

TourismMarketing Today

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The MICHELIN Guide Comes to Florida

Michelin and VISIT FLORIDA revealed an expansion of The MICHELIN Guide, with the announcement of The MICHELIN Guide Miami, Orlando and Tampa. This great opportunity to elevate Florida's culinary scene and bring a positive economic impact to the state was announced just ahead of international travel resuming on November 8.

"The timing of this global partnership couldn't be more perfect as we open our borders to international visitors once again this month," says Santiago C. Corrada, president and CEO of Visit Tampa Bay. "As one of Florida's most diverse culinary destinations, Visit Tampa Bay is excited to collaborate with its home state to welcome the world-renowned MICHELIN Guide. We are honored to help position Florida as a rightful culinary



empire alongside Visit Orlando and the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau."

"Orlando's dining scene continues to evolve in both sophistication and diversity with nationally recognized chefs, international cuisines, and plentiful options for every budget and taste," says Casandra Matej, president and CEO of Visit Orlando. "Having the MICHELIN Guide inspectors visit Orlando to experience and rate our restaurant

MICHELIN GUIDE ... continues on pg. 3

Value of Events

by Robert Skrob



Kory and I participated in Ironman Florida in Panama City Beach as spectators this year.

While in town, Kory and I had the opportunity to spend a few minutes with Dan Rowe of Visit Panama City Beach.

We discussed the impact of the Ironman Florida brand associated with Panama City Beach. While the event attracts more than 3,000 participants during race week, many more spectators travel to watch their loved ones and thousands of strangers test their will against the 140.6 mile course.

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offerings will raise the visibility of our destination's culinary superstars on a global scale."

David Whitaker, president and CEO of the Greater Miami CVB had this to say about the new guide: "The Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau is honored to partner with VISIT FLORIDA and these other world-class Florida destinations to bring this prestigious guide to our state. Aligning with the exclusive Michelin brand will be a major contribution to our continued rise on the global gastronomic stage. Like the destination itself, the culinary scene in Greater Miami & Miami Beach is energetic and dynamic. Its signature feature is how it uniquely reflects our



Baia Beach Club offers elevated, authentic food and beverage offerings, progressive health and wellness services, and immersive social activities to create a truly modern oasis of taste and tranquility in the heart of South Beach. Featured in the photo is their whole roasted branzino.

diverse population's rich melting pot of international flavors. I believe the multicultural influences that shape our cuisine will provide the Michelin aficionado with an exciting new palate to experience."

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DESTINATIONS FLORIDA TourismMarketing Today

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On the Cover

The Linton E. Allen Memorial Fountain at Lake Eola Park in Downtown Orlando provides a scenic backdrop for diners taking a stroll after dinner. The Orlando dining scene grows stronger every year with nationally recognized chefs and diverse cuisines for every budget and taste. In 2022, Orlando will join Miami and Tampa in the first-ever MICHELIN Guide to Florida. See the story on page one.

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Still, a few members of the community question the value of the event. Some are frustrated with the additional traffic of bikes along 112 miles of county roads. And others grow frustrated with sharing the road with athletes for days before the race as they bike and run to prepare for the event.

What these individuals don't recognize is the worldwide recognition of the Ironman brand and how the association benefits Panama City Beach throughout the year. Ironman is a premium brand associated with high performance. Panama City Beach has world-class beaches and accommodations. The reflective glow of each brand



Chris O'Brien and Dan Rowe of Visit Panama City Beach receive last-minute instructions from Iva Kusan of Ironman on how to hold the tape for the winner of Ironman Florida.

grows the prestige of both brands.

While it's easy for us to see this, if you are an attorney, a retired Ohio factory worker, or anyone else outside of the marketing

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Research shows four out of five travelers say they would extend by an extra night if a MICHELIN Guide selection existed, and 71% of travelers say they would increase their spending. An analysis of 2021 credit card data by Florida's visitors from top domestic markets suggests that 86% of their spend (nearly \$40M per year) occurs at independent or smaller local-chain restaurants.



Overall, Orlando is home to more than 6,000 restaurants representing 40 different international cuisines. New restaurants are always opening, and Orlando has three Top Chef alumni with restaurants, or soon-to-open restaurants, offering fine dining.

In addition, 80% of travelers agree that if a destination of a business trip offers a MICHELIN Guide selection, they would likely extend their stay. Business travelers, especially those traveling for a meeting or convention, are a big economic driver to the state because they typically stay longer and spend more. Having Michelin-rated restaurants will undoubtedly have a very significant economic impact.

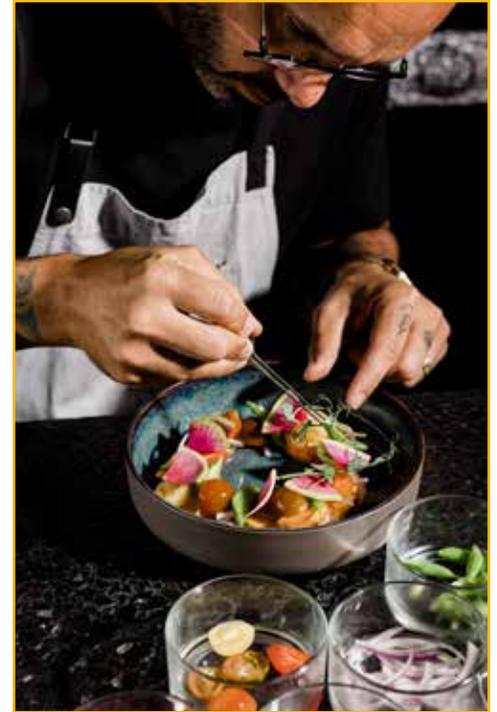
Below is the overall visitor spending and the amount spent on food and beverage for each participating county for 2019, as derived from VISIT FLORIDA data sources. This shows the impact that F&B has on the overall spend for these destinations and the opportunity they have to increase traveler spending with the Michelin partnership.

