

TourismMarketing Today

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Great News for Florida Tourism: No TDT Expansion, VISIT FLORIDA Sunset Extended to 2028

by Mat Forrest and Andrew Chekan, Destinations Florida Government Affairs

We are proud to announce:

- No bills expanding the use of Tourist Development Tax passed!
- No TDT expansion passed within either the House or the Senate.
- No TDT expansion provisions were included within the annual "Tax Package."
- VISIT FLORIDA's legislative authorization sunset five-year extension was PASSED by the House and the Senate and is pending the governor's final approval.

VISIT FLORIDA Sunset Extension (Passed)

SB 434 passed the House by a vote of 98-17 and the Senate by a vote of 36-3. The Florida

Tourism Marketing legislation delays the scheduled repeal of provisions regarding the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation until 2028. The Senate agreed to take the House position on the date of repeal, thus coming to an agreement and extending the deadline.

TDT Expansion (Failed)

Legislation that would expand the use of Tourist Development Taxes remained locked in committee in the House and did not move after week 6. The Senate bills were never heard. Legislation rarely goes away after just one session, though, so below is a refresher on

GREAT NEWS... continues on pg. 4

Next Up: National Tourism Week

by Robert Skrob, CAE



During the recent legislative session, House members who voted to support

VISIT FLORIDA were subject to attacks via social media paid ad campaigns, direct mail, and email/phone call campaigns. There is an aggressive and active group campaigning *against* tourism marketing in Florida.

It has never been more important to engage with your local lawmakers to thank them for their support and

NEXT UP... continues on pg. 3

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

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On the Cover

Destin-Fort Walton Beach is a place of initiation, where play on the water goes beyond sun-drenched fun to a transformative experience, inspiring self-confidence and self-reliance, and nurturing imaginations. Families will discover Little Adventures, which are bite-size adventures they can do right now!

to demonstrate that the tourism industry appreciates them standing up against these fringe groups.

Now that session has come to a close, it's time to maximize our impact with National Travel and Tourism Week, May 1-7, 2022.

Our team at CoreMessage is connecting with tourism marketers to provide you with talking points, white papers, and other documents you can use to promote tourism marketing within your community.

Because this is an important election year, consider how you can incorporate candidates into your events. Having industry ambassadors who greet them, build connections with them, and help educate them can turn this

one-week event into new lifelong relationships.

It's one thing to convince lawmakers that tourism marketing is important when we don't have active opposition. Now that there's a well-financed opponent rallying voters against this economic growth program, our efforts to rally our industry are more important than ever.

Let's work together to make this year's NTTW the most effective one ever.



NOW ACCEPTING DONATIONS FOR THE 2022 Dave Warren Silent Auction



Several years ago Destinations Florida created the Dave Warren Scholarship Program in our continuing efforts to improve awareness about destination marketing. Named for Dave Warren, a destination marketing pioneer, this program awards scholarships to hospitality students and tourism professionals who want to advance their knowledge of the tourism industry.

To raise funds for the Dave Warren Scholarship, we are requesting donations from Destinations Florida members to the Silent Auction that will be held during the Destination Marketing Industry Summit. Contributions of all kinds will be gladly accepted, such as weekend packages in your destination or gift baskets with items that showcase your unique location. Media agencies often contribute ad space in their publications for our DMOs to bid on. Our past auctions have raised over \$52,000 for this fund.

All Marketing Summit attendees are invited to bid to win exciting destination getaways, valuable ad space, and other great prizes.

Donations Deadline: Friday, May 13, 2022

[DestinationsFlorida.org/22SilentAuction](https://www.DestinationsFlorida.org/22SilentAuction)

what was filed so you can discuss it with lawmakers from your area before the next session.

HB 673 relating to TDT by Rep. Shoaf (R-Calhoun, Franklin, Gulf, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, Wakulla). As filed, the bill makes changes to the area of the statute that allows for TDT to be used for lifeguards in certain rural coastal counties. It sought to increase the percentage that could be used from 10% to 20% as well as expand the uses from public safety to include "tourism training programs," which it does not define.

The bill was amended at the first committee to provide more restrictions, and it was amended again to remove the last sentence as you'll see below.

