

TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of Destinations Florida, Inc. | www.DestinationsFlorida.org | February 2020

Tourism Campaign 'Handcrafted & Homegrown' Taps Into What Makes Flagler County Unique



Carla Cline, native Floridian and owner of Flagler Surf Art & Stuff, shares her love of the Flagler Beach Community in her Handcrafted & Homegrown video.

Our Story

by Robert Skrob, CAE



Why is tourism marketing so important to Florida's diverse communities? That's the

story we need to tell.

That's why we created this comprehensive report:

*Destination Promotion:
Empowering*

Florida's Growth is a 40-page document that communicates the impact of tourism



OUR STORY continues on pg. 3

Download your copy of the report at
EmpoweringFloridasGrowth.com

Flagler County's Tourism Department unveiled its newest video campaign—Handcrafted & Homegrown—just in time for the holidays, with a weekly rollout of videos during November and December.

The series of eight videos (and growing) gives local business owners the opportunity to share the passion behind their products. They are being shared across Flagler County's social media platforms, but an even stronger emphasis is being placed on the Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches' monthly e-newsletters, business listings, blog posts, as well as in paid advertising. Additionally, the short features have their own landing page on VisitFlagler.com.

Amy Lukasik, tourism development director for Flagler County, explained how the

campaign came about, saying, "We met with business partners in person, shared our vision for the project, and showed them examples of past videos we've done with CycleHere Media. We talked about the power of video storytelling and its role in creating an emotional connection with visitors. We talked about the road construction on A1A (to repair damage done by hurricanes Matthew and Irma) and the impact it's had on their businesses. They definitely understood that a campaign like this could really boost business for them."

One video was released across social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest,

FLAGLER COUNTY continues on pg. 3

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Visit Sarasota County Announces New Meeting Sales Manager

Visit Sarasota County (VSC) has promoted Amanda Walker to meeting sales manager. Hired as the leisure group sales manager in 2018, Walker secured accommodations and community activities for the social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal groups market as well as for weddings and travel agents, contributing to more than \$11 million in economic impact to the area. Walker serves on the Emerge Board of Directors. The mission of Emerge is to provide connections, opportunities, and a platform for young professional minorities who have a passion for their community and careers. VisitSarasota.com



Amanda Walker

as a key driver of Florida's economy. It addresses common misconceptions about the industry. Plus it explains how Florida's county and statewide DMOs attract high-yield visitors that have the biggest positive impact for supporting jobs and creating new revenue.

You are welcome to distribute it within your community. Consider sharing it with members of your TDC and elected officials.

A special thank you goes to our public relations team of Jennifer Fennel and Kat Bustamante at CoreMessage. These two made this report happen by assembling a comprehensive outline, completing the manuscript, and overseeing the graphic design, with assistance from Destinations Florida's own Susan Trainor. Susan works behind the scenes to produce *Tourism Marketing Today*. She was instrumental in creating the first draft of the report, which enabled us to get it completed in such a short timeframe. Also, a special

thank you goes to you and the dozens of members who provided feedback on the early draft manuscript. Your comments helped us see around our own blind spots to make this first report as powerful as it can be. In addition, Jack Johnson, chief advocacy officer at Destinations International, was generous with his time to give us his insight on this report.

While *Empowering Florida's Growth* provides a lot of useful information, it is only the first draft. We already have a list of things we'd like to expand upon or illustrate better. As you use this document within your community, let us know what questions come up. Or, let us know if you have other examples that could strengthen the report.

Our goal is to make revisions over the next two years to create a simple to understand, well-documented, and beautifully illustrated report demonstrating the positive impact your DMO has within your community.