- Orange (Orlando) - \$30.69 billion overall, \$7.33 billion F&B
- Miami-Dade (Miami) - \$21.71 billion overall, \$4.88 billion F&B
- Hillsborough (Tampa) - \$4.33 billion overall, \$1.09 billion F&B

"Florida is known for its iconic beaches and world-class theme parks, but what travelers may

not know is the diverse and unexpected culinary delights that can be found throughout the Sunshine State," says Staci Mellman, chief marketing officer for VISIT FLORIDA. "This Michelin partnership will elevate Florida's culinary position to travelers around the world, and more importantly, will boost our tourism economy and make Florida more attractive to people who prioritize culinary experiences when they travel."

The inaugural edition of The MICHELIN Guide Miami, Orlando and Tampa will be announced in 2022.



Ferrell Alvarez meticulously lays finishing touches on his culinary masterpiece at Rooster and the Till. Alvarez is one of the many local chefs responsible for forging a path to Tampa's growing culinary reputation.

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world, this year-long benefit may not be readily apparent.

As tourism marketers, we usually see our role as simply putting these deals together. After all, if we don't win these events for our communities, they'll go somewhere else.

There is another important role for us. We must educate the community about the benefit of these opportunities. How these partnerships grow our

brand. How they attract visitors who are willing to pay more. How they attract off-season visitors to support year-round employment.

We aren't done when we close the deal. We aren't even done when the event is over. Our job is to help our community embrace our partners and our visitors so the tourism industry can continue to power Florida's economy.



- Destin-Walton Beach
- Destination Panama City Florida
- Franklin County Tourist Development Council
- Gulf County Tourist Development Council
- Jackson County Tourist Development Council
- Mexico Beach Community Development Council
- Santa Rosa County Tourist Development Office
- Visit Panama City Beach
- Visit Pensacola
- Visit South Walton
- Visit Washington County

Destin-Walton Beach Offers Little Adventures to Get Families Out on the Water

To help introduce kids of all ages to Little Adventures that get families out on the water in unique and safe ways, Destin-Fort Walton Beach opened its first Adventure Outpost. Located at The Shores at Crystal Beach in Destin, the outpost invited families to meet with local scouts who not only shared their knowledge, but also introduced them to experts to experience adventures firsthand through a series of free weekly workshops. These lessons gave passionate locals the opportunity to share the destination's water culture and provided opportunities for

kids to take their first step toward adventure, oftentimes trying something new for the very first time.

The outpost is just one of several pilot programs underway in the destination that will resume in 2022, and this summer through early fall alone, more than 300 kids participated in a workshop!

"There's nothing like watching a kid reel in a fish for the first time or hold a sea creature they've only ever seen in a picture," says Kerry Sutsko, destination stewardship manager. "The outpost not only introduced families to water-based adventures, but it ultimately created a memorable experience in the moment and gave them the confidence to try new things across the destination."



The team from Emerald Coast Bait and Tackle is on hand during *Join the Pinfish Patrol*, teaching kids about the types of bait, the best way to hold a rod, and even how to reel in a catch from the water's edge.



See *Creatures* welcomes kids to a living lab guided by the Emerald Coast Science Center where they'll encounter and learn about the species that call the Gulf of Mexico and Choctawhatchee Bay home.



Fall Brings Live Music to Historic Downtown Panama City

On a beautiful, cool, mid-October evening along the bay-front #LovePC Lawn, Destination Panama City hosted the first of its new concert series Downtown After Dark on the grounds of the brand new state-of-the-art Visitors Center. This inaugural concert featured popular soul-rock musician JJ Grey and his band, Mofro, with local favorite Tyler James and the Voodoo Jelly opening the evening. The energy and excitement was palpable as the crowd of more than 3,000 gathered from all over the country and enjoyed food truck vendors



The Panama City Songwriters Festival is a free, family-friendly event.

and bar service as they soaked in the sounds that filled the impressive stage. The Downtown After Dark concerts will continue to take place quarterly, becoming a staple of Historic Downtown Panama City life.

Historic Downtown Panama City hosted its 3rd annual Panama City Songwriters Festival set to the enchanting backdrop of art galleries, breweries, charming dining venues, and even a boxing ring. Original live music and the captivating stories that inspired the 40-plus local, regional, and national songwriters and performers filled the streets for two nights in November on six stages spread throughout Historic Downtown Panama City. This free, family-friendly event gave attendees the unique opportunity to experience the talents of several accomplished artists with its well-planned staggered schedule at closely grouped venues within walking distance of each other.



With the success of the inaugural Downtown After Dark concert series, plans are to make it a quarterly event.

Local Legends Tell the Story of Tourism in Gulf County

Tourism advocacy took a front seat in Gulf County during the DMO's latest campaign, calling those who are Champions of Tourism for the area Local Legends. After Hurricane Michael and the influx of visitors during COVID-19, the Gulf County TDC found it imperative to tell the tourism story. They did this by filming four Local Legends who all understand the importance of tourism to Gulf County. These Local Legends are also well-known and trusted members of the community.



Local Legend Reggie Smith is filmed for a story promoting Gulf County tourism.

Executive Director Kelli Godwin states, "The stories have different narratives, including sharing Gulf County, the right kind of tourism, how tourism helps all businesses, and how visitor spending puts food on the table

for Gulf County residents. All these stories are vital in showing our local community the value of tourism."

The GCTDC staff attended local community events and organizational meetings telling these stories. This campaign also included 30-second commercial spots, newspaper advertisements, and digital advertisements. During the campaign, the TDC hosted the first Park Hopper Day, celebrating the 5% Tourist Development Tax and its role in tourism. More than 3,000 pieces of Champions of Tourism T-shirts, stickers, and other promotional items were distributed.



The Gulf County TDC hosts Park Hopper Day.



BEST of NORTHWEST FLORIDA

Jackson County Reports Unprecedented Five Years of Continuous Growth in Visitation

Between recovery from a category 5 hurricane and two years of pandemics, Jackson County has faced many obstacles just like many of our partners in Northwest Florida.

These obstacles haven't slowed down tourism growth for the region, and the same holds true for Jackson County. Data received from VISIT FLORIDA shows a \$167.5 million economic impact in 2019 with county tourism officials estimating 1.2 million visitors to Jackson County that same year.