As amended the bill now says:

125.0104 Tourist development tax; procedure for levying; authorized uses; referendum; enforcement.—

(5) AUTHORIZED USES OF REVENUE.—

(c) A county located adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic Ocean, except a county that receives revenue from taxes levied pursuant to s. 125.0108, which meets the following criteria may use up to 10 percent of the tax revenue received pursuant to this section to reimburse expenses incurred in providing public safety services, including emergency medical services as defined in s. 401.107(3), and law enforcement services, which are needed to address impacts related to increased tourism and visitors to an area. However, if taxes collected pursuant to this section are used to reimburse emergency medical services or public safety services for tourism or special events, the

governing board of a county or municipality may not use such taxes to supplant the normal operating expenses of an emergency medical services department, a fire department, a sheriff's office, or a police department. To receive reimbursement, the county must:

1. Generate a minimum of \$10 million in annual proceeds from any tax, or any combination of taxes, authorized to be levied pursuant to this section;
2. Have at least three municipalities; and
3. Have an estimated population of less than 225,000, according to the most recent population estimate prepared pursuant to s. 186.901, excluding the inmate population.

The board of county commissioners must by majority vote approve reimbursement made pursuant to this paragraph upon receipt of a recommendation from the tourist development council.

(d) A fiscally constrained county, as defined in s. 218.67(1) that is located adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic Ocean, may use up to 10 percent of the tourist development tax revenues received to reimburse for expenses incurred in providing public safety services that are needed to address impacts related to increased tourism and visitors to an area. However, if taxes collected under this section are used to reimburse emergency medical services or public safety services for tourism or special events, the governing board of the county or municipality may not use the taxes to supplant the normal operating expenses of an emergency medical

services department, a fire department, a sheriff's office, or a police department. The fiscally constrained county may use up to 10 percent of the tourist development taxes for public safety services even if the county does not meet the requirements under subparagraphs (c)1. 3.

The fiscally constrained counties located adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic Ocean that the bill may affect include Dixie, Franklin, Gulf, Jefferson, Levy, Taylor, and Wakulla.

The House bill passed two of three committees in the House before stalling. **SB 1542 relating to TDT by Sen. Gainer (R-Bay, Holmes, Jackson, Walton, Washington, Okaloosa)** was referenced to three committees but was not heard.

TDT Expansion 2: Infrastructure Improvements. SB 1898 relating to TDT by Sen. Farmer (D-Broward) and HB 6075 relating to TDT by Rep. Eskamani (D-Orange) were never heard, but it is important to remember what they sought to do in case they are filed again next session.

The bills are identical and seek to modify one of the requirements that allows for the use of TDT for infrastructure improvements. In current law there are five requirements counties must adhere to before spending TDT on infrastructure projects. These bills delete the requirement that a county must first use at least 40% of the total TDT collected to promote and advertise tourism before it can authorize and use TDT for those improvement projects.

Section 1. Paragraph (a) of subsection (5) of section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

6. To acquire, construct, extend, enlarge, remodel,

repair, improve, maintain, operate, or finance public facilities within the boundaries of the county or subcounty special taxing district in which the tax is levied, if the public facilities are needed to increase tourist-related business activities in the county or subcounty special district and are recommended by the county tourist development council created pursuant to paragraph (4) (e).

Tax revenues may be used for any related land acquisition, land improvement, design and engineering costs, and all other professional and related costs required to bring the public facilities into service. As used in this subparagraph, the term "public facilities" means major capital improvements that have a life expectancy of 5 or more years, including, but not limited to, transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, and pedestrian facilities. Tax revenues may be used for these purposes only if the following conditions are satisfied:

- a. In the county fiscal year immediately preceding the fiscal year in which the tax revenues were initially used for such purposes, at least \$10 million in tourist development tax revenue was received;
- b. The county governing board approves the use for the proposed public facilities by a vote of at least two-thirds of its membership;
- c. No more than 70 percent of the cost of the proposed public facilities will be paid for with tourist development tax revenues, and sources of funding for the remaining cost are

identified and confirmed by the county governing board; and

~~d. At least 40 percent of all tourist development tax revenues collected in the county are spent to promote and advertise tourism as provided by this subsection; and~~

e. An independent professional analysis, performed at the expense of the county tourist development council, demonstrates the positive impact of the infrastructure project on tourist-related businesses in the county.

Vacation Rentals (Failed)

Despite moving in both chambers early in the session, short-term rental legislation once again stalled in committee and never made it to the floor in either chamber. This issue has been around for years, though, and will likely be filed again next year. Since legislation usually picks up where the previous year's legislation stopped, below is a summary of the bills. Both bills were amended in their brief runs, and those changes are reflected below.

