

TourismMarketing Today

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

Sean Doherty Named Tourism Director of Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB



Sean Doherty

It's official. After serving in an interim capacity since June, Sean Doherty has been appointed tourism director and will spearhead the tourism marketing efforts of the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB.

Doherty has been with the Charlotte County tourism department since 2005, serving as the sales and sports marketing manager until his appointment to interim tourism director earlier this year. Using the experience he has gained from serving several months in the position, he is ready to begin implementing the DMO's strategic plan.

"Completing our strategic plan, which was put on hold by the pandemic, is one of my top goals heading into the new fiscal year," Sean says. "The plan, which will be

devised with significant input from local industry partners, will help provide guidance to our decision making as we focus on elevating tourism in Charlotte County. In addition, it's my goal to enhance industry partner engagement in order to maximize the reach and accuracy of our messaging to potential visitors."



Sean Doherty releases a tagged redfish for the Coastal Conservation Association STAR event, the state's largest, family-friendly fishing tournament, for which the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB is a sponsor. Registered anglers who catch a tagged redfish have a shot at winning a boat, motor, and trailer package.

SEAN DOHERTY ... continues on pg. 4

Certain Uncertainty

by Robert Skrob, CAE



The only thing certain today is uncertainty. There is more uncertainty now than ever. If you can be

the energy that pulls your community together into one mission, you can become a powerful force for good.

While you and I feel uncertainty, it's even worse in our tourism industry. Booking windows have shrunk down to a few days before the weekend. Weekday business has declined. Meetings will be different for many years to come.

UNCERTAINTY ... continues on pg. 3

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

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HAPPY Birthday

John Pricher
November 13

DT Minich
November 22

Charlotte Bireley
November 26

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Today

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On the Cover

Golf Digest ranked Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach the 3rd Best Place in America to Live and Play Golf. Spectacular landscapes provide the backdrop for inviting play on 20 courses including two ranked 4½ stars by *Golf Digest* and three Audubon-certified courses. Newly appointed Tourism Director Sean Doherty is an avid golfer. You can read more on page 1.

Photo: PureFlorida.com

Destinations Florida Chairman Adam Thomas Shares Goals to Move Tourism Forward

Destinations Florida is proud to announce that Adam Thomas has been named chairman of the board.

Mr. Thomas is the tourism director for Experience Florida's Sports Coast. He has served many positions on the Destinations Florida board of directors since October 2017 including CEO director, treasurer, secretary, and vice chair.

"This is a well-deserved recognition of the many valuable contributions Adam has made to our organization," says Jacqueline L. Johnson, past chairman of the Destinations Florida board of directors and executive director of the Lakeland CVB. "He has a unique perspective of the tourism industry that provides a tremendous advantage. This knowledge, combined with his keen leadership skills, will help position the association for continued positive growth into the future."

Shortly after taking on the role of chairman, Mr. Thomas commented on the association's role in advocacy and enumerated the goals he plans to tackle during his tenure.

"First, I want to continue the success of the association at the legislative level during the upcoming session," Adam says. "Destinations Florida is an important voice for the tourism industry."



Adam Thomas

And in light of the many challenges the industry has faced over the last several months, Mr. Thomas addressed what he says is key to the association's continued success.

"Perhaps the most important goal for the board and for the association as a whole is developing a strategic plan for Destinations Florida that will take us into the new reality of how we're doing business—or the *Now Normal*, as Robert Skrob described it in the October edition of *Tourism Marketing Today*," Adam states. "Our success will depend on all of us coming together with one shared voice and one common goal that will carry us forward, not only for tourism but for everyone who calls Florida home."

UNCERTAINTY ... continued from pg. 1

Position yourself as the change agent to lead your community through those challenges.

- Be as transparent as you can on the numbers.
- Engage your industry and community with data on your target markets.
- Get everyone involved in outreach.

- Track and report results.
- Educate local leaders on the biggest opportunities to help their tourism industry.

There *are* some knowns out there. If you position yourself as the person with the facts and the plan for improving the numbers, you will attract a strong following of supporters.



Who Runs Your Museum?

If an aquarium or a museum is publicly owned but is operated by a private company, can TDT funds be used to repair or improve it? The Florida attorney general weighed in on this issue in 2019 and advised that the answer is no. Op. Att’y Gen. Fla. 2019-13 (2019).