FLAGLER COUNTY continued from pg. 1

DESTINATIONS FLORIDA TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of Destinations Florida, Inc.
1400 Village Sq. Blvd., Suite 3-250
Tallahassee, FL 32312
Phone: 850/222-6000
Fax: 850/222-6002
www.DestinationsFlorida.org

Robert Skrob, CAE,
Executive Director

Suzanne Hurst, CAE,
Deputy Executive Director

MaryLu Winchester,
Member Database

On the Cover

Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches offers an alternative escape from the nearby hustle and bustle. Visitors are drawn to its uncrowded beaches, friendly locals, and tons of spots to relax and unwind and to capture incredible views of the ocean. Read about Flagler County's Handcrafted & Homegrown video campaign on page one.

and YouTube) each Wednesday at noon, and the campaign was picked up by local newspapers and radio.

Lukasik stressed the importance of each business owner to the success of the campaign.

"Handcrafted & Homegrown has helped us build on our relationship with our partners," she said. "So often when we walk into a business to discuss us promoting them, they automatically think we're selling something or that there are strings attached.

With all the buzz amongst the partners over these videos, I can see the conversation beginning to shift. Hey, they [tourism department staff] really are here to help!"

Flagler County plans to build upon its successful campaign.

"We will pause on filming until early March and then get started on the next round of videos, which will include businesses throughout the rest of the county," Lukasik said. "We are also creating a passport program with the Handcrafted & Homegrown businesses, where customers will be rewarded for buying local. We're excited about all of the possibilities!"



Heather Wales, owner of Down to Earth Pottery, throws a pot during her video shoot for the Handcrafted & Homegrown campaign.

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TDT Funds and Artificial/Coral Reefs

The Tourist Development Tax statute allows TDT funds to be spent by a county with a population less than 750,000 to "acquire, construct, extend, enlarge, remodel, repair, improve, maintain, operate, or promote one or more zoological parks,

fishing piers or nature centers which are publicly owned and operated or owned and operated by non-for-profit organizations and open to the public."



Steven M. Hogan

One type of project that can qualify under this section is the creation of artificial reefs or in expanding existing reefs. The idea is that creating or expanding such reefs will drive diving and snorkeling-related tourism as part of an aquatic "nature center." See Op. Att'y Gen. Fla. 97-48 (1997) (approving creation of an artificial reef); Op. Att'y Gen. Fla. 2013-29 (2013) (approving coral outplanting projects to repair or improve naturally occurring reefs).

Such projects have the double benefit of boosting our marine ecology while drawing more tourists to Florida to enjoy our natural resources. As always, the details of the project matter when determining whether the project will qualify as a nature center.

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.



Creating or expanding an existing reef may qualify for funding under the TDT statute.

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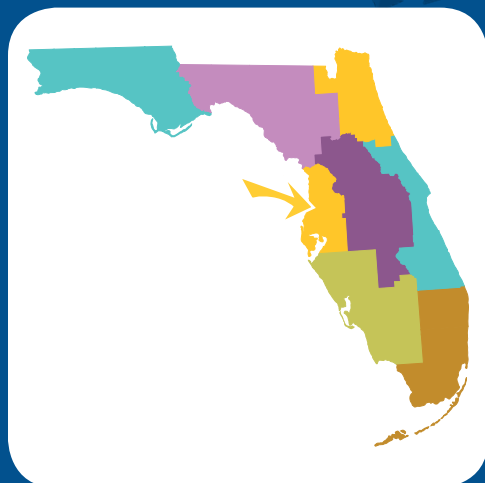
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SOUTHWEST FLORIDA



- Bradenton Area CVB
- Hendry County TDC
- Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB
- Punta Gorda-Englewood Beach VCB
- The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel – Lee County VCB
- Visit Sarasota County

Bradenton Area CVB

The Bradenton Area was fortunate to report another year of success, thanks largely to its marketing initiatives and the continued diversification of its accommodation product.



The Bradenton Area's latest integrated marketing campaign, Cure, wins big at the 2019 Adrian Awards; CVB takes home a gold and two silvers for best tourism marketing in the world.

"The destination celebrated three international awards for executing some of the world's best tourism marketing," said BACVB Executive Director Elliott Falcione. "Beyond that, we launched activations in two important new markets of lift and welcomed a new hotel to our downtown."



The BACVB encourages potential visitors living in Cleveland to "Get Beach Ready" with complimentary pedicures.