SB 512 and HB 325 relating to Vacation Rentals by Sen. Burgess (R-Zephyrhills) and Rep. Fischer (R-Jacksonville). Like past years, the legislation applies to any local law, ordinance, or regulation adopted after June 1, 2011. Below are some "highlights" of the bills. The following text requires advertising platforms to collect and remit taxes for certain transactions.

1. An advertising platform, as defined in s. 509.013, which owns, operates, or manages a vacation rental or which is related within the meaning of s. 267(b), s. 707(b), or s. 1504 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to a person who owns, operates, or manages the vacation rental shall collect and remit all taxes

due under this section and ss. 125.0104, 125.0108, 205.044, 212.0305, and 212.055 which are related to the rental.

Local governments must review an application for registration of a vacation rental within 15 days of receiving it. They may extend the deadline if both agree.

4.a. Within 15 business days after receiving an application for registration of a vacation rental, the local government must review the application for completeness and accept the registration of the vacation rental or issue a written notice specifying with particularity any areas that are deficient. If the local government fails to accept or deny the registration within the timeframes provided in this subparagraph, the application is deemed accepted.

The owner of a vacation rental must display the license number and local registration number when offering the rental for occupancy through an advertising platform.

The owner or operator of a vacation rental offered for transient occupancy through an advertising platform must also display the vacation rental license number and, if applicable, the local registration number.

The Division of Hotels and Restaurants of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation must maintain license information in an electronic format that complies with requirements.

By July 1, 2023, the division shall maintain vacation rental license information in a readily accessible electronic

format that is sufficient to facilitate prompt compliance with the requirements of this subsection by an advertising platform or a person placing an advertisement on an advertising platform for transient rental of a vacation rental.

The advertising platform must remove from public view the listing of a vacation rental within 15 business days of being notified that it fails to display a valid license number.

An advertising platform must remove from public view an advertisement or a listing from its online application, software, website, or system within 15 business days after being notified by the division in writing that the subject advertisement or listing for the rental of a vacation rental located in this state fails to display a valid license number issued by the division.

The division cannot charge more than \$1,000 per offense of violating the rules of the division.

(5) The division may fine an advertising platform an amount not to exceed \$1,000 per offense for violations of this section or of the rules of the division. For the purposes of this subsection, the division may regard as a separate offense each day or portion of a day in which an advertising platform is operated in violation of this section or rules of the division. The division shall issue a written warning or notice and provide the advertising platform 15 days to cure a violation before commencing any legal proceeding

under subsection (4). (6) Advertising platforms shall adopt an antidiscrimination policy to help prevent discrimination among their users and shall inform all users of their services that it is illegal to refuse accommodation to an individual based on race, creed, color, sex, pregnancy, physical disability, or national origin pursuant to s. 509.092.

The division may suspend a vacation rental license when the owner has been cited for two or more violations in a period of 90 days. The division must warn before pursuing any legal action.

(11) The division may suspend, for a period of not more than 30 days, a vacation rental license when the owner or operator has been cited for two or more code violations related to the vacation rental during a period of 90 days. The division shall issue a written warning or notice and provide an opportunity to cure a violation before commencing any legal proceeding under this subsection.

However, the Senate adopted an amendment at the first committee that changes the above bill text to 30 days. The House bill was also amended after it was filed. It removed a local government's ability to charge a registration fee after the bill becomes law, which would be January 1, 2023. It reads:

2. A local government may not charge a fee for processing a registration application, except for local governments that adopted vacation rental registration fees on or before the effective date of this act, which may be amended to be reduced or eliminated, but may not be

increased. A local law, ordinance, or regulation may not require renewal of a registration more than once per year. However, if there is a change of ownership, the new owner may be required to submit a new application for registration.

In its second stop, the Senate bill was amended to state that local governments can charge a fee of no more than \$50 for an individual vacation rental registration or \$100 for a collective vacation rental registration. The text reads:

2. Local governments may charge a fee of no more than \$50 for processing an individual registration application or \$100 for processing a collective registration application. A local law, ordinance, or regulation may not require renewal of a registration more than once per year. However, if there is a change of ownership, the new owner may be required to submit a new application for registration.

