

# TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of Destinations Florida | [www.DestinationsFlorida.org](http://www.DestinationsFlorida.org) | May 2025



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## Florida Breaks Record for 6th Time as #1 Vacation Destination for Americans

Days after the tourism industry met in Tallahassee for Florida Tourism Day, Governor Ron DeSantis made an announcement that showcases the importance of tourism promotion to our state.

Florida has reached a historic milestone in tourism, securing an all-time record 15.5% share of the domestic vacation market in



"Florida is the world's favorite place to visit," said Governor DeSantis on Apr. 7. "This record tourism is a result of policies that prioritize freedom, public safety, and common sense."  
Photo: Emergent Media

2024. This marks a nearly one-point increase from 2023 and further strengthens Florida's long-standing leadership as the top travel destination in the United States—a trend that began in 2019 and continues to accelerate. This is the sixth time Florida has broken its own tourism record under the tenure of Governor DeSantis.

"Destinations Florida is proud to be the single unifying voice for all of Florida's destination marketing organizations," said Destinations Florida Chairman Jennifer Adams Kemp, tourist development director for Destin-Fort Walton Beach. "In an increasingly competitive tourism marketplace, we work hard everyday to bring visitors to Florida—and by all metrics we are succeeding!"

*#1 VACATION DESTINATION continues on pg. 3*

## Don't Sunset Florida's Success

*by Robert Skrob*



Governor Ron DeSantis presided over Florida Tourism Day reminding us: "We can't take Florida's success for granted."

Yet, some lawmakers are considering cuts that would jeopardize the very industry responsible for that success—tourism. Time and time again, Florida's economy has relied on tourism to bounce back from slowdowns. Our visitors don't just bring vacation dollars—they fuel Florida's entire economic engine.

Visitors pay their way—through fuel and airline

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

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# HAPPY Birthday



Tamara Pigoff  
May 12

Adam Thomas  
May 22

Elliott Falcione  
May 25

## DESTINATIONS FLORIDA TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of  
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On the Cover  
Photo: Folklore

Florida's west coast is known for its beautiful sunsets, like the one shown here on Marco Island. Just one of the many reasons Florida is the #1 Vacation Destination for Americans. See the story on page 1.

The state's tourism performance also remains strong on the global stage. In the first two months of 2025, Florida saw:

- A 0.5% increase in Canadian air visitation, outperforming the national trend, which showed a 2.3% decline in Canadian travel to the U.S.
- A 6.5% increase in overseas visitation, with notable gains from the UK, Brazil, and Argentina.

In February 2025, Governor DeSantis announced that Florida remained the top destination for travelers worldwide, welcoming a record-breaking 142.9 million visitors in 2024. This figure

represents a 1.6% increase over 2023, which previously held the record for the highest annual visitation in the state's history. The fourth quarter of 2024 also set a new milestone, drawing 33.1 million visitors—the highest number ever recorded for a Q4 period. This surge in tourism was driven by 29.9 million domestic travelers, 2.5 million overseas visitors, and 742,000 Canadian tourists, highlighting Florida's continued appeal across both domestic and international markets.

Florida's tourism sector remains a cornerstone of the state's economy and a model of sustained success in the global travel industry.

### Want to See Your DMO's News Here?



We regularly publish brief news items from DMOs in *Tourism Marketing Today*. News about your staff will appear in our "In the News" section. We also publish "Quick Trips," and they are your opportunity to share your good news! Your story should be about *past* events, awards, or campaigns to serve as "best practices" for your fellow tourism professionals. Our deadlines typically fall on a Thursday around the middle of each month. If you aren't receiving an email reminder, reach out to Susan Trainor ([editor.trainor@gmail.com](mailto:editor.trainor@gmail.com)), and she will add you to the mailing list.

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

taxes, sales tax on meals, hotels, shopping, and attractions. The businesses they visit pay commercial property taxes that support schools, infrastructure, and local services. And, in addition to all that, visitors pay Tourist Development Taxes, dedicated to attracting more visitors to keep Florida's economy strong.

Sunsetting the TDT is like proposing we stop breathing. Without the TDT, we cut off the very funding that drives Florida's economic engine, sustains local jobs, and fuels future growth.

Now is the time to make our voices heard. Don't let lawmakers sunset Florida's success.

# West Volusia Tourism’s Georgia Turner Awarded Volunteer of the Year

Georgia Turner, executive director of the West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority, was named the City of DeLand’s Volunteer of the Year on Mar. 28.



A closeup of the Walk of Fame plaque

Leading West Volusia’s tourism promotion since 2016, Georgia has led the effort to spotlight the City of DeLand and the 13 other charming communities along the St. Johns River in Central Florida. The award serves as a testament to her 40+ years in the tourism industry and her emphasis on building close relationships with stakeholders in the community.

