

# ALL OF THE TRAINING YOU NEED TO **ATTRACT MORE VISITORS TO YOUR DESTINATION**

DESTINATIONS FLORIDA  
**Destination  
Marketing  
Summit**  
**May 13-15, 2026**

Bradenton Area  
Convention Center  
Palmetto, Florida

**A program of education designed for tourism specialties to share information and to help destination marketers attract more customers to their communities.**

- Detailed education that can be applied immediately to bring more visitors to your destination
- Education sessions that serve many different professionals within your DMO
- Opportunity to gain insights from your peers throughout Florida on how to build better community partnerships within the industry and with organizations outside of the traditional tourism industry
- VISIT FLORIDA's plans for helping destinations bring more customers to our communities.







## From the Chairman of the Board

It is my pleasure to invite you to the 2026 Destinations Florida Destination Marketing Summit, the year's largest gathering of Florida destination marketing professionals and industry partners.

We are fortunate to live and work in one of the most desirable places in the world. While Florida may appear to sell itself, those of us in destination marketing know that attracting visitors today requires strategy, creativity, and constant adaptation. Our destinations compete daily with well-funded markets across the globe, and the livelihoods of millions of Floridians depend on our ability to drive visitation and economic impact.

That is why investing in professional development for ourselves and our teams has never been more important. This year's Destination Marketing Summit is intentionally designed to deliver practical insights, proven strategies, and real-world tools that marketing teams can put to work immediately.

This year's program is designed to help destination marketers:

- Build community-supported tourism strategies that sustain visitation and local buy-in
- Strengthen the DMO's role through partnerships that expand reach and marketing impact
- Use data and performance insights to prove value and optimize marketing spend
- Reach more travelers through accessible, inclusive, and family-friendly experiences
- Elevate destination brands with authentic storytelling that converts interest into visits
- Work smarter using AI, automation, and emerging tools to drive results with small teams

In addition to dynamic educational sessions, the Summit offers unparalleled opportunities to connect with respected speakers, fellow destination marketers from across Florida, and the industry's leading partners. We encourage you to bring your team, share ideas, and leave with strategies you can put into action right away.

Destinations Florida looks forward to welcoming you to this important event and to continuing our work together to strengthen tourism across Florida.

Sincerely,

*Nerissa Okiye*

Nerissa Okiye, Chairman of the Board  
Destinations Florida

[www.DestinationsFlorida.org](http://www.DestinationsFlorida.org)

1400 Village Sq. Blvd., Suite 3-250 • Tallahassee, FL 32312 • 850/222-6000

# SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

## Wednesday, May 13, 2026

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Board of Directors Meeting and Working Lunch
2:00 PM – 2:45 PM	The Delicate Dance of Destination Stewardship: Where Residents and Tourism Can Thrive Together
2:45 PM – 3:30 PM	Evolution of the DMO: Advanced Destination Promotion and Sustainability
3:45 PM – 5:30 PM	Destination Marketing State of the State Report
5:30 PM – 6:30 PM	Welcome Reception
6:30 PM	Dinner on own

## Thursday, May 14, 2026

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Networking Breakfast	
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	On Your Mark, Get Set...! Accessibility Is Like a Race Without a Finish Line, But There Are Many Starting Lines	Proof and Performance: Turning Attributed Visitation Into Economic Value and Strategic Advantage
10:00 AM – 10:45 AM	Data Sharing That Connects	Portrait of Family Travel: Autism, ADHD, and Neurodiversity
11:00 AM – 11:45 AM	Work Smarter: How AI Automations Are Transforming Workflows for Small Team	How to Attract the Luxury Traveler (Even If You're Not a Luxury Destination)
11:45 AM – 1:00 PM	Networking Luncheon Legislative Update With Mat Forrest	
1:00 PM – 1:45 PM	Soul of Surf 2.0: Catching the Next Wave	Brand Storytelling in the Experience Economy
2:00 PM – 2:45 PM	Evolving Partnership Models: Strengthening Community and Industry Success	Iron Chef: DMO Style: "Secret Ingredient Spotlight"
3:00 PM – 3:45 PM	From Home Town Takeover to Destination Transformation: How a Culture of Collaboration Rebuilt a Tourism Ecosystem	25 Irrefutable Truths About AI for Destination Marketing
5:00 PM – 8:30 PM	Connect Evening Event	Connect

## Friday, May 15, 2026

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Networking Breakfast
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	Building a Destination Research and Data Ecosystem: How Ocala/Marion County Turns Data Into Decisions
9:45 AM – 10:30 AM	Florida’s Air-Mobility Future: What DMOs Need to Know to Attract Tomorrow’s Travelers
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM	VISIT FLORIDA Marketing Update & “The Big Co-op Reveal”
12:00 Noon	Adjourn