And it clarifies that the State may suspend a vacation rental license for a period of no more than 30 days if the owner or operator has been found by the local code enforcement board to have two or more code violations. The text reads:

(11) The division may suspend, for a period of not more than 30 days, a vacation rental license when the owner or operator has been found by the code enforcement board, pursuant to s. 162.06, to have two or more code violations related...

To provide some context, FRLA continually testified at each stop and would like to see further changes to the bills because

there is no reporting to DBPR, and the per unit physical address of the rentals is not required to be logged. There was also testimony in opposition from individual property owners and local government representatives.

Budget

We are happy to announce that \$50 million has been included for VISIT FLORIDA for the 2022-23 fiscal year. This is the same funding level as for the current fiscal year. On an unspecified date between March 15 and June 30 (basically after the session ends and before the next fiscal year starts on July 1), the Legislature will send the budget to the governor for his review and line-item vetoes.

HB 7071 - Tax Package (Passed)

A few weeks ago, the House Ways and Means Committee published its proposed committee bill that deals with taxation. Every year, we check to ensure that anything related to expansion of the TDT is not included in this package. We are very happy to report that this year the House bill does not contain any changes to the TDT statute. Unlike in previous years, there is no

Senate Tax Package to monitor. In light of this, nothing pertaining to the TDT will be included in the Tax Package this year.

What's next?

The next session will convene on Tuesday, March 7, 2023, and conclude on May 5, 2023. It will be the start of new leadership teams in both the House and the Senate, new committee chairs, and several new members after the November 2022 elections. Pre-session committee weeks have not been announced, and probably won't be until after the November election; however, they will likely take place in December 2022 and January to March 2023.

Please stay engaged with your delegation this summer and fall. Strive to personally know each member and educate them on the issues that are important to the tourism industry. Also, the campaign trail is a great time to meet and discuss issues with not only incumbents but also new candidates. It is never too early! The 2022 Session is over. Advocacy for the 2023 Session starts today.



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- Discover The Palm Beaches
- Florida Keys & Key West
- Greater Miami CVB
- Visit Lauderdale

'Connect & Protect' Promotes Sustainable Travel, Protects Keys' Quality of Life

Sustainability, a top priority for the Florida Keys & Key West, is emphasized with the island chain's "Connect & Protect" program. "Connect & Protect" addresses an ever-increasing demand for sustainable travel options and immersive and environmentally friendly activities for visitors.

"Our sustainability messaging emphasizes the Keys' wealth of protected natural areas, our locals' dedication to a unique lifestyle, and through stewardship, a commitment to protect the island chain's fragile environment," says Stacey Mitchell, director of the Florida Keys tourism council. "We show visitors ways they can connect with the environment to positively impact the Keys during their vacation experiences."

"Connect & Protect" includes "Stewards of the Keys" profiles, introducing locals who, through tourism businesses and organizations, work to motivate visitors to engage in eco-friendly behaviors, visit environmental attractions, and participate in voluntourism activities such as coral restoration.

"Connect & Protect" also includes social media promotions of eco-events, weekly "Sustainable Sunday" posts, and "Connect with Keys Life," highlighting locals' preferred activities. "Keys Crafted" features handcrafted, environmentally friendly wares, food, and beverages made in the Keys. "Connect & Protect" seeks to attract Keys visitors who support the environment and help protect the Keys' quality of life.



In the Florida Keys & Key West, "Connect & Protect" emphasizes scenic natural resources such as Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park's protected beach area. Photo: Florida Keys News Bureau



"Connect & Protect" in the Florida Keys & Key West highlights the local way of life and encourages visitors to protect the Keys' fragile environment. Photo: Florida Keys News Bureau



Discover The Palm Beaches Hosts Pop-Up Travel Experience in NYC

The Palm Beaches landed in New York City for a Golden Age of Travel pop-up experience at Grand Central Terminal's Vanderbilt Hall where commuters and travel industry representatives experienced the nostalgic travel ambiance on a recreated life-size vintage jet plane. The event showcased The Palm Beaches as Florida's premier travel destination featuring daily nonstop flights from the tri-state area, its grand and luxurious resorts, and the travel features northerners are most seeking—a warmer climate, beautiful beaches, and fewer crowds.

CEO Jorge Pesquera of Discover The Palm Beaches says, "The golden age of travel is back—romantic beach escapes, breeze-filled days, and elegant nights—in The Palm Beaches, the nation's resort capital, and I welcome you to explore it for yourself."