The destination received recognition from Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International through the Adrian Awards, the world's most prestigious advertising, public relations, and digital marketing competition. The BACVB earned three awards (including a Gold) for the video, online survey component, and overall concept of its Cure Campaign, which urged visitors to find the cure for "vacation deficiency" by visiting the destination.

The Bradenton Area also celebrated the opening of SpringHill Suites Bradenton Downtown/Riverfront, further expanding its accommodation product and offering visitors even more unique ways to stay on Florida's West Coast.

The CVB also hosted media missions in Grand Rapids and Cleveland—both new markets of lift—which included meetings with top travel influencers, a radio remote and trip giveaway, as well as complimentary pedicures for consumers and media, serving as important introductions to the destination.



Hendry County TDC

2019 in Hendry County offered a little bit of everything!

The Swamp Cabbage Festival in LaBelle and the Sugar Festival in Clewiston always start the year off strong in Hendry County. Offering a fantastic blend of great music of all genres, fun for the family, and of course, amazing food, festival season in Hendry County is a must-experience.



LaBelle Brewing Company is Hendry County's first brewery.
Photo: LaBelle Brewing Company



And they're off at the Hendry County Motorsports Park.
Photo: Hendry County Motorsports Park

There's no off-season in Hendry County. When the sun goes down, the lights come on at the Hendry County Motorsports Park where exciting dirt track races take place almost every weekend (so long as those Florida summer thunderstorms allow).

The fishing on Lake Okeechobee was stellar in 2019, and 2020 is looking even better!

Last but certainly not least, Hendry County welcomed its very first brewery. The highly anticipated LaBelle Brewing Company opened its doors in December and has been a tremendous hit for locals and visitors alike.

Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB

2019 was an exciting year for Florida's Paradise Coast!

For the fourth straight year, the Naples-Immokalee-Marco Island, Florida, metro area had the highest well-being across 156 U.S. communities, based on data collected as part of the Gallup



The sunsets are beautiful on Florida's Paradise Coast.



The Key Marco Cat is on display at the Marco Island Historical Museum.

National Health and Well-Being Index. The Naples area ascended to the top spot in 2014-2015 and has since remained there. This marks the first time in 11 years of annual Well-Being Index reporting that the same city has topped the rankings four times in a row.

An amazing historical exhibition of Calusa Indian ancient artifacts are on extended display at the Marco Island Historical Museum through April 2, 2021. The exhibition includes the return on loan from the Smithsonian Institution of the Key Marco Cat and other rare pre-Columbian Native American artifacts discovered on Marco

Island during an archaeological dig in 1896. The loaned artifacts are being displayed as part of the *Paradise Found: 6,000 Years of People on Marco Island* permanent exhibit. The Key Marco Cat has been described as one of the finest pieces of pre-Columbian Native American art ever discovered in North America.



Punta Gorda-Englewood Beach VCB



Chip Futch, marketing director, and Wendie Vestfall, tourism director, with the VISIT FLORIDA Flagler Award for Creativity in Public Relations

Charlotte County collected more than \$4.3 million in TDT for fiscal year 2018-2019, which is 5.1% over last year. The Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB received the Flagler Award for Creativity in Public Relations for red tide recovery efforts, and the Outsiders Welcome campaign featuring testimonials by representatives from the local tourism industry earned an eTourism Summit Excellence Award for Best Use of Video.

VISIT FLORIDA Tourism Recovery Grant Program for Red Tide funds were used to show and tell the world "we are beach ready." Media and influencers where hosted and shared content

of beautiful beaches and water-based activities. An EarthCam camera was purchased to show potential visitors real-time conditions at Englewood Beach.



Top professional pickleball players from around the world compete during the World Pickleball Championship at the Pickleplex in Punta Gorda.

The VCB supported several events including the inaugural Pickleball World Championship at the new PicklePlex® of Punta Gorda. The Southeast Tourism Society named Florida International Air Show and Englewood Beach Waterfest top 20 events in the Southeast for November.

"Allegiant Air broke ground on Sunseeker Resort in Charlotte Harbor and is expected to attract about 300,000 visitors annually beginning in 2021. Other hotels and resorts are in development, and tourism is changing in Charlotte County," said Tourism Director Wendie Vestfall, who joined the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB in February 2019. "To prepare for growth, a strategic plan was commissioned and the framework for the Certified Tourism Ambassador program was established. Both will be presented in spring 2020."

The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel – Lee County VCB

Ten consecutive years of record-breaking TDT gains was achieved in the 2019 fiscal year by the Lee County VCB, aka The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel.

"The destination has benefited from the record expansion in the travel industry, but we are also pleased that we've been able to maintain our growth during challenging times as well," said

Tamara Pigott, executive director of the Lee County VCB. "It's a testament to the strength of our partnerships in the community, and we're super proud of this achievement."

In November, the VCB took home eight Flagler Awards, including four prestigious first-place Henry awards, at the Florida Tourism Forum in Panama City.

The 22nd Hobie 16 World Championship, held November 1-16 on Captiva Island, was a success with 25 million media impressions as a result of national and international coverage.

Economic boosts, including almost 1,800 room nights, helped to benefit many businesses on the island.

In September, the sixth Island Hopper Songwriter Fest once again proved to be a strong economic force for fall, typically a slow time of the year for industry partners. The VCB will host the singer-songwriter event again this year, September 18-27.



Pamela Johnson, Tamara Pigott, and Brian Ososky bring home four Henry awards won by the Lee County VCB.

Photo: Lee County VCB



Sailboats line the shore at the Hobie 16 World Championship held in November on Captiva Island.

Photo: Lee County VCB



Visit Sarasota County

Visit Sarasota County (VSC) had a strong year in 2019. The DMO generated \$11 million in booked group business, \$5 million in economic impact from incentive programs, and \$143 million in economic impact from the Sports Commission.

It was integral for the DMO to service the local industry with a red tide relief program. VSC opened a new visitor center in Venice and increased interactions at its four centers by 65%. The community was honored to receive one of the first Florida designations on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail. VSC took a strong stance to promote the area as a diverse and inclusive destination and showcased its creative side with an interactive out-of-home glass truck activation that garnered industry awards.



An interactive exhibit in a glass box truck promotes the warmth of Sarasota County to potential visitors up north.



CoolToday Park, Spring Training home of the Braves, plays ball.

The number of FAMS hosted increased and saw a 60% booked-business conversion rate, ensuring that Sarasota County stood out for its unique venues and activities. A revamped meetings site and wellness initiative launched, and partnerships abounded.

VSC supported nearly 100 events, including USRowing Youth Nationals and the World Rowing U23 Championship. Nearly 90,000 lodging room nights were generated, four events were secured for the future, and the Braves officially made the area its Spring Training home!

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Visit Orlando's Magical Dining Raises Record \$306,772 for Charity

Visit Orlando's Magical Dining raised a record \$306,772 for the National Alliance on Mental Illness Greater Orlando and Lighthouse Central Florida. NAMI, a grassroots support network, will be able to expand its Ending the Silence program, which helps raise awareness and change perceptions among teenagers about mental health and suicide prevention. Lighthouse, which helps individuals with vision loss, will use the funds to expand its early intervention programs for young children so they can adapt, integrate, and enjoy active, productive lives. VisitOrlando.com



Lighthouse Central Florida President & CEO Kyle Johnson and ambassadors Jeanette Varela and her son Lucas; Visit Orlando Board Chair Adrian Jones; NAMI Greater Orlando Board Chair Paula Kegelman; and Executive Director Eric Welch
Photo: Visit Orlando

Experience Florida's Sports Coast Welcomes One Million Visitors

The numbers are in and Florida's Sports Coast is growing. Following a rebranding in early 2019, the destination has welcomed more than one million visitors, an impressive 8% increase from 2018. Year-end performance data shows record-breaking visitation numbers, with tourism generating \$650 million+ in economic impact to the area. Visitors used 1.2 million+ paid room nights (up 7%), generating \$3 million+ in TDT, a 15% increase over last year. Each dollar spent by Florida's Sports Coast is associated with \$447 in visitor spending. FLSportsCoast.com