Support from the following partners makes our meetings possible:

### Founding Partner



### Diamond Partners



### Platinum Partners



### Gold Partners





# Destination Marketing Summit

## PROGRAM DETAILS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026

2:00 PM – 2:45 PM

### **The Delicate Dance of Destination Stewardship: Where Residents and Tourism Can Thrive Together**

*Kara Franker, Visit Florida Keys*

Destination stewardship...it's at the heart of how we as tourism marketers approach our roles. And it's not just about increasing visitor numbers. It's about balancing economic benefits with residents' quality of life, protecting the environment, and honoring local culture and heritage. In this session, you'll learn why winning over your residents isn't optional—it's essential for long-term tourism success. We'll explore strategies for engaging local communities, fostering sustainable practices, and creating experiences that delight visitors. By the end of this session, you'll have actionable tools to become a true steward of your destination, ensuring it thrives for both residents and travelers alike.



2:45 PM – 3:30 PM

### **Evolution of the DMO: Advanced Destination Promotion and Sustainability**

*Milton Segarra, Discover The Palm Beaches*

As destination marketing organizations adapt to rapid changes in the tourism landscape, Discover The Palm Beaches has embraced an Advanced Destination Promotion and Sustainability (ADPS) model to drive growth and future-proof your DMO. This strategy transforms your destination into a year-round, experience-driven, and financially resilient tourism hub that merges advanced marketing, sustainable revenue generation, and civic collaboration. This session will explore how real-time data, analytics, and technology are transforming marketing effectiveness, alongside innovative financial models to diversify revenue streams. You will also learn strategies for integrating residents and stakeholders into tourism initiatives, ensuring that destination success benefits both visitors and the community.



3:45 PM – 5:30 PM

### **Destination Marketing State of the State Report**

A complete report on the activities of your peers in the destination marketing industry throughout Florida.

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2026

9:00 AM – 9:45 AM

### **On Your Mark, Get Set...! Accessibility Is Like a Race Without a Finish Line, But There Are Many Starting Lines**

*Kristy Durso, TravelAbility Corp*  
*Attiya Atkins, Visit Lauderdale*  
*Patrick Harrison, Visit Tampa Bay*

TravelAbility will moderate a panel featuring Florida DMOs sharing how they began their accessibility journey. One focused first on deaf inclusion, another on blind/low vision access, and the third on wheelchair accessibility—together illustrating the building blocks of an Accessibility Stack.



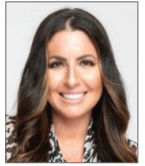
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM

### **Proof and Performance: Turning Attributed Visitation Into Economic Value and Strategic Advantage**

*Summer Gonzalez, VISIT FLORIDA*  
*Andria Godfrey, Miles Partnership*

In this session, we will explore how VISIT FLORIDA transforms digital media KPIs into measurable economic value for the state and uses those insights to guide future strategy. You will learn how we connect digital engagement to

attributed visitation, and then quantify downstream outcomes such as visitor spending, tax revenues, and job creation. We'll break down how this methodology powers our KPI Map, enabling us to translate campaign performance into real-world economic outcomes. Beyond measurement, we'll show how these insights actively shape campaign planning, media investment decisions, and optimization strategies. Participants will walk away with actionable ways to measure digital media's true impact and apply those learnings to build more efficient, economically grounded marketing plans.



10:00 AM – 10:45 AM

### **Data Sharing That Connects**

*Frida Bahja, Experience Kissimmee*

Whether you are sharing your department's CRM data with partners, reports from platforms with stakeholders, or highlights of studies with local authorities, you play a key role in your organization's information dissemination. Furthermore, as more data becomes available for your organization, the challenge will be not just sharing information, but learning how to share it in a way that is meaningful and compelling to different stakeholders. This is the purpose of this session, to explore practical data-sharing strategies to help you advocate for your organization's impact despite your role or the audience. You will hear how to avoid the "deadly sins" of data-sharing formats and visualizations, and some of the best practices for reporting. Join the conversation on transforming information sharing into a catalyst for partner engagement, market intelligence, and advocacy for tourism's impact.



10:00 AM – 10:45 AM

### **Portrait of Family Travel: Autism, ADHD, and Neurodiversity**

*Ryan Gillis, Tripadvisor*

This session explores data-driven insights into how families with autism, ADHD, and other neurodivergent needs research, plan, and select destinations. You will examine key demand signals, content cues, and accessibility indicators that influence decision making earlier in the planning funnel. You will review examples of how destinations are using traveler data, search behavior, and sentiment trends to inform inclusive messaging, experience design, and partner alignment, and leave with practical ideas for applying these insights to improve awareness, consideration, and visitation among neurodiverse family travelers.



11:00 AM – 11:45 AM

### **Work Smarter: How AI Automations Are Transforming Workflows for Small Team**

*Jess Bertolini, Visit Sarasota County*

In this session, Visit Sarasota County will share how they use AI automations to streamline PR, social media, and web workflows, freeing up more time for meaningful storytelling and visitor engagement while providing immediate transparency for stakeholders. You'll walk away with practical tools and examples that DMOs of any size can adopt to improve efficiency and consistency. By reducing manual workload, these automations help teams focus on creating stronger content and experiences that ultimately attract more visitors.



11:00 AM – 11:45 AM

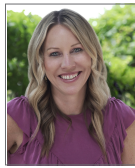
### **How to Attract the Luxury Traveler (Even if You're Not a Luxury Destination)**

*Matt Stiker, Madden Media*  
*Melissa Pert, Karsh Hagan*

Today's Luxury Traveler isn't defined by price point. They're defined by the desire for experiences that feel intentional, elevated, and aligned with their identity. These high-value travelers stay longer, spend more, and increasingly seek destinations that offer a sense of distinction, whether traditionally upscale or simply offering rare, meaningful, or beautifully framed moments.



Destinations of all types can win this audience by clarifying what makes their experience feel luxurious to the traveler—whether that's exclusivity, authenticity, nature, creativity, hospitality, or the luxury of space and calm. The key is to pair a sharpened brand position with media precision that reaches Luxury Travelers in the premium channels and passion spaces where they shape their travel decisions. This session shows how destinations, even those not perceived as luxury, can build relevance, trust, and long-term loyalty with this influential audience.



**1:00 PM – 1:45 PM**

### **Soul of Surf 2.0: Catching the Next Wave**

**Andrea Mestdagh, Visit Jacksonville**

Following the successful rollout of its new Soul of Surf campaign, learn how Visit Jacksonville continued to reinforce its positioning with prospective visitors by engaging the local surf community and tourism stakeholders for the second phase via the SeaGals and Board Stories video series. Hear the strategy and insights behind shifting from Catch Surf and GoPro athletes and influencers in year one to fully spotlighting the locals in year two.



**1:00 PM – 1:45 PM**

### **Brand Storytelling in the Experience Economy**

**Rudy Webb, Paradise Advertising & Marketing Inc.  
Laurie Rowe, Laurie Row & Company – a Division of  
Paradise Advertising & Marketing Inc.**

In today's experience-driven travel landscape, a destination's story is its most powerful asset. This session explores how tourism leaders can craft authentic, compelling narratives that resonate with visitors and differentiate their destinations. You will learn practical strategies for integrating storytelling across marketing channels, immersive experiences, and partnerships. Real-world examples will demonstrate how strong brand narratives drive engagement, loyalty, and economic impact. By the end, destination leaders will leave equipped to transform their brand story into memorable experiences that captivate and inspire travelers.



**2:00 PM – 2:45 PM**

### **Evolving Partnership Models: Strengthening Community and Industry Success**

**Santiago C. Corrada, Visit Tampa Bay**

This session covers how Visit Tampa Bay has updated its partnership model to better support local businesses and the regional hospitality workforce. Programs include development opportunities for small businesses, community workshops, and collaborations with local schools. TECO's video series showcasing Tampa Bay's culinary scene offers another way partners gain visibility. The session also highlights Hospitality Heroes, which recognizes frontline excellence. This approach strengthens relationships and builds long-term value for the destination.



**2:00 PM – 2:45 PM**

### **Iron Chef: DMO Style: "Secret Ingredient Spotlight"**

**Sylvia Weiler, Zartico**

Get ready for a fast-paced, high-stakes culinary showdown—DMO style! Three industry leaders will step up to the cutting board to present a case study, but with a twist. We'll reveal a "secret ingredient" they must incorporate into their presentation, forcing them to reinterpret their triumphs through a new, powerful lens. This session promises a fresh, engaging, and highly informative look at how a single critical factor can transform an ordinary marketing effort into a savory success story. Step into the DMO kitchen where three "chef-presenters" use the same secret ingredient in three totally different ways to cook up marketing success in their destinations. Our marketing chefs will go head-to-head—not in competition, but for inspiration. By the end, you'll walk away with three new strategies, one powerful ingredient, and endless ways to remix it for your own marketing recipe. You will walk away with immediately actionable strategies, learning how to integrate Data Intelligence more deeply into your own operations.



**3:00 PM – 3:45 PM**

### **From Home Town Takeover to Destination Transformation: How a Culture of Collaboration Rebuilt a Tourism Ecosystem**

**Casey Hartt, Visit Sebring – Highlands County  
Tourist Development Council  
Shellie Phelps-Whitfield,  
Biggest Fish Consulting**

This session will highlight how the momentum from the hit television show evolved into the creation of a Regional Leadership Team, bringing leaders from across the county together to align priorities and to work collaboratively. You will learn practical strategies for overcoming long-standing barriers and converting community excitement into sustained regional cooperation as well as how to develop tourism products that connect a region's story and how to use partnership-driven strategies to grow visitation and economic impact.



**3:00 PM – 3:45 PM**

### **25 Irrefutable Truths About AI for Destination Marketing**

**Seth Lawson, Epsilon**

Artificial Intelligence isn't the future—it's the present, and it's reshaping how destinations understand, reach, and convert travelers. This session unpacks the 25 most powerful, practical truths about how AI is transforming audience targeting, media optimization, and visitor measurement. You will learn how DMOs can use deterministic data to identify actual visitors, personalize creative at scale, and prove ROI with real spending outcomes—not modeled estimates. Designed for both marketing and executive teams, this session will challenge common misconceptions and arm you with a framework you can take back to your teams immediately.



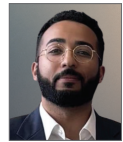
## **FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2026**

**9:00 AM – 9:45 AM**

### **Building a Destination Research and Data Ecosystem: How Ocala/Marion County Turns Data Into Decisions**

**Isiah Lewis, Downs & St. Germain Research  
Sky Wheeler, Ocala/Marion County  
Visitors & Convention Bureau  
Hayley Radich, Miles Partnership  
Ktimene Axetell, Arrivalist**

Visit Ocala/Marion County, Miles Partnership, Arrivalist, and Downs & St. Germain Research will share how a destination can connect complementary data sources into a practical research ecosystem that improves marketing decisions and internal goal-setting. The session will highlight how research, mobility and visitor insights, and media planning outputs can be translated into actionable strategy, and how those same inputs can be synthesized into visitor personas that align stakeholders on who the destination is trying to reach and why.



**9:45 AM – 10:30 AM**

### **Florida's Air-Mobility Future: What DMOs Need to Know to Attract Tomorrow's Travelers**

**Brian London, London Tourism Publications**

Florida is emerging as a key player in the nationwide effort to prepare for air taxis and low-altitude mobility, with state agencies, airports, and federal partners laying the policy and infrastructure groundwork for this new layer of transportation. This session gives DMOs and community leaders a clear look at what's happening now—where planning is accelerating, which statewide and national initiatives matter most, and how air taxis will integrate with existing airports and visitor movement.



**10:30 AM – 11:30 AM**

### **VISIT FLORIDA Marketing Update & "The Big Co-op Reveal"**

VISIT FLORIDA will roll out its 2026–2027 DMO Cooperative Marketing Program.

**VISIT FLORIDA®**



## Who Should Attend the Destinations Florida Destination Marketing Summit?

**Destination Marketing Directors** – Stay informed on the latest advancements in the competitive world of tourism marketing, share ideas with peers, and see the newest marketing opportunities from our industry vendors.

**Deputy Directors** – Broaden your skills by participating in education tracks that are outside your current expertise. Gain a broader understanding of destination marketing.

**Convention Sales** – See your destination outside of the meeting room. Learn more about selling your destination's tourism benefits in addition to its meeting assets. Participate in discussions with convention sales professionals from around the state to learn from your peers.

**Tourism Marketing** – Learn the latest on packaging techniques and super-effective industry and community education strategies.

**Agency Employees** – Visit with your clients in a casual atmosphere and learn more about the destination marketing industry so you can serve your clients better. Please note the attendance policy on page 5.

## 5 Ways to Justify Your Destination Marketing Summit Registration

We know how it is. Tourism marketing conferences operate in a busy events scene. There is a lot of competition out there, not only in terms of events, but for your time.

Every decision of whether to come to a conference like the Destination Marketing Summit eventually boils down to “What do I expect to have gained/learned from spending my time attending this event versus taking care of my busy day-to-day routine?” In other words, what you need to know right now is this: What's the payoff from coming to the Destination Marketing Summit?

Here are five reasons we think attending the Destination Marketing Summit is not only worthy of your time in terms of benefits gained, but also why we think it's a different kind of event.

1. Learn new ideas and concepts, and the latest on what's working at other DMOs around the state
2. Meet staff of all different levels from both large and small DMOs, people who can help you
3. Hear candid talks about the things that went wrong at other organizations
4. Give yourself time to listen and think—work on, not in, your business
5. Join a global community of people who care about tourism marketing

You'll learn things that will change how you market your destination from the day you return to the office.

## Meeting Location: The Bradenton Area Convention Center

1 Haben Blvd., Palmetto, FL 34221 | (941) 722-3244

### Hotel Accommodations:

The Palmetto Marriott Resort & Spa is offering a special rate for Destinations Florida meeting participants of \$199 per night. Please visit <https://bit.ly/DF26SUMMIT> or call (941) 304-3115 and reference the Destinations Florida Marketing Summit. Reservations must be made by **Wednesday, April 29, 2026**. Be sure to make your reservation as soon as possible because the room block will sell out.

#### Palmetto Marriott Resort & Spa

600 U.S. Hwy. 41  
Palmetto, FL 34221  
(941) 304-3115





# 2026 Destination Marketing Summit REGISTRATION FORM

## Four Easy Ways to Register:

### Online:

DestinationsFlorida.org  
(with Visa/MC/Amex)

### Mail:

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

### Phone:

(850) 222-6000  
(with Visa/MC/Amex)

### Email

Suzanne@  
DestinationsFlorida.org

## Advance Discounted Registration

(on or before May 6, 2026)

### DMO Member

First Registrant From Organization .....\$295  
Each Additional Registrant  
(From Same Organization).....\$245

## Regular Registration

(after May 6, 2026)

### DMO Member

First Registrant From Organization .....\$495  
Each Additional Registrant  
(From Same Organization).....\$445

## Use one form for up to five registrants from the same organization - Please print!

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please **circle** the correct amount for each registrant and write their name and email address on the line provided. Registration includes all seminars, breakfast, lunch, reception, and dinner.

	DMO Member Advance Registration	DMO Member Registration (After May 6th)	Total Amount
#1 _____	\$295	\$495	\$ _____
#2 _____	\$245	\$445	\$ _____
#3 _____	\$245	\$445	\$ _____
#4 _____	\$245	\$445	\$ _____
#5 _____	\$245	\$445	\$ _____

**Grand Total** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Payment: ☐ Check (payable to Destinations Florida) ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Amex

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Sec.Code \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Cancellation Policy: A refund of your registration fee will be made, minus a \$25 cancellation fee, if cancellation is received in writing by May 6, 2026. Alternates are encouraged to attend for any pre-registrant who is unable to attend. For our compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact our office if you need any special accommodations. A minimum of seven days' notice is required.

### Destination Marketing Summit ATTENDANCE POLICY – AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

The Destinations Florida Destination Marketing Summit is the annual learning exchange for tourism destination marketing professionals within Florida. It offers employees of Florida's destination marketing organizations a unique opportunity to learn, share information, and network in a sales-free environment.

Recognizing the important role that account representatives at contracted agencies play as "extensions of staff," Destinations Florida has instituted a policy to allow those individuals to attend the Summit as delegates to learn about critical issues and trends and to engage in discussions that will help them better serve their clients.

Those firms that serve multiple destination marketer clients, and for whom the Summit would primarily be a sales opportunity, are encouraged to participate as an affiliate partner through the Destinations Florida Partnership Program.

The designated account representative for contracted advertising, public relations, eMarketing, etc., agencies may attend the Destinations Florida Destination Marketing Summit as a delegate ONLY if invited and officially endorsed by a Destinations Florida member under the following conditions:

1. The account representative clearly understands the attendance policy and agrees not to solicit business from other members.
2. The account representative is invited in writing to attend by a Destinations Florida member. As such, a copy of the communication should be sent by the client to Destinations Florida.
3. No more than two such attendees may be invited by any member. The two attendees may be from the same firm or different firms at the discretion of the member as long as they meet the above criteria.

4. All contracted account representatives will have name badges that indicate they are a representative of the member that invited them to attend.

5. The member is responsible for assuring that their account representative abides by this policy.

6. The account representative is not eligible to attend the Summit if no one from the member DMO is attending.

Any exceptions to these rules will require the approval of the Destinations Florida Executive Committee.





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

DESTINATIONS FLORIDA

# Destination Marketing Summit May 13-15, 2026

Bradenton Area Convention Center – Palmetto, Florida