The Palm Beaches anticipates tourism to continue to be at an all-time high; after all, it has been two years since being able to travel, a luxury reminiscent of the "Golden Age" of flying.



Discover The Palm Beaches team members Colleen Price, Robin Prakash, Beril Gutierrez, Kelly Cavers, Nick Parks, Rita Barreto, Jorge Pesquera, Erika Constantine, Jaimie Hart, Lindsey Wiegmann, Susan Carlson, Eva Damato, and Erick Garnica gather in Grand Central Terminal in NYC.



CEO Jorge Pesquera of Discover The Palm Beaches addresses commuters and travel industry representatives during the pop-up experience in NYC.

GMCVB Has Award-Winning, Record-Setting Year

The Greater Miami CVB was recognized as a top destination sales and marketing organization, recently winning two Travvy Awards: Gold for Best Domestic Destination and Bronze for Best Travel Agent Academy Program.

"The current record-setting and globally leading rebound of our hotel community is a vivid example of our industry and community working together through targeted storytelling and distinctive programming to deliver upon and exceed visitor expectations," says David Whitaker, president and CEO of the GMCVB.



The GMCVB team celebrates a Gold and a Bronze Travvy Award. Pictured are Debra Lee, Lee Lennon, Gisela Marti, Philip Sherlock, George Neary, Petra Brennan, and Jennifer Haz.

The Miami Beach Convention Center hosted 16 major conventions, trade shows, and events in 2021—an example of why the investment in a reimagined and expanded convention center is already paying dividends.

This year Miami and Miami Beach welcomed large-scale events to South Florida including the Miami International Boat Show,

South Beach Wine & Food Festival, Ultra Music Festival, Miami Open, and in May, the inaugural Formula 1 Miami Grand Prix. Throughout March, the GMCVB promoted Miami Beach Live!—a month-long celebration of music, art, and culture.

Finally, the GMCVB's year-round Miami Temptations months are in full swing for 2022. This signature program encourages residents and visitors to enjoy unique experiences offered by local businesses. Miami Health & Wellness Months wrapped up in March, and Miami Attraction & Museum Months throughout April and May will bring incredible savings on admissions to top attractions and museums.



Miami Beach Live! is a month-long celebration of music, art, and culture.



Newly Expanded Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center to Provide 1,000-Plus Jobs, Boosts Economy

Phase one of the expanded Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center reopened last October, hosting the indoor portion of the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show in the 800,000 sq. ft. center's 350,000 sq. ft. of contiguous exhibit space. Work now proceeds on the additional expansion that will take the project to a total of 1.2 million sq. ft. by late 2025.

Highly anticipated new additions in the next phase include an eastside building with a 65,000 sq. ft. waterfront ballroom, a second interior ballroom, as well as meetings rooms and kitchen facilities. A six-acre outdoor waterfront plaza with three restaurants and an amphitheater in a park-like setting will set the center apart with its accessible and versatile outdoor space

for meetings and recreation. An 800-room headquarters hotel rounds out the expansion plans.

"The convention center expansion makes Greater Fort Lauderdale highly competitive in the national convention landscape," says Stacy Ritter, president and CEO of Visit Lauderdale. "The expansion is key to our continuing evolution as an upscale, cosmopolitan, and diverse tourism and meetings destination."

The convention center expansion is expected to create more than 1,000 jobs and boost the Greater Fort Lauderdale economy by more than \$200 million annually.



Visitors to the convention center portion of the October 2021 boat show were connected to new product debuts including more than 250 boats along with motors and watersports products.

TripAdvisor's World's Best Beaches List Includes Nine in Florida

TripAdvisor has announced the winners of its 2022 Travelers' Choice awards for Best Beaches, and nine Florida beaches made the Top 25 list of the Best of the Best. Congratulations to Florida's World's Best beaches:

- Siesta Key Beach (Sarasota County)
- Pensacola Beach
- Henderson Beach State Park (Destin)
- St. Augustine Beach
- Fort Lauderdale Beach
- Treasure Island Beach (Pinellas County)
- Panama City Beach
- St. Pete Beach
- Clearwater Beach



Residents will be welcome along with convention attendees to enjoy the convention center's new six-acre waterfront plaza with an amphitheater and restaurants in a park-like atmosphere.