Christy Andreasen reported great news during a county commission meeting in November, saying, "Jackson County

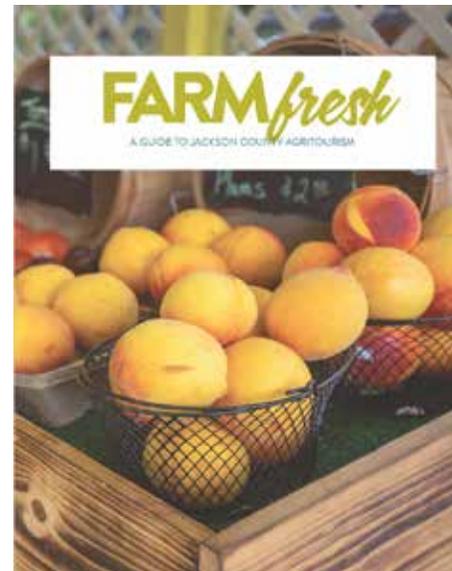


Southern Living's feature on Jackson County focuses on agriculture and farm visits as the county focuses on and sees a rise in agritourism.

has experienced an unprecedented five years of continuous growth."

The rise in tourism can be largely attributed to a shift in marketing campaign focus to highlight ecotourism, nature tourism, heritage tourism, and agritourism. The third edition of the Jackson County agritourism guide, *Farm Fresh*, helped set the path for JCTDC staff and PR firm Laurie Rowe Communications to pitch a story on farm visits. The story idea was picked up by *Southern Living* and generated more than 7.3 billion impressions with a media value of over \$67 million—an immense success for a destination with an operating budget of under \$400,000.

Jackson County TDC continues to look to the future with plans for new product development in the next year, including the creation of a Sports Tourism Strategic Plan to help align facilities in the county to work toward a common goal—increasing visitation year-round.



Farm Fresh, Jackson County's agritourism guide, helps visitors and residents "Find the Fruits of Florida."

Mexico Beach Opens New Welcome Center, Enhances Beaches

New building, same location! July 2021 saw the opening of the new Welcome Center in Mexico Beach. The old building succumbed to its damages sustained by Hurricane Michael in 2018, and since then staff had been operating out of a temporary modular unit. Not anymore!

"Our new welcome center is another steppingstone in the rebuilding efforts for Mexico Beach, and we are delighted to continue the growth progress," says Mexico Beach Community Development Council President Kimberly Shoaf. "Visitors and



Mexico Beach has a new Welcome Center that serves as an information hub for visitors and residents alike.

residents are invited to stop and see not only the growth that is occurring throughout the city, but also receive current news and information about our amazing destination."

Progress is happening along the sandy beaches as well. Mexico Beach CDC and the Bay County TDC were able to assist the city with the Inlet Sand Bypassing Project. Almost 19,000 cubic yards of sand was excavated from stockpile areas and then redistributed along deemed areas in the critically eroded section of the beaches.

"This is just the start of our goals to nourish and enhance our beautiful beaches with our own sand. More efforts are in place to complete a full beach restoration project, so stay tuned!" states Shoaf.



The Inlet Sand Bypassing Project is replenishing sand and enhancing the beautiful beaches of Mexico Beach.

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2021 Is a Banner Year for Santa Rosa County Tourism

Fall in Santa Rosa County is in full swing with seaside and riverside festivals and adventures showcasing the natural beauty, cultural heritage, and quaint, relaxing rhythm that the destination is best known for. So far, 2021 has been a banner year for Navarre Beach and Santa Rosa County, which realized the highest ever recorded tax collections; received widespread national recognition from media outlets Money, CNBC, MSN, Orbitz, TripSavvy, and Yahoo; and were honored for the DMO's creative tourism marketing efforts.



Known as "Florida's Most Relaxing Place," Navarre Beach offers everything from white sand beaches on the Gulf of Mexico to endless outdoor adventures inland.

Over the summer, Santa Rosa County Tourism unveiled its Do Good, Feel Good Navarre Beach program. This program was

created to offer sustainable volunteer opportunities for both travelers and locals of all ages.

Santa Rosa County Tourism's print advertising campaign Open Air Fun was awarded a 2021 Silver Flagler Award from VISIT FLORIDA.

"This campaign ran late last year as part of an integrated media program that addressed the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the travel industry due to the global pandemic," shares Julie White, tourist development director, Santa Rosa County. "As such, we positioned Navarre Beach as Florida's Most Relaxing Place, delightfully filled with socially distanced possibilities, making it the perfect location for a safe, satisfying, and relaxing beach vacation. We are thrilled with this campaign's continued success."



Get a little closer to nature. Escape to a place that is uncrowded, unspoiled, and unbelievably fun. Pictured here is Coldwater Gardens, Stargazer Platform.

Visit Panama City Beach Wins Two ESTO Awards for *Chasin' the Sun*

Visit Panama City Beach's fishing and coastal lifestyle series *Chasin' the Sun* won the esteemed Destiny Award for best destination marketing in the Video, Film or Podcast Series category at the 2021 U.S. Travel Association's ESTO awards ceremony in Los Angeles. The show also won the highly competitive, inaugural People's Choice Award. These awards recognize excellence and creative accomplishment in destination marketing and promotion at the local and regional levels.

"I am extremely proud of this program and the other marketing initiatives that showcase Panama City Beach as a dynamic tourist destination and a Real.Fun.Beach," says Visit Panama City Beach President & CEO Dan Rowe. "This achievement is for a first-class,



Capt. Justin Leakes enjoys the #ReelFunBeach.

nontraditional marketing initiative that showcases Panama City Beach to audiences across the country."

Chasin' the Sun promotes tourism to Panama City Beach, creates awareness of the area's diverse fisheries, and highlights the city's restaurants, attractions, and special events. *Chasin' the Sun* has elevated exposure for Panama City Beach beyond its core markets, increased activity for fishing charters, and achieved its goal of showcasing the spectacular fishery and hidden gems of the destination.

Chasin' the Sun is hosted by local charter fishing guide Capt. Justin Leake and produced by Chris Hermans of Pinfish Media. Filming for the show's seventh season is underway, and all-new episodes will premiere on Discovery Channel in January 2022.



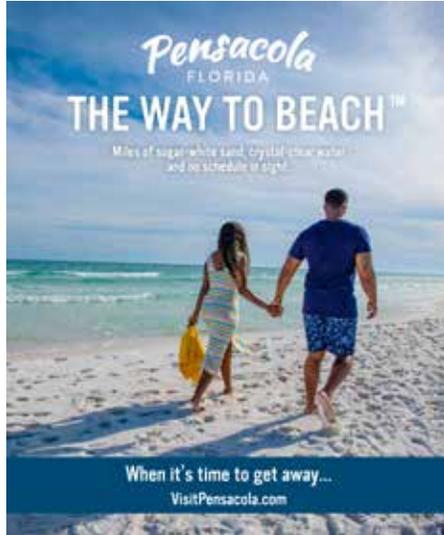
Viewers can catch an all-new season of *Chasin' the Sun* premiering January 2022.



Visit Pensacola Celebrates New Brand, The Way to Beach™, and 2021 Tourism Successes

This past month, Visit Pensacola celebrated a record year and the launch of its new brand, The Way to Beach™, at its annual meeting.

"This past year, we've seen difficult challenges met with determination by our hospitality and tourism industry. To support our destination and its future efforts, we felt strongly we needed to evolve the Visit Pensacola brand into something that told our destination's story completely," Visit Pensacola President & CEO Darien Schaefer says. "The Way to Beach™ is Pensacola because we're not just any beach with beautiful water and white



Visit Pensacola announces The Way to Beach™, evolving the destination's existing brand. The Way to Beach™ starts with the beach but paints a bigger picture to include a full range of experiences available in Pensacola, allowing the brand to tell the story of the whole community.

sand—we have arts, we have food, we have neighborhoods, and we have a community that makes this truly the best destination to live, work, play, and visit."

Along with announcing the brand, Schaefer shared that Escambia County had a record-breaking year across the board. In fiscal year 2021, \$17,671,461 in TDT dollars was collected, an increase of 59.9% over FY20, and 23.3% over FY19.

To continue the celebration of the new launch, Visit Pensacola awarded one lucky winner with a vacation prize package for participating in The Way to Beach™ Cocktail Trail. The community was invited to a series of destination brand parties at partner businesses and encouraged to check in to the destination's app. The celebration garnered nearly 200 app downloads!



Visit Pensacola installs its FY22 board of directors at its annual meeting and introduces a new board chair, Deandra Holcomb, to lead the organization in the new year.

Visit South Walton Celebrates Beach Access Expansion

Representatives from the Walton County Board of County Commissioners and Visit South Walton were pleased to officially break ground on the county's newest regional beach access on October 27. The Gulf-front property boasts 400 feet of sugar-white sand and is located at 907 Scenic Gulf Drive in Miramar Beach.

"Walton County continues to see tremendous growth given its natural beauty, incredible quality of life, and our welcoming community," says Jason Cutshaw, co-interim executive director of the Walton County Tourism Department. "When we have an opportunity to expand beach access for our residents and visitors to enjoy, it's always a priority."

Since August 2016, Visit South Walton has purchased a total of seven parcels to be used as new regional access points as well as future parking facilities. The Scenic Gulf Drive properties were purchased in 2017 for \$5.7 million.



Signage marks the site of the future Scenic Gulf Drive Regional Beach Access.

Each regional beach access point includes parking, rest room facilities, beach flag condition information, and a lifeguard station.

All regional and neighborhood beach accesses are maintained using Tourist Development Tax dollars, a 5% tax collected on short-term rentals. Residents do not pay the TDT unless they are taking a "staycation" in a local rental property or accommodations.



Representatives from the Walton County Board of County Commissioners and Visit South Walton break ground on the Scenic Gulf Drive Regional Beach Access.

JOIN US FOR FLORIDA TOURISM DAY

at the Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida
January 18-19, 2022

This is your chance to speak with legislators at the Capitol to discuss the issues that are important to DMOs.

To promote awareness for the importance of tourism marketing to Florida's economy, the Partnership for Florida's Tourism is hosting Florida Tourism Day at the Capitol. This event will feature visits by legislators to our meeting as well as appointments for Destinations Florida members to meet with legislators at the Capitol to discuss the issues that are important to DMOs. **Attendance is capped at 250 attendees with Destinations Florida committed to 50. To attend you must be one of the first 50 to register.**

This meeting is being held in conjunction with Destinations Florida, Florida Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds, Florida Attractions Association, Florida Association of Museums, and Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association.

Schedule of Events

Events begin with a 2 p.m. meeting of the Destinations Florida Board of Directors' meeting on Friday, January 18, followed by a welcome reception sponsored by Madden at 5:30 p.m. Plan on a full day of events on Saturday, January 19. We'll begin with a Destinations Florida member briefing at 8 a.m.

and conclude the day with the Florida Tourism Day Reception from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Accommodations

The Hyatt House
Tallahassee
Capitol-University

is offering a special rate of \$219 per night (two-night minimum stay) for Destinations Florida members attending Tourism Day. To make your reservation for the nights of January 18 and 19, please call the hotel reservations directly at (850) 222-0039 and reference the group name Destinations Florida or make your reservation at this link: <https://bit.ly/22TourismDay>.

There is a two-night minimum stay required during legislative session.

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Register today at:

DestinationsFlorida.org/22TourismDay



Destinations Florida Legislative Action Plan & Toolkit

The Destinations Florida Tourism Marketing Legislative Action Plan & Toolkit is a new resource for members that outlines the legislative and public policy challenges facing Florida's tourism industry and tourism promotion organizations, particularly recent legislative efforts to change the uses of the Tourist Development Tax. The document also offers solutions, tactics, tools, templates, and examples designed to address these challenges.

Download the toolkit at:

DestinationsFlorida.org/Legislative-Toolkit

Q&A With Paul Beirnes of Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB

Paul Beirnes, the newly appointed executive director of the Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB, shares a few insights about what drives him in the destination management space, what he sees as short- and long-term issues for the industry, and what helps him recalibrate during his "off" hours. His 30-plus-year career has taken him from overseeing destination marketing for Hilton's 18-brand portfolio, directing global and partnership marketing for 16 years at Visit Orlando, and over a decade of accelerated marketing leadership roles at Disney.

What excites you most about taking over the leadership role at Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB, one of the most noteworthy destinations in Florida?

Coming into the position during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic was certainly unique timing. Over the course of the past year, the destination has embraced research at every turn and has remained exceptionally nimble to market and consumer nuances. I'm extremely optimistic for the path ahead and see a destination whose brand assets are precisely what visitors are seeking. I look forward to our team continuing to demonstrate the value and importance that the tourism industry has upon the community as a whole.

How does your previous experience in tourism promotion determine your approach to overseeing tourism in your Southwest Florida location?

I have had the distinct pleasure and opportunity to work with some of the finest destination and brand leaders in the industry,



"My goal is to ensure that the tourism product in Collier County will grow with a depth of purpose and intent that is data-driven and the right fit for the destination."

— Paul Beirnes, Executive Director, Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB

and I celebrate the opportunity to apply that cumulative experience to the Naples, Marco Island, and Everglades brand. My goal is to ensure that the tourism product in Collier County will grow with a depth of purpose and intent that is data-driven and the right fit for the destination. If I have gleaned anything from all my years in this industry, it is that research and a defined strategy should lead the way in the decision-making process. Being meticulous with our strategic direction and purposeful with our implementation is as important as encouraging the CVB's dynamic team to be comfortable with generating new and creative ideas that will continuously move the brand forward, to the forefront of the industry.

Can you outline your plans/goals for boosting visitation over the next year and beyond?

While cautiously optimistic about the future, it is fundamentally important that we remain strategic and at the same time nimble in order to ensure a continuation of our success as we emerge from the pandemic. We have experienced an extraordinary rebound in the past year including exceptional ADR, increased airlift, as well as record-setting visitation numbers. The fact is we must remain engaged and top-of-mind with our existing visitors while clearly communicating the value proposition that our destination has to offer. Competition in the years ahead will be fierce as global destinations battle to regain market share. As a result, it will be extremely important that we remain research focused, remain as nimble as possible, and at the same time remain committed to our value proposition that I mentioned earlier, which has allowed us to weather the storm.

What helps you to recalibrate and relax; can you share a little bit about yourself?

Relocating to such a spectacular coastal destination as Naples is in itself a great way to relax. Being able to spend time together as a family is a wonderful plus, since my daughter was already attending Florida Gulf Coast University, just a few miles away. Between home redesign projects and exploring the coastline with my wife, Lynne, we always are finding new outlets to explore.

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TDT for Park Sculptures?

by Steven M. Hogan

We all know the pressure that counties can get to use Tourist Development Tax funds on various projects. Some projects look like great ones to benefit the community—but the TDT statute restricts the use of TDT funds to only those specific uses set forth in section 125.0104, Florida Statutes.

Along these lines, a recent question came up addressing whether TDT funds can be used to finance public art sculptures in downtown parks.

Questions like these always have to be answered by looking at section 125.0104 and determining whether a proposed use fits within the statutory restrictions. The ultimate responsibility for making these decisions rests with the county, which must make "legislative findings" to the effect that the proposed use of TDT funds is an "Authorized Use" under the statute. See Op. Att'y Gen.



TDT funds potentially can be used to finance public art sculptures if the proposed use of the funds is an "Authorized Use" under section 125.0104, Florida Statutes.

Fla. 201514 (2015) ("Ultimately, the county must make the appropriate legislative determination that the construction of a boat ramp and observation platform that serve as a part of a nature center . . . relates to and primarily promotes tourism.").



Steven M. Hogan

With regard to sculptures, they can potentially qualify if the county determines that the primary purpose for the sculptures is to "promote tourism." An example of this is found in a 1998 Florida Attorney General Opinion addressing whether TDT funds can be used to fund a war memorial. In Opinion 98-74 (Dec. 1, 1998), the Florida attorney general stated that if the memorial could be tied to the purpose of attracting tourists, based on the county's legislative findings to that effect, then TDT funds could potentially be used for such a project.

Keep this in mind when similar questions arise for you. As always, legal counsel should be sought on specific questions, as the facts can change the analysis.

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.

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Visit Sebring Launches Centennial GeoTrail

Visit Sebring recently launched its new Centennial GeoTrail, which celebrates 100 years of Highlands County. This GeoTrail is in addition to the official Sebring Area GeoTour: Florida's Hidden Gem launched in 2020. Geocachers who complete the GeoTrail will be awarded a set of five path tags and collectible coins that highlight activities and history throughout the area. "We are thrilled to add another geocaching opportunity that's interactive and fun for all ages," says Visit Sebring's Casey Hartt. VisitSebring.com/geocaching



Geocachers from around Florida and two other states attended Visit Sebring's Centennial GeoTrail launch at Lake Placid's Journal Plaza.

Treasure Coast DMOs Launch Podcast

The St. Lucie, Indian River and Martin County tourism offices launched *Don't Come Here: Stories of the Treasure Coast* podcast. The podcast features local host Joshua Flores along with many other special guests throughout the episodes. The podcast weaves the region's snarky ad campaign theme into a podcast series that describes experiences and reasons of why visitors *should* plan a trip to the Treasure Coast. All episodes are available on Apple, Spotify, and Google podcasts. FloridasTreasureCoast.com



Treasure Coast's creative for its podcast listing brings in listeners who actually will learn why they *should* visit this beautiful area.

Monroe County TDC Unveils New Mission Statement That Guides Efforts for Marketing the Florida Keys & Key West

"The mission of the Monroe County Tourist Development Council is to manage Monroe County's tourism marketing efforts to assure long-term economic stability resulting from visitor-related revenues," the new mission statement reads. "The TDC pledges to benefit residents and visitors by utilizing those financial contributions to improve Florida Keys environmental and community resources. The tourism council also prioritizes working to enhance residents' quality of life and minimize their property taxes through safeguarding the health of the county's primary industry." Fla-Keys.com



Bahia Honda State Park in the Lower Florida Keys
Photo: Andy Newman/Florida Keys News Bureau

Florida International Air Show Returns to Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach

With more than 15,000 in attendance, the Florida International Air Show was a huge success. The family-friendly event offered a wide variety of vendors, aircraft displays, food trucks, performances, and more. Guests received a firsthand view of World War II planes flying over Charlotte Harbor. "The hospitality was amazing. We met some great people, and I thoroughly enjoyed the Punta Gorda restaurants. One of my favorites was the sunsets as we explored the Harbor," says Captain Aimee "Rebel" Fielder, jet pilot with the F-16 Backup Viper Demo Team, USAF, Shaw AFB. PureFlorida.com



After being canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic, the Florida International Air Show was back in full force this year.



Quick Trips!

Levy County Honors Veterans, Gold Star Families

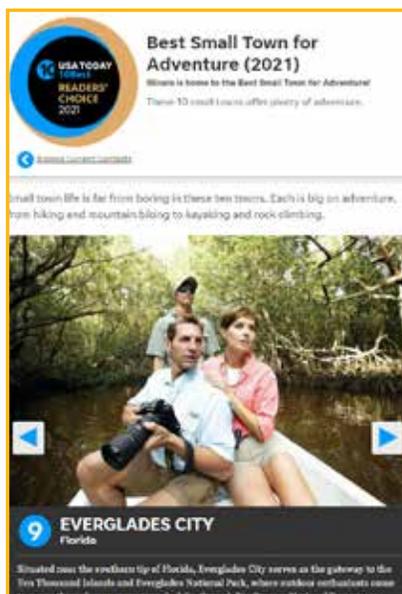
On November 10, Levy County honored veterans and their families with a new addition to the Wall of Honor in the lobby of the Levy County Courthouse. During this presentation, Levy County honored four Gold Star families of servicemen who made the ultimate sacrifice in defending our liberties. These families can take pride in knowing their loved one left humanity a legacy. Levy County Visitors Bureau provided refreshments and celebrated the birthday of the United States Marine Corps. In honor of the Marines, donations were made to Toys for Tots. VisitLevy.com



Levy County's Wall of Honor recognizes the Gold Star families of U.S. Army Private First Class Wardell "Bubba" Borders, U.S. Navy Petty Officer First Class Joseph Plummer Brooks, U.S. Marine Lance Corporal Brian Rory Buesing, and U.S. Army Sergeant Karl Campbell.

Everglades City Named a USA Today's Top Ten Best Small Town for Adventure

After being nominated for *USA Today's* 10 Best Small Towns for Adventure, Everglades City hovered at the #14 spot for weeks. The CVB's team set a goal to get Everglades City into the top ten list. Their combined social media efforts and targeted outreach proved successful, with Everglades City making it over the goal line to take the #9 spot. This ensures Everglades City will be included whenever the winning top ten entries are published. Everglades City was the only Florida town to make the top ten list. ParadiseCoast.com



Everglades City is a top ten Best Small Town for Adventure in *USA Today's* Readers' Choice 2021.

Visit South Walton Debuts Quarterly Newsletter

Visit South Walton is excited to introduce the inaugural issue of *Walton County Line*, spotlighting the great events, businesses, and people that make Walton County one of the country's most-loved destinations. Each issue will feature local shops and the individuals that contribute so much to the county's welcoming personality. Readers will also discover important tips for preserving Walton county's natural beauty, the distinctive landscape, and other elements that make it unique. The quarterly newsletter is direct mailed and available at county offices throughout Walton County. VisitSouthWalton.com



The inaugural issue of *Walton County Line*, published in November 2021, puts a spotlight on Walton County businesses, events, and people.

Martin County Tourism Wins Two Magellan Awards

The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing was recently recognized in the 2021 Travel Weekly Magellan Awards, winning a gold in the Overall Destinations: Cultural/Arts category for its Martin County Arts & Culture Trail and a silver in the Destination Marketing Campaign category for the Missed Milestones program. "It's truly an honor to be recognized alongside such incredible destinations across the globe," says Ian Centrone, tourism public relations & community liaison for Martin County. DiscoverMartin.com



Leveraging expert knowledge of the travel industry, the annual Travel Weekly Magellan Awards honor the best in travel across a broad range of industry segments, including hotels and resorts, destinations, cruise lines, airports, and more.



Experience Kissimmee Hosts First Networking Event of Its Kind

Experience Kissimmee recently hosted a hybrid networking event for HelmsBriscoe’s regional teams in Florida and Arizona at both teams’ local TopGolf locations—connecting each in-person event with TopGolf’s brand new leaderboard venue-to-venue technology. The teams played simultaneously and competed for a first-place prize. Each regional team selected a beneficiary charity of their choice to receive canned foods and other products to stock the shelves for those in need. *ExperienceKissimmee.com*



HelmsBriscoe teams attend Experience Kissimmee’s networking event in-person while connecting with each other virtually.

Polk County Hosts Orange Cup Regatta

For the 83rd time, the Orange Cup Regatta took to Lake Hollingsworth in Lakeland. Dubbed “The Quake on the Lake,” the powerboat race features hydroplanes going well over 100 miles an hour on the three-mile-wide body of water. For the first time in its history, the race was not held in March but rather in October, and attendance benefitted from the more predictable weather. This powerboat race is the second oldest continuous sporting event in Polk County, trumped only by MLB Spring Training. *VisitCentralFlorida.org*



Power boat racing is a popular and longtime sporting event in Polk County.

Space Coast Breaks TDT Record

It’s official! The 2020-21 fiscal year was a record-breaker for the Space Coast Office of Tourism, reaching \$16,939,307 in TDT. Port Canaveral currently matches its record with nine homeported ships with another two on the way. The Melbourne Orlando International Airport is moving along on the international terminal expansion to welcome TUI passengers in March and broke ground on its new hotel. New Discovery show *RV There Yet?* filmed a Space Coast episode that will air on January 29, 2022. *VisitSpaceCoast.com*



RV There Yet? interviews Port Canaveral CEO Captain Murray near Exploration Tower.

Lee County VCB Launches It’s a Good Day Campaign

Lee County VCB’s It’s a Good Day marketing campaign, announced at last month’s Tourism Outlook Annual Meeting, is built on the belief that it’s time for more good days. VCB Executive Director Tamara Pigott said the VCB is poised to keep local tourism moving forward as an economic engine for Lee County and a must-see slice of paradise where everyone deserves a Good Day. New and repeat visitation, opportunities to promote inland activities, accommodations, and attractions are included. *FortMyers-Sanibel.com*



Keynote speaker Samantha Brown speaks about ways travelers can have meaningful experiences by being more in the present and the emotional value of travel. Brown hosts the Emmy Award-winning PBS travel series *Samantha Brown’s Places to Love*.



Writers' Fishing Excursion Generates Stories About Crystal River

Discover Crystal River Florida partnered with The Plantation at Crystal River and Suzuki Marine Boating to host a writers' fishing excursion in October. Following 2021 IBEX, seven writers enjoyed two epic days with Hang'Em High Sportfishing aboard two Suzuki-powered boats. One writer said it was the best grouper fishing of his life! Several stories have been published, generating upward of 350K impressions so far. There are four more articles expected, including a cover story. DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com



The fishing is great in Crystal River, Florida.
Photo: Jim Hendricks

Amelia Island Reports Tourism Growth for FY21

Amelia Island CVB was excited to host its Tourism Industry Marketing Meeting in October where they recapped FY21 and presented the plan for FY22. Partners were just as eager to discuss and celebrate Amelia Island tourism. FY21 highlights include a 21% increase in website users, 115% increase in social media engagements, 17% increase in visitors, and 29% increase in tourism economic impact. As tourism rebounds, visitation to Amelia Island will continue to bloom with the growth of the industry. AmeliaIsland.com



The Amelia Island CVB team celebrates rebounding tourism during the "Amelia Island in Bloom" Tourism Industry Marketing Meeting.

Panama City Beach Kicks Off the Holiday Season With Annual Celebration Weekend

Santa Claus came to town for the sixth annual Beach Home for the Holidays in Panama City Beach on Thanksgiving weekend. Families kicked off the most magical time of the year with a fun-filled weekend of holiday cheer at Aaron Bessant Park, including caroling concerts, delicious s'mores, magical nightly fireworks, and the lighting of the destination's 36-foot-tall Christmas tree. This year's Beach Home for the Holidays celebration included a Christmas Tree Village, photos with Santa, and a live concert from award-winning country music star Josh Turner. VisitPanamaCityBeach.com



Families enjoy Beach Home for the Holidays in Panama City Beach.

Visit Tampa Bay Closes Strongest Fiscal Year

Visit Tampa Bay closes out its fiscal year setting a new benchmark in tourism development collections. Reflecting hotel collections from October 2020 through September 2021, Visit Tampa Bay reports \$38.4 million in year-end collections, beating out 2019 over the same period by 7.04%. Six of Visit Tampa Bay's 12 fiscal months reached never-before-seen levels, including its latest September collections, which accomplished its first \$3 million month totaling \$3,241,979, a 17.44% increase over the previous record in October 2019. VisitTampaBay.com



Tourism is going strong in Tampa Bay.



Destin-Fort Walton Beach Honors Women Veterans

On Veteran's Day, Destin-Fort Walton Beach introduced a memorial paying tribute to women who have made significant contributions in the U.S. military. Located in Okaloosa County's 17.5-acre Veterans' Park, the Women Veterans Memorial features eight bronze statues of those who bravely served, welcoming visitors from around the country to both pay their respects and learn more about the women's individual contributions throughout history, from the Revolutionary War to the war in Afghanistan. DestinFWB.com



This statue honors World War II and Korean War Army Air Corps veteran Jonita Ruth Bonham-Bovée, the first female recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The Air Force Thunderbirds Soar Into Orlando North, Seminole County

The Orlando Air & Space Show wowed thousands of spectators October 16-17 at the Sanford International Airport. The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds were the stars of the show and featured the Navy F-18 Super Hornet, Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey, a B-52 Bomber, and more! This show celebrated the past, present, and future of aviation, and Orlando North looks forward to a continued partnership with the air show for years to come. DoOrlandoNorth.com



The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds fly into action at the Orlando Air & Space Show.

GMCVB Captures Gold and Bronze at 2021 TRAVVY Awards

The GMCVB received Gold for Best Domestic Destination and Bronze for Best Travel Agent Academy Program for its Specialist Program at the 2021 TRAVVY Awards November 11 at the Miami Beach Convention Center. Considered the "Academy Awards" of the travel industry, the TRAVVYs recognize top suppliers, destinations, technology providers, and attractions, and are especially significant as they're voted on by travel advisors, the key influencers in travel. MiamiAndBeaches.com



The GMCVB team celebrates their TRAVVY Awards. Pictured are Debra Lee, Lee Lennon, Gisela Marti, Philip Sherlock, George Neary, Petra Brennan, and Jennifer Haz.

Work Where You Want to Live

While Visit Sarasota County and the Economic Development Corporation have been working together on a paid media strategy for years, VSC recently started contracting with a local public relations firm to specifically handle relocation-focused earned media. The two groups have been working on a campaign titled Work Where You Want To Live that will allow visitors the opportunity to see why Sarasota should be considered as a destination to both work and live in. VisitSarasota.com



A family who just relocated to Sarasota enjoys their time fishing in the Gulf.



LagoonFest Raises Awareness of Fascinating Lake Worth Lagoon

The Palm Beaches and Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management presented the 7th annual LagoonFest event November 6 to educate the community and bring awareness to the fascinating and diverse habitat of one of the county's most important natural resources, the Lake Worth Lagoon. The event had free and educational activities that included but were not limited to wildlife presentations, kayak-clean-up tours, boat tours, and interactive educational displays from more than 80 exhibitor booths. *ThePalmBeaches.com*



The annual LagoonFest educates the public about Lake Worth Lagoon, an important natural resource in Palm Beach County.

Visit Lauderdale Debuts Expanded Convention Center Exhibit Space

Visit Lauderdale debuted the newly expanded 350,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space at the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center during the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (FLIBS). The rest of the \$1.2 billion expansion is on track for completion in 2025. The bureau also sponsored the show's VIP opening night reception and the NBC Sports Network television special with multiple airings to date on NBCSN. *Sunny.org*



Pictured here is the indoor portion of the FLIBS featuring 23 brands including boat and marine product manufacturers in the expanded convention center exhibition hall.

Elite Airways Offers New Nonstop Flights to Florida's Historic Coast From the NYC Area

Just in time for the 28th annual Nights of Lights® celebration in St. Augustine, Elite Airways is offering service between Newark Liberty Airport and Northeast Florida Regional Airport in St. Augustine. With the intent of increasing visitors from the Northeast, the St. Johns County VCB leadership was instrumental in securing the nonstop jet service that is now operating twice weekly on Mondays and Fridays. *FloridasHistoricCoast.com*



St. Johns VCB and Elite Airways announce nonstop flights between Newark, New Jersey, and St. Augustine, Florida.

Projection Festival Brings Light, Sound, Art, and Fun to Panama City

The 8th annual Public Eye Soar projection festival brought the Gulf Coast State College campus to life for two nights this November with light, sound, art, and fun. Public Eye Soar delighted and impressed art lovers with featured imagery from hundreds of artists of all ages from all corners of the globe. Supported by local businesses and benefactors, and completely run by volunteers, this free, unique festival has grown exponentially this year and expects to enjoy continued success and growth for years to come. *DestinationPanamaCity.com*



Public Eye Soar is one of the longest-running projection festivals in the United States.



Orlando North, Seminole County Announces Promotions, Addition to Tourism Team

Orlando North, Seminole County is pleased to announce three promotions and an addition to the new Tourism Team! Gui Cunha has been promoted to the administrator role for the Seminole County Office of Economic Development and Tourism. He will continue to lead the Tourism Team as well as oversee the economic development for Seminole County. Through their innovative marketing strategies and content creation campaigns, Karen Aplin and Jessica Pickering have been at the forefront of record-setting demand indicators. Karen has been promoted to tourism director, and Jessica has been moved up to tourism manager.



Karen Aplin



Gui Cunha



Colby Goncalves



Jessica Pickering

In addition, Colby Goncalves has been added to the Tourism Team as the new tourism coordinator. Colby comes from a strong background in the hospitality industry and will utilize his tech, logistics, and recreation experience to expand Orlando North's youth sports tourism marketing efforts. DoOrlandoNorth.com

Visit Lake's Steven Clenney Promoted to Director

Visit Lake is proud to announce the promotion of Steven Clenney to director of the office of Visit Lake. Steven started with the Lake County DMO in 2017, serving as the manager of sports development and recently as the interim director. Many of his accomplishments include successful recruitment of premier bass fishing tournaments, which resulted in an over \$13 million project economic impact since 2017, as well as oversight of capital infrastructure projects including the Hickory Point Beach athletics center and other niche sports initiatives. Steven will focus on the strategic direction of the destination's marketing, capital projects, and other industry support initiatives. VisitLakeFL.com



Steven Clenney

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Deadline: January 7, 2022

**Destination Marketing Summit
May 25-27, 2022
Streamsong Resort
Bowling Green, Florida**

DMO members are encouraged to submit presentations sharing successes and challenges over the past year. Affiliate partners, advertising agencies, and other vendors interested in educating and networking with DMOs are also encouraged to submit presentations.

Submit your presentation online by January 7, 2022, at:
DestinationsFlorida.org/2022SummitSpeakers

Photo by Vecteezy.com



DESTINATIONS
FLORIDA



CALL to ACTION Corner

Florida Tourism Industry Leaders:

Here are two things you can do this month to help communicate the value of Florida tourism and tourism promotion:

- ✓ Send a copy of the *Destination Promotion: Empowering Florida's Growth* report to your local elected officials and the state legislators in your delegation. Email them a note with this link, EmpoweringFloridasGrowth.com, or ask us to mail you some printed copies of the report by emailing Suzanne@DestinationsFlorida.org.
- ✓ Now that legislative committees have started to meet, it is critical that we get some face time with our state lawmakers and start building relationships. Reach out and ask if you can meet with them when they are home in the district. This is a great opportunity to start sharing with them the value and impacts of tourism on their district and constituents.

Thank you for continuing to be incredible advocates for the industry!



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DESTINATIONS FLORIDA MEMBER BENEFIT

Legal Resource for Your DMO

As a member benefit for you, Destinations Florida has retained Steven M. Hogan with the Ausley McMullen law firm to provide insight into the operation of the TDT and related issues to Destinations Florida.

There are several situations where it would be helpful for you to have a legal opinion for your community. As a member benefit, you can speak with Mr. Hogan about the facts and laws at a general level.

To take advantage of this program, feel free to reach out to Steve Hogan at the information below:



Steven M. Hogan
Ausley McMullen
850/224-9115
shogan@ausley.com

If you require specific advice on decisions that your DMO will make under the TDT or other law, you can hire Mr. Hogan to advise you separately as your lawyer.

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Enclosed is your copy of Tourism Marketing Today
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INSIDE: Join us in Tallahassee for Florida Tourism Day, January 18-19!

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Destinations Florida



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

Destinations Florida represents the 55 official county DMOs that promote their communities throughout the world. Tourism promotion activities help to attract 131.4 million visitors to Florida, adding \$96.5 billion to Florida's economy and supporting more than 1.6 million jobs. These activities are made possible by Tourist Development Taxes provided by Florida Statutes Section 125.0104. Statistics: VISIT FLORIDA Research

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