Surfing Santas Puts Space Coast on the International Map

For the third year, the Space Coast Office of Tourism worked with Surfing Santas, an event started 10 years ago as a fun family outing that has now grown to having hundreds of Santas surfing on the Space Coast and thousands of onlookers on the beach, as well as thousands of dollars raised for several charities. The other outcome has been national and international media attention that this year garnered more than 1.3 billion media impressions and a media equivalent value of \$5.5 million. VisitSpaceCoast.com



The annual Surfing Santas event helps brand the Space Coast as a key surfing destination and a family-friendly place to come for the holidays.

Asian Lantern Festival Comes to Central Florida Zoo

The Asian Lantern Festival: Into the Wild has transformed the Central Florida Zoo into a dazzling evening experience full of color, light, and sound. This event, in partnership with Tianyu (tē-ān-yōō) Arts & Culture, Inc., celebrates the culture, art, and beauty of traditional Asian lantern festivals and features 35 larger-than-life, handcrafted lantern elements illuminated with 10,000 LED lights along a three-quarter-mile trek through the zoo. DoOrlandoNorth.com

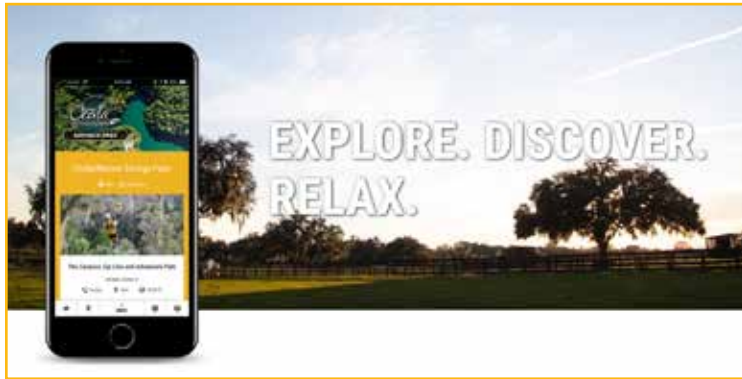


A fanciful dragon is one of the colorful Asian lanterns lighting up the night at the Central Florida Zoo.



Ocala/Marion Launches Savings Pass

The recently launched Ocala/Marion Savings Pass is a curated collection of great deals and discounts for a variety of experiences in the destination. Visitors and residents can explore the diverse offerings in Florida's outdoor playground, ranging from the forest and springs to the canyons and champion horse farms, sign up for guided tours on river or horse, and discover restaurants for all tastes. This new resource is available thanks to the Ocala/Marion County VCB. OcalaMarion.com



The Ocala/Marion Savings Pass is available at Explore.OcalaMarion.com.

Discover The Palm Beaches Help in Fight Against Human Trafficking

One of the meetings industry's most highly anticipated annual events, PCMA Convening Leaders, set the stage for Discover The Palm Beaches' interactive experience in support of a critical cause. Attendees gathered at the booth to learn about the destination and enter for a chance to win big prizes, each of which told the destination's story. All donations went toward the PCMA Foundation, which funds a tourism and hospitality industry training program to end human trafficking. ThePalmBeaches.com



The DTPB booth at PCMA Convening Leaders displays a map of The Palm Beaches and offers a raffle to raise funds for the PCMA Foundation.

Photo: Discover The Palm Beaches

Visit Pensacola Tells Industry Stories Through Video

Visit Pensacola launched an advocacy campaign dubbed *My Pensacola Stories*. The campaign shares the destination's story through hospitality and tourism employees via video. Monthly, industry employees are asked the following questions: Why do you love your job? When you think of tourism, what does that mean to you? Why Pensacola? These stories are distributed throughout corporate social channels and on YouTube. Visit Pensacola recognizes that the heart and soul of the tourism industry is its people, and the DMO is excited to showcase this incredibly important industry. VisitPensacola.com



Pup Patrol volunteer Connie Fleming works with a group of volunteers to bring joy to passengers and crew with their therapy dogs at the Pensacola International Airport.

Nights of Lights Contest Inspires Expansion

Now in its seventh year, the Annual Old Town Trolley's Nights of Lights contest engages all local businesses to compete for bragging rights of best holiday display. This year's contest brought in many more people to see the Nights of Lights display in St. Augustine, ranked #6 on USA TODAY's Best Holiday Displays 2019. The award and the attention have inspired expansion of lights beyond downtown to the island and Ponte Vedra Beach. FloridasHistoricCoast.com



Hilton Bayfront Inn, winner of the OTT Nights of Lights contest



Visit South Walton Opens New Beach Access

Visit South Walton celebrated the grand opening of the new Dune Allen Regional Beach Access (RBA) in February, the first regional beach access to be built in Walton County in more than a decade. The Dune Allen RBA includes public parking for cars and golf carts, bike racks, rest room facilities, and a lifeguard station on the beach. The 1.51-acre property has 220 feet of beachfront. Two more new regional beach accesses are expected to open in 2020, in Miramar Beach and Seagrove Beach. VisitSouthWalton.com



Walton County commissioners and Visit South Walton Executive Director Jay Tusa hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the opening of a new regional beach access in Dune Allen.

Photo: Visit South Walton

Out of the Way, Worth the Journey

Historic Cedar Key in Levy County hosts a Top 10 Arts Fair in America. In addition to bringing high-quality, creative, and unique art to this small island community, the Spring Arts Festival in Cedar Key (CedarKeyArtsFestival.com), now in its 56th year, supports the community by allowing only local nonprofit organizations to sell food and goodies during the event. Known as the Old Florida Celebration of the Arts, this juried art festival attracts some of the best artists in the Southeast and beyond. This year's celebration will be held April 4-5. VisitNatureCoast.com



Visitors travel a few extra miles to reach Cedar Key, but it's worth it!

Experience Kissimmee Offers International Reps Some Fun in the Sun

In December, Experience Kissimmee welcomed its international representative firms for a week of fun in the sun. The agencies set goals and strategized for 2020 through executive- and peer-led seminars while exploring Walt Disney World Resort theme parks, ICE! at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center, the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex, and more. This gave Experience Kissimmee's team the chance to work face-to-face with representatives from overseas agencies they work with daily. ExperienceKissimmee.com



International visitors bundle up in Kissimmee for ICE! at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center.

Amelia Island Welcomes Holiday Revelers to Dickens on Centre

Despite a rainy start to the event, research released by the Amelia Island CVB shows the fifth annual Dickens on Centre supported an estimated economic impact of more than \$3.5 million from off-island visitors (overnight guests and day-trippers). One of Amelia Island's signature annual events, the award-winning Dickens on Centre is free to the public and was held December 13-15 in downtown Fernandina Beach. AmeliaIsland.com



Carolers welcome visitors to Dickens on Centre in Fernandina Beach.

Photo: Deremer Studios LLC (DeremerStudios.com)



PCTSM and Partners Bring New Fieldhouse to Fruition

Polk County Tourism and Sports Marketing, in partnership with the City of Winter Haven, the Polk County Board of County Commissioners, and the Polk County TDC, made the dream of a new state-of-the-art sports and entertainment complex a reality. One of the many uses of the \$25 million, 83,300 sq. ft. facility will be as a practice facility for the Lakeland Magic, the G-League franchise of the Orlando Magic. Thus far more than 40 events have been recruited to the complex for 2020. VisitCentralFlorida.org



Polk County Commissioner and TDC Chair Martha Santiago addresses the crowd at the January 4 opening of the AdventHealth Fieldhouse and Conference Center.

