collaborate with other Florida DMOs are extremely important in order to seek best practices as well as solutions to new changes or opportunities," she said. "I look forward to even more participation and engagement with Destinations Florida and fellow Florida DMOs, as we have a lot to share and learn from each other."

As she settles into her new role, Florida's Historic Coast is right where Phillips wants to be.

"The abundance of great food, music, cultural history, luxurious amenities, natural beauty, and magnificent architecture all combine to create a great energy and vibrancy," she said. "Add to this our great beaches, water activities, and spas—I am in heaven!"

Destinations Florida Applauds Governor DeSantis's VISIT FLORIDA Budget Recommendation

Destinations Florida applauds Governor Ron DeSantis's recommended \$100 million budget for VISIT FLORIDA next fiscal year. Funding for VISIT FLORIDA initiatives that attract visitors to Florida play a critical role in generating local and state revenue that helps keep the tax base low for residents and to create job opportunities that put Floridians to work.

The tourism promotion efforts of VISIT FLORIDA resulted in record visitation to Florida in the third quarter of 2022. VISIT FLORIDA estimates that the Sunshine State welcomed 35.1 million visitors between July and September 2022, which is a 6.9% increase over the same quarter the previous year. From the beginning of 2022 and through the third quarter of the year, 104.5 million visitors travelled to Florida, an increase of 4.1% from the same pre-pandemic period in 2019, and 15.3% more than in 2021.

"Governor DeSantis recognizes the key economic engine driving Florida's growth, low tax rate, and attracting new residents with his recommendation to fund VISIT FLORIDA at a level that will enable our state to remain the world's number one destination," said Executive Director Robert Skrob of Destinations Florida. "VISIT FLORIDA has a proven track record of success helping thousands of small businesses throughout Florida to grow, and a budget of \$100 million will help them build upon that success."



Governor Ron DeSantis announces his 2023-2024 budget, including \$100 million for VISIT FLORIDA.



Visit Orlando Announces New COO

Visit Orlando has announced the appointment of Mario J. Bass to chief operating officer. As the COO for Visit Orlando, Bass is responsible for the oversight of internal operations, leading and implementing Visit Orlando's strategic initiatives, strategic plans, and annual business plans while supporting the company's mission, vision, and values. A hospitality industry veteran with more than 25 years of experience, Bass most recently served as the chief sales officer for Visit San Antonio. VisitOrlando.com



Mario J. Bass

Experience Kissimmee Welcomes Kissimmee Sports Commission Executive Director

Jessica Beers joins the Kissimmee Sports Commission, a brand extension under Experience Kissimmee, as the executive director of sports. Beers previously served as director of partnerships/sponsorships for Brightline Trains Florida. She has also worked with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Orlando City Soccer Club, and Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. Beers oversees the administration and management of the Kissimmee Sports Commission, including sports event services, sports event recruitment, business operations, and partner relations. ExperienceKissimmee.com



Jessica Beers

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB Hires New PR Manager

The Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB is proud to announce that Lois Croft is their new public relations manager. Croft will build and strengthen relationships with travel editors, writers, and other journalists to facilitate media awareness to promote Charlotte County's tourism opportunities as a premier vacation destination. Croft worked with the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association for 11 years, most recently as a regional director building and managing chapters in Collier, Lee, and Charlotte counties. PureFlorida.com



Lois Croft

Florida's Sports Coast Adds to Their Marketing Team

Florida's Sports Coast has made some notable additions to their roster for this year. In October, they welcomed Jennifer O'Connor to the team as the new marketing and communications manager. O'Connor previously worked for Madden Media in Tucson as an account manager working with Florida's Sports Coast. Raul Nardi has joined the team as the marketing coordinator. A Tampa native, Nardi previously worked for Mettler Toledo before joining the marketing team. FLSportsCoast.com



Jennifer O'Connor



Raul Nardi

Greater Miami CVB Makes Key Staff Appointments

Taylor Fry and Diego Vervloet have joined the Greater Miami CVB's convention sales and services department. Fry was named director of national accounts and is the first West Coast-based sales representative in the organization's history. Vervloet joins as meeting and convention services manager, responsible for servicing the organization's current and prospective business and ensuring a seamless destination experience for both clients and their delegates. MiamiandMiamiBeach.com



Taylor Fry



Diego Vervloet

Clearwater Marine Museum's David Yates Honored for His Vision for Tourism

Preserve Vision Florida has named David Yates, former CEO of the Clearwater Marine Museum, the 2023 Person of Vision for his role in helping to transform Tampa Bay into one of the most vibrant tourism destinations. Yates was CEO of Clearwater Marine Aquarium (CMA) from 2006 to 2020, where he co-produced *Dolphin Tale* and executive produced *Dolphin Tale 2*. CMA is internationally recognized thanks to these blockbuster movies. When Yates took over as CEO at CMA in 2006, it was virtually unknown and nearly broke. But Yates told a story that inspired millions of people around the world: A dolphin that lost her tail, refused to give up, and lived beyond what anybody thought she would. Yates also produced, directed, and wrote the documentary *Winter, the Dolphin That Can*. VisitStPeteClearwater.com



David Yates poses with Winter the dolphin at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium.



ALL OF THE TRAINING YOU NEED TO **ATTRACT MORE VISITORS TO YOUR DESTINATION**



DESTINATIONS FLORIDA
**Destination
Marketing Summit**
May 31 – June 2, 2023
Margaritaville Resort Orlando
Kissimmee, Florida

A program of education designed for tourism specialties to share information and to help destination marketers attract more customers to their communities.