Turner was awarded a brass plaque on the city’s Walk of Fame in front of the MainStreet DeLand Association office, one of the organizations with which she volunteers the most.

“Volunteers like Georgia make our city special,” said DeLand Mayor Chris Cloudman.



Georgia Turner (right) proudly poses with her Volunteer of the Year plaque alongside Aaron Preston (left), Volunteer of the Year Under 40, in Downtown DeLand.

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## Registration for GC25 Opens May 14!

The Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism (GC) is the premier educational conference for Florida's tourism industry. This year's event is taking place Aug. 27-29, 2025, at the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate. The conference brings together 1,000 tourism industry professionals, advertising agencies, travel experts, and state leaders to network and to explore the latest trends and opportunities for the tourism industry.

VISIT FLORIDA's goal is for attendees to leave GC25 with tangible takeaways about latest trends, opportunities, and actionable strategies for challenges in addition to new connections and growth opportunities.

Registration opens on May 14. Mark your calendars so you don't miss out on the discounted early bird rate!

**Learn more here:**  
<https://bit.ly/GCT2025>



Closing keynote at GC24 where Jacob Petwitt Yancey, director of consumer insights and analytics at VISIT FLORIDA, and Seth Borko, head of research at Skift, presented new data showing the Florida Tourism Brand is valued at \$142 billion

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# Destinations Florida Celebrates Florida Tourism Day...



The Florida Tourism Day briefing featured Senator Stan McClain (R-Ocala), who expressed his appreciation for how tourism is driving growth within his community.

"Don't take Florida's success for granted," Governor DeSantis cajoles lawmakers at Florida Tourism Day.



Florida Tourism Day 2025 was a great success thanks to the collaborative efforts of its sponsors.

## Florida Tourism Day Expo



The Florida Tourism Day Expo was a huge success with 12 Florida DMOs demonstrating how tourism marketing drives their local economy.

## ...The Story in Pictures



Lois Croft of Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB and Natalie Killian of SUP Englewood, a stand up paddle board and kayak outfitter, stamp Tourism Day Passports while educating attendees on the positive impacts of visitors to their community.



The Florida Memorial University Ambassador Chorale entertains the crowd, demonstrating the deep community impact of tourism in Miami-Dade County and throughout Florida.



After all the hard work of assembling the Pop a Shot (which required actually reading the directions), Marc Zimmerman and Neal Duncan of Visit Central Florida conduct a safety test. (Who do you think won? The smart money is on the Pop a Shot.)



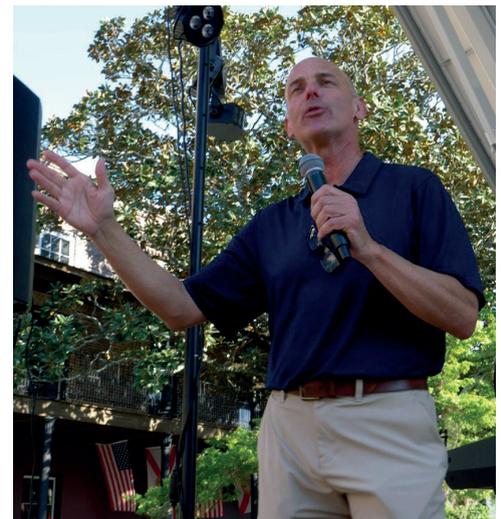
A Walt Disney World character artist demonstrates the wide range of professions represented within the hospitality industry.



United Parks and Busch Gardens Tampa Bay/SeaWorld Orlando teams brought Crush and Nigel the Lesser Flamingos and Parker the Spider Tortoise to dazzle the crowds.



Paul Beirnes of Amelia Island CVB with "Shrimpy," the island's mascot, celebrating the award-winning beaches and the kindest daughter ever (who will politely decline all future invitations to travel to Tallahassee with her father).



"Best Speech Ever" goes unheard as the huge crowd was having too much fun to pay any attention.

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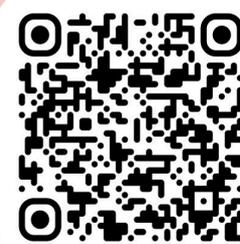


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## TDT and Geography

by Steven M. Hogan

Some counties levy the Tourist Development Tax within subcounty tax districts that do not encompass the entire county. In such situations, can the TDT be used for events within the county but outside of the subcounty district?

The Florida attorney general has answered "yes" to this question, with some qualifications.



Some uses of TDT funds are not limited in their geographic location. These types of projects include promotion of zoological parks and advertising tourism activities or events, among other things.

In Opinion 2014-02, the Florida attorney general explained that some uses of TDT funds are specifically limited to projects within the borders of the taxing district that imposes the TDT tax. These geographically limited projects are set forth in section 125.0104(5)(a), Florida Statutes, and include stadiums, aquariums, museums, and tourist information centers, among other projects. Op. Att'y Gen. Fla. 2014-02 (2014).

However, the Florida attorney general noted that other uses of TDT funds are not similarly limited in their geographic location. These types of projects include promotion of zoological parks and advertising tourism activities or events, among other things. *Id.*

Of course, if TDT funds are used for a project outside of the subcounty taxing district, the event must still have a distinct and direct relationship toward promoting tourism in the area. *Id.* (approving use of TDT funds for a project within a county but outside of the taxing district).



Steven M. Hogan

As always, the details matter and can change the analysis. This is a reminder to keep geography in mind when making decisions about how TDT funds are used.

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

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# BEST of SOUTHEAST FLORIDA!



- Discover The Palm Beaches
- Greater Miami CVB
- Visit Florida Keys
- Visit Lauderdale

## Record-Breaking Visitation for The Palm Beaches

Discover The Palm Beaches (DTPB) announces record-breaking visitation numbers for 2024 with an unprecedented 9.9 million visitors, marking a 4.6% increase from 2023. This milestone represents the fourth consecutive year of growth in visitation since the pandemic's impact on travel. Total spending reached \$7.2 billion, and the economic impact was \$10.5 billion.

"This remarkable achievement underscores the effectiveness of our strategic destination promotion efforts," said DTPB President & CEO Milton Segarra, CDME. "Our data-driven advertising and marketing strategies, combined with our robust sales initiatives and the invaluable collaboration with our sister Tourist Development Council agencies in Sports, Culture, and Film/TV, have been instrumental in continuing to attract a record number

of visitors to our destination. We thank our tourism industry partners for their unwavering support and dedication, which have been crucial to our success."

Some notable trends that contributed to the record-breaking rise include the emergence of Texas as a growing market with a fresh focus from DTPB, key international markets showing continued growth because of DTPB's promotional activities in those countries, and domestic markets that received additional airlift and marketing support such as Detroit, Cincinnati, Charleston, Indianapolis, and Los Angeles.



The Discover The Palm Beaches team works tirelessly to promote the organization's mission of growing the local tourism economy.



Discover The Palm Beaches is celebrating their record-breaking milestone of 9.9 million visitors in 2024. The organization promotes an array of destinations and experiences in The Palm Beaches including their iconic sandy shores.

Photo: Captain Kimmo



## Miami Attraction & Museum Months Returns With Special Offers for Visitors and Locals

The Greater Miami CVB's popular Miami Attraction & Museum Months returned Apr. 1-May 31 with special deals and discounts from Greater Miami and Miami Beach's top adventure and cultural institutions. This year's program highlights a variety of new experiences and long-time favorites in neighborhoods throughout Miami-Dade County.

The program invites locals and visitors to experience over 40 of Greater Miami and Miami Beach's cultural attractions, museums, performance venues, adventure activities, wildlife encounters, and more through exclusive deals and discounts, BOGO specials, and complimentary perks.



Miami Grand Prix Formula 1 at Hard Rock Stadium

"It's an annual celebration of what makes our destination truly exceptional—a vibrant blend of world-class cultural institutions, unique attractions, and unforgettable experiences," said GMCVB President & CEO David Whitaker. "From outdoor adventures and family-friendly fun to immersive museum visits, there's something for everyone across Miami-Dade's diverse neighborhoods. This program is an invitation to rediscover the dynamic energy that makes us unlike any other destination in the world."

GMCVB Temptations programs—including local favorites Miami Spice and Miami Spa months—take a thematic focus on the best the destination has to offer with monthly deals and special events appealing to both visitors and residents. Learn more at [MiamiAttractionsandMuseums.com](http://MiamiAttractionsandMuseums.com).



Phillip & Patricia Frost Museum of Science

## Visit Florida Keys Launches DestinationsNEXT Strategic Planning Process

Visit Florida Keys, the tourism destination organization for the Monroe County TDC, launched the process to develop a three-year strategic plan with guidance from MMGY DestinationNEXT, well-documented experts in the tourism strategic planning process.

The organization has worked with more than 400 tourism destinations to create strategic plans that align with community values.

The strategic plan was discussed during the Visit Florida Keys' February Tourism Advocacy Workshop "Blossoming Possibilities,"



The Visit Florida Keys three-year strategic plan is designed to provide a clear view for the future, aligning development of Keys tourism as the primary economic driver while supporting the Keys' natural environment and sustainable tourism choices.

attended by more than 250 tourism industry professionals and community members.

Since that time destination staff members have worked with the DestinationNEXT team to build an assessment survey that deployed in mid-April. Results from the survey have been combined with the results of a series of focus groups and stakeholder interviews, complemented by workshops with the TDC board and VFK leadership team.



Visit Florida Keys President/CEO Kara Franker announces the strategic planning process at the destination's Tourism Advocacy Summit, attended in February by more than 250 industry and community stakeholders.  
Photo: Nick Doll Photography/Visit Florida Keys

The end result for the Florida Keys will be a clearly defined path forward with input from the community and the industry that outlines clear priorities, defines the identity for the destination's tourism organization and its values, sets goals and defines the actions required to achieve them, and provides for measurable results. The target for the final strategic plan report is mid-July.



## Savor the Flavors of Greater Fort Lauderdale

Greater Fort Lauderdale is serving up flavor with flair this summer thanks to its vibrant and diverse culinary scene. From international cuisine to elevated fine dining, the destination celebrates its multicultural roots through bold, flavorful experiences that attract food lovers from around the world.

What sets Greater Fort Lauderdale apart is its unique *dock and dine* culture. With 300 miles of navigable waterways, diners can arrive by boat and enjoy everything from fresh seafood at laid-back waterfront spots to innovative cuisine at upscale marina restaurants. It's a signature experience that blends coastal charm with culinary excellence.



Oceanic at Pompano Beach Pier is serving up a bite of paradise with fresh seafood and savory dishes.

Adding to the culinary buzz is the refreshed Dine Out Lauderdale program, returning every August through September. This annual celebration of local cuisine is being elevated to new heights, offering specially curated, prix-fixe menus at some of the area's most sought-after restaurants. New enhancements include elevated offerings, exclusive chef events, and storytelling that highlights Greater Fort Lauderdale's culinary diversity and innovation.

From casual bites along the water to elevated culinary experiences, Greater Fort Lauderdale continues to grow as a premier destination for food enthusiasts.



Savor the flavor of Greater Fort Lauderdale. Arrive by boat and enjoy waterfront dining at its best.

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## Florida's Adventure Coast's Mermaid Trail Unveils 10 New Statues

Florida's Adventure Coast, Brooksville-Weeki Wachee, unveiled 10 new mermaid statues on The Mermaid Tale Trail at Weeki Wachee Springs State Park. The colorful additions celebrate local art and the area's iconic mermaid legacy. Visitors can now discover a total of 37 unique mermaids across the region. "Each mermaid tells a different story," said Manager of Tourism Tammy Heon. "They highlight our community's creativity and the magic that makes this place unforgettable." [FloridasAdventureCoast.com](http://FloridasAdventureCoast.com)



Visitors enjoy the colorful mermaid statues on The Mermaid Trail at Weeki Wachee Springs State Park.

## Seminole County Approves Tourism Improvement District to Boost Sports Tourism

The Seminole County Board of County Commissioners approved the creation of a Tourism Improvement District (TID), a strategic move backed by local hoteliers to fund sports tourism growth. Expected to generate \$3.2 million annually, the TID will support infrastructure upgrades and high-profile event attraction. Over 50% of qualified hotel rooms backed the initiative, reinforcing strong industry support and collaboration. [DoOrlandoNorth.com](http://DoOrlandoNorth.com)



Concept rendering of a potential indoor sports facility envisioned through the newly established Tourism Improvement District (Image is a placeholder and not the final design.)

## Martin County Tourism Wins Two AVA Digital Awards

The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing recently won two 2025 AVA Digital Awards. The first was a Platinum Award in the Integrated Marketing Campaign category for their holistic launch campaign promoting the Explore Natural Martin ecotourism program. The other was a Gold Award in the Travel Video category for their Explore Natural Martin video series. The AVA Digital Awards are organized annually by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals. [DiscoverMartin.com](http://DiscoverMartin.com)



The AVA Digital Awards honor excellence in digital, creativity, branding, and strategy across web, social, mobile, video, audio, and interactive media.

## Pensacola's Once-in-a-Lifetime Snow Event Creates a Flurry of Engagement

Pensacola transformed an unexpected snowfall into a tourism marketing win, capturing national attention and driving record-breaking engagement. With a strategic real-time response, Visit Pensacola turned the rare winter wonder into viral social media content, generating 8.7 million impressions, 610K engagements, 172K shares, and 8.1 million video views. The buzz resulted in 4,000 new followers and over 21K saves. Media coverage included 5,500 digital and print articles, leading to 713.6K engagements and 77.69 billion UVM, while web traffic surged 212%. [VisitPensacola.com](http://VisitPensacola.com)

The New York Times

### Crews Work Through the Night After Pensacola, Fla., Sees Record Snowfall

Unofficial, backyard tallies have recorded at least nine inches of snow. The previous record snowfall for Pensacola was three inches in 1895.

Share full article



Heavy snow fell across Pensacola, Fla., on Tuesday.

Pensacola, Florida, makes headlines in *The New York Times* as crews work tirelessly through the night to clear roads after the destination saw record-breaking snowfall, the most recorded since 1895.



## Recharge Your Mind, Soul, and Vehicle!

The Mexico Beach Welcome Center now offers two electric vehicle charging stations for public use. Each station provides a CCS and Chadmo charger, and fees are market price per kilowatt. The Welcome Center secured a grant from Duke Energy to provide the stations. "Next time you're at the beach, you can recharge your vehicle while enjoying our destination. We are delighted to offer this service to visitors and residents," stated MBCDC President Kimberly Shoaf. [MexicoBeach.com](http://MexicoBeach.com)



Mexico Beach Welcome Center offers EV charging stations for public use.

## Destin-Fort Walton Beach Has a New Interactive Playground

Destin-Fort Walton Beach proudly announced the grand opening of a unique playground at Ross Marler Park on Okaloosa Island. The \$1.3 million transformation, funded entirely by tourist revenue, welcomes families with interactive music, games, and educational elements about marine life such as sea turtles and lionfish. Located near Choctawhatchee Bay and the Gulf, the playground features rubberized safety surfacing, slides, play structures, sail shades, and benches in a coastal theme. The park promotes outdoor play and educational opportunities providing a safe, engaging space for locals and visitors alike. [DestinFWB.com](http://DestinFWB.com)



Local officials, parents, children, and supporters gathered to celebrate and tour this one-of-a-kind playground during the grand opening in Destin-Fort Walton Beach.

## Amelia Island Celebrates Global Meetings Industry Day

In honor of Global Meetings Industry Day (Apr. 3), the Amelia Island CVB brewed up a special coffee and networking event, welcoming meetings, sales, and marketing professionals for an afternoon of connection, conversation, and celebration. Additionally, several island lodging partners and destination landmarks were illuminated in blue to further commemorate the global #GMID initiative. More than 670 groups chose Amelia Island for their meetings and events in 2024—45% of which were repeat groups—demonstrating the destination's enduring appeal as a premier meetings location. [AmeliaIsland.com](http://AmeliaIsland.com)



#GMID "Brewing Connections" event at The Preserve on Amelia Island

## SUN 'n FUN Aerospace Expo Enjoys Another Banner Year

The SUN 'n FUN Aerospace Expo certainly lived up to its motto for the 2025 edition of what is called "Spring Break for Pilots." The idea was to *Turn Up The Fun at 51*, which is precisely what happened during the six-day event at the SUN 'n FUN Expo Campus in Lakeland. Ticket sales were up 20%, with Wednesday and Saturday's highly anticipated drone and fireworks night shows enjoying capacity crowds. In addition, fans were treated to the Tuesday opening night concert highlighted by Tyler Hubbard. [VisitCentralFlorida.org](http://VisitCentralFlorida.org)



The SUN 'n FUN Aerospace Expo saw the return of the legendary U.S. Navy Blue Angels, which helped lead to capacity crowds in 2025.



## Experience Kissimmee Celebrates Earth Month

In honor of Earth Month, Experience Kissimmee, Osceola County, and Trees4Travel planted 200 trees at Pioneer Village, an open-air museum showcasing Osceola County's history. Special thanks to Chairwoman Viviana Janer, District 2 commissioner, and Nico Nichols, CEO and co-founder of ZEERO GROUP, for their support and commitment to a healthier environment. This initiative highlights impactful partnerships with various organizations and government entities dedicated to preserving the environment and promoting eco-friendly practices. Together, they are making strides toward a sustainable future. [ExperienceKissimmee.com](http://ExperienceKissimmee.com)



Experience Kissimmee staff poses for a group photo at Pioneer Village.

## College Hoops Fans Flock to Tampa for 2025 Women's Final Four

For a record fourth time, Tampa hosted one of the nation's marquee sporting events, the 2025 NCAA Women's Final Four, Apr. 4-6. The weekend-long showcase for the Tampa Bay area featured sellout crowds at all three games, including 19,777 for UConn's 82-59 championship victory over South Carolina, and saw a capacity attendance at Curtis Hixon Waterfront Park for a free concert headlined by hip hop star GloRilla. The Women's Final Four aired on ABC, ESPN, ESPN2, and ESPNU and was distributed to more than 200 countries internationally. [VisitTampaBay.com](http://VisitTampaBay.com)



Fans of the University of Connecticut and the University of South Carolina gather on the plaza outside Tampa's Amalie Arena prior to the sold-out NCAA Division 1 Women's Basketball Championship on Apr. 6.

## Visit Panama City Beach Hosts UK Travelers

In March, Visit Panama City Beach had the pleasure of hosting 14 UK travelers for a familiarization tour. From dining at local restaurants and exploring top attractions and accommodations to planting sea oats on the beach, they experienced everything that makes Panama City Beach a premier destination. Their visit wrapped up with UNwineD presented by Publix. This year's UNwineD showcased the Cigar and Bourbon Lounge and exclusive bites crafted by Chef Kelsey Barnard Clark—perfectly paired with artisan wines selected by sommelier Michael Green. [VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com)



Journalists, magazine editors, and travel operators from the UK visit Panama City Beach.

## Discover Lake County Invites Media to Experience the Region With Custom Mailer Boxes

In March, Discover Lake County sent out 12 media mailer boxes, inviting journalists nationwide to experience the region through all five senses. Each box featured a voice recorder with Lake County sounds, a viewfinder with scenic images, local honey, handmade soap, and Florida-native tea—offering a multi-sensory taste of the area's charm. These mailer boxes went to writers from various national, regional, and southern focused publications, immersing them in the charm of Lake County. [DiscoverLakeCountyFL.com](http://DiscoverLakeCountyFL.com)



Discover Lake County mailer boxes shared with media



## Beard Bites

The Palm Beaches partnered with the James Beard Foundation for its Taste America 2025 series to showcase area culinary offerings in target markets. The destination brought the flavors of Chef Pushkar Marathe of Stage Kitchen & Bar to the Boston tasting event, and Chef Diego Soriano of Florie's at the Four Seasons Palm Beach to Philadelphia. The partnership highlighted The Palm Beaches' exceptional culinary scene, bringing fresh Florida flavors and Palm Beaches style to an engaged foodie audience. [ThePalmBeaches.com](http://ThePalmBeaches.com)



Left: Chef Pushkar Marathe and Rohit Kundu of Stage Kitchen & Bar and Ela Curry Kitchen and Right: Vincent Bodiou and Chef Diego Soriano of Florie's at the Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach and Ryvis Sierra with Discover The Palm Beaches

## Major Milestone in Resurrection of Beloved St. Andrews Landmark in Panama City

Destination Panama City is proud to announce a key milestone in the restoration of one of the city's most treasured landmarks—Drews Hall. Originally built in 1926 as St. Andrews School, Drews Hall is listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places and stands as a powerful symbol of education, resilience, and community. Damaged in Hurricane Michael, the building is now entering a new phase of transformation under Destination Panama City's project leadership. This first phase marks a visible and meaningful step forward in preserving an important piece of Panama City's history. [DestinationPanamaCity.com](http://DestinationPanamaCity.com)



Roof restoration begins at Drews Hall, a major milestone in preserving this iconic Panama City landmark.

## Visit Sarasota County Features Resiliency With Spring Campaign

Visit Sarasota County hosted a special networking event focused on sharing their seasonal campaign for spring with their partners. The recently launched *The Sarasota Keys are calling* marketing campaign aimed to ensure local businesses along the keys and barrier islands are seen, supported, and sought-after all year long. After months of needed resilience, the keys of Sarasota County are in a strong place and ready to welcome visitors and residents alike. [VisitSarasota.com](http://VisitSarasota.com)



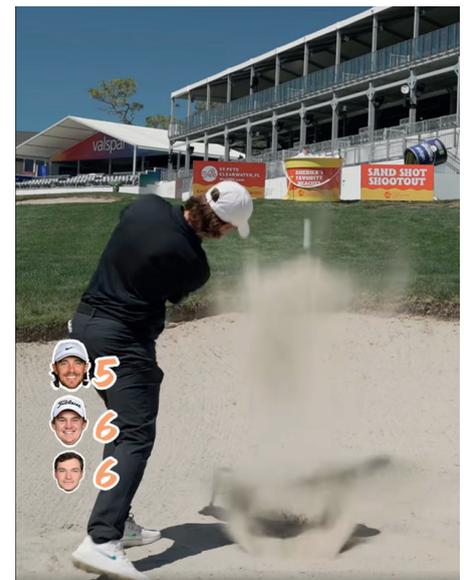
Let's Go

VISIT *Sarasota* beaches and beyond

In partnership with VISIT FLORIDA, *The Sarasota Keys are calling* campaign promotes the coastal charm and local businesses of Sarasota's barrier islands from Longboat to Manasota.