The Tourist Development Tax statute allows TDT funds to be used, among

other things, to “acquire, construct, extend, enlarge, remodel, repair, improve, maintain, operate, or promote one or more” types of facilities. § 125.0104(5)(a), Fla. Stat. Among these facilities are aquariums or museums that are “publicly owned and operated” or that are “owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public.” § 125.0104(5)(a)1.c., Fla. Stat.

In Opinion 2019-13, the Florida attorney general read these provisions together to find that if an aquarium or a museum is publicly owned, but is not operated by the government or a not-for-profit organization, then TDT funds cannot be used to repair or improve it.



Steven M. Hogan

Though Opinion 2019-13 does not address it, the same logic would apply to using TDT funds for “zoological parks” that are mentioned in section 125.0104(5)(a)2., which must also be publicly owned and operated or publicly owned and operated by a not-for-profit in order to qualify for TDT funds. If such parks are operated by a for-profit entity, then TDT funds cannot be used for their repair or improvement under Opinion 2019-13.

This dynamic should be kept in mind when considering who is operating a publicly owned aquarium, museum, or zoological park.

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.



If a museum is publicly owned, but is not operated by the government or a not-for-profit organization, then TDT funds cannot be used to repair or improve it.

SEAN DOHERTY ... continued from pg. 1

One of these industry partners is Allegiant Air, which recently announced that two new destinations, Chicago (Midway) and Houston, will be flying directly into Punta Gorda Airport (PGD).

“I feel we are poised to become larger players in the tourism pool,” Sean says, “and with our dedicated, professional staff, we have the knowledge and expertise to take tourism to the next level in Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach.”

With his eye on the future of the destination, Doherty says he and his family enjoy the local festivals and the area’s diverse culinary scene. Sean has been married to Tonya for 15 years and has two

stepchildren and two daughters. The family enjoys spending time at the beach or anywhere on the water, which is plentiful in Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach.

Doherty notes that the tourism landscape in Charlotte County is changing, offering this “tease” of things to come:

“I’m very excited about the evolving landscape of our tourism product as there are several projects in the early stages of development that, if implemented, have the potential to be game-changers for our destination.”



Florida Keys Sustainable Tourism Documentary Airs Nationally

Florida Keys: Protecting Paradise, about sustainable tourism, is to be aired nationally by more than 250 PBS stations, nearly 80% of PBS viewing markets. A half-hour Protecting Paradise aired on Earth Day on WPBT and WXEL, and is to air in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta, San Francisco, Houston, Detroit, and throughout Florida. The original hour-long Protecting Paradise—airing on Discovery, Destination America, and WGN America—was produced with support by the Monroe County TDC. Fla-Keys.com



Crystal River Breaks RevPAR Record

Crystal River in Citrus County has experienced steady occupancy numbers and, more important, record-breaking RevPAR this summer. In August, RevPAR was up 8%. Executives at Discover Crystal River Florida credit their local industry's trend-defying performance to several factors, including location, consistent marketing, messaging, earned media, and active industry partners—all coming together with the message that Crystal River is a great place to safely get away, get outside, and have fun away from crowds of people. DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com



Located on Florida's Nature Coast, Crystal River and the surrounding cities of Old Homosassa, Inverness, and Floral City promote themselves as an authentic showcase of outdoor adventure and scenic beauty. Photo: Charlie Moore/Discover Crystal River Florida

Experience Kissimmee Takes Industry Partners 'Center Stage' With New Feature Opportunity

Experience Kissimmee's media relations team recently created a partnership with local newspaper Osceola News-Gazette for a column titled "Center Stage with Experience Kissimmee." The weekly column showcases one of EK's industry partners each week, sharing a description about the business, its operating hours, and new safety procedures and guidelines. This opportunity is available on a first-come, first-served basis. EK received more than 50 inquiries in the first week and has scheduled columns through December 31. ExperienceKissimmee.com

Center Stage with Experience Kissimmee: Board and Brush

Submitted by Experience Kissimmee

Board and Brush pairs woodworking techniques with the latest trends for a fun do-it-yourself activity, with a goal of making every doer a DIY master. The best part is, no experience is needed. The Kissimmee branch offers a wide variety of hands-on, private and group workshops that help create the perfect masterpiece for any occasion or season. From choosing your overall design, all the way down to the wood type, paint colors and stencil - each project is fully customized. Projects begin with building, nailing, sanding and staining. For this reason, guests under 16 are not permitted in the workshop unless it is a



In the latest Osceola News-Gazette column, Experience Kissimmee features the new health and safety procedures of industry partner Board & Brush—a workshop that pairs woodworking with creativity, turning every DIY lover into a DIY master.