GFLCVB Hosts Press Trip at Riptide Music Festival

The Greater Fort Lauderdale CVB developed and executed a music- and travel-focused press trip and influencer activation for the destination's signature event, the fourth annual Riptide Music Festival, November 23-24. The itinerary focused on Riptide's music lineup with more than 30 bands and the destination's unique culinary and cultural experiences. The UVM (unique visitors per month) for press exposure was 211,725,990+. Coverage included *Rolling Stone* and *Good Morning America*. Sunny.org



Standing: Kara Franker (CVB), Anthony Cordo (CVB), Noelle Stevenson (CVB), Ed Simon (CVB), Jiliam Bruce; seated: Ali Settel, Dawson Pritchett (CVB), Stacy Ritter (CVB), Amber VanBuren (CVB)

Photo: Visit Lauderdale and World Red Eye

GMCVB Promotes Greater Miami at PCMA Meeting

GMCVB President & CEO William D. Talbert III, CDME, led a delegation participating at the 2020 Professional Convention Management Association's (PCMA) annual meeting, January 5-8 in San Francisco. The group met with prospective customers and conducted interviews with news outlets to promote Greater Miami to association and corporate executives, highlighting the reimagined Miami Beach Convention Center and upcoming headquarter hotel. The GMCVB also hosted a one-on-one dinner for targeted hotel/convention center customers.

MiamiAndBeaches.com



Stephanie Figueroa (CVB), Kathy Semmes (CVB), Brad Weaber (Brad Weaber Consulting), Sonia Fong (CVB), Matt Kenny (director of tourism & culture, City of Miami Beach), Kathleen McClemmy (meetings manager, American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery), William D. Talbert III (president & CEO, GMCVB), Freddie Peterson (general manger, MBCC), Barry Moskowitz (CVB)

Happy 25th, Visit Jacksonville!

Visit Jacksonville celebrated its 25th anniversary of promoting tourism with a tourism expo in November. Visit Jacksonville, along with many of the area's tourism industry businesses, gathered in Hemming Park to celebrate. The event included local attraction booths, food trucks, giveaways, and live music. In addition, the Visitor Center welcomed guests to experience virtual reality tours and more. VisitJacksonville.com



Visit Jacksonville celebrates 25 years of promoting tourism.



Visit St. Pete/Clearwater Has Record Year With HelmsBriscoe

VSPC's Meetings & Conventions team had a record 2019 working with one of the world's largest meeting planner networks, HelmsBriscoe. The team helped book more than 46,000 room nights and \$9 million in hotel revenue, shattering 2018 performance with 21% and 20% year-over-year increases, respectively. Both numbers are all-time highs, too, solidifying VSPC's place as a strategic destination partner with HelmsBriscoe. VisitStPeteClearwater.com



The Don CeSar—Florida's iconic "Pink Palace"—unveiled completely renovated meeting spaces in 2019, including the Grand Ballroom.

Forty 'Voluntourists' Turn Out for Launch of Stay It Forward

Panama City Beach recently launched Stay It Forward, a voluntourism program aimed at offering a helping hand to neighboring Mexico Beach, which continues to recover from Hurricane Michael's impact in October 2018. Visitors have the opportunity to assist with cleanup and relief efforts in Mexico Beach by planting sea oats on sand dunes, partnering with Habitat for Humanity, and more. Panama City Beach "voluntourists" receive a Stay it Forward hat, T-shirt, and equipment before embarking on their coordinated mission. VisitPanamaCityBeach.com



Florida Tourism Forum attendees plant sea oats in Mexico Beach for the Stay It Forward initiative.

St. Lucie Hosts Annual Skeeter Skoot Ultra Run

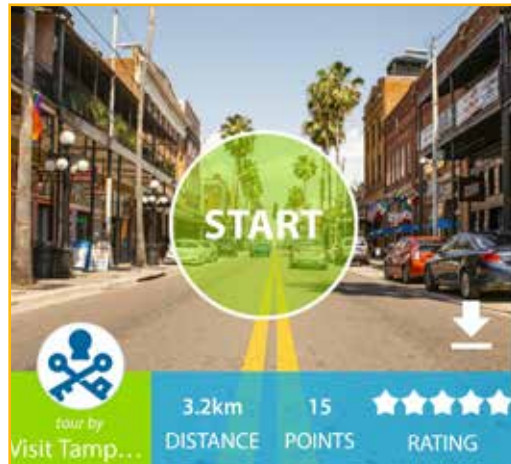
Visit St. Lucie, along with the Treasure Coast Sports Commission and other supporting county departments, hosted the second annual Skeeter Skeet Ultra Run that included a 50K and 100K on December 14. The runners ran on miles of trails on nature preserves lining the Indian River Lagoon on South Hutchinson Island. The event was a great success with 76 participants coming from two countries, several states, and various parts of Florida. Visit St. Lucie thanks its host hotels and Sailfish Brewery for hosting packet pickup. VisitStLucieFla.com



Runners celebrate their wins at the Skeeter Skoot Ultra Run on South Hutchinson Island.

Visit Tampa Bay Offers Walking Tours of Historic Latin Quarter

Visit Tampa Bay and GeoTourist have launched their first destination audio tour—a self-guided walking tour of Ybor City, the historic Latin Quarter of Tampa Bay. The app-based tour lets visitors explore the unique historical and cultural features of the National Historic Landmark District (one of two in Florida) at their own pace. The project is one of several audio tours Visit Tampa Bay is planning with GeoTourist. VisitTampaBay.com



GeoTourist takes visitors on self-guided walking tours of Ybor City.



Quick Trips!

Luminary Unveils New Name for Convention Center

The downtown Fort Myers Harborside Event Center will reopen in August as the Caloosa Sound Convention Center & Amphitheater. Adjacent to the 243-room Luminary Hotel & Co., also opening in August, the renovated convention center will feature 40,000 sq. ft., including a riverfront terrace. The 12-story hotel is part of Marriott's Autograph Collection and will be home to the Silver King Ocean Brasserie, Beacon Social Drinkery rooftop lounge, Ella Mae's Diner, The Workshop culinary theater, and a fourth-floor pool overlooking the Caloosahatchee River. FortMyersSanibel.com

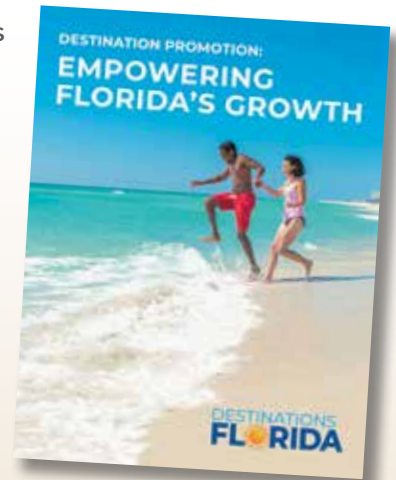


Rendering of Caloosa Sound Convention Center & Amphitheater with Luminary Hotel in background

Photo: Mainsail Lodging & Development

Communicate the Value of Your Destination Promotion Efforts

Empowering members of your industry with the facts and educating lawmakers is a weekly task. To help you, Destinations Florida and our members created this report on the unique role Florida's local DMOs play in attracting visitors to our state.



For print files send an email request to Suzanne@DestinationsFlorida.org

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1400 Village Sq. Blvd., Suite 3-250
Tallahassee, FL 32312

Bringing more customers to Florida

Destinations Florida, Inc.
Executive Director Robert Skrob, CAE | Lobbyists Brian Ballard and Mat Forrest, 850/577-0444
1400 Village Sq. Blvd., Suite 3-250, Tallahassee, FL 32312, USA | Phone: 850/222-6000 | Fax: 850/222-6002 • www.DestinationsFlorida.org



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

Destinations Florida represents the 55 official county DMOs that promote their communities throughout the world. These tourism promotion activities help to attract 118.8 million visitors to Florida, generating \$112 billion in spending and 1.4 million jobs. These activities are made possible by Tourist Development Taxes provided by Florida Statutes Section 125.0104. Statistics: VISIT FLORIDA Research

DESTINATIONS FLORIDA