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

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“Penny” by “Penny”

by Steven M. Hogan

Destinations Florida has published a white paper describing various aspects of the Tourist Development Tax. One portion of the white paper describes the “pennies” that make up the TDT rate imposed by each county. Here is a link to the white paper: EmpoweringFloridasGrowth.com

Each penny represents 1% of the TDT that can be imposed under section 125.0104, Florida Statutes (the TDT statute). We have gotten various questions about these pennies, so in this and the next few Legal Tips articles we will take a closer look at these tiers.

To begin at the beginning, the “original” TDT tax includes the first and second pennies that can be imposed by referendum under section 125.0104(3)(c). This section provides that the county can start the TDT tax at the rate “of 1 percent or 2 percent of each dollar and major fraction of each dollar of the total consideration charged for [leases and rentals].”

These first and second pennies can be used for the purposes set forth in section 125.0104(5)(a). This is the broadest set of authorized uses under the TDT statute, and includes a long list of items that TDT funds can be used for. The most common questions we tend to get from Destinations Florida members is whether a particular use of funds fits within section 125.0104(5)(a).

For counties that are located on the coast and that meet the requirements of section 125.0104(5)(c), TDT funds can be used for spending on public safety services related to increased tourism and visitors to an area (spring break, anyone?).

Finally, TDT revenues from the first and second penny can also be used to secure and liquidate revenue bonds that meet the criteria of section 125.0104(5)(d).

Of course, this article is a high-level overview, and the details matter for particular situations. For that reason, as always, legal counsel should be sought on specific questions impacting your county.

Steven M. Hogan is a shareholder with the Ausley McMullen law firm in Tallahassee. Destinations Florida has retained Mr. Hogan to consult with our members on the Tourist Development Tax and related legal issues. You can contact Mr. Hogan at shogan@ausley.com. Nothing in this article constitutes legal advice. Please seek counsel of your own choosing before making decisions that impact yourself or your organization.




Steven M. Hogan



The first and second pennies of the Tourist Development Tax can be used for the purposes set forth in section 125.0104(5)(a), Florida Statutes.

Instead of listing each use here, we recommend that you take a look at the statute and the long list of items it contains here: bit.ly/tdtuses

For counties that have a population of less than 950,000, TDT funds can be used for the additional purposes set forth in section 125.0104(5)(b), which include spending on zoological parks, fishing piers, or nature centers.




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Mexico Beach Hosts Plein Air Student Art Day

Mexico Beach loves Student Art Day! Part of the Forgotten Coast en Plein Air Paint-Out, one of the world's most prestigious plein air events, local school students were paired with award-winning artists to create their own plein air pieces. Students enjoyed cultivating their art skills while artists were able to demonstrate tips and techniques. Mexico Beach also hosted the Artists' Choice Collection, an exhibition featuring the Best of the Best, in the Welcome Center. MexicoBeach.com



An artist teaches techniques and insider tips to a local school student in Mexico Beach.

Clay County Opens Penney Farms Historic Museum

As the result of private donations and a \$30,000 Clay County TDC product development grant, the town of Penney Farms recently celebrated the opening of the Penney Farms Historic Museum. Focusing on founder J.C. Penney's efforts to bring homesteaders to the farm, the museum features ledgers, clothing, tools, and pictures telling the stories of the town. Clay County welcomes visitors to visit the museum and learn the area's history dating back to 1927. ExploreClay.com



Clay County leaders and Penney Farms residents celebrate the ribbon cutting for the Penney Farms Historic Museum.

Florida's Treasure Coast Launches *Don't Come Here* Podcast

Off the beaten path lies Florida's Treasure Coast, a hidden gem with one-of-a-kind charm, unspoiled nature, and 60 miles of expansive beaches to relax. Florida's best-kept secret along the Treasure Coast has launched its first-ever podcast, *Don't Come Here*. Hosted by Joshua Flores, the podcast releases new episodes each month with stories from the destination in collaboration with the three counties that make up the Treasure Coast—St. Lucie, Indian River, and Martin. FloridasTreasureCoast.com



The podcast *Don't Come Here* actually tells visitors why they *do* want to visit Florida's Treasure Coast.

