

TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of Destinations Florida | www.DestinationsFlorida.org | September 2025

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Meet Bryan Griffin— VISIT FLORIDA's New CEO With Deep Florida Roots

On July 25, the VISIT FLORIDA board confirmed Governor Ron DeSantis's pick of Bryan Griffin as president and CEO. He began his tenure on Aug. 4.

A Tampa native and fourth-generation Floridian, Griffin calls the Sunshine State "everything to me," adding, "I was born and raised in Tampa, got my education

at the University of Florida, started businesses here, met my wife here, and spent the past several years articulating the policies and priorities of Florida from the governor's office."



Bryan Griffin

Griffin's background is as diverse as Florida itself—lawyer, hospitality business owner, national advocacy leader, and most recently, communications director in the Executive Office of the Governor. He brings "deep-rooted relationships in the Capitol," a strong work ethic, and a clear mission: "I will fight for this organization and support the



Bryan and Lindsay Griffin enjoy a visit to Cà d'Zan in Sarasota, which served as the winter retreat of John and Mable Ringling.

MEET BRYAN GRIFFIN continues on pg. 4

Staying Ahead, Together

by Robert Skrob



Florida's tourism industry continues to shine. After a couple of years of unprecedented performance,

most Florida destinations are still posting strong numbers, particularly in domestic visitation.

However, recent reports from Las Vegas show that even the most popular destinations can face challenges. Visitor numbers there have slipped, driven by factors like rising travel costs, a strong U.S. dollar, and changes in

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

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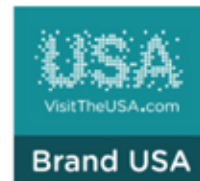
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HAPPY Birthday

Bill Talbert
September 21

Julie White
September 24

DESTINATIONS FLORIDA TourismMarketing Today

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Destinations Florida
1400 Village Sq. Blvd., Suite 3-250
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Phone: 850/222-6000
www.DestinationsFlorida.org

Robert Skrob,
Executive Director

Suzanne Hurst, CAE,
Deputy Executive Director

MaryLu Winchester,
Member Database

On the Cover
Photo: Folklore

Friends enjoy a sunset stroll at the water's edge on Marco Island, a barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico off Southwest Florida, linked to the mainland by bridges south of the city of Naples. Naples, Marco Island, Everglades—Florida's Paradise Coast.

Destination International Honors Tourism Hall of Fame Awardee From Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB

Congratulations to Jack Wert on his recent induction into Destinations International Tourism Hall of Fame. Launched in 2014, the Hall of Fame Award was created to recognize individuals who have changed the future of destination marketing organizations for the better. It is the highest honor that Destinations International can bestow.

Jack Wert, FCDME, is the former executive director of the Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB, as well as its founding father. He created the organization in 2002 and led its tourism marketing initiatives for almost two decades, stepping down from his role in 2021.



President & CEO Don Welsh of Destinations International, former Executive Director Jack Wert, FCDME, of Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB, and President & CEO Tammy Canavan, FCDME, of Visit Seattle at the Tourism Hall of Fame Awards in Chicago, July 2025

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international travel. While Las Vegas is far from Florida in geography and brand, its experience serves as an early warning system for us, much like a hurricane forecast that shows a storm forming far offshore.

Sometimes those storms fizzle, but other times they make landfall. The point isn't to panic. It's to prepare. When headwinds do come, the work you do as a tourism marketer becomes even more vital. Your leadership in keeping your destination visible, desirable, and competitive is what sustains the local businesses, jobs, and livelihoods that depend on tourism.

Today, Florida's numbers are strong. That's no accident. It's the direct result of your strategic marketing, community partnerships, and commitment to excellence. Let's keep building on that momentum while staying watchful. Our job is to promote our destinations in good times and challenging ones, ensuring Florida remains a top choice for travelers everywhere.

Thank you for your dedication to keeping Florida's tourism economy thriving, rain or shine.

industry as broadly and effectively as possible. And I will protect Florida's investment."

Griffin says he recognizes the critical contributions of the tourism industry to Florida's success and looks forward to marketing the state of Florida to visitors and helping tourism partners make the case to domestic and international travelers to choose Florida as their destination.

"So much of the Florida way of life—the benefits that Floridians enjoy and rely upon, such as our low tax burden, our nation-leading infrastructure and services, our strong state government, and even our prospect to further reduce taxes into the future—relies on a strong tourism industry," he said. "The revenue from our visitors is critical to

Florida. The respective work of our hotel, restaurant, attraction, and tourism partners in this industry, including the success of each of them, is critical to Florida."

Griffin's first-year priorities include promoting Florida's "world-class amenities, unique natural and historical sites, and family-oriented opportunities" to both national and international audiences. He's also eyeing a big opportunity: the 2026 semiquincentennial. "It's my goal to make the state of Florida a top national destination for those celebrating and observing the nation's 250th all year long," he said, pledging to work closely with industry partners to maximize the moment.

He says he also looks forward to revealing VISIT FLORIDA's new branding campaign, so "stay tuned."

To Destinations Florida members, his message is simple: "Reach out. We have multiple opportunities for co-op marketing campaigns and a host of benefits available for VISIT FLORIDA partners including critical research and market insights. Destinations can even submit content to be promoted across our social media channels. We are here to help!"

Away from the office, Griffin is as much a Florida explorer as a Florida advocate. He enjoys fossiling in the Peace River, antiquing in North Florida's small towns, strolling the beaches of Pinellas, and soaking up the history of St. Augustine. Recently married to his wife, Lindsay, the couple spends their free time traveling the state and enjoying Tampa's local treasures.

NOTEWORTHY

The 941 Takes Center Stage as Visit Sarasota County Receives Top Honors at FPRA

All eyes were on Visit Sarasota County as they were honored at the 68th annual Golden Image & Pinnacle Awards Gala, hosted by the Florida Public Relations Association (FPRA). Recognized as the hallmark of excellence in public relations and communications, the Golden Image Awards and Pinnacle Awards celebrate outstanding strategy, innovation, and results on a state level.

In the PR Division, VSC earned top honors—a Golden Image Award and Judges' Award—for its crisis communications campaign #SupportThe941 assisting in community economic recovery following Hurricane Milton. Visit Sarasota also won an Award of Distinction for its special event, the Indicators & Insights Summit.

VSC also took home a Silver Pinnacle Award for Government Team of the Year, and Hunter Carpenter, APR, director of community relations and partnership, was named the statewide PR association's inaugural Young Professional of the Year.

Whereas Golden Image distinguishes outstanding campaigns, the Pinnacle Awards celebrate individuals and businesses for their strategic work. The Pinnacle Award for Government Team of the Year recognizes a local or state governmental agency, department, or office operating in the state doing exceptional work using public relations, marketing, and communications to improve the lives of its community.



Hunter Carpenter and Olivia Turpening accept the Golden Image Award and Judges' Award for the Support the 941 campaign with VP Chris Graham of Golden Image and FPRA State President Julie Frey (pictured are Chris Graham, APR, CPRC; Olivia Turpening; Hunter Carpenter, APR; and Julie Frey, APR, CPRC).

Photo: Florida Public Relations Association/Joe Gallagher



What is a 'fiscally constrained' county?

by Steven M. Hogan

Two provisions in the TDT statute reference uses for TDT funds for counties that are "fiscally constrained." One section, which is new following the most recent legislative session, allows "fiscally constrained" counties to use TDT funds for "public facilities" under section 125.0104(5)(a)6., Florida Statutes.



Section 218.67(1), Florida Statutes, provides the definition of a "fiscally constrained" county.
Photo: FDOT.gov

The other section, which has been in the TDT statute for some time, allows TDT funds to be used for reimbursement of public safety services by "fiscally constrained" counties under section 125.0104(5)(c)2., Florida Statutes.

Because of the new addition to the TDT statute, we have received several questions from Destinations Florida members about what "fiscally constrained" means.

Both sections of the TDT statute that use the term "fiscally constrained" reference section 218.67(1), Florida Statutes, to define the term.

Section 218.67(1) is straightforward in its definition, stating that a "fiscally constrained" county is one that meets the following criteria:

Each county that is entirely within a rural area of opportunity as designated by the Governor pursuant to s. 288.0656 or each county for which the value of a mill will raise no more than \$5 million in revenue, based on the taxable value certified pursuant to s. 1011.62(4)(a)1.a., from the previous July 1, shall be considered a fiscally constrained county.

As of the date of this article, no regulation citing the statute amplifies or modifies this definition.

Therefore, the statutory language referenced above is the sole definition of whether a county is "fiscally constrained" for purposes of the TDT statute.

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



In the News

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB Hires Senior Sales Manager–Meetings/Conventions

With over two decades of leadership in hospitality and sales, Robyn Price brings a results-driven, client-focused approach to her role as senior sales manager for meetings and conventions at the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB. A two-time Marriott Golden Circle Award of Excellence recipient, Price is known for her ability to build meaningful client relationships that drive growth. Her expertise in developing sales programs, analyzing market trends, and leading cross-functional teams has consistently delivered multimillion-dollar revenue growth. PureFlorida.com



Robyn Price

Visit St. Pete-Clearwater Welcomes New Meetings & Conferences Sales Manager

As meetings and conferences sales manager, Donna Siegel brings more than 20 years of experience and relationships across the destination that she truly loves! Siegel previously worked in sales with Clearwater Beach Marriott Suites on Sand Key, and she also owned a local pontoon boat tour business. She's looking forward to crafting unforgettable experiences in the St. Pete-Clearwater slice of paradise where business and leisure seamlessly blend. VisitStPeteClearwater.com



Donna Siegel



- Discover Lake County
- Experience Kissimmee
- Explore Lakeland
- Ocala/Marion County VCB
- Orlando North, Seminole County
- Visit Central Florida
- Visit Orlando

Experience Kissimmee Sets the Stage for an Award-Winning 2025

2025 has been a standout year for Experience Kissimmee, with awards and recognitions across departments that highlight the passion and impact of their work.

"These recognitions are a testament to the passion and collaboration that drive our team every day. I'm incredibly proud of how Experience Kissimmee continues to set the standard for innovation in travel and tourism," said DT Minich, CEO of Experience Kissimmee.

- Silver Telly Award in General Travel & Tourism – Video campaign with Southwest Airlines and Matador Network
- Silver eTSY Award for Best Influencer Marketing Campaign – Video campaign with Southwest Airlines and Matador Network

- Silver Indigo Award for Graphic Design – Give Back Beer Initiative with Celebration Brewing Company
- PR News Honorable Mention for Best Entertainment Premiere Event – The Kissimmee Experience Premiere Event
- PR News Honorable Mention for Best Cause/Community Event/Campaign – Give Back Beer Initiative with Celebration Brewing Company
- Finalist for 2025 Skift IDEA Awards – ¡Vámonos a Kissimmee!, a bilingual video series
- Orlando Business Journal Women Who Mean Business – Jessica Beers, executive director of the Kissimmee Sports Commission

Beyond marketing, Kissimmee also climbed to 19th on CVENT's Top Meeting Destinations in North America, and the Kissimmee Sports Commission hosted a record-breaking Flag Football event with nearly 9,000 participants from 27 states and four countries.



Celebration Brewing Co-Owner Frank Lozito, Experience Kissimmee President & CEO DT Minich, and Experience Kissimmee Chief of Destination Stewardship Jason Holic pose with cans and T-shirts designed for Give Back Beer Initiative.



In partnership with Matador Network, Experience Kissimmee created a video campaign with Southwest Airlines featuring Adam Boro and a family from Dallas, Texas, who agreed to an all-expenses-paid trip to Kissimmee, Florida.



Destination Gateway Is Brought to Life in Ocala/Marion County

2025 marked a major milestone for Ocala/Marion County—the completion of the ongoing I-75 Gateway Signage Project. After years of envisioning, designing, and planning, the South Gateway Project is now realized with support from the Ocala/Marion County VCB, the Marion County Board of County Commissioners, and most importantly, the 1.4 million annual visitors who contributed to the Tourist Development Tax that funded it.



The South Gateway under construction

The Gateway Project was designed to promote Ocala/Marion County as a unique destination, specifically to emphasize its title as Horse Capital of the World®, and to offer visitors a clear sense of arrival. The gateway's design embodies these goals, featuring a distinctive silhouette that reflects the region's renowned horse country landscape.

Now, an estimated 80,000 vehicles a day traveling along the I-75 corridor are exposed to this one-of-a-kind signage. The Gateway Project continues with another gateway to be built at the future interchange just north of Ocala, where the much-anticipated Buc-ee's Ocala Travel Center is planned. Ultimately, the Gateway Project has become a powerful symbol of Ocala/Marion County's identity, welcoming millions and reinforcing the destination's brand for years to come.



The South Gateway near completion in summer 2025

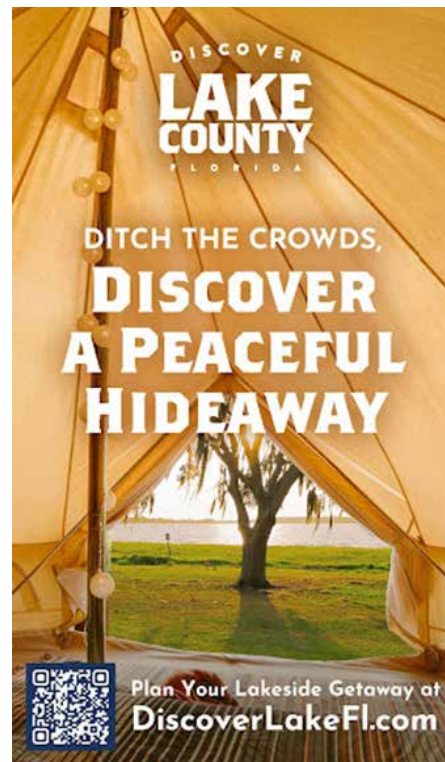
Discover Lake County Campaign Sees Strong Results in Miami Market

This year, Discover Lake County launched a Miami Outreach Campaign to connect with a new audience of outdoor lovers, daytrippers, and event goers. The goal was to boost awareness and travel to Lake County using tactics such as placing billboards in high-traffic areas across Miami to showcase Lake County's outdoor adventures and family-friendly fun. The campaign also partnered with influencers to reach audiences in Miami, Jacksonville, and Tampa. Connected TV ads ran on popular streaming platforms in the Miami market, and public relations efforts included pitching Lake County's stories to travel writers based in the Miami area.

The Miami outreach campaign saw strong results. The campaign generated 7.2 million impressions, and Miami ranked as the top market for traffic to Lake County's website. Website users from the Miami area increased by 30%, showing that the campaign effectively reached its target audience.



Lake County offers tranquility (not traffic) to visitors.



Lake County makes its appeal to Miami visitors seeking a peaceful hideaway for their vacation.

"We're excited to see such a strong response from the Miami market," said Ryan Ritchie, director of Discover Lake County. "This campaign helped us connect with new visitors and show them everything Lake County has to offer."

Florida Stories That Make Waves.

From the Gulf Coast to the Atlantic, Madden supports Florida communities to create tourism marketing that moves more than travelers—it moves economics, pride, and possibilities.

We're the creative collaborators behind campaigns that make people feel something real about a place, and then book the trip to experience it. With over 200 tourism partners nationwide, we know how to craft strategies that cut through the noise and connect straight to the heart.

Florida Communities We're Proud to Call Partners:



Let's build the next great



Floridian story—together.

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Orlando North, Seminole County's Boombah Sports Complex Ranked #1 in the Nation

Orlando North, Seminole County is proud to announce that the Boombah Sports Complex has been ranked the #1 Youth Baseball Complex in the United States by *Newsweek's* 2025 Fans' Choice Awards. This national recognition reinforces the destination's growing status as a leader in Florida's sports tourism industry.



Boombah Sports Complex is officially *Newsweek's* Best Youth Baseball Complex of 2025!

Located in Sanford, the 102-acre Boombah Sports Complex features 15 professionally maintained fields, digital scoreboards, high-quality lighting, and expansive team facilities. The complex regularly hosts elite travel tournaments and showcases, attracting thousands of athletes and their families from across the country.

Beyond the games, visitors enjoy the full Orlando North experience—with vibrant downtowns, award-winning dining, and outdoor recreation just minutes from the fields. With more

affordable accommodations than nearby destinations and easy access via two major airports, Seminole County is positioned for continued growth in this competitive market.

Gui Cunha, director of the Office of Economic Development and Tourism for Seminole County, said, "This recognition reflects the caliber of our facilities and the strength of our tourism and facilities teams. Orlando North continues to set the standard for youth sports in Florida, offering an experience that's both professionally run and genuinely welcoming."



A young ballplayer throws out a pitch at the Boombah Sports Complex.

Visit Central Florida Hosts Major Events Drawing Domestic, International Visitors

In June, Visit Central Florida hosted two major yet very different events: the Miss Florida and Miss Florida's Teen Scholarship Competition (June 23-28) in Lakeland, and the Pan American Lacrosse Association (PALA) Women's Lacrosse Championships (June 26-30) in Auburndale. Though one unfolded under the lights of the RP Funding Center's Youkey Theatre and the other on the fields of Lake Myrtle Sports Park, both events showcased elite-level talent and shared a common thread—participants



The U.S. National Women's Lacrosse team took home the gold medal in the 2025 Pan American Lacrosse Association Championships in June in Auburndale, Fla. They advance to the 2026 Women's World Lacrosse Championships in Japan.

Photo: Michael Hogan, Visit Central Florida

had to qualify through earlier rounds to reach Polk County and then compete again for a chance to advance to even bigger stages.

Paris Richardson was crowned Miss Florida, and Noelle Schnacky earned the title of Miss Florida's Teen. Both will go on to represent the state in the Miss America and Miss America's Teen competitions—Miss America being the longest-running event of its kind. Meanwhile, the PALA Championships brought more than 260 athletes and coaches from eight nations, including top-ranked teams from the United States, Canada, and the Haudenosaunee. Team USA claimed victory, earning a berth to next year's World Lacrosse Championship in Japan.



Paris Richardson (right), the newly crowned Miss Florida, celebrates with 2024 Miss Florida, Casana Fink.

Photo: Michael Hogan, Visit Central Florida

Ultimately, both events helped highlight Polk County as a vibrant, welcoming destination for domestic and international visitors alike.



Visit Orlando Receives Three Awards for Industry Excellence, Community Impact, and Workplace Culture

On July 9, Visit Orlando was honored with the 8th annual Harris Rosen Philanthropic Award by the International Drive Resort Area Chamber of Commerce for its charitable initiatives, including nearly \$3 million raised since 2009 through Visit Orlando's Magical Dining, presented by Orlando Health, as well as their year-round employee volunteerism.



Visit Orlando leaders accept the 8th annual Harris Rosen Philanthropic Award from the International Drive Resort Area Chamber of Commerce, recognizing the organization's charitable initiatives and year-round volunteerism. The honors highlight Visit Orlando's impact across the travel industry and Central Florida community.

That same day, Visit Orlando received the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program designation from Destinations International, reaffirming nearly 20 years of commitment to performance and accountability among global destination organizations.

Additionally, Visit Orlando was named one of *Orlando Business Journal's* Best Places to Work in Central Florida for the third consecutive year, based on anonymous employee feedback highlighting a culture of collaboration.

From industry leadership to giving back and being a top employer, Visit Orlando continues to deliver strong economic and community impact.



Visit Orlando is recognized as one of the *Orlando Business Journal's* Best Places to Work in Central Florida.

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Annual Meeting

Wednesday, November 5, 2025

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting

5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Registration Desk Open

5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Welcome Reception

Thursday, November 6, 2025

8:00 a.m. Registration Desk Open

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Networking Breakfast

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Florida Destination Marketing Industry State of the State Report

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Networking Break with Little Adventures Destin-Fort Walton Beach

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon Inside the Capitol: Lessons from 2025 and What It Means for 2026

12:00 noon – 1:30 p.m. Networking Luncheon sponsored by Destin-Fort Walton Beach

1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Smarter, Faster, Better: AI Strategies for High-Impact Destination Marketing

2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Networking Break with Little Adventures Destin-Fort Walton Beach

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Bring Your A-Game: How You Can Increase Your Effectiveness in Leadership in Any Situation

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Miles Evening Event

Friday, November 7, 2025

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Networking Breakfast

9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Destinations Florida Annual Business Meeting

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. The Future of Destination Marketing in Florida

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. VISIT FLORIDA Marketing Update

12:00 noon Adjourn

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VISIT FLORIDA

MEETING LOCATION:

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center

1250 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548
(850) 609-3800

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS:

Destinations Florida has secured special rates for meeting participants at two hotels within walking distance of the convention center. **Please make your reservation as soon as possible to guarantee availability.**

Hilton Garden Inn Fort Walton Beach offers Inland View rooms at \$119 per night and Beachfront rooms at \$139 per night. The hotel is located at 1297 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548. Reserve online at https://bit.ly/DFAnnual_HiltonGarden or by calling (850) 373-6897 using Group Code DES or Destinations Florida Annual Meeting. **Deadline: October 10, 2025.**

Holiday Inn Resort Fort Walton Beach offers Inland View rooms at \$138 per night and Beachfront rooms at \$159 per night, with resort fees included and parking waived at check-in. The hotel is located at 1299 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548. Reserve online at https://bit.ly/DFAnnual_HolidayInn or call (850) 301-9000 and reference Destinations Florida Annual Meeting. **Deadline: October 10, 2025.**

Register at DestinationsFlorida.org



Florida's Historic Coast's Successful Online Video Marketing Strategy

Florida's Historic Coast has seen remarkable growth on its YouTube Channel, @FloridasHistoricCoast, reaching 4,838,912 lifetime views as of June 2025. This is up from 976,563 in January 2025 and 554,969 in June 2024. Active since January 2009, the channel's recent success is driven by strategic video content—most notably, the VCB's online video ads and the *Must-Do Experiences* video series. These efforts demonstrate the power of engaging storytelling to inspire travel and drive destination interest. [FloridasHistoricCoast.com](https://www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com)



Capturing the charm of Florida's Historic Coast—one frame at a time. This scene, from their *Must-Do Experiences* video series, continues to inspire travelers worldwide.

Orlando North, Seminole County Debuts *ON Board* Adventure Series

Orlando North, Seminole County has launched *ON Board*, a cinematic travel series highlighting guided outdoor adventures across the region's rivers, springs, and lakes. Featuring local tour operators and hosted by a Seminole County native, the six-episode series showcases paddleboarding, airboat rides, fly fishing, and more. *ON Board* is available to stream on YouTube and at [DoOrlandoNorth.com/ONBoard](https://www.DoOrlandoNorth.com/ONBoard), offering fresh inspiration for travelers seeking authentic, water-based Florida experiences. [DoOrlandoNorth.com](https://www.DoOrlandoNorth.com)



Poster for *ON Board*, Orlando North, Seminole County's new outdoor adventure travel series

Martin County Earns Award for Promoting Sustainable Tourism

The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing recently earned a PRNEWS Nonprofit Award in the PR or Marketing Campaign category, recognizing the team's impactful work promoting sustainable tourism. This national honor celebrates innovative, results-driven communications efforts that make a difference, even with limited resources. Additional winners include the National Parks Conservation Association, the American Medical Association, Toastmasters International, and more. [DiscoverMartin.com](https://www.DiscoverMartin.com)



Senior Environmental Resources & Eco Tourism Program Manager Emily Dark leads a free Explore Natural Martin eco-tour in Halpatokee Regional Park.

Destination Panama City Draws Record Crowd for Salute to Freedom

Destination Panama City's 2025 Salute to Freedom celebration welcomed a record-setting 8,000 attendees to the Panama City Marina for an evening of fireworks and festivities. Attendance grew 67% year-over-year, with nearly 34% of guests traveling more than 50 miles, reinforcing Panama City's growing appeal as a Fourth of July destination. The event's success reflects strong community support, strategic planning, and measurable economic impact in surrounding districts. [DestinationPanamaCity.com](https://www.DestinationPanamaCity.com)



Crowds gather along the Panama City Marina to celebrate Salute to Freedom with fireworks, live music, and waterfront views.



ABC Action Spotlights Downtown Brooksville's Charm

ABC Action News brought their entire morning show to life in downtown Brooksville, broadcasting live and shining a spotlight on this vibrant community. From local businesses to scenic spots, the show captured what makes the area so special, featuring businesses and nonprofit organizations. One of the morning's highlights? Brooksville's very own Halo from the *Halo's Hangouts* video series went live on-air—exploring downtown and meeting new friends. It was a fun, pet-friendly morning that truly showed off Brooksville's welcoming charm. FloridasAdventureCoast.com



Halo the Tourism Dog joins the anchors from ABC Action News.

Daytona Beach Wins Bid to Continue to Host NCA & NDA Collegiate Championship Through 2030

Varsity Spirit announced the National Cheerleaders Association (NCA) & National Dance Alliance (NDA) Collegiate Cheer and Dance Championship—the premier collegiate cheer and dance competition in the world—will continue to call Daytona Beach home through 2030. The 2026 competition, which marks the 30th year in Daytona Beach, is already scheduled for Apr. 8-11 at the Daytona Beach Bandshell and the Ocean Center. The event attracts more than 450 college and cheer and dance programs to the destination. DaytonaBeach.com



The historic Daytona Beach Bandshell and the Ocean Center Convention Complex will continue to serve as the home for the NCA & NDA Collegiate Championship through 2030. Photo: Varsity Spirit

Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex Is Top Attraction in U.S.

Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex has been named the top attraction in the United States on Tripadvisor's 2025 Travelers' Choice Awards: Best of the Best Things to Do ranking. The complex was also ranked third-best attraction in the world. The Gantry at LC-39 opened in July featuring stunning launch views, education about the nature around the center and how NASA works to protect wildlife, a rocket creation game, and a rocket engine replica that moves, rumbles, and lights up during a test fire, misting visitors below. VisitSpaceCoast.com



Excited for liftoff, visitors watch the engine shake and enjoy the mist on a hot July day.

Lakeland Hosts Miss Florida, Miss Florida's Teen for Ninth Year

The Miss Florida and Miss Florida's Teen Scholarship Competition returned to Lakeland for the ninth year, June 23-28. Paris Richardson, Miss Gainesville, was crowned Miss Florida and will advance to the 2026 Miss America Pageant. She plans to expand her CROWN of Health initiative by working with schools, health care professionals, and communities to promote wellness education and improve access to health care in Florida. Noelle Schnacky, Miss Orlando's Teen, was named Miss Florida's Teen. VisitCentralFlorida.org



Following the Miss Florida and Miss Florida's Teen Scholarship Competition in Lakeland, Paris Richardson and Noelle Schnacky will now represent Florida at the Miss America and Miss America's Teen Competitions in Orlando. Photo: Jack Portune



Discover Lake County Joins Star Athletics at the 50th Prefontaine Classic

Discover Lake County proudly joined Star Athletics at the 50th Prefontaine Classic in Eugene, Oregon, to support their world-class athletes and celebrate a growing partnership. The collaboration highlights Lake County as a premier destination for Olympic-level training and competition. Attending the event reinforced a shared commitment to elevating the region's visibility in the track and field world. The announcement underscores their strategic mission to elevate sports tourism while celebrating elite competition on a world stage. DiscoverLakeCountyFL.com



Discover Lake County attends the 50th Prefontaine Classic in Eugene, Oregon.

Visit St. Pete-Clearwater Serves Up Palate & Palette in New York City!

What happens when four chefs from St. Pete-Clearwater are inspired by four St. Pete museums? A curation of creative dishes at Platform by The James Beard Foundation for NYC-based media to show off the destination's food scene! VisitStPeteClearwater.com



Chefs David Reyes (St. Pete Distillery), Nick Ocando (Allelo), Rob Reinsmith (Wild Child), and Chris Artrip (Black Pearl) drew on The Dalí Museum, Chihuly Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, and Museum of the American Arts & Crafts Movement to create a one-of-a-kind dining experience.

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DT Minich Appointed to VISIT FLORIDA Board of Directors

DT Minich, president and CEO of Experience Kissimmee, has been appointed to the VISIT FLORIDA Board of Directors. With over 30 years in tourism and leadership roles at three Florida DMOs, Minich brings extensive industry expertise to the board. "Our partnership with VISIT FLORIDA is invaluable," said Minich. "I am honored to contribute to statewide tourism marketing efforts and look forward to working with peers who are equally passionate about growing Florida's visitor economy." ExperienceKissimmee.com



Experience Kissimmee President & CEO DT Minich was recently appointed to the VISIT FLORIDA Board of Directors.

Shared Love of Art Keeps Tampa Bay Visible in Key European Markets

Street art was the focus of Visit Tampa Bay's most recent European marketing and PR initiative, as Tampa Bay artist Dylan Perry debuted major installations in Amsterdam and Hamburg. At Amsterdam's STRAAT Museum, Perry painted and unveiled *Twin Bloom* using two large shipping containers as a canvas for his Tampa Bay- and Amsterdam-inspired work. Perry also infused Hamburg's cultural landscape with Tampa Bay's flair in a mural that artistically interprets the connection between culture, sport, and social commitment at FC St. Pauli's Millerntor Gallery. VisitTampaBay.com



Tampa artist Dylan Perry stands in front of his finished mural *Twin Bloom* during an installation at the STRAAT Museum in Amsterdam. Perry was also one of 40 artists selected to create a mural for FC St. Pauli's Millerntor Gallery in Hamburg, Germany, which will be on display in the soccer stadium for the next 12 months.

Endeavor Convention Center Debuts in Marianna

The new Endeavor Convention Center, Jackson County's largest venue with a capacity of 590, opened in July in Marianna, Florida. The center launched with two successful events—a sold-out Murder Mystery Dinner and a vibrant Wedding Expo. As a premier space for meetings, expos, and community events, the facility is expected to boost tourism and serve as a regional gathering hub. VisitJacksonCountyFla.com



Jackson County's new Endeavor Convention Center in Marianna

Citrus County Is Manatee Capital of the World

Citrus County has secured a registered service mark for its iconic new logo identifying the destination as "Manatee Capital of the World." The announcement was made at Discover Crystal River Florida's recent *Partners In Tourism* event, where 80+ tourism leaders celebrated the achievement. The destination will proudly use the new logo as a symbol of the area's unmatched reputation as the best place in the world to see and swim with manatees. Just in time for Manatee Season this November. DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com



Manatee Capital of the World® partner celebration



Clay County Earns Destination Verified Status From Wheel the World

Clay County has been officially recognized as a Destination Verified location by Wheel the World, a global platform for accessible travel. More than 30 local businesses, including hotels, attractions, and restaurants, were personally assessed for accessibility. A dedicated landing page on their website now helps travelers with disabilities confidently plan their exploration of Clay County. This recognition highlights the county's commitment to inclusivity and making travel welcoming for everyone. [ExploreClay.com](https://www.exploreclay.com)



Learn more about accessibility in Clay County here: <https://www.wheeltheworld.com/accessible-travel/usa/florida/clay-county>.

Discover The Palm Beaches Earns DMAP Accreditation With Distinction

Discover The Palm Beaches has earned Reaccreditation with Distinction from the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP). This prestigious accreditation from Destinations International is in recognition of an organization's commitment to excellence, meeting the industry standards for performance, and accountability of destination organizations around the world. Accreditation with Distinction is the highest possible recognition for a destination organization. DTPB is among more than 200 destination organizations obtaining DMAP recognition, and fewer than 10% earned "Accreditation with Distinction." [ThePalmBeaches.com](https://www.thepalmbeaches.com)



Sarasota Day in Baltimore, Another Home Run

The team at Visit Sarasota County cheered on the Orioles during Sarasota Day at Camden Yards in Baltimore this Summer. The tradition is always a grand-slam home run for the team as well as the spring training home for the Orioles, Sarasota County. Commissioner Tom Knight threw out the honorary first pitch, and the VSC team passed out dual branded swag to attendees. All of which turned out to be lucky charms as the O's brought home a win. [VisitSarasota.com](https://www.VisitSarasota.com)



The VSC team (Camille Seabrook, President & CEO Erin Duggan, and Hunter Carpenter) enjoys the Baltimore Orioles game.

From Spa to Spice: GMCVB Signature Promotions Boost Sales—And Support for the Community

Fueled by the Greater Miami CVB, Miami Spa Months (July–August) and Miami Spice Restaurant Months (August–September) continue to be two of the destination's most popular promotions, drawing locals and visitors alike with special-value dining and spa offers. This year's Miami Spice adds a charitable twist—partnering with Camillus House so a \$10 donation provides three meals for those experiencing homelessness—combining marketing reach with community impact. [MiamiandMiamiBeach.com](https://www.MiamiandMiamiBeach.com)



Greater Miami CVB's signature promotions



Paradise Coast Boosts Hottest Travel Trend of the Year at Big Cypress National Preserve

Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB was honored to be featured as a Silver Speaker Sponsor at the Florida Society of Association Executives Annual Conference in July, with special attention given to their Big Cypress National Preserve advertising campaign. The campaign showcases one of the hottest travel trends of 2025: "Noctourism"—where night skies and celestial events offer a unique and authentic experience on Florida's Paradise Coast. Big Cypress National Preserve, a designated International Dark Sky Park, serves as the perfect backdrop for this distinctive nighttime tourism initiative. *ParadiseCoast.com*



Big Cypress National Preserve, International Dark Sky Park, East Ochopee, Florida
Photo: Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB

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Lee County VCB Grows Shoreline Superheroes

On Sanibel Island, the Lee County VCB team rolled up their sleeves for Coastal Watch's Adopt-A-Mangrove program—caring for baby red mangroves for six months before planting them at a restoration site. These "shoreline superheroes" will fight erosion, protect wildlife, and keep the coast beautiful. Even better? Visitors can join in! This hands-on voluntourism experience with the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation lets travelers make a lasting impact while enjoying a slice of paradise. *VisitFortMyers.com*



Lee County VCB staff plant red mangrove propagules to help protect Sanibel Island's shoreline.

Florida's First Coast of Golf Attends North America Golf Tourism Convention

Florida's First Coast of Golf completed 50 meeting in two days selling the Northeast Florida golf product and encouraging travel to the area to tour operators. The North America Golf Tourism Convention (NAC) is open to golf resorts, golf clubs, hotels, tourist boards, DMOs, DMCs, and other golf tourism suppliers, with a particular focus on the golf destinations of the USA, Canada, Mexico, Latin America, and the Caribbean. *Florida-Golf.org*



Florida's First Coast of Golf promotes travel to the Northeast Florida golf destination.

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Destin-Fort Walton Beach Unveils Refreshed Website for Meetings & Events

Destin-Fort Walton Beach unveiled a refreshed Meetings and Events website, showcasing newly acquired properties and projects. Alongside the website relaunch, they relaunched their dedicated social media channels—Meet in Destin-Fort Walton Beach—on Facebook and Instagram. These platforms make it easier than ever for planners to organize corporate meetings, trade shows, conventions, and special events at local venues such as the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center, The Rigdon Center, Baker Recreation + Equestrian Center, and the Shoal River Preserve. *DestinFWB.com*



The newly redesigned Meetings & Events website is live, along with dedicated Facebook and Instagram accounts, making it easier than ever for planners to explore premier venues in the Destin-Fort Walton Beach area.

Walton County Steps Up to the Plate in Sports Tourism

Walton County Tourism is scoring wins in sports tourism, recently booking four baseball tournaments at sports facilities across South Walton and Authentic Walton. Building on this momentum, the group sales team plans to attend several sports trade shows to position the destination as a prime location for small, high-end sporting events. With a growing event portfolio and top-notch facilities, Walton County is poised to attract more teams and spectators from across the country. *WCFLTourism.com*



A youth baseball team poses on the field during a USSSA spring tournament in Walton County.

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach on the Go!

The tourism team with Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach proudly represented their destination at the NorthStar's Global Travel Market and the Florida Society of Associations Executives (FSAE) Conference. These efforts helped promote Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach to meeting planners as a premier destination for future conferences and events, which will bring more domestic and international travelers to the area, supporting local businesses and strengthening Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach's place on the tourism map. *PureFlorida.com*



Director of Global Leisure Travel Aimee Blenker of Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB with Owner/Partner TJ Hayes of Adventure Book Travel LLC

Florida's Sports Coast Hosts Travel Writers and Influencers for Scaloping FAM

This year, Florida's Sports Coast hosted its 2025 annual Scaloping FAM spotlighting one of their most unique coastal experiences. Travel writers and influencers, including Milena López from Colombia—who boasts nearly 2 million followers—joined the group for an underwater "Easter egg hunt," diving for scallops in the Gulf. The day ended with a scallop dinner at the iconic American Flag Stilt House, with stunning sunset views and a taste of local Pasco County local flavor. *FLSportsCoast.com*



FAM participants gather at the American Flag Stilt House where they enjoyed a scallop dinner.



Visit Orlando's Magical Dining Celebrates 20 Years of Flavor and Community Impact

Celebrating 20 years of impact and flavor, Visit Orlando's Magical Dining, presented by Orlando Health, is underway, running through Sept. 30. More than 20 hotels are also offering exclusive offerings through Visit Orlando's Magical Nights. Each year, \$1 from every \$40 meal and \$2 from every \$60 meal supports local nonprofits. This year's primary beneficiary is REED Charitable Foundation, focused on ending the literacy crisis. Additionally, Visit Orlando will award a \$3,000 donation to a local nonprofit in each of Orange County's six commission districts. VisitOrlando.com



Diners enjoy a three-course experience at one of 160+ participating restaurants during Visit Orlando's Magical Dining, presented by Orlando Health. Running through Sept. 30, the program supports local nonprofits while showcasing the region's vibrant culinary scene.

Visit Lauderdale Hosts Annual Partnership Tourism Summit

Greater Fort Lauderdale hosted more than 250 industry partners at the Broward County Convention Center for the annual Partnership Summit to gear up for IPW 2026! The event highlighted the incredible opportunities ahead, from curated hosted buyer strategies to showcasing the destination's culture and hospitality. Attendees connected, shared ideas, and learned how to make the most of this global platform. With so much energy and collaboration, Great Fort Lauderdale is ready to make IPW 2026 an unforgettable experience for visitors from around the world. VisitLauderdale.com



The Visit Lauderdale team gathers at the annual Partnership Summit.

Visit Panama City Beach Produces 10th Season of Fishing Show

Visit Panama City Beach recently wrapped up its 10th season of the fishing show, *Chasin' The Sun*, with epic catches, stunning Gulf Coast views, and unforgettable Panama City Beach adventures. Season 10 proved that any two days on the water are never the same. Each episode blends education, adventure, and scenic exploration, offering a fresh perspective on the Gulf Coast while celebrating the people and places that make Panama City Beach a premier destination. VisitPanamaCityBeach.com



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