Lee County VCB's #BeachReadySpiritWeek Puts People in a Creative Beach Frame of Mind on Social Media

Couscous looks like a playful beach scene, and tin foil, a few sweet potatoes, and model train figures transform into a striking Sanibel sunset. These are two of the more than 100 entries for #BeachReadySpiritWeek, a four-week social media promotion The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel launched to encourage people to get into the beach frame of mind. Flashy beach fashion, retreats, and creations resulted in more than 330,000 earned social engagements and 3.6 million total potential impressions. FortMyers-Sanibel.com



Influencer @erinoutdoors makes what looks like a Sanibel sunset from tin foil, sweet potatoes, a cutting board, a sheet, a lamp, and some model train figures for #BeachReadySpiritWeek.



Florida's Nature Coast Offers Nature Therapy

Florida's Nature Coast invites visitors to take a break from the routine of city life and get outdoors to enjoy some much-needed nature therapy. Florida's Nature Coast encompasses the best of Old Florida and has stunning oceanfront nature preserves, Withlacoochee Gulf Preserve, the quiet island vibe of Cedar Key, the natural springs in Chiefland, and charming coastal villages like Yankeetown. While in Levy County, visitors can enjoy two state parks, Manatee Springs State Park and Fanning Springs State Park. VisitLevy.com



The sun rises over the Gulf of Mexico just off Cedar Key. Photo: Bonish Photography

Be the Distant Thunder

Over the past three years, Visit Tampa Bay has partnered with the Tampa Bay Lightning on its Distant Thunder program. Distant Thunder invites a lucky Lightning fan to Tampa Bay each season to experience the city and see the Bolts in action. From Italy to Indonesia, these stories of Lightning fandom rally fans from around the world. Recently, Visit Tampa Bay and the Lightning partnered on the Be the Distant Thunder campaign to support the squad from a distance during its Stanley Cup Playoff run—recognizing that Bolts fans may be apart, but never absent. VisitTampaBay.com



The Distant Thunder program serves to rally Bolts fans near and far.

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB Offers Social Media Takeovers

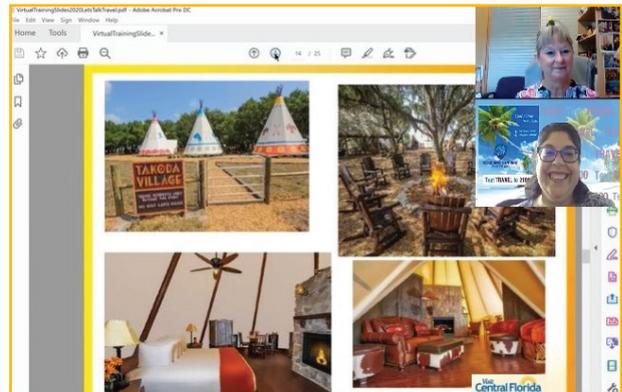
The Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB launched a new initiative allowing members of the Charlotte County tourism industry to “takeover” social media channels for one day. The VCB works with partners to develop content for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and a blog post, and the VCB makes the posts. This helps participating partners gain more visibility through the VCB’s reach. Takeovers are twice a month and are booked through 2020. PureFlorida.com



The Military Heritage Museum in Punta Gorda prepares to film a video for a Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB social media takeover. Photo: PureFlorida.com

Visit Central Florida Sells Polk County to Travel Agents Through Virtual Training Sessions

The Visit Central Florida sales team has adapted its strategies to educate key travel professionals, both domestically and internationally. Partnering with VISIT FLORIDA and working alongside travel agency owners and its sales and marketing representatives in the United Kingdom and Latin America, VCF has conducted numerous virtual destination training sessions for travel professionals in the UK and across Latin America. Many of these sessions will live on the host agencies' websites to provide continuing educational opportunities to travel professionals. VisitCentralFlorida.org



Joni Allen (top right) of VCF and Loulu Lima (lower top right), owner of Book Here, Give Here Travel Agency, discuss Westgate River Ranch Resort during a Facebook Live training session for travel agents.



Orlando North Announces ONSC Podcast, Season 2

Wrapping up a very successful first season of the ONSC Podcast featuring local residents, leaders, and businesses, Orlando North announces the drop of its second season in mid-November. With the demographic analytics showing a high volume of viewer engagement in Central Florida, India, and the UK, the tourism team looks toward expanding further by providing listeners with even more travel "infotainment," with interviews ranging from NBA Analyst Stan Van Gundy to CEO Dana Young of VISIT FLORIDA. DoOrlandoNorth.com



The ONSC Podcast is available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, iHeartRadio, and a variety of other streaming services.

St. Pete Voted Among 10 Best Big Cities in U.S. by Condé Nast Traveler Readers

Things just got more exciting in St. Pete! The "Sunshine City" has been named one of *Condé Nast Traveler's* Best U.S. Big Cities for 2020—ranking alongside some of America's most well-known destinations, including Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C. A record 715,000 readers of the popular travel magazine recognized St. Pete for its cultural and arts scene, plus close proximity to award-winning beaches. This is a prestigious feather in St. Pete's cap following the completion of the \$92 million St. Pete Pier. VisitStPeteClearwater.com



St. Pete Makes *Condé Nast Traveler's* 2020 Readers' Choice Awards List. Photo: City of St. Pete

South Walton Ends Summer With Strong Visitation

Summer visitation in South Walton ended on a strong note, as August 2020 TDT collections showed a 50.76% increase when compared at an equal collection rate to the previous year. Merchandise sales, both online and in-person, were also strong—sales increased by 12% compared to 2019, despite the fact that staff is managing in-person interactions outside and socially distanced in front of the visitor center to increase safety measures. VisitSouthWalton.com



Merchandise sales, along with TDT collections, are up in South Walton.

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Fosters Local Events

Destin-Fort Walton Beach has continued its mission of fostering local events by inviting partners to apply for a new paid-media marketing program. Events such as the Mattie Kelly Festival of the Arts and the region's ultimate tournament for anglers, the Destin Fishing Rodeo, both participated, earning ad spots that were created by and ran on CBS-affiliate WKRG. As an extension the partnership formed with the station, these signature events were spotlighted through commercials and digital placements to great success. DestinFWB.com



Destin-Fort Walton Beach's paid-media marketing program helps to promote events like the Destin Fishing Rodeo.



Drive It Home Campaign Targets NE Florida Drive Markets

Florida's First Coast of Golf's Drive It Home social media campaign is targeting visitors within Northeast Florida drive markets. Participating hotels/resorts offer incentives to book a trip, and the FFCCG's messaging to local and drive market social audiences entices followers to share/invite their friends and family to visit them and stay in Northeast Florida. FFCCG is working with the five Northeast Florida DMOs to amplify the message through all five destinations' social channels (800K followers). *Florida-Golf.org*



Florida's First Coast of Golf launches Drive It Home campaign.

PR Campaign Aims to Bring Meetings Back to Sarasota

Midweek business has suffered the most, and a meetings push is how VSC is working to correct that! A PR campaign around small meetings and destinations was executed with Orlando firm TJM Communications. In three months, 16 stories were secured in *Smart Meetings*, *Convention South*, *Meetings & Conventions*, *MeetingsNet*, *Black Meetings & Tourism*, *The Meeting Magazines*, and more. While the 800K impressions are solid, VSC is elated to have received several leads as a result! *VisitSarasota.com*



Small meetings score big in Sarasota with beaches and more!
Photo: Don Riddle Images 2013 All Rights Reserved

GMCVB Opens New Visitor Center at Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce

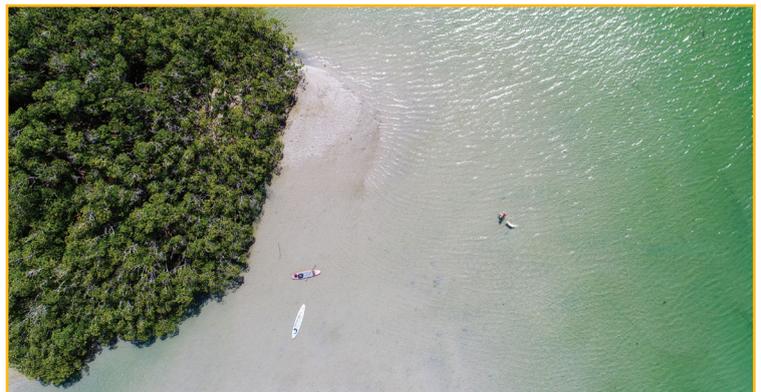
The GMCVB and the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce inaugurated Greater Miami's newest Visitor Center. As a resource for visitors and the local community, it offers information about special events, restaurants, accommodations, and more in Coral Gables and its surrounding areas. The newest of 26 official Visitor Centers, it is part of an expansion effort by the GMCVB to ensure that visitors and the local community have access to information throughout Greater Miami's multiple and diverse neighborhoods. *MiamiAndBeaches.com*



Pictured at the ribbon cutting for the new Visitor Center are Matt Hege, The Welcome Channel; Rolando Aedo, GMCVB; Henry Miller, Intermedia Touch; Cristina Miller, Intermedia Touch; Hon. Patricia Keon, City of Coral Gables commissioner; and Mark A. Trowbridge, Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce.

Martin County Highlights Outdoor Adventures Through New Video Campaign

With more than 22 miles of uncrowded beaches and 100,000-plus acres of parks and conservation lands, Martin County has plenty of room for visitors to spread out. Whether relaxing on golden sands or recharging during an outdoor adventure, there's something for every traveler to enjoy. To showcase the region's diverse array of outdoor activities, Discover Martin launched a new YouTube video series featuring local cycling trails, paddling tours, road trip highlights, and more. *DiscoverMartin.com*



Uncrowded beaches and conservation lands allow visitors in Martin County to spread out.



Bradenton Area CVB Hires New German Marketing Firm

The Bradenton Area CVB has enlisted the services of a new German-based integrated marketing firm to aid in the destination's advertising, public relations, and social media efforts in Germany. Tourism marketing agency Global Communications Experts, based in Frankfurt and with a branch in Munich, will now work alongside the BACVB to ensure the Bradenton Area remains top of mind among leisure and business travelers for when the time comes to return. *BradentonGulfIslands.com*



Global Communications Experts will oversee the Bradenton Area's marketing efforts in Germany.

Sunshine Summit FAM Hosts 120+ Attendees—Virtually

The Daytona Beach Area CVB brought the destination to the world—virtually—during the Sunshine Summit FAM held September 23. More than 120 meeting planners, rights-holders, and tour and travel operators/receptives from the U.S. as well as Canada, England, Ireland, Germany, and Argentina attended. It featured a countywide itinerary of tours and experiences, along with industry-specific breakout sessions. The event was presented in partnership with the Visit West Volusia and Visit New Smyrna Beach tourism bureaus, the Ocean Center Convention Complex, Daytona Beach International Airport, as well as many area tourism partners. *DaytonaBeach.com*



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Visit Panama City Beach Receives *ConventionSouth* Award

Visit Panama City Beach has been honored with *ConventionSouth's* Annual Readers' Choice Award. Visit Panama City Beach is among 380 convention and visitor bureaus, meeting facilities, and hotels located across the South to receive this year's Reader Choice Award. "We've quickly become a favored destination for meetings and conventions with the expertise and resources of a city that hosts over 11 million visitor days annually. We appreciate the acknowledgement of meeting planners and partners like *ConventionSouth!*" says Renee Lalanne-Wuerdeman, vice president of sales. VisitPanamaCityBeach.com



Visit Panama City Beach is a four-time winner of *ConventionSouth's* Annual Reader's Choice Award.

Jacksonville Influencers Take Over Flagler

Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches kicked off their Infinite Summer campaign by hosting six influencers from Jacksonville Mom, a locally focused parenting website with 40 contributing mommy bloggers. Following an exciting three-day itinerary, the group enjoyed a moms-only getaway and shared their experiences via social media from more than 14 different tourism partners. The tourism team noted a marked increase in social media engagement and followers during the takeover, and continues to repurpose authentic content captured during the trip. VisitFlagler.com



Jacksonville Mom bloggers prepare for their guided kayak tour of the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve with Ripple Effect Ecotours.





Professional Beach Volleyball Event Hosted in Lake County

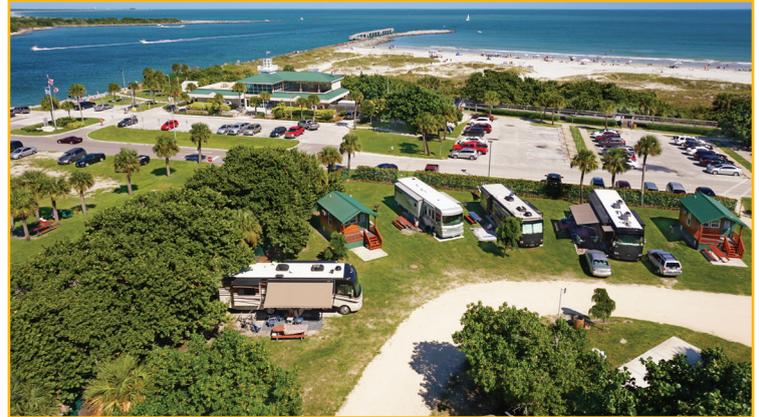
Visit Lake FL and the Florida Region of USA Volleyball are welcoming the top professional beach volleyball athletes to Tavares for the 2020 Florida Pro Best of the Beach Volleyball Tournament. The event is being held November 6-8 at Florida's largest beach volleyball complex, Hickory Point Beach in Tavares. Athletes include Olympic gold medalist Phil Dalhauser as well as 2021 Tokyo Olympic hopefuls Taylor Crabb, Trevor Crabb, Kelly Claes, Kelley Larsen, and others. VisitLakeFL.com



Photo: Florida Region of USA Volleyball

Great Space Coast Road Trip Generates Media Coverage

The Space Coast Office of Tourism put together a Great Space Coast Road Trip modeled after the classic summer vacations and Great American Road Trips of the past. A promotional piece specifically targeted RVers and families looking for one last trip before back to school that was also safe and socially distanced. The story was picked up by 122 outlets nationwide. VisitSpaceCoast.com



Many RV campsites on the Space Coast come with spectacular views and are close to major attractions.

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FLORIDA TOURISM STRONG RECOVERY MARKETPLACE

Destinations Florida's Partners have put together the Florida Tourism Strong Recovery Marketplace booklet with resources that can help DMOs now and as we move forward into recovery. Our Partners will be updating their research, reports, and programs on an ongoing basis. Visit often for up-to-date support.



DestinationsFlorida.org/StrongRecoveryMarketplace

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Quick Trips!

Palm Beaches Program Offers Hotel Commission Booking Incentive

Discover The Palm Beaches launched a new incentive program in partnership with Travelport on October 1 for travel agents that secure business to Palm Beach County hotels. The program offers agents based in Florida, Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Texas an additional 3% commission when booking business to the destination through Nov. 30, 2020. According to Travelport, DTPB is the first partner DMO to provide such a substantial commission-based incentive in the United States. *ThePalmBeaches.com*



Under a new incentive program, agents can receive additional commission when booking hotels in Palm Beach County.
Photo: Captain Kimo

DESTINATION PROMOTION: EMPOWERING FLORIDA'S GROWTH

Empowering members of your industry with the facts and educating lawmakers is a weekly task. To help you, Destinations Florida and our members created the report *Destination Promotion: Empowering Florida's Growth*.

The report reveals the truth behind common misconceptions about Florida tourism and the unique role Florida's local destination marketing organizations play in attracting visitors.

Download your copy of the report at EmpoweringFloridasGrowth.com. If you'd like to have the print files complete with trim marks for full bleeds, send an email request to Suzanne@DestinationsFlorida.org.



FIND THE WAY TO RECOVERY

To get back on track in 2020, marketing efficiency will be critical. With Epsilon, you'll find and connect with the people most likely to visit your destination. And when they do, you'll measure exactly how your marketing efforts drive community impact and economic growth.

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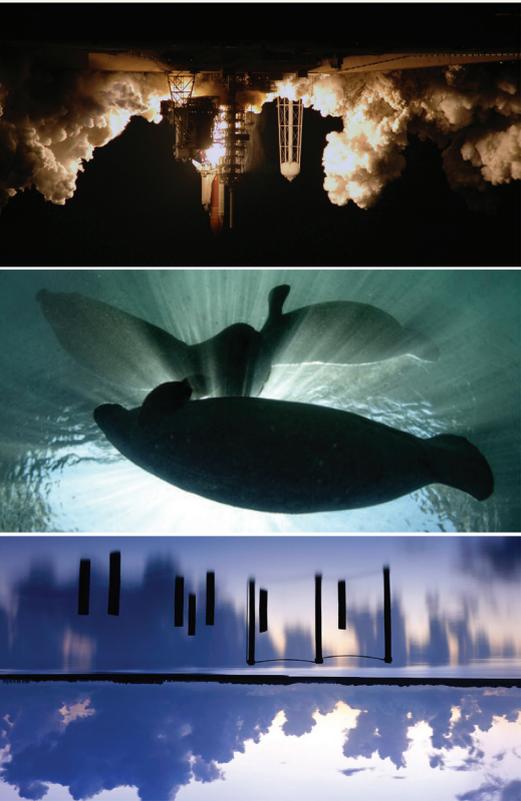
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INSIDE: Destinations Florida Chairman Adam Thomas shares his vision.

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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