Everglades City Is 2021 Bicycle Friendly Community of the Year

Each year during Florida Bicycle Month in March, the Florida Bicycle Association recognizes individuals, city and state officials, and communities for their contributions to promoting safe bicycling. Everglades City, a Florida State Trail Town since January 2019, was named 2021 Bicycle Friendly Community of the Year for providing bicycle racks throughout town, installing a Bike Repair Station and Dolphin Bike Rack at McLeod Park, and adopting the Everglades City Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan, which will allow both cyclists and pedestrians safe alternative transportation throughout the community. ParadiseCoast.com



City attorney Chris Lombardo, Esq., council member Parker Oglesby, council member Tony Pernas, Patricia Huff, Mayor Howie Grimm, council member Vicki Wells, and council member Josh Minton celebrate Florida Bicycle Month and Everglades City's recognition as Bicycle Friendly Community of the Year.



Orlando North, Seminole County Takes Fun to the Next Level

Orlando North, Seminole County welcomes one of the largest entertainment centers in the county with Elev8 Fun. Elev8 Fun offers two floors and more than 125,000 sq. ft. of entertainment. Attractions include more than 150 state-of-the-art and retro video games, 12 full-sized bowling lanes, interactive mini-golf, a multi-level go-kart track, and much more. The go-kart track is one of the biggest draws as it is larger and faster than the well-known Andretti's. DoOrlandoNorth.com



Arcade games at Elev8

Combined Obstacle Course Races Generate \$2.1 Economic Impact in Sebring

In December, Visit Sebring hosted the first-ever combined Spartan Race + Tough Mudder Obstacle Course races with close to 13,000 participants. The weekend events generated an estimated \$2.1 million in economic impact, \$1.15 million in hotel economic impact, and \$46,000 in TDT revenue. The race was supported by a Visit Sebring event grant as well as a Florida Sports Foundation grant. VisitSebring.com



Runners participate in the Spartan + Tough Mudder Obstacle Course. Photo: Highlands News-Sun and Jake Hitt

High School Competition Inspires Careers in Culinary Arts

More than 100 high school students participated in the Central Florida NAF Academy of Hospitality & Tourism's annual culinary competition at The Ritz-Carlton and JW Marriott Orlando, Grande Lakes. Students learned about careers in culinary arts and demonstrated their talents by competing in a variety of contests. Visit Orlando is proud to partner with Orange County Public Schools to help foster a bright, highly skilled pipeline of young professionals to meet the ever-evolving needs of the tourism industry and the culinary workforce. VisitOrlando.com



Judges for the culinary competition include renowned local chefs and professionals from Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando Resort, Johnson & Wales University, UCF Rosen College, Valencia College, and other organizations.

Walton County Tourism Department Hosts Job Fair

The Walton County Tourism Department was pleased to help support its community and help boost the business workforce by hosting a free Hospitality & Service Industry Job Fair. Representatives from 40 Walton County companies were present, and each business was able to actively recruit to fill positions. "We hope to see this event continue to grow each year, as we all understand the importance of having a strong, passionate, and talented workforce," says Matt Algarin, director of communications for the Walton County Tourism Department. VisitSouthWalton.com



A job seeker speaks to a hotel representative at the Hospitality & Service Industry Job Fair in Walton County.



GMCVB Celebrates Miami Beach Live!

Launched in March, Miami Beach Live!—a month-long celebration of music, art, and culture, featured family-fun activities, art installations, sports, and a diverse lineup of programming, including concerts by international superstars Alanis Morissette, Juanes, Wilson Phillips, and Bernadette Peters. Events took place on each weekend in March throughout the City of Miami Beach. The GMCVB promoted the series through social media and website promotions as well as dedicated social media and advertising campaigns. MiamiAndBeaches.com



A couple enjoys a walk in Miami Beach.

Martin County Presents Webinar for 'Florida Takeover Month'

The Martin County Office of Tourism recently participated in the "Florida Takeover Month" of Club Adventures, powered by AAA Exclusive Vacations. Each week in February, one selected Florida destination presented a customized webinar to the Club Adventures' network of specialty travel agents, highlighting their region's various adventure offerings. The month culminated with a livestreamed roundtable discussion, where each Florida DMO partner answered questions and provided additional travel tips to educate agents on their respective destinations. DiscoverMartin.com



The other Florida destinations that participated in the month-long "Florida Takeover" include St. Pete/Clearwater, Tampa Bay, and Florida's Paradise Coast.

Daytona Beach Area CVB Launches Mural Trail

The Daytona Beach Area CVB launched its exciting new Daytona Beach Mural Trail in February as part of its Ultimate Daytona Beach Trail Guