

TourismMarketing Today

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Governor DeSantis Recommends \$105M for VISIT FLORIDA in 2024-25 Budget

On Dec. 5, Governor DeSantis announced that he is recommending \$105 million in funding for VISIT FLORIDA as part of his Focus on Florida's Future budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2024-25.



On Nov. 16, Governor DeSantis announced a record number of visitors to Florida in the third quarter of 2023, with an estimated total of 35.1 million visitors between July and September. Visitation included 32.2 million domestic visitors, 2.2 million overseas visitors, and 666,000 Canadian visitors. Additionally, Florida continues to beat overall annual visitation records with 105.2 million visitors reported so far in 2023, 724,000 more visitors than during the first nine months of 2022.

Photo: Daytona Beach CVB

In announcing the budget line item to board members, VISIT FLORIDA President & CEO Dana Young said, "This recommendation shows Governor DeSantis' support for VISIT FLORIDA and the work that we do every day to make sure that Florida is the #1 destination for visitors worldwide.

"As seen through the record number of visitors already received in 2023 and the record-smashing 137.4 million visitors in 2022, the state's investment in VISIT FLORIDA is vital to the continued success of Florida's tourism industry. Governor DeSantis' budget recommendation will enable VISIT FLORIDA to continue positively impacting Floridians and the state's economy."

Because of You

by Robert Skrob



While we are facing the toughest challenges we've ever experienced during this Legislative Session, we

are also stronger than ever.

The reason is because of you.

The last eight years have taught us how to advocate the value of tourism marketing in a time when most people take for granted the benefits of Florida's tourism industry and the marketing that fuels it.

During this time we've come together because we had to. We've forged new strong

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

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

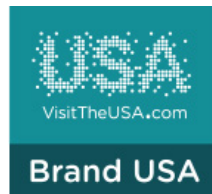
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Santiago Corrada
February 6

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

The Official Newsletter of
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On the Cover

Pensacola is The Way to Beach™ with nearly 40 miles of white sand beaches along Pensacola, Pensacola Beach, and Perdido Key; a historic, walkable downtown; and a gamut of offerings including arts and culture, culinary, and national and state parks.

Ocala/Marion County VCB Hosts Inaugural Tourism Annual Meeting

On Dec. 14, the Ocala/Marion County VCB hosted its inaugural Tourism Annual Meeting celebrating the success of tourism in Marion County with community leaders, elected officials, and the hospitality industry. The event recognized the deep-rooted history of tourism in Marion County, provided insights on the current initiatives of the Ocala/Marion County VCB, and shared new projects that will impact tourism in the near future.

At the event, the Ocala/Marion County VCB shared updates on capital projects and recent successes in marketing, public relations, and sales initiatives. In fiscal year 2023, the total economic impact of events served by the sales team was more than \$79 million. In fiscal year 2023, the VCB earned \$19.5 million in media value and a total audience reach of nearly 1.5 billion.

The VCB announced participation in an innovative Florida For All program to receive the Destination Verified Seal from Wheel the World to provide enhanced inclusive and accessible experiences. The annual meeting also provided highlights on the new tourism app called the OcalaMarion Travel Guide, an enhanced destination website experience, new marketing trends among travelers, and more.

The event welcomed more than 200 guests consisting of leaders across the community including Marion County Board of County Commissioners, City of Ocala Council Members, and a variety of representatives of the local hospitality industry such as hoteliers, attractions, state and local parks, restaurants, art leaders, and more.



Community and industry leaders gather to celebrate tourism in Ocala/Marion County at the Hilton Ocala.

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

relationships with decision makers and told tourism's story hundreds of times.

Legislative Session will soon be over. And when it is done, we will still have each other.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you and this industry to benefit our state and the residents who depend on our work for their livelihoods.



TikTok Final Rule

by Steven M. Hogan

We have written before about section 112.22, Florida Statutes, which was passed last year and went into effect on July 1, 2023. The new statute bans "prohibited applications" on government-issued devices. The statute's commonly used name has become synonymous with the TikTok app because of the rhetoric surrounding passage of the law, but it potentially goes beyond TikTok to impact other apps that the Department of Management Services (DMS) deems to be prohibited applications.

The full text of section 112.22 can be viewed here: <https://bit.ly/tiktok-112>

We have been monitoring the process that DMS has been going through to develop a rule to implement section 112.22 and to establish a waiver process for government use of apps that are otherwise prohibited. Prior articles have tracked the proposed language for the DMS rule and the public hearing dates DMS set to collect public comments.

In Dec. 2023, DMS finalized the new rule at section 60GG-2.008, Florida Administrative Code. The full text of the final rule can be viewed here: <https://bit.ly/tiktok-dms-rule>

The final rule states that DMS will create a list of prohibited applications and will periodically publish that list. The list has

not been published as of the date this article is being submitted, but we can expect it will include TikTok at a minimum.

The "meat" of the rule is in the waiver process it proposes for government employers to request to use apps that make it onto the prohibited application list. The final version of the waiver request form can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/tiktok-waivers>

Among other information, the waiver request form requires a government employer to justify the need for use of a prohibited application, list the number of devices to which the waiver will apply, specify the length of time for the waiver (maximum of one year), and describe the risk mitigation efforts that will be undertaken. The form (and the rule) contemplates extension requests for waivers that would last longer than one year.

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.



Steven M. Hogan

Scholarships Planning a Career in Hospitality?

Application Deadline: February 15, 2024



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 Sheraton Sand Key Resort in Clearwater Beach, Florida April 3-5, 2024.**

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/DW24Scholarship>
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

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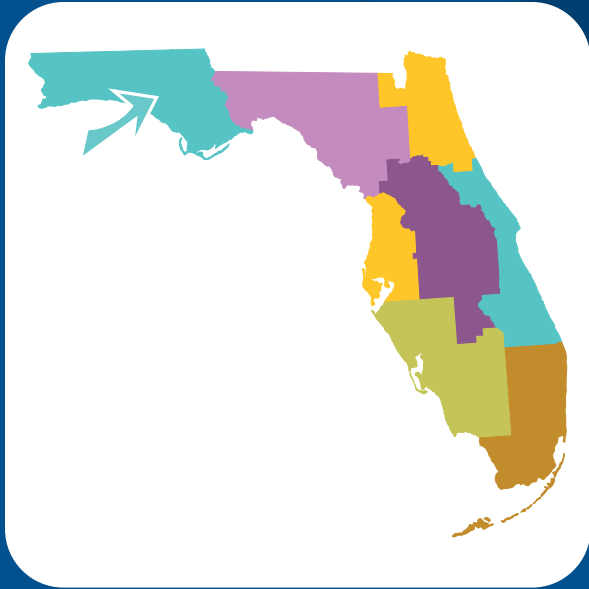
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- Destin-Fort Walton Beach
- Destination Panama City Florida
- Franklin County Tourist Development Council
- Gulf County Tourist Development Council
- Jackson County Tourist Development Council
- Mexico Beach Community Development Council
- Navarre Beach Tourist Development Office
- Visit Panama City Beach
- Visit Pensacola
- Visit Washington County
- Walton County Tourism

Destin Fort-Walton Beach Tourism Partners Get Kids Outside for Adventures

Destin Fort-Walton Beach tourism partners approached 2023 with a shared promise: they get kids outside on the water to give their adventurous side room to grow. To help bring that promise to life, new products were continuously introduced and expanded, inclusive of the introduction of new Little Adventures—bite-sized challenges for families that make it easy to get outside and out of their comfort zones; Little Adventures Classes that bring local businesses to guests that may not have otherwise discovered them; and the formation of a team of local Scouts inclusive of moms sharing their personal recommendations via an online chat and beach scouts sharing their passion for the water at Adventure Outposts.

"I am incredibly proud of the collaboration we've developed between my team here at the tourist development organization and our local businesses," said Director Jennifer Adams. "Since launching, we've reached nearly 3,000 kids, helping families discover not only something unexpected about our destination, but perhaps even themselves."

Whether on the Gulf or bayside, kids encountered scouts and local experts who invited them to sign up for a free, one-hour class, inspiring them to try something new from surfing to fishing to snorkeling.



During one-hour, free classes at Little Adventures outposts, kids have an opportunity to try out and learn something new, like fishing.



The destination's team of scouts help customize Little Adventures for families whether they meet at a mobile outpost or by visiting DestinFWB.com.



The Boat Parade of Lights Returns to Panama City, Florida

After a hiatus of five years following Hurricane Michael, the Panama City Boat Parade of Lights made a triumphant return in Dec. 2023, creating quite a buzz. Teaming up with partners like Destination Panama City, St. Andrews Bay Yacht Club, Hotel Indigo, Harrison's Restaurant, and the City of Panama City, the event once again illuminated St. Andrews Bay for the community to enjoy. More than 40 boats, all decked out in colorful decorations, cruised through the waters, attracting 10,000-plus spectators to the Panama City Marina, St. Andrews Marina, and the shorelines. The event was a massive success, spreading holiday cheer and happiness throughout the city. The twinkling lights and festive ambiance served as a powerful symbol of Panama City's resilience and enduring spirit.

Locals and visitors gathered to witness the spectacle, creating lasting memories anchored by the charm of the community. This sparkling event not only brought joy to the spectators but also highlighted the creativity and festive spirit of the local community. As the boats glided through the bay, the air was filled with laughter and excitement, creating a magical atmosphere that resonated with people of all ages.

The return of the Boat Parade of Lights marked a joyous celebration, proving that Panama City always shines bright! The event's success promises an annual tradition that will continue to bring residents and visitors together in Panama City's vibrant coastal community.



The Panama City Boat Parade of Lights passes under the illuminated Hathaway Bridge.



Santa is always a welcomed guest at the Panama City Boat Parade of Lights!

Gulf County Sees Record-Breaking Growth in 2023

Gulf County achieved extraordinary tourism growth in 2023, setting records that reflect their thriving destination. "The tourism success this past year reflects the professionalism and creativity of our team, solidifying Gulf County's position as a premier destination," said TDC Executive Director Silvia Williams.

Through innovative marketing efforts, Gulf County has been able to captivate audiences with compelling campaigns, showcasing their unique charm and diverse offerings. For example, in 2023, through their Fall Wellness Campaign, they were able to influence and increase fall visitation by highlighting the natural wellness

opportunities available to visitors, focusing on things that make Gulf County different from other wellness travel destinations.

Despite the growth, Gulf County remains committed to protecting and preserving what makes this destination so special while fostering continued growth and showcasing the unique appeal of Gulf County to visitors near and far. "We are steadfast in promoting our destination as a more natural Florida, and our marketing efforts remain focused on attracting loyal visitors and those who care deeply about the environment and are drawn to the outdoors," said Williams.



Gulf County is a special place where families come to relax and reconnect with nature and with one another.



Nature soothes our overwhelmed minds. In Gulf County, visitors can fully immerse themselves in the wellness benefits that are found naturally in this unique destination.



BEST of NORTHWEST FLORIDA!

Jackson County to Begin Convention Center Construction

In an exciting milestone for Jackson County, the first phase of construction for a convention and multi-use center was awarded in Nov. 2023, made possible by a \$1 million appropriation from the State alongside dollars from the Tourist Development Council. This project is breathing new life into Endeavor Park, formerly known as the Dozier School for Boys campus, by renovating the former gymnasium and ensuring the preservation of its historical significance. Construction is slated to take approximately a year and combines modern functionality with a deep commitment to preserving the site's historical reverence.

Following Hurricane Michael's impact in 2018, the State gifted Jackson County the 1,200-acre campus after Dozier's closure



The former Dozier School for Boys gymnasium will house a 650-person capacity convention and multi-use center in Jackson County.

the same year. This project represents a visionary approach to revitalizing the area, ushering in a new era of growth and opportunity. Large-scale development is already underway at Endeavor. NextStep at Endeavor Academy, an adult autism transition academy, held its grand opening in Nov. 2023 after completing its pilot program in 2022. The program has already successfully enrolled more than 100 participants in courses that teach adults with autism necessary life skills to help them live independently.

The momentum doesn't stop here—plans are already in motion to develop two museums: a heritage museum and an African American history museum. Stay tuned as Jackson County paves the way for a future that seamlessly blends history, community, and innovation.



Jackson County opens NextStep at Endeavor Academy, an adult autism transition academy.



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Mexico Beach: The Success of an Unforgettable Comeback

Tourism growth achieved new heights in 2023 for Mexico Beach. After losing 98% of lodging revenue from the devastating impacts from Hurricane Michael, Mexico Beach saw TDT revenues returning to 110% of the pre-Michael levels, in part fueled by the reopening of two hotels and a significant number of vacation rentals properties.

"This growth and success could not have been possible if it was not for the loyal businesses and visitors that love our destination," stated Kimberly Shoaf, tourism director. "We have come a long way since the storm, and we are continuing to push forward, focus on the positive, and showcase how amazing our destination is."



Balcony view of the beach from the El Governor Beach Resort, which reopened in 2023

TDT growth is not the only achievement Mexico Beach has on their list. With the return of the Beach Cam, visitors can see the beaches and begin planning their next trip to the beach. Four different camera positions allow viewers to gain an idea of the current conditions and what they can look forward to. Marketing efforts have also increased, allowing the destination to reach new visitors as well as retarget previous visitors. In part to a new campaign and a website refresh, Mexico Beach is continuing to forge a destination that is truly unforgettable.



Behind the scenes photoshoot for the new storytelling campaign

Navarre Beach TDO Reports Continued Growth and Partnership Initiatives in 2023

Navarre Beach experienced continued growth in 2023, witnessing 1.43 million visitors throughout the year. Impressively, over 88% of these visitors hailed from out-of-state markets. Here's a quick snapshot of the successes achieved by the Navarre Beach TDO:

Navarre Beach Tourism by the Numbers

- Tax collection increased 4.4% compared to the 2022 fiscal year
- More than 231,000 website visits to the Navarre Beach web page
- 63% of visitors spend more than three days in the destination
- 53% of visitors are 25-54 years old



At 1,545 feet long, the Navarre Beach Fishing Pier is the longest of its kind in the state. It is the 15th longest public pier of any kind in the United States.

Photo: Aerial Solutions

These remarkable statistics directly correlate with the effective marketing campaigns and experiences curated by the Tourist Development Office in the past year. Ranging from innovative, immersive activations in Houston to impactful community outreach initiatives like the successful introduction of the Partner Program, the office has adeptly responded to consumer needs. This approach has significantly boosted interest and engagement with the destination across crucial feeder markets.

With Navarre Beach flourishing more than ever, the Navarre Beach TDO anticipates a continued surge in visitors and sustained growth throughout 2024.



Arcadia Mill in Milton, Florida, is an archaeology and nature area with interpretive trails amid remains of 19th century mill structures.



BEST of NORTHWEST FLORIDA!

Publix Sports Park Awarded National Complex of the Year by USSSA

Panama City Beach's Publix Sports Park was recently named the National Complex of the Year for 2023 by the United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA). Founded in 1968, USSSA has approximately 3.5 million participants competing in 13 nationally sanctioned sports in more than 1,000 parks across the country. Publix Sports Park was selected over many renowned complexes through voting done by sports heads, the USSSA executive team, and the CEO.

"We are honored to have Publix Sports Park receive this esteemed designation as National Complex of the Year by USSSA," said Visit Panama City Beach President & CEO Dan

Rowe. "Publix Sports Park has had a tremendous impact on the Panama City Beach community, and this national recognition is a testament to the invaluable efforts of our sports tourism team and the staff at Publix Sports Park for their dedication to providing a world-class facility for all visitors."

The premier complex hosts soccer, lacrosse, rugby, football, baseball, softball, and other youth, elite amateur, and college sporting events. Publix Sports Park is home to several USSSA events, including the Panama City Beach USA Global World Series, which attracts 150 teams and 7,000 visitors annually.



Publix Sports Park is a state-of-the-art recreation facility that offers the ultimate venue for sports enthusiasts in Panama City Beach.



Publix Sports Park's offerings include 13 multipurpose fields, two championship fields, and more than 1,000 parking spots.

Visit Pensacola Continues to Shine as The Way to Beach™

Pensacola, Florida is the ultimate Way to Beach™ as the long-beloved destination continues to see a significant boom in tourism and residential growth. Emerging as one of the country's undiscovered treasures, Pensacola was named number eight on Conde Nast Traveler's Top 10 Best Small Cities in 2023, Pensacola International Airport secured the ninth spot in *USA Today's* 10Best Readers' Choice Awards for Best Small Airport, and Pensacola and Perdido Key's nearly 40 miles of white sand beaches remain at the top of nationwide favorites.

Visit Pensacola continues to grow in ways to connect visitors and locals alike to information and destination offerings, including a

new and improved mobile app, interactive digital kiosks, and new display boards in the Visitor Information Centers.

"It's an exciting time to be in Pensacola as these accolades and additions are a product of the hard work and dedication of so many in the community," President & CEO Darien Schaefer said. "These all confirm that Pensacola is The Way to Beach™, leading not only in its natural offerings, but in how we do business as a destination marketing organization, in the partnerships we've built with stakeholders and local business owners, and the development of the destination's products from arts, culture, events, culinary options, and more from our hardworking partners."



Downtown Pensacola's Palafox Street serves as the hub for the historic 460-year-old destination. Pensacola is the only destination in Northwest Florida to boast a historic, walkable downtown complete with local restaurants, shops, and nightlife.



The sugar-white sand beaches of Pensacola and Perdido Key are some of the most pristine in the country featuring sand that is 100% pure white quartz washed down from the Appalachian Mountains. The destination has nearly 40 miles of public beach access that is friendly to all.



New Tourism Website Is One-Stop Hub for Visitors and Community in Walton County

Walton County Tourism's new website provides an insider's look at much of what it takes to keep everything running smoothly when it comes to the county's number one economic driver.

Launched in October 2023, *WaltonCountyFLTourism.com* serves as a one-stop hub, sharing many of the services and resources that help shape the local brand identity. It provides insight on all the diverse efforts of the county's tourism department, including ongoing programs and beach maintenance projects.

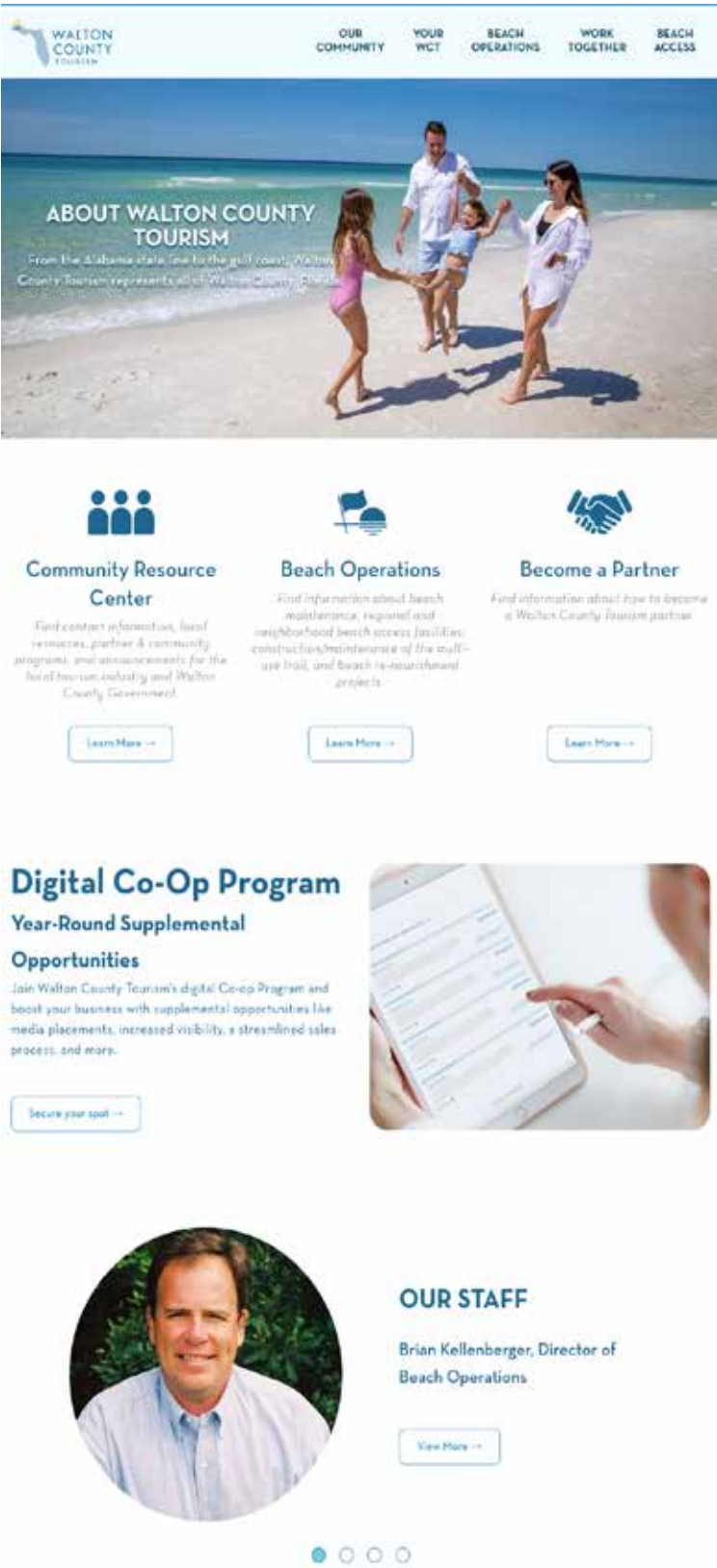
The new website also plays a bigger role strategically. It acts as a cohesive presence to promote not only the destination organization, but also the highly recognized South Walton brand and Authentic Walton (previously Beyond the Beach) in north Walton, both having significant differences in their primary audiences and purposes.

"This website gives us the opportunity to speak about both brands, and to talk about the whole county and marry them all together," said Kelli Carter, director of marketing for Walton County Tourism.

While this user-friendly new site creates an appreciation for the uniqueness of Walton County and the impacts tourism has on their communities, it also offers partners and locals ways of promoting themselves to the collective target visitor audience.



PARADISE
PARADISEADV.COM



WaltonCountyFLTourism.com is Walton County's new one-stop hub for visitors and the community

SUNSHINE THROUGH STORM CLOUDS: ATTRACTING VISITORS TO YOUR COMMUNITY WHILE NAVIGATING NEGATIVE PUBLICITY



COMPILED FROM RESOURCES
AND COMMENTS SHARED AT THE
DESTINATIONS FLORIDA ANNUAL
MEETING OCTOBER 12, 2024

Contributors



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Visit Tampa Bay



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INTRODUCTION

In today's 24-hour news media landscape, Florida's destinations sometimes face unexpected narratives, questions from media, and concerned inquiries by travel partners. It is important to embrace strategies for handling negative publicity, respond gracefully to upset individuals, and address concerns raised by event promoters. This article helps DMO directors prepare for success, train their teams to deliver effective messaging, and keep the tourism industry focused on attracting customers, so that the sun shines on your destination's brand.

SUMMARY POINTS



Biased media coverage has caused damage to the Florida brand.



Clear and unbiased communication is the best way to address concerns and questions.



DMO leaders must correct misconceptions, speak truth and emphasize the positive.



Tools like toolkits, webinars, and talking points help with consistent messaging.



Building relationships is the goal, whether with the media, stakeholders, or the local community.



The influence of social media can't be ignored, strategies should be put in place to counter negative sentiments.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The Florida brand has recently faced challenges due to negative media and state coverage, that isn't always factual. The media today can sometimes be either emotion filled or opinion filled, leaving DMO leaders to clarify and correct misconceptions.

DMO leaders need to ensure clear understanding, especially among event planners and conventioners, since they have membership that can influence decisions about visiting the state. Therefore, being clear, kind, and avoiding personal biases is key. The goal is to genuinely understand the concerns and anxieties some groups or travelers might have due to how certain legislation is presented in the media.

It is up to each DMO leader to tell their story, especially since many people don't get past the headline.. While not all DMOs have the same opportunities or issues, there is common ground and where possible, organizations should try to align their messaging.

Internally, it's essential for team members to feel confident in asking questions and understand the organization's stance. Externally, it's all about relationships, especially with communities most affected by new legislation. Aligning with their messaging supports everyone's messaging that much more.

Visit Tampa Bay emphasizes staff education. It ensures their team knows what the budget is, how it is being spent, and how the organization attracts business. Meanwhile, meeting with other organizations, communicating concerns, clarifying the organization's mission, and ensuring they grasp what it is they do all help. Their motto is, always "relational not transactional."

Cultivating a positive relationship with the press, and making sure that they understand what you do, how you do it, and why you do it, also allows a certain amount of humanity.

Cultivating a positive relationship with the press, and making sure that they understand what you do, how you do it, and why you do it, also allows a certain amount of humanity. This reduces the likelihood of sensationalized stories.

To guide stories and foster media relationships, Visit Orlando uses proactive pitches, either as videos and/or written statements along with providing b-roll or images. Being responsive and respecting deadlines with the timeliness of responses, despite knowing you may never agree on all aspects of an issue, and staying focused on giving the facts is imperative.

Sharing press releases, newsletters, and extending invitations to industry events are additional ways to enhance media relations and maintain ongoing communication with the press. Highlight accomplishments, difficult situations, and always remain accessible because when you aren't they'll write the story for you.



REACHING OUT TO MEETING PLANNERS

Communicating your community's message to meeting planners that are scattered throughout the country, especially when they aren't fully aware of what's happening on the ground is something every DMO contends with. This is especially important now, as members may be hesitant or against booking events in Florida.

Both Visit Orlando and Visit Tampa Bay have developed toolkits for meeting planners, organizers, and also for their sales team and stakeholders. Visit Orlando's features a video message from the mayor, the sheriff, people across the community, fact sheets, and storytelling that all communicates the facts about Orlando as a welcoming and inclusive destination, under the umbrella — Orlando for all. They also rely on individual meetings, reaching out to see how the organization can help and whether they have questions, often hosting multiple conference calls per week to ensure clients are informed.

Ultimately, it all goes back to relationships. Each customer has a different set of concerns that range from medical treatments to safety and bathroom use, so being very direct with facts is the best way to communicate and minimize negative economic impact.

It's about being proactive. It's reaching out because you have a relationship to the event planner or to the organization, and asking, what is your membership saying? Because at the end of the day, everything a DMO does is to generate economic benefit for their local community. And so, even having answers to immigration policies and what's happening in your own destination related to legislation is critically important. Communication, relationships, education, being proactive, and mitigating before you have an issue are all key. As Santiago Corrada always says, "Be a friend before you need a friend."

MANAGING SCRUTINY FROM LOCAL LEADERS

Visit Orlando's impressive TDT collections have drawn both attention and scrutiny. Local elected officials worried about the state tapping into TDT from a county perspective, while county commissioners looked to evaluate the organization's overall structure, to be able to fund other community projects.

Similarly, Visit Tampa Bay faced a potential challenge when their commission flipped politically. As is often the case, newly elected officials often lack understanding of state statutes, contracts, or agreements

an organization has with the county and city government, requiring educating and handholding.

Despite the situation, the important thing to do is to always be civil, even when there's no common ground. Remaining factual, unemotional, and relying on common sense go a long way. For Visit Tampa Bay, the decades it spent developing relationships and educating the community made it possible to quickly align and educate new commissioners for the betterment of all involved.



EMPOWERING TEAMS WITH CONSISTENT MESSAGING

Bringing everyone up to speed on toolkits and other resources available to them to answer questions at the convention sales level is key.

Utilizing webinars, Q&A sessions, signature events, updated member portals, and providing talking points makes it easier to empower others with the correct messaging. Sometimes, Casandra Matej admits, it can seem like a full campaign, but it's the only way to communicate on an ongoing basis and provide the necessary tools.

Visit Tampa Bay utilizes podcasts, email blasts, regular networking events and quarterly success meetings where all partners and stakeholders are invited to attend. Supported by internal and external advocacy videos, these events all center around messaging, the brand, working together, and making tourism a point of pride for the entire community.

No matter what, it is important to allow people to be heard and ask questions, while always remaining focused on the mission of the organization.

COPING WITH CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

Talking points are a great way to ensure that DMO teams are prepared for any situation, while maintaining positive internal and external relationships, and exercising good communication all help mitigate difficult situations. However, it's also about being able to have fun. Having an organizational culture where people feel secure, comfortable, appreciated, and that they're a part of the decision making that goes on is important.

INCLUSIVE TARGET MARKETING

Inclusivity is huge. However, it isn't limited to gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. Messaging should also consider other factors like age and culture, among others, to reach more people.



BEST PRACTICES FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Being supportive and attending events outside of one's organization helps build relationships and create awareness. Often, doing so helps identify common ground, create synergy, and incentivize organizations to strengthen those relationships.

Making other industries understand that you work for them also helps, and when issues arise, you have an ally.

TAPPING INTO THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA

It's no secret that social media can help build you up or tear you down. So, when influencers put out hateful things about the organization, it's important to counter it with positive messages. Santiago Corrada says, for every bad review or hateful comment, get ten influencers to post positive things. Developing an army of social media influencers who can truly speak about a destination to a specific population is huge.

Using op-eds is another way to be proactive. Being the expert voice and tapping into others' support can help turn negative opinions into positive ones. Having others, especially community leaders tell your story, through op-eds, posts, or even one-on-ones generates momentum.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



Prioritize Transparent

Communication - Always address media stories directly and factually, without letting personal biases or emotion creep in.



Embrace Social Media - Develop a network of positive influencers to counterbalance negative posts, and to positively represent the destination.



Empower Teams with Resources

- Equip staff with comprehensive toolkits, webinars, and talking points to ensure consistent messaging.



Engage in Community Building -

Attend external events, find common ground, and foster relationships with both allies and potential critics.



Strengthen Media Relationships -

Proactively engage with the media, ensuring they understand your mission and message.



Be Proactive - Continuously educate both internal teams and external stakeholders about the organization's objectives, recent legislation impacts, and industry benefits.



Champion Inclusivity -

When crafting messaging and campaigns, ensure all demographic groups feel seen and represented.



Celebrate Organizational Culture -

Create an environment where teams feel valued, involved in decision-making, and motivated to uphold the organization's reputation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Destinations Florida - Florida Welcomes You brochure <https://bit.ly/47fldLD>



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

DESTINATIONS FLORIDA
**Destination
Marketing Summit
April 3-5, 2024**

Sheraton Sand Key Resort
Clearwater Beach, 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.



SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Board of Directors Meeting and Working Lunch
2:00 PM – 2:45 PM	Innovative Product Development: What's Good for the Local Is Good for the Visitor
2:45 PM – 3:30 PM	How to Build an Award-Winning EcoTourism Program From Scratch
3:45 PM – 5:30 PM	Destination Marketing State of the State Report
5:30 PM – 6:30 PM	Welcome Reception at Sheraton Sand Key Resort
6:30 PM	Dinner on own

Thursday, April 4, 2024

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Networking Breakfast	
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	How to Showcase the Value of Tourism to Your Local Community	The 12 Laws of AI: A Practical Guide to AI for DMOs
10:00 AM – 10:45 AM	Big, Bold Heart Meets Cold, Hard Cash	Florida Reimagined: International Travelers' Shifting Perceptions in the Post-Pandemic Era
11:00 AM – 11:45 AM	An Inside Peek Into the Social Media Strategies That Won Top Social Media Marketer in U.S. Award by PR Daily	Unpacking the Travel Trends That Drive Demand
11:45 AM – 1:00 PM	Networking Luncheon	
1:00 PM – 1:45 PM	How to Develop a Customized Tourism Plan	Florida's Competition – How Other Destinations Turn Insights to Outcomes to Steal Your Visitors
2:00 PM – 2:45 PM	How to Increase the Impact of Marketing With Data	Revolutionizing Audience Engagement: Fresh Approaches to Data Collection in the Era of Privacy
3:00 PM – 3:45 PM	Straight Truth, No BS Tactics to Keep Your Brand Healthy and Relevant to Drive Your Sales, Marketing, and Tourism Economy Forward	Turn AI Into ROI
5:00 PM – 8:30 PM	Connect Evening Event	Sponsored by Connect

Friday, April 5, 2024

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Networking Breakfast	
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	Legislative Update With Mat Forrest	
9:45 AM – 10:30 AM	U.S. & Florida Hospitality Update: Trends & Forecasts	
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM	VISIT FLORIDA Marketing Update & "The Big Co-op Reveal"	VISIT FLORIDA
12:00 Noon	Adjourn	

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

Sheraton Sand Key Resort

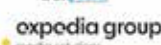
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The Sheraton Sand Key Resort is offering a special rate for Destinations Florida meeting participants of \$299 per night. Please call (727) 595-1611 and reference the Destinations Florida group rate. Reservations must be made by Monday, March 4, 2024. Be sure to make your reservation as soon as possible because the room block will sell out.



Sheraton Sand Key Resort
1160 Gulf Blvd
Clearwater Beach, FL 33767
(727) 595-1611

Register Now at: DestinationsFlorida.org



The Florida Keys Showcases Tiny Home, Key Lime Pie in Canada

The Florida Keys & Key West hosted a promotion to boost destination awareness prior to winter months in Canada, with a "tiny home" and Keys imagery at high-traffic Yonge and Dundas Square in Toronto and at City Hall Forecourt in Hamilton. Samples of authentic Key lime pie and recipe cards were given to hundreds of curious Canadians, who also entered a contest for Keys prizes. Keys display advertising for Yonge and Dundas Square was also secured. Fla-Keys.com



The Florida Keys & Key West launches a "tiny home" promotion with Key lime pie and branded prizes for consumers in Canada's Toronto and Hamilton to promote Keys winter vacations.
Photo: Ashley Serrate

Daytona Beach Celebrates Holiday Season With Magic of Lights

Daytona International Speedway shifted gears once again during the holiday season, transforming from a high-speed motorsports facility to a drive-through holiday-themed spectacular featuring dozens of displays, festive favorites, and digital animation, all constructed with millions of individual LED lights. Inside the comfort of their own vehicles, guests enjoyed Magic of Lights' classic holiday favorites including Winter Wonderland, the 12 Days of Christmas, Toyland, festive Elves, Reindeer Road, and the 200-foot-long Enchanting Tunnel of Lights. DaytonaBeach.com



Daytona International Speedway hosts the Magic of Lights holiday lights spectacular for the seventh year.

Martin County Tourism Wins Top Content Marketing Award

The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing was recently honored in the 2023 Content Marketing Awards. The team won the top prize in the Travel, Hospitality, and Tourism category for their successful Mood for Martin campaign (MoodforMartin.com). Each year, the Content Marketing Awards are organized by PR Daily. Discover Martin was in fabulous company, and other winners this year included Pfizer, Penn State University, Walgreens, e.l.f. Cosmetics, and more! DiscoverMartin.com



The Mood for Martin campaign leverages ethereal aesthetics and allows potential visitors to build curated itineraries based on their mood.

Jackson County Acquires Historic Property, Plans Events Venue and Garden

In June 2023, Jackson County acquired the Great Oaks property for \$20,000. This was made possible through the Great Oaks Historical Society, which had been the caretakers of the 12 acres of live oaks and an 1861 antebellum home. In fall 2023, TDC officials conducted community workshops for local citizens to weigh in on the property's future, helping shape its vision to become a wedding and events venue. Partnerships with the local Master Gardeners will convert the remainder of the property into an outdoor garden complete with walking trails. VisitJacksonCountyFla.com



The 12-acre Great Oaks property in Jackson County will become a wedding and events venue with an outdoor garden and walking trails.



Anticipation Is Building for Black History Month Celebrations in St. Augustine, the Oldest City in the U.S.

The iconic Fort Mose State Park, the first free Black Settlement in North America, will have a groundbreaking in late January to build a replica of this fort, followed by the electrifying Fort Mose Jazz & Blues Series in February. Residents and visitors alike will engage in a vibrant tapestry of events honoring African American heritage and the area's rich cultural mosaic. FloridasHistoricCoast.com



The replica construction of Fort Mose is set to take place in winter 2024 at Fort Mose Historic State Park in St. Augustine.

Discover Crystal River Showcases Destination at WTM London

In November, Sales & Marketing Manager Terry Natwick traveled to London to represent Discover Crystal River Florida at World Travel Market. The trade show is a great way to build brand awareness in thriving and up-and-coming international markets. Natwick proudly showed off the unique activities, beautiful scenery, and authentic experiences visitors can enjoy in Citrus County, and it was wonderful that WTM London had 43,727 attendees this year—an increase of more than 20% from 2022. DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com



Terry Natwick of Discover Crystal River Florida (center) is joined by WTM London attendees.

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Space Coast Sports Commission Wins Destination Marketing Award

The Space Coast Sports Commission was one of Playeasy's 2023 Destination Marketing Award recipients. Playeasy is a sports tourism platform that connects sporting event organizers, destinations, facilities, and events. Sports Commissioner Terry Parks attended the 2023 National Fastpitch Coaches Association Convention to get the word out about available Spring Training facilities. He also met with Chenita Edwards, organizer of the HBCU (Historically Black Colleges & Universities) Softball Invitational, to discuss future events. [VisitSpaceCoast.com](https://www.visitSpaceCoast.com)



Runners compete during the Cocoa Beach Half Marathon.

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Opens New 785-Room Luxury Resort

Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor, a new luxury waterfront resort, opened and welcomed their first guests on Dec. 15 in Southwest Florida. Guests can enjoy 785 coastal-inspired guest rooms including 189 luxury "Sunsuites," 60,000 sq. ft. of meeting space with two waterfront ballrooms, and 20 world-class food and beverage concepts from casual eats on the water to elegant fine dining. Plus, guests can relax at two unique pool experiences, a ground-level oasis and the largest rooftop experience in Florida, or at the championship level golf course. [PureFlorida.com](https://www.pureflorida.com)



Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor appeals to anyone who would like to seek adventure, luxury, and a savory food and beverage experience.

Florida's First Coast of Golf Engages Golf Travelers, Football Fans

Florida's First Coast of Golf wrapped its annual Football Golf Giveaway Campaign. This enter-to-win social media campaign engaged out-of-market golf travelers who are also fans of the away football team playing in Jacksonville. Through enticing stay-play-watch giveaways, the six-month campaign captured 20,000 email leads and reached 3 million impressions all while sparking enthusiasm for travel to the captivating golf destination of Florida's First Coast of Golf. [Florida-Golf.org](https://www.florida-golf.org)



Amelia Island Festival Generates Close to \$6M in Economic Impact

The Amelia Island CVB and TDC's 9th annual Dickens on Centre Victorian Christmas Festival (Dec. 7-10) generated a total economic impact of more than \$5.9 million from off-island visitors. The holiday event featuring 100+ vendors and 75+ entertainment acts attracted more than 74,000, making it the best Dickens yet. The Enchanted Village (450+ people) and Dickens After Dark (164 tickets) sold out before the end of November, and 204 beach runners participated in Run Like the Dickens! [Amelialand.com](https://www.amelialand.com)



A 3D drone show draws thousands of eyes to the sky during Dickens on Centre. Photo: Deremer Studios LLC



Visit Panama City Beach Ball Drop Is #1

Visit Panama City Beach's New Year's Eve Beach Ball Drop has been awarded the No. 1 spot within USA TODAY's 10Best Readers' Choice Awards in the Best New Year's Eve Drop category. Presented by Coca-Cola, the unique annual event welcomes thousands of visitors to ring in the New Year, "Real. Fun. Beach." style—with two countdowns, fireworks, live music, and 10,000 inflatable beach balls raining down from the sky over the streets of Pier Park. VisitPanamaCityBeach.com



Beach balls rain down over the streets of Pier Park during Visit Panama City Beach's New Year's Eve Beach Ball Drop.

UK's Jimmy's Taste of Florida TV Show Visits Central Florida

Visit Central Florida hosted the UK network TV series *Jimmy's Taste of Florida* in November. Shooting took place with host Jimmy Doherty at Peebles Barbecue in Auburndale and Westgate River Ranch Resort in Lake Wales. In advising on these locations, VCF's objective was to showcase the community and its longstanding agricultural heritage. The show will air on the ITV network in the UK in February or March and has a potential audience of 9 million. VisitCentralFlorida.org



Jimmy's Taste of Florida host, chef and celebrity farmer Jimmy Doherty, visits Westgate River Ranch during his trip to Central Florida, highlighting the county's barbecue culture and culinary initiative.

Walton County Tourism Reveals New Brand

Walton County Tourism is excited to unveil the new brand for Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay—Authentic Walton. The project followed a multistep branding process involving stakeholder research, ideation, trademark search, and adoption. The findings of the brand positioning study directly informed the strategic direction for the brand. Authentic Walton makes the area unique—traditional values, welcoming sense of community, genuine, and true to its roots. WaltonCountyFLTourism.com



Walton County Tourism staff members join with Walton County commissioners during the brand reveal at the Best Western Crossroads Inn in DeFuniak Springs. Pictured are Nicole Everett, Kory Rogers, Lisa Bulriss, Kelli Carter, District 2 Commissioner Danny Glidewell, Lisa Foster, District Commissioner William "Boots" McCormick, Ashlyn Temples, Matt Algarin, Summer Padgett, and Darrelesha Kelly.

Visit Sebring Promotes Holiday Travel for Families

To promote awareness about the Sebring area's holiday activities for families, Visit Sebring hosted one influencer and one travel writer on individual press trips during the holiday break. Thanks to the hospitality of Inn on the Lakes, both guests brought their families and experienced Sebring's Carousel of Lights, the historic Jacaranda Hotel, lake/water activities, Sebring International Raceway, Highlands Hammock State Park, Maxwell Groves, three charming downtowns, and several local eateries. VisitSebring.com



Visitors explore Sebring's Carousel of Lights in historic downtown's Circle Park.



Lee VCB Unveils 2024 Digital Visitor Guide

The Lee VCB's new 2024 Digital Visitor Guide is now available. This digital-only approach features more engaging content, inspiring visitors with beautiful imagery, captivating video, and peaceful sounds from Fort Myers' Islands, Beaches & Neighborhoods. With direct links throughout, the Visitor Guide provides specific information visitors seek and helps guide them in their planning journey. The guide is available at tinyurl.com/VisitorGuide2024. *VisitFortMyers.com*



Check out the Visitor Guide at tinyurl.com/VisitorGuide2024.

Gulf County TDC Celebrates Successful Welcome Back Reception for Winter Visitors

The Gulf County Welcome Center played host to more than 100 visitors along with local businesses and numerous local nonprofit organizations, creating an atmosphere of camaraderie and community spirit. Visitors were able to connect with local nonprofits, allowing them to discover the various community projects and voluntourism opportunities available. "We are thrilled with the event's success. The TDC is committed to cultivating meaningful connections between visitors and locals, and having our local nonprofits participate was a great way to foster that initiative," said TDC Executive Director Silvia Williams. *VisitGulf.com*



An excited group of winter visitors enjoy the 2024 Welcome Back Reception at the Gulf County Welcome Center.

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Tampa Bay Tourism Soars to Its Best Year Ever

Visit Tampa Bay's proven ability to build strong relationships with valued partners and meeting professionals means Tampa Bay's tourism numbers continued to climb, leading to its best fiscal year ever with nearly \$1.1 billion in taxable hotel revenue. With more than 26.7 million visitors in 2023, hotel revenue grew by 10% over the last year. Tampa Bay was also recognized as a leader in hospitality recovery, achieving the #1 spot amongst the 25 U.S. markets in the most recent Hospitality Group and Business Performance Index from Knowland and Amadeus. [VisitTampaBay.com](https://www.visittampabay.com)



Hillsborough County exceeds \$1 billion in hotel revenue for the second consecutive year.

Green Cove Springs Welcomes ACL's Great Rivers of Florida Guests

Green Cove Springs now serves as a port for American Cruise Lines' Great Rivers of Florida sailings with select dates in 2024 and 2025. The roundtrip six-day, seven-night sailing on the *American Star* ship sails from Jacksonville with additional ports in Northeast Florida. Green Cove Springs is welcoming guests to visit local establishments like Spring Park and the many businesses and restaurants throughout the downtown area, including popular Walnut Street. [ExploreClay.com](https://www.exploreclay.com)



The *American Star* in port along the St. Johns River in Clay County's Green Cove Springs

Visit Sarasota County Hosts UK FAM

Visit Sarasota County is proud to be Florida's Cultural Coast and is thrilled that the Sarasota Ballet will be performing at The Royal Ballet in London in the summer. To garner some excitement across the pond, VSC hosted a FAM trip of media from the UK. The group attended performances, took tours of venues, and got to sit down with several artistic directors. [VisitSarasota.com](https://www.VisitSarasota.com)



Sarasota Ballet director Iain Webb (right) poses with Graham Watts after pulling one of Watts' books from his library of ballet books.

Discover Lake County Sponsors High School Basketball Showcase

Discover Lake County sponsored the 2023 ESPN High School Basketball Showcase resulting in 166,000 national live viewers across ESPN and ESPN2. The Showcase amassed more than 2.2 million impressions on the SportsCenter Next and League Ready social platforms. Fifteen of the top 100 high school basketball players in the nation played in games, which included Prolific Prep (California) versus Columbus High (Florida) and Montverde Academy (Lake County, Florida) versus Columbus High (Florida). [VisitLakeFL.com](https://www.VisitLakeFL.com)



The Montverde Academy basketball team, Lake County, Florida



Visit St. Pete/Clearwater Hosts WWE Royal Rumble

Visit St. Pete/Clearwater was ready to rumble to start the year as the destination played host to the WWE Royal Rumble event on Jan. 27. It was VSPC's first time hosting the prestigious wrestling event with fans present, with tickets purchased by fans from all 50 states as well as 15 countries. VSPC joined the Tampa Bay Rays, the City of St. Petersburg, and the Tampa Bay Sports Commission to create an entire weekend of events across St. Petersburg and Clearwater along with Tampa, which hosted Monday Night Raw. [VisitStPeteClearwater.com](https://www.visitstpetclearwater.com)



WWE Superstars Big E (left) and Zelina Vega (right) stop by the St. Pete Pier to ask people what St. Pete hot spots they should visit while in town for the 2024 Royal Rumble. Check out all the fun content on the Visit St. Pete/Clearwater social media handles.

Alachua County First U.S. Destination Selected to Host World Masters Indoor Track & Field Championships

World Masters Athletics, the international governing body for track & field, cross country, road race, and racewalk for athletes 35+, has announced that Alachua County will host the 2025 WMA Indoor Championships (WMAI25). The state-of-the-art indoor track facility at the Alachua County Sports and Events Center at Celebration Pointe was a catalyst in landing the championship and made possible through a public-private partnership between Alachua County and Celebration Pointe Developer, Viking Companies, LLC, with additional support from the State of Florida. [VisitGainesville.com](https://www.visitgainesville.com)



Track athletes compete on the Jimmy Carnes track at the Alachua County Sports and Events Center at Celebration Pointe. The track will be at the center of the 2025 World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships.

The Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens Illuminate the Holidays in Orlando North, Seminole County

Central Florida Zoo's Asian Lantern Festival: Into the Wild returned for its fourth year in Orlando North, Seminole County. The lantern festival showcases vibrant hand-painted lanterns by Chinese artists and are illuminated by thousands of LED lights. This event is one of the most anticipated events of the season, drawing more than 93,000 visitors in 2022 and surpassing those numbers for the 2023-24 season. [DoOrlandoNorth.com](https://www.doOrlandoNorth.com)



Guests enjoy the Asian Lantern Festival in Orlando North, Seminole County.