## Visit St. Pete-Clearwater Hits the Links

In conjunction with the Valspar PGA Championship at Innisbrook Golf Resort in March, Visit St. Pete-Clearwater partnered with event organizers, the PGA Tour, and influencers St. Andre Golf to hold the Sand Shot Shootout. Highlighting the award-winning sand in the destination, golfers competed and created incredible content trying to get out of the sand trap and into a large branded bucket on the 18<sup>th</sup> hole during warm-ups. Check out VisitSPC on Instagram for the reel, which generated 211 views! [VisitStPeteClearwater.com](http://VisitStPeteClearwater.com)



The sand flies during an attempt to get out of the sand trap and into the Sand Shot Shootout Bucket.



## Jacksonville's Favorite Ale Trail Brewery Revealed

In March, Visit Jacksonville launched a bracket-style voting competition to determine the public's favorite Jax Ale Trail brewery. Nearly 4,700 votes narrowed 26 breweries to one winner. On Apr. 7, National Beer Day, Ruby Beach Brewing was crowned the favorite and they were honored at Visit Jacksonville's quarterly trivia night with a beer-themed trophy. The competition was part of the celebration of the 10-year anniversary of the Jax Ale Trail. [VisitJacksonville.com](http://VisitJacksonville.com)



Visit Jacksonville President & CEO Michael Corrigan presents the beer trophy to Mark Vandeloo, owner of Ruby Beach Brewing.

## Promoting Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach for a UK Holiday

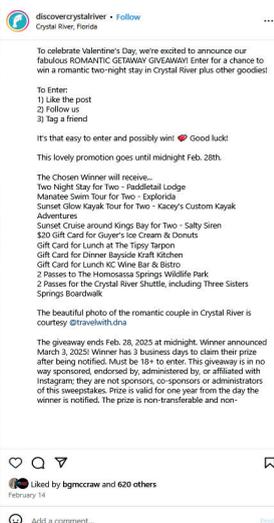
Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach hosted a Familiarization Tour with UK representation, Cellet Marketing and Public Relations Limited, bringing tour operators and media to explore and gain insight to the destination. This visit showcased Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach's unique attractions to support efforts in promoting the destination in the UK market offering visitors all the best of Florida's wonderful outdoor experiences and a laid-back lifestyle. [PureFlorida.com](http://PureFlorida.com)



Sean Wallage of Not Just Travel (based in England), Sharon Cohen of Travel Magazine (based in London), PGEB Director of Leisure Sales Aimee Blenker, Angela Andersen of Ocean Holidays (based in Scotland), and Laura MacGregor of Glen Travel (based in Scotland)

## Social Media Fans Compete for Crystal River Florida Romantic Getaway

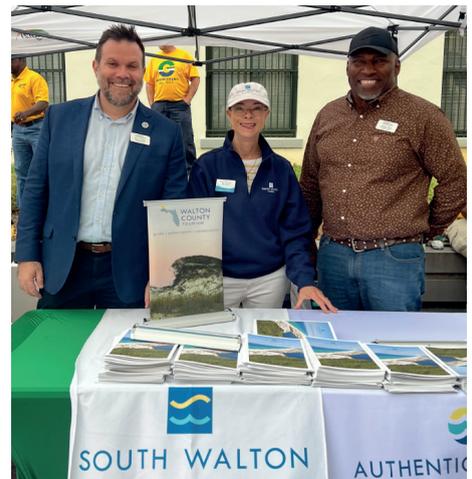
Discover Crystal River Florida celebrated Valentine's Day with a "Romantic Getaway Giveaway" on social, offering a prize package with lodging and a variety of nontraditional romantic activities such as a manatee tour, a sunset kayak tour, and strolling the boardwalk at Three Sisters Springs. Fans fell in love with the idea, submitting nearly 2,300 entries, along with 245,000 organic views and nearly 2,900 engagements. There was only one winner, but the social commentary showed friends and fans were inspired by the prize package to create their own romantic retreats. [DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com](http://DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com)



"Romantic Getaway Giveaway" generates love for Crystal River on social media.

## Walton County Tourism Promotes Economic Assets at State Tourism and Rural Counties Day

Walton County Tourism made a strong showing at Florida Tourism Days and Rural Counties Day in Tallahassee. WCT representatives partnered with Northwest Florida Beaches Coalition to present a unified voice in advocating for policies that support the local economy and strengthen the state's tourism industry. WCT joined the Walton County Economic Development Alliance to showcase the rural county's distinct assets and benefits, including \$6.9 billion in economic impact, making tourism the No. 1 economic driver. [WaltonCountyFLTourism.com](http://WaltonCountyFLTourism.com)



Walton County showcases its economic resources and amenities at Rural Counties Day, represented by WCEDA Executive Director Uriah Matthews, WCT Communications Director Nicole Everett, and WCEDA Associate Developer Lionell Poston.



## Azul Airlines Offers Nonstop Service Between Fort Lauderdale and Curaçao

Visit Lauderdale teamed up with Azul Airlines and other partners to introduce the people and businesses of Curaçao to everything the destination has to offer year-round. In December, Brazil-based Azul Airlines launched nonstop service between Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport and the Curaçao International Airport. Since December, 10,000 passengers have flown the route. [VisitLauderdale.com](http://VisitLauderdale.com)



Visit Lauderdale's SVP of Global Trade Development Tracy Vaughan and VP of Multicultural Business & Community Engagement Neki Mohan take part in a very special mission on Mar. 12, joined by Gaston Rodriguez of Azul Airlines, Patrick Yvars of Visit Orlando, and Claudia Menezes of Go Pegasus Travel.

## Lenny Returns to the Sea in the Florida Keys

Two weeks after being rescued off the Florida Keys, "Lenny," a giant loggerhead sea turtle was returned to his ocean home. Lenny was treated at the Keys' Turtle Hospital for wounds from a predator to his head and a front flipper and released just in time for sea turtle mating season. His heartwarming story was featured on NBC Nightly News and in a Florida Keys News Bureau release that reached many other media outlets. [Fla-Keys.com](http://Fla-Keys.com)



Lenny is released back into his ocean home.

## Motorcyclists Return to Daytona Beach for 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Bike Week

The motorcycle community descended upon Daytona Beach to kick off the new riding season with the 84<sup>th</sup> annual Bike Week, one of the world's largest motorcycle events. Organized by the Daytona Beach Regional Chamber of Commerce, the event that ran between Feb. 28-Mar. 9 attracted thousands of motorcycle enthusiasts from every corner of the globe to enjoy the world-famous beaches and exhilarating biker events throughout Volusia County. The dates for next year's rally are Feb. 27-Mar. 8. [DaytonaBeach.com](http://DaytonaBeach.com)



Motorcycle enthusiasts ride down the iconic Main Street during the 84<sup>th</sup> annual Bike Week in Daytona Beach. Photo: Daytona Beach Area CVB

## Florida's Space Coast Office of Tourism Participates in UK Sales Mission

From Mar. 25-27, Florida's Space Coast Office of Tourism participated at the VISIT FLORIDA UK Sales Mission to Guildford in Surrey, Edinburgh in Scotland and Central London. In Guildford and Edinburgh, the sales mission group made 11 eight-minute presentations each evening to travel agents attending in small groups. Approximately 115 travel agents were training over the two evenings. [VisitSpaceCoast.com](http://VisitSpaceCoast.com)



Rukhsana Timmis (second from right), international representative for the Space Coast Office of Tourism, stands with other VISIT FLORIDA representatives during the UK Sales Mission to Scotland and England.



## PortMiami Welcomes MSC World America and World's Largest Cruise Terminal

In April, MSC World America—MSC's newest and largest ship in the North American fleet—debuted at PortMiami ahead of its inaugural sailing. MSC Cruises Terminal, the world's largest, also opened, capable of hosting up to three ships and 36,000 guests daily. Featuring shore power connectivity and other advanced energy technologies, the terminal reflects Miami-Dade County's commitment to sustainability and cements PortMiami's status as the Cruise Capital of the World®. *MiamiandMiamiBeach.com*



A ship enters PortMiami.

## Visit Sarasota County Welcomes Visitor Experiences Coordinator

Jennifer Dolgetta is now a go-to guide as she steps into the role of visitor experiences coordinator at Visit Sarasota County. Dolgetta will oversee the day-to-day operations and programming of both in-person Visitor Centers and the mobile "area visitor assistant" RV. A Sarasota native, Dolgetta joins VSC with nearly 13 years of customer service, hospitality operations, and training design experience. The team is excited to see Dolgetta encourage visitors and residents alike to feel at ease in Sarasota County. *VisitSarasota.com*



Jennifer Dolgetta

## Now Accepting Donations for the 2025 Dave Warren Silent Auction



The Dave Warren Scholarship Silent Auction is taking place at the Destination Marketing Summit May 14-16 at The Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village. All proceeds from the silent auction support the Dave Warren Scholarship Fund, which awards a yearly scholarship to college juniors and seniors majoring in hospitality or marketing.

Donating to the silent auction is a great way to promote your destination, and a fun way for you to bid to win trips and gift baskets from other destinations. Contributions of all kinds are 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. All Marketing Summit attendees are invited to bid to win exciting destination getaways, valuable ad space, and other great prizes.

### Deadline: Thursday, May 8, 2025

Complete a donation form online by May 8 and either bring your donation to the Summit or ship it to Destinations Florida to arrive by May 8.

[DestinationsFlorida.org/25SilentAuction](https://DestinationsFlorida.org/25SilentAuction)

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