- Detailed education that can be applied immediately to bring more visitors to your destination
- Education sessions that serve many different professionals within your DMO
- Opportunity to gain insights from your peers throughout Florida on how to build better community partnerships within the industry and with organizations outside of the traditional tourism industry
- VISIT FLORIDA's plans for helping destinations bring more customers to our communities



REGISTER NOW AT [DESTINATIONSFLORIDA.ORG](https://www.destinationsflorida.org)

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Wednesday, May 31, 2023

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Board of Directors Meeting and Working Lunch
2:00 PM – 2:45 PM	Preparing Your Team for the DMO Emergency Response Role
2:45 PM – 3:30 PM	It's Time for DMOCRACY – Community Engagement, A Tourism Imperative
3:45 PM – 5:30 PM	Destination Marketing State of the State Report
5:30 PM – 6:30 PM	Welcome Reception at Margaritaville Resort Orlando
6:30 PM	Dinner on own

Thursday, June 1, 2023

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Networking Breakfast	
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	Winning Big by Promoting Small	Vacation Decision- Making Among Young Millennials & Gen Zers
10:00 AM – 10:45 AM	Out-of-the-Box Marketing Is a Strategy, Not a Whim	Behind the Curtain: How the Travel Industry (and Others) Spend Their Digital Ad Dollars—and What to Do About It!
11:00 AM – 11:45 AM	Cultivating an Iconic Brand Through Partnership	Generative AI for Destination Marketing Organizations
11:45 AM – 1:00 PM	Networking Luncheon	
1:00 PM – 1:45 PM	A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words, but These Are Worth a Million	Turning Insights Into Action: Understanding Evolving Traveler Expectations to Capture Demand
2:00 PM – 2:45 PM	The One Where You Learn How to Attract New Travelers on Any Budget	Destination ROI: How to Drive Measurable Performance With Audience-Driven Strategies
3:00 PM – 3:45 PM	Destination Advocacy and Tourism Branding	The Effects of Destination Competitiveness Stimuli on Visitors' Decision-Making
5:00 PM – 8:30 PM	Connect Evening Event	Sponsored by Connect

Friday, June 2, 2023

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Networking Breakfast	
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	State of the Hotel Industry for the U.S. and Florida Vacation Rental Data: Beyond the Numbers	
10:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Legislative Update With Mat Forrest	
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM	How DMOs and VISIT FLORIDA Can Work Together to Bring More Customers to Our Communities	VISITFLORIDA.
12:00 Noon	Adjourn	

This meeting is made possible by the support of our Partners:

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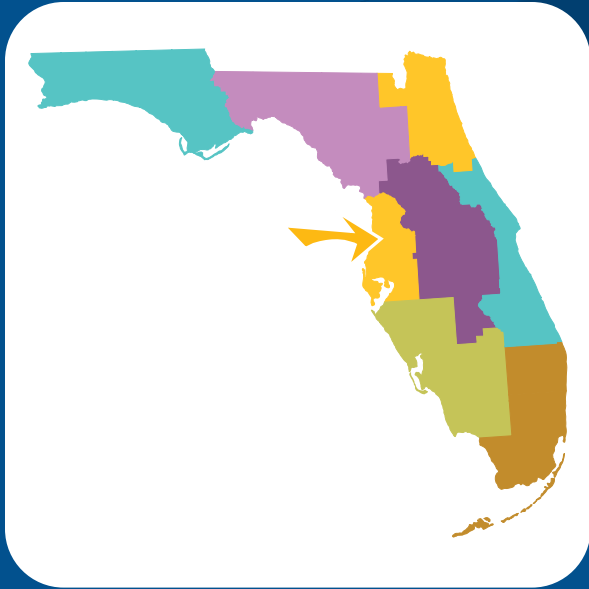
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REGISTER NOW AT [DESTINATIONSFLORIDA.ORG](https://destinationsflorida.org)



- Discover Crystal River Florida
- Florida's Adventure Coast, Brooksville-Weeki Wachee
- Visit Sebring
- Visit Tampa Bay
- Florida's Sports Coast
- Visit St. Pete/Clearwater

Discover Crystal River Florida Sets Records

Discover Crystal River Florida (DCRF) is thrilled to report on a record-setting year! Compared to 2021, 2022 metrics show a 10.1% increase in occupancy; 14.6% increase in ADR (\$110.71 to \$126.89); 26.2% increase in RevPAR (\$68.87 to \$86.94); 10% increase in rooms sold; and 26.2% increase in revenue (\$23.9 million to \$30.1 million).

John Pricher, director of Discover Crystal River Florida, attributes the growth to a dedicated and resilient team, a strategic marketing plan executed by Madden Media that's hyper-focused on key markets and niches, and successful collaboration with Citrus County and local partner businesses.

From November through March, DCRF focused on promoting Manatee Season as a "Bucket List" experience in the United States. In the spring, DCRF switched gears to market Scalloping Season, another unique activity that can only take place in a few select regions. Add the area's robust event calendar and its outstanding fishing and cycling options into the mix, and it's clear why travelers are being drawn to Crystal River, Homosassa, Inverness, and Floral City for amazing outdoor adventures.



Scalloping Season was a big hit in the DCRF marketing strategy in FY22.



Fresh water, salt water, in-shore, off-shore, in a lake, in a bay—it's all available in Citrus County.