2023 Florida Senior Games Returns to Florida's Sports Coast

The 2023 Florida Senior Games recently concluded its nine-day event at various venues in Florida's Sports Coast. The games featured more than 2,000 athletes aged 50 and over participating in various sports. Notable achievements include impressive free throw success rates in basketball, extensive cycling distances, accurate archery performances, and a substantial number of points scored in basketball games. The event also highlighted the record-breaking feats of senior athletes in field events and featured a record number of athletes during the opening weekend of competition. [FLSportsCoast.com](https://www.flsportscoast.com)



The Florida Senior Games will return to Pasco County in Dec. 2024 for the final qualifier event prior to the 2025 National Senior Games, which will draw senior athletes from across the U.S. to Florida's Sports Coast.



Visit Orlando's Magical Dining Raises \$269,272 for Orange County Charities

Visit Orlando donated \$269,272 to Orange County charities that support survivors of abuse in Central Florida. The donation was raised through Visit Orlando's Magical Dining, which showcases some of Orlando's best restaurants, with \$1 to \$2 from each meal designated for charity. Since 2009, Visit Orlando's Magical Dining has raised over \$2.5 million for local charities. The majority of this year's donation will benefit The Lifeboat Project, a local organization that raises awareness of the issue of human trafficking and empowers the lives of survivors. VisitOrlando.com



Visit Orlando President & CEO Casandra Matej and Visit Orlando Board Chair Terry Prather present Visit Orlando's Magical Dining check to The Lifeboat Project.

Celebrating Miami Arts, Culture & Heritage Months

In December and January, the Greater Miami CVB celebrates Miami Arts, Culture & Heritage Months, showcasing the destination's diversity and rich fusion of cultures and traditions. From Art Basel Miami Beach and the Wynwood Arts District to Opa-locka's rich history, Art of Black Miami, and a burgeoning culinary scene—visitors and locals alike enjoy special deals and BOGO offers at participating galleries, exhibitions, museums, live performances, culinary tours, and special events. MiamiAndBeaches.com



Miami Arts & Culture showcased in Wynwood

The Palm Beaches Focuses on Destination Transformation at the State of the Tourism Industry Event

Discover The Palm Beaches held a special State of the Tourism Industry event on Dec. 8 at the Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts for tourism partners and community stakeholders. The event's theme was "Aspire. Transform. Collaborate." highlighting the evolution of the tourism industry through new technologies and the long-term transformation and sustainability of the destination. The agency discussed key initiatives including new artificial intelligence and forecasting tools, the fundamental role of the tourism master plan and second convention center hotel, as well as its 2024 marketing campaign. ThePalmBeaches.com



Discover The Palm Beaches team gathers at the State of the Tourism Industry event.

Okaloosa County Acquires Building to Repurpose as Tourism Hub

On Nov. 21, Okaloosa County approved the \$2 million purchase of BeachBank in Crestview, with the intention of repurposing the site as a tourism hub. This summer, visitors can interact with local experts to get a feel for the experiences that are in store for their families. This will also allow individuals and families to ask questions and utilize interactive visitor displays to learn more about the Little Adventures that exist both on and beyond the beach. DestinFWB.com



Okaloosa County BeachBank building in Crestview
Photo: Jared Williams/Taylor Allen Properties LLC



Marion County Line Pillars Light Up in Marion County

Brand-new Marion County entry pillars were erected this past month on I-75 on both the north and south travel directions. Each pillar is 21 feet tall and 7.5 feet wide. The north pillar is near McIntosh, facing southbound traffic as drivers enter Marion County. The south pillar is south of Belleview facing northbound traffic. The pillars are part of a larger Gateway Signage Project that will also include future south and north bridge overpass gateways on Interstate 75. OcalaMarion.com



North Marion County line pillar facing southbound traffic

Naples, Marco Island, and the Everglades Featured in *The Boston Globe's* Sunday Travel Section

The Northeast is an important market for the destination, especially once the winter weather sets in. What a great way to ring in the new year—with a placement in *The Boston Globe's* Sunday Travel section (<https://bit.ly/3NNdjm6>). The online version ran Jan. 28, and the print version hit newsstands on Jan. 31, generating unique visitors per month of 4,018,905 and circulation of 408,974, respectively. The Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB hosted the journalist in the destination earlier in the year knowing that travelers are seeking unique and authentic experiences, which is exactly what the Everglades delivers. ParadiseCoast.com

The Boston Globe

TRAVEL

Alligators and crabs in paradise

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright | Globe Correspondent. Updated December 28, 2023, 10:00 a.m.



The sunsets are sublime on the beaches of Marco Island, part of Florida's Paradise Coast. PAMELA WRIGHT/GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Florida's Paradise Coast is featured in *The Boston Globe*.
Photo: Pamela Wright

Visit Tampa Bay Promotes Adam DePiro to Chief Sales Officer

Visit Tampa Bay is pleased to announce the promotion of Adam DePiro to chief sales officer. As a veteran sales and hospitality professional, DePiro has been instrumental in shaping the strategic direction, policies, and goals of the convention and meetings team, which includes a record-setting performance in 2023. Coming off of Visit Tampa Bay's best summer of conventions to date and the DMO's best fiscal year ever, with \$1.1 billion in taxable revenue, DePiro was part of the team that launched the \$1M+ campaign targeting meeting professionals and associations across the U.S. VisitTampaBay.com



Adam DePiro

Josh Harrison Joins Visit Jacksonville as COO

In December, Visit Jacksonville welcomed Josh Harrison as the new chief operating officer. Harrison is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the organization as well as providing oversight for the Convention Sales and Destination Experience teams. Most recently, he was the president of Murphco of Florida, a hospitality development and management company with hotel properties throughout Florida. Prior to that, he worked in banking. Harrison was also a member of the Visit Jacksonville Board of Directors. VisitJacksonville.com



Josh Harrison

Experience Kissimmee's Accessibility Champion Recognized Among the Top 24 to Watch in 2024

Experience Kissimmee's senior vice president of operations, Jason Holic, emerged as a trailblazer of inclusive travel in Travelability's 24 Accessibility Champions to Watch in 2024. From orchestrating the launch of an accessible travel landing page and collaborating with content creators in 2023 to a strategic partnership with Wheel the World in 2024, Holic's leadership is steering Experience Kissimmee toward a more inclusive future, making him a notable figure among the champions driving systematic change. ExperienceKissimmee.com



Jason Holic

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INSIDE: Celebrating a successful 2023 and welcoming 2024!

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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 56 official county DMOs that promote their communities throughout the world. Tourism promotion activities help to attract 136 million visitors to Florida, adding \$101.9 billion to Florida's economy and supporting more than 1.7 million jobs. These activities are made possible by Tourist Development Taxes provided by Florida Statutes Section 125.0104. Statistics: VISIT FLORIDA Research