Florida's Adventure Coast Hosts CroomFest 2023

Florida's Adventure Coast, Brooksville-Weeki Wachee recently hosted Croomfest 2023, sponsored by the Swamp Mountain Bike Club in partnership with VISIT FLORIDA. This exciting three-day event grew from a former one-day ride to a three-day weekend outdoor adventure extravaganza. Originally a 35- or 50-mile endurance ride through the Withlacoochee State Forest's Croom mountain bike trails, organizers decided to expand and include a paved trail/road ride, a kayaking event, and a vendor village with entertainment, food trucks, and more.

Hosted at the Silver Lake Recreation Complex in the Withlacoochee State Forest, participants enjoyed the best of Florida's Adventure Coast cycling trails, riding both the gravel trails in the forest and the paved Withlacoochee State Trail.



Croomfest 2023 draws cyclists and outdoor enthusiasts to Withlacoochee State Forest for three days of adventure.

Organizers reported increased attendance, happy vendors, and campgrounds filled with tired but happy campers throughout the weekend. Local bike shop Crank Works was on hand throughout the weekend with specialty bikes, gear, and service.

"We're excited to see this cycling event grow and add new events," noted Patricia Laird, owner of the shop.

Tammy Heon, manager of tourism development for Florida's Adventure Coast Visitors Bureau added, "Cycling is one of our top activities, drawing visitors from all over the world. We're thrilled to see the growing popularity of our single-track trails in the forest. As this event continues to grow and expand, we look forward to a continued partnership with Swamp and to welcoming more visitors on two wheels."



Cyclists test their skills on the Withlacoochee State Forest's Croom mountain bike trails.

Now Accepting Donations for the 2023 Dave Warren Silent Auction

Destinations Florida created the Dave Warren Scholarship Program in our continuing efforts to improve awareness about destination marketing. Named for Dave Warren, a destination marketing pioneer, this program awards scholarships to hospitality students and tourism professionals who want to advance their knowledge of the tourism industry.

To raise funds for the Dave Warren Scholarship, we are requesting donations from Destinations Florida members to the Silent Auction that will be held during the Destination Marketing Summit. Contributions of all kinds will be gladly accepted, such as weekend packages in your destination or gift baskets with items that showcase your unique location. Media agencies often contribute ad space in their publications for our DMOs to bid on. Our past auctions have raised over \$55,000 for this fund.

All Marketing Summit attendees are invited to bid to win exciting destination getaways, valuable ad space, and other great prizes.



Donations Deadline: May 19, 2023
DestinationsFlorida.org/23SilentAuction



BEST of CENTRAL WEST FLORIDA!

Sports Tourism Helps Visit Sebring Garner Record High TDT Collections for Second Year

Visit Sebring's final tax collection figures for fiscal year 2021-22 from the Florida Department of Revenue show record high Tourist Development Tax (TDT) collections with a 33.7% increase over the previous year. Staff attributes this success to an increase in securing sports tourism events to the area during need months, as well as an increase in room rates. In August 2022, Visit Sebring won a Flagler Award in the Rural Marketing category for their Sports Tourism Marketing Campaign, which included attracting new sports events to the area such as Prowatercross, Motosurf, Spartan Race, lacrosse showcases, golf tournaments, multisport, and youth wrestling.



December's Spartan Race at Skipper Ranch brought an estimated \$2.6 million in economic impact to the destination.

"We have realized that event planners are looking for a centrally located destination for their events that is not crowded and offers a fantastic value for their participants," said Casey Hartt, Visit Sebring's lead marketing consultant. "Sebring is checking a lot of boxes for these events that want to relocate to a smaller market but stay in Florida."

Visit Sebring kicked off the 2022-23 fiscal year by adding two new marketing partners, Madden Media and Wander Media, as well as embarking on a sports facility study with the Huddle Up Group.



Motorized surfboard racing, which is televised on CBS Sports, brings endurance action to the water in Sebring.

Hillsborough County Tourism Kicks Off the New Year With Hotel Revenue Boom

Tampa Bay ended 2022 on a high with an incredible record-setting year collecting over \$1 billion in taxable hotel revenue. Hillsborough County's total hotel revenue reached \$1,020,315,314, a 43% increase over the previous year, which surpassed the self-imposed five-year goal set by Visit Tampa Bay in just three years.

"It's a tremendous accomplishment for our destination to hit our billion-dollar goal in just three years," said President & CEO Santiago C. Corrada of Visit Tampa Bay. "With only 20% of direct visitor spending on hotels and even higher percentages spent on

entertainment, retail, and food and beverage, reaching our goal is a massive achievement for our partners and community."

Hillsborough County's total Tourism Development Tax collections totaled over \$61 million for the 2022 calendar year and held the highest hotel occupancy for the year in both the convention and leisure sales competitive sets. Visit Tampa Bay and its industry partners drive nearly \$8 million a year in economic impact across Tampa Bay, which supports more than 51,000 jobs that support families and secure future opportunities.



Outside of the 600,000 sq. ft. waterfront Tampa Convention Center, the Tampa Riverwalk links hotels, restaurants, and cultural venues like gems on a string.



Visit Tampa Bay works closely with hundreds of industry partners across the region to drive over \$7.1 billion a year in economic development through tourism.



BEST of CENTRAL WEST FLORIDA!

Florida's Sports Coast Wins First Adrian Award

Florida's Sports Coast (FLSportsCoast.com) was named the recipient of a Bronze Adrian Award by Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI) in the category of Digital Marketing – Website in December 2022. It was the first Adrian Award for the destination. This award comes after a complete redesign of the destination's website in conjunction with Madden Media, making it more user-friendly and incorporating brand elements, custom illustrations, and area photography, along

with an overall updated feel that aligns with the brand's outdoor and active lifestyle demographic. Florida's Sports Coast website was selected from more than 600 entries submitted this year.

"We are honored to receive our first-ever Adrian Award and to be recognized in the travel marketing excellence category," said Florida's Sports Coast Tourism Director Adam Thomas. "In conjunction with our partners at Madden Media, it was our goal to create a user-friendly platform that would help showcase the dynamic nature of our destination's offerings and to encourage travel to Florida's Sports Coast. This award has helped to prove that we are achieving our goal."



Florida's Sports Coast team members Maria LaJeunesse Avilla, Jennifer O'Connor, Adam Thomas, Consuelo Sanchez, Raul Nardi, Kayla Getz, and Shelly Bandy



Florida's Sports Coast reimagined and award-winning website

Visit St. Pete/Clearwater Brings New Brand Campaign to Life

Following a successful launch of Visit St. Pete/Clearwater's new brand—Let's Shine—in fall 2022, the team set out to bring the campaign to life with a multifaceted campaign in New York City—"Warm Up to Win." Creating a winter message and activation overlay that positioned St. Pete/Clearwater as the ideal destination for winter getaways and inspired consumers to engage with the brand, VSPC took to NYC this January to bring the sunshine and warmth.

The team developed a high-profile pop-up event leading up to National Plan for Vacation Day and capitalized on additional exposure from the New York Travel & Adventure Show. The campaign featured a spectacular sweepstakes to get audiences excited about a potential trip to St. Pete/Clearwater and inspire entry.

"We wanted to bring this new campaign to life and felt there was a perfect connection with U.S. Travel Association's National Plan for Vacation Day on January 31," said Visit St. Pete/Clearwater CEO/President Steve Hayes. "We hosted an experiential pop-up event inviting New Yorkers to quite literally warm up by enjoying an interactive St. Pete/Clearwater Beach Day in Herald Square, NYC, and were able to reach 1,700 guests!"

To date, the sweepstakes has garnered more than 24,000 entries, and the overall earned and paid media impressions for the campaign total more than 220 million.

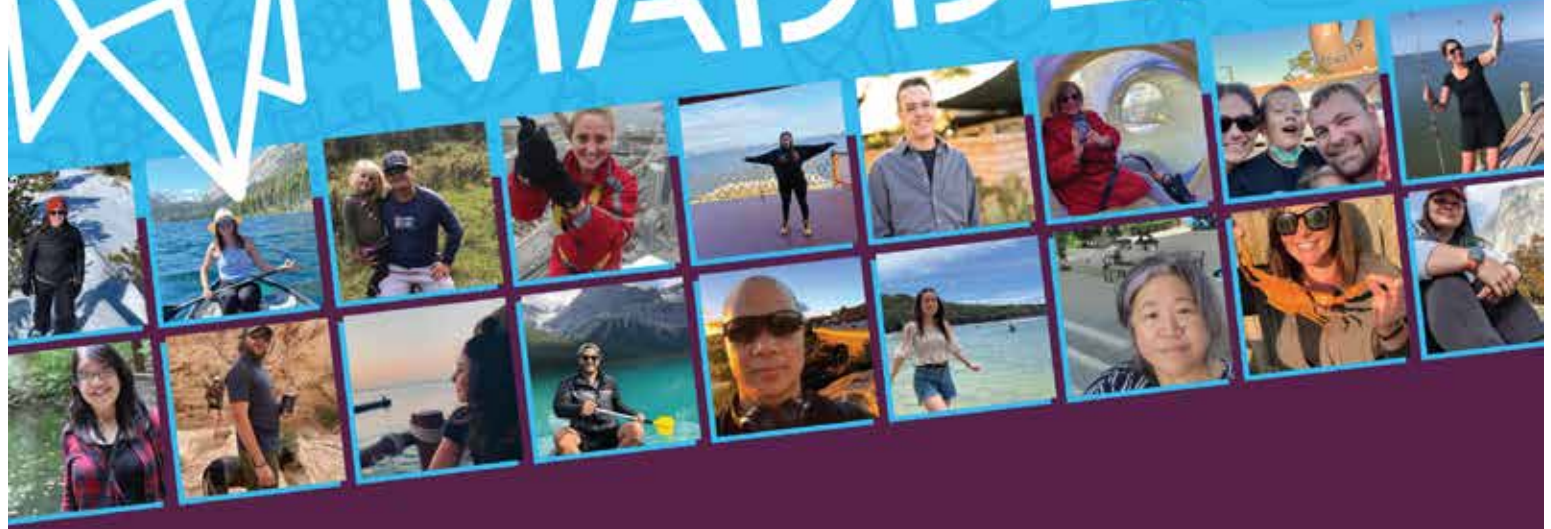


New Yorkers line up to "Warm Up to Win" in a heated greenhouse at the VSPC pop-up event in Herald Square.



The VSPC team at the "Warm Up to Win" pop-up event in New York City

MADDEN



Well **hello** there...

Maybe this is the first time we're meeting or maybe we're old friends, either way, we'd love getting to know you and your destination. You see, we're passionate about travel.

We know **tourism**.

For 40 years, we have been helping destinations find their perfect traveler—and helping travelers make lifelong memories. Our experience makes us a true tourism partner who understands your challenges and the intricate landscape you navigate—over 20% of our team comes from DMOs.

We **care**.

There's a reason we're so passionate about travel: it makes the world a better place. Tax revenue builds parks and schools. Paychecks feed families. Exposure to new people and places builds empathy. We want our work to make an impact that ripples across generations.

TAKE A LOOK AT
WHAT WE'VE BEEN
WORKING ON!



We do it **all**.

Madden is a full-service agency with teams of experts who stay on top of the latest trends and industry insights, so that you always look your best. We're ready to roll up our sleeves as your one-stop shop.



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Scholarships

Planning a Career in Hospitality?

**Application Deadline:
March 15, 2023**



Since 1979, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County has awarded more than \$20 million in scholarships to students in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte, and Desoto counties.

To learn more about traditional, adult, special interest, and other scholarship programs, visit: www.cfsarasota.org/students/scholarship-opportunities.



Destinations Florida, through the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, is pleased to offer the **Destinations Florida Dave Warren Memorial Scholarship**.

This exciting scholarship opportunity is available to incoming juniors and seniors who plan to make a career in the hospitality industry within the State of Florida. Selection criteria includes the personal goals of the student, financial need, and community involvement.

Receive money for school and recognition of the award at the **Destinations Florida Marketing Summit at the Margaritaville Resort Orlando in Kissimmee, Florida on May 31 - June 2, 2023.**

The application is currently open and you are encouraged to be prepared and submit your application early!

How do I apply?

1. Go to: <https://bit.ly/DWScholarship>
2. Complete the application and submit the required documentation including: FAFSA Student Aid Report (SAR) and current college transcript. Incomplete and/or late applications will not be considered.

For Assistance Contact:
Scholarships@cfsarasota.org or (941)556-7173



TDT for Lake Clean-Up

by Steven M. Hogan

Are water weeds like hydrilla keeping tourists out of your inland lakes and rivers? Florida counties can spend Tourist Development Tax money on mechanical harvesting and herbicide application programs to remove these weeds so long as the programs are primarily related to tourism. *See Op. Att'y Gen. Fla. 90-59 (1990).*

We are a state surrounded on three sides by water, but our water-gear tourism doesn't stop at the ocean. Inland lakes and rivers provide wonderful opportunities for fishing, boating, and other



If the rivers and lakes benefiting from mechanical harvesting and herbicide application programs are open to the public, counties may finance the programs with TDT revenues.

tourist activities, though water weeds can put a damper on the fun.

Fortunately, section 125.0104(5)(a), Florida Statutes, allows counties to use Tourist Development Tax funds for the "enhancement, cleanup, or restoration of inland lakes and rivers to which there is public access." The statute's legislative history reveals that this language was added in an effort to expand the permitted uses of the tax funds. *See Op. Att'y Gen. Fla. 90-59 (1990).*



Steven M. Hogan

If the rivers and lakes benefiting from mechanical harvesting and herbicide application programs are open to the public, counties may finance the programs with Tourist Development Tax revenues and clear the waterways and waterbodies of weeds for the tourists. As always, you should consult your attorney before making specific decisions on expenditures.

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. Nothing in this article constitutes legal advice. Please seek counsel of your own choosing before making decisions that impact yourself or your organization.

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Sebring's Citrus Golf Trail Attracts Golf's Future Stars

The Citrus Golf Trail (CGT, CitrusGolfTrail.com) is gaining momentum as a marketing brand with two new golf tournaments that recently took place. The CGT Open, hosted by the Minor League Golf Tour, offers professional players the chance to move up the ranks while competing for a total of \$25,000 and the honor of wearing the Orange Jacket. The CGT Ladies Invitational (formerly the Harder Hall) attracts female players to compete for amateur ranking points. VisitSebring.com



Peter Bradbeer, winner of the 2022 Citrus Golf Trail Open

Martin County Wins Content Marketing Award

The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing was recently named a winner in the 2022 Content Marketing Awards, organized by PR Daily. The team earned the top honor in the Travel, Hospitality and Tourism Campaign category for their "Martin Memories" holiday campaign. The colorful images and playful copy encouraged people to give their loved ones the gift of new experiences (instead of more "stuff"). Other winners included Pfizer, Intel, Condé Nast, Best Buy, and more. DiscoverMartin.com



The winning multimedia campaign drove traffic to a dedicated microsite that included vacation-planning resources like an experiential gift guide, relevant blog posts, and a built-in hotel booking tool.

Calling All User-Generated Content!

This year when the marketing team at Visit Sarasota County started to look at possible cover art for the 2023 Visitor Guide, nothing felt right. Everything looked so staged and just "been there/done that." So Digital Marketing Manager Jess Bertolini used collaboration with CrowdRiff to find gorgeous authentic images to use. Using the platform, VSC did a callout on social media to attract submissions. The finished product is a multitude of images that showcase all of the corners of the community, and they couldn't be happier. VisitSarasota.com



Visit Sarasota's new visitor's guide cover features user-generated content, front and back.

Visit St. Lucie Launches Digital Nature & Wildlife Pass

In October 2022, Visit St. Lucie launched its first-ever digital Nature & Wildlife Pass to encourage visitors to get outside and explore St. Lucie's natural wonders. The pass highlights some of the destination's most popular nature and wildlife experiences—all navigable through a visitor's smartphone. Since its launch, nearly 800 people have downloaded the pass, there have been more than 372 location check-ins, more than 65 people are halfway through the pass, and five people have successfully completed the trail. VisitStLucie.com



A group of visiting outdoor enthusiasts pose with their St. Lucie swag after completing the Nature & Wildlife trail.



Visit Tampa Bay Invites Gay-Cationers to Show Their Pride in the Heart of Florida's Gulf Coast

In partnership with Creative Loafing and a collaboration with the Tampa Bay LGBTQ+ Chamber, Visit Tampa Bay launches the third edition of its Tampa Gay Guide. From advertising to activations, ambassadors, and more, Visit Tampa Bay is a tourism industry leader in diversity with Destinations International, U.S. Travel, a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion sponsor for TTG (UK trade publication), and others. The destination guide encourages adventure with a relaxing vibe to create a vacation that is authentically Tampa Gay. VisitTampaBay.com



Visit Tampa Bay's Gay Guide

The Florida Keys: 200 Years of Paradise Debuts

The Florida Keys: 200 Years of Paradise, produced by South Florida PBS for broadcast during the Keys' bicentennial year, was partially underwritten by the Monroe County TDC. After its late January debut on WPBT/WXEL, *The Florida Keys: 200 Years of Paradise* will air on 85% of all U.S. PBS stations by American Public Television beginning in early March. Some 249 public television stations around the country are to broadcast it in 2023. Fla-Keys.com



The Florida Keys & Key West 200 logo

Visit Central Florida Showcases New Attraction as Part of Pre-Huddle FAM

Visit Central Florida's (VCF) recruitment of LEGOLAND® Florida Resort more than a decade ago continues to reap economic benefits for Polk County, now with the opening of the park's newest attraction, Pirate River Quest. The ride's January opening coincided perfectly with a VCF-recruited Polk County FAM tour for Brazilian tour operators prior to Florida Huddle. VisitCentralFlorida.org



Senior managers from Brazil's leading tour operators visit LEGOLAND® Florida Resort.

Orlando North, Seminole County Releases Season 2 of *Encounters with Jim Duby*

Orlando North, Seminole County recently released Season 2 of the popular YouTube series, *Encounters with Jim Duby*. This season takes viewers deeper into Seminole County's diverse ecosystems to learn about the native flora and fauna that visitors can discover while hiking the trails. A few of the popular featured locations include Black Bear Wilderness Area, Lake Jesup Conservation Area, Spring Hammock Preserve, and much more. Stream both seasons on Do Orlando North's YouTube Channel. DoOrlandoNorth.com



Jess and Jim explore Chuluota in Seminole County. View Season 2 of their video series [here: youtube.com/doorlondonorth](https://youtube.com/doorlondonorth).



Space Coast Celebrates New Visitor Information Center

The Space Coast Office of Tourism held an industry open house at the new Visitor Information Center in Cocoa Beach to celebrate its grand opening. Community partners met with staff and each other to network and to learn about the services the Visitor Information Center can provide visitors. Officials say they hope the new center will help the community build on a record \$23 million in Tourist Development Tax that was collected in 2022. VisitSpaceCoast.com



The new Visitor Information Center provides a photo opportunity in front of a beautiful mural of Space Coast attractions painted by Lyssa Wyn of Barefoot and Doodles.

Amelia Island's Restaurant Week Boosts Business for 26 Restaurants

Amelia Island's 15th Annual Restaurant Week (Jan. 20-29) featured a 10-day culinary showcase including special events and savory prix-fixe menus at 26 of the island's restaurants. The campaign performed exceptionally well, boasting a 6% engagement rate on social media, 31% enews open rate, and nearly 50k web views in one month. Local restaurants enjoyed the boost in business, with a 13% increase in guests over 2021 and one owner saying, "We did the most meals we have ever done!" AmeliaIsland.com



Restaurant partners ranked their overall satisfaction with Restaurant Week 4.38 out of 5!

Explore and Conquer the Cape Coral Quest

Known for its unique shopping opportunities and more than 400 miles of canal waterways, Cape Coral is full of vibrant culture. To celebrate this, the City of Cape Coral and the Lee County VCB have teamed up to launch the Cape Coral Quest. The mobile-exclusive pass gives locals and visitors a fun way to explore the destination, earning discounts and rewards. Each participating location has a four-digit code somewhere on the property, and pass users are urged to look for clues and win! VisitFortMyers.com



Visitors and locals can go to VisitFortMyers.com/cape-coral-quest to collect a Cape Coral Quest pass to participate on any mobile device.

Bradenton Area CVB Hosts High-Impact Press Trip

The Bradenton Area CVB showed off the sustainability of their culinary destination during a high-impact press trip. Writers from target markets and top-billed freelance writers were brought along to Bradenton area waters to learn about the All Clams on Deck initiative, along with sustainable fishing for seasonal offerings like stone crab. The January trip has already yielded major coverage for the destination with additional pieces in the works. BradentonGulfIslands.com.



Writers enjoy dining outdoors during a press trip to Bradenton.
Photo: Bradenton Area CVB



Spring in Miami

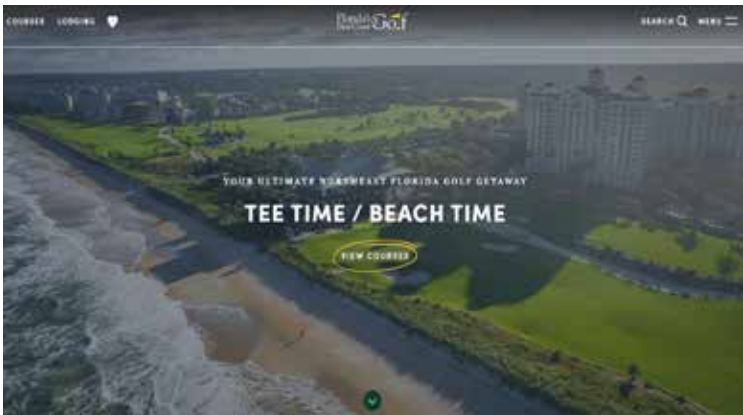
The Greater Miami CVB (GMCVB) unveils its new "Spring in Miami" programming, welcoming visitors from all backgrounds and lifestyles to experience a diverse calendar of cultural events and happenings taking place across the destination. "We take pride in presenting a season of events that are as diverse as the audience we welcome," said GMCVB President & CEO David Whitaker. The program's website SpringInMiami.com will be the portal to all events and happenings throughout the season. MiamiAndBeaches.com



Spring is the perfect season for a bike ride in Miami.

Florida's First Coast of Golf Launches New Website

FFCG underwent a robust website renovation with the launch of a new site in January. Users are immediately submerged in green and blue colors, representing the lush and coastal courses in the area. The look is reminiscent of a luxury brand and inspired by golf scorecards with clean block styles and subtle line work. Faster load time, simplified search functionality, savable favorites, and increased video positioning create a more engaging site overall. New related content connections and listing styles will elevate course and resort/hotel partner visibility and time on site. Florida-Golf.org



FFCG's new website offers an engaging way to plan a visit to Florida's First Coast of Golf.

Navarre Beach x Content Creators: Amplifying Efforts Through Thoughtful Partnerships

From May through August of last year, Navarre Beach curated and executed an influencer marketing campaign to promote in-destination tourism. Utilizing both Instagram and TikTok, the campaign targeted Atlanta and Dallas travelers to target two of Navarre's top markets. Partnering with one micro-traveler influencer in each market, 17 pieces of content were created and published, with one video receiving more than 2.4 million views. The results: 3.8 million impressions; 263,000 engagements; and 90% positive sentiment. GetRelaxing.com



Navarre Beach partners with a TikTok influencer to promote travel to Florida's Most Relaxing Place.

Visit Jacksonville Becomes First Autism-Certified DMO in Florida

Visit Jacksonville is Florida's first DMO to earn the Certified Autism Center™ designation. This designation, granted by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), recognizes organizations that have undergone staff training to better understand and meet the needs of autistic visitors and their families. "We're proud to be the first DMO in the state of Florida to achieve the Certified Autism Center™ status, but we're most proud to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all who visit Jacksonville," said Visit Jacksonville President & CEO Michael Corrigan. VisitJacksonville.com





Pickleball Tournaments Brings \$3.2 Million in Economic Impact to Punta Gorda

Punta Gorda, Florida's PicklePlex was the first stop in the 20-tournament tour for the 2023 Association of Pickleball Professionals Tour, bringing the best professional and amateur pickleball players for five days. More than 700 athletes traveled internationally and throughout the USA competing for a portion of the \$1 million overall tour purse. The Final Championship aired on CBS Sports, showcasing the destination while generating 3,000-plus room nights with an economic impact of \$3.2 million. [PureFlorida.com](https://www.pureflorida.com)



The PicklePlex in Punta Gorda hosts the 2023 Association of Pickleball Professionals Tour.

Ocala/Marion County VCB Launches Industry Newsletter

The Ocala/Marion County VCB recently launched an industry newsletter with their new tourism brand to shine a light on Florida's Natural Wonder. This quarterly newsletter aims to connect with tourism and community partners to share VCB tools, sales and marketing leads, industry resources, and good news information and opportunities. Due to the great work of VISIT FLORIDA, coupled with new state-of-the-art venues, attractions, accommodations, restaurants, and other tourism businesses opening at an exceptional speed, Ocala/Marion County continues to flourish with record-breaking tourism numbers and revenue. [OcalaMarion.com](https://www.OcalaMarion.com)



Ocala/Marion County VCB's newsletter shares news about Florida's Natural Wonder.

Tallahassee Renames Amphitheater in Cascades Park

In January, Tallahassee honored Julian "Cannonball" and Nathaniel "Nat" Adderley unveiling the newly named Adderley Amphitheater at Cascades Park. The Adderley brothers spent their formative years in Tallahassee. After attending Florida A & M University, the brothers achieved fame serving in the U.S. Army band and playing with icons Ray Charles, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane. Eventually they formed The Cannonball Adderley Quintet, where the brothers became known for developing soul jazz and winning every respected jazz poll in the world. [VisitTallahassee.com](https://www.VisitTallahassee.com)



The Adderley Amphitheater offers an opportunity for visitors to learn more about the capital city's Black history and culture.

Rolex 24 At DAYTONA Draws Record Crowd

In front of the largest crowd in event history and an international television audience, Daytona International Speedway hosted the 61st Rolex 24 At DAYTONA in late January. The Rolex 24 At Daytona is North America's most prestigious sports car race and one of only two 24-hour races in the world. Six of the seven continents and 32 different countries were represented among the 234 drivers and 61 cars that competed. The winning car, the No. 60 Acura ARX-06, won by 4.190 seconds. [DaytonaBeach.com](https://www.DaytonaBeach.com)



Daytona International Speedway hosted the largest crowd in event history for the 61st running of the Rolex 24 At DAYTONA sports car race.
Photo: Daytona International Speedway



Visit Orlando Launches 'Winter Doesn't Exist' Campaign

Visit Orlando launched its "Winter Doesn't Exist" winter and spring advertising campaign in the U.S. and Canada to motivate travel demand to Orlando. This is a new winter overlay campaign to the "Unbelievably Real" brand introduced last year. This latest campaign features dynamic live weather feed billboards, high-impact out-of-home advertising, digital displays, and paid social in several markets experiencing cold weather like New York, Chicago, Washington D.C., and Toronto. VisitOrlando.com



Digital spectaculars prominently appear in key market locations like New York City's Time Square, Washington D.C.'s Union Square, and Young-Dundas Square in Toronto.

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Celebrates Success and Looks to the Future

A record 250 attendees gathered at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center celebrating a successful 2022 and learning more about the exciting initiatives underway for the year ahead across marketing, research, destination stewardship, and coastal resources. The destination continues to fulfill its promise of getting kids outside on the water to give their adventurous side room to grow, and recently relaunched a website that allows moms to customize their experiences and connect directly with local moms who serve as online scouts. DestinFWB.com



Tourism Director Jennifer Adams thanks tourism partners and community leaders for their continued support and commitment to fulfilling a mission of making time spent in Destin-Fort Walton Beach, whether visiting, living, or working, more valuable to all.

Alachua County's Gateway to the Springs Receives National Coverage in German Diving Magazine

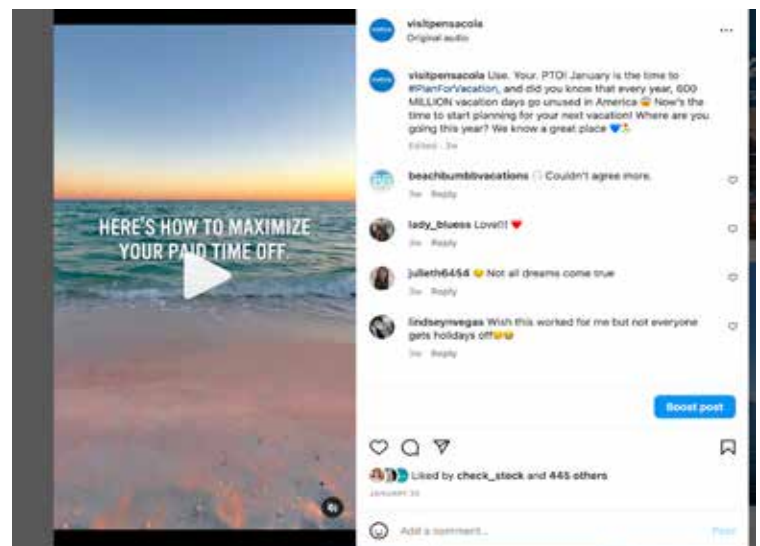
Located in Alachua County, High Springs is called the Gateway to the Springs and features breathtaking underwater caves with 1,000-plus feet of subterranean passages underneath a 50-foot head spring giving access to another 30,000 feet of passages. This February, photojournalists Manuela Kirshner and Chiara Thiele of *Silent World*—Germany's premier diving magazine with a 17,000 subscriber base—spent six days cave diving and exploring area dining, breweries, and attractions. Locally headquartered Halcyon Dive Systems, a manufacturer of world-class exploration-grade dive equipment, provided a guide for the dives. VisitGainesville.com



A German photojournalist on assignment for *Silent World* diving magazine takes breathtaking photos for an article due to publish in April 2023.

Visit Pensacola Encourages People to Plan for Vacation

Did you know that each year, 768 million vacation days go unused by American workers? In an effort to help people make plans for National Plan for Vacation Day, Visit Pensacola took to social media to provide its audiences with dedicated Pensacola itineraries, travel hacks, and more. Visit Pensacola and company produced more than 30 pieces of unique content to share The Way to Beach™, garnering 150,000-plus impressions. VisitPensacola.com



Visit Pensacola's inviting content centered on National Plan for Vacation Day encourages people to use their paid time off and to visit the destination.



Residents and Visitors Select Perfect in Walton County Award Winners

Walton County Tourism recently hosted the 2023 Perfect in Walton County Awards. This annual celebration spotlights tourism-related businesses, services, and organizations voted on by residents and visitors as their favorites. "These businesses help our residents and visitors create lifelong memories, so to be able to talk about them and promote them as Perfect Award winners is always rewarding," said Matt Algarin, Walton County tourism director. The top three in each of 30 categories, including dining, entertainment and accommodations, were recognized. [VisitSouthWalton.com](https://www.visitsouthwalton.com)



The Perfect in Walton County Awards recognize tourism-related businesses, services, and organizations.

Tierre Verde Is Tripadvisor's #5 Trending Destination

Tripadvisor has named Tierre Verde the #5 2023 Trending Destinations in the U.S. as part of its Travelers' Choice Best of the Best Destination Awards. Just beyond the tip of St. Petersburg, the island of Tierra Verde is more than just a quiet boating community—it's also a stepping stone to some of the best nature and wildlife in the area. Visitors can bike or take a drive down the Pinellas Bayway to Fort De Soto Park for a day at the beach (pets welcome!) or catch a ferry to Egmont or Shell Key for tortoise-spotting and bird-watching. [VisitStPeteClearwater.com](https://www.visitstpeteclearwater.com)



The white sand beaches of Tierre Verde beckon visitors to enjoy unspoiled nature on this island near St. Petersburg.



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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



Enclosed is your copy of Tourism Marketing Today
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INSIDE: Meet the new CEO leading promotion of Florida’s Historic Coast.

Executive Director Robert Skrob | Lobbyists Brian Ballard and Mat Forrest, 850/577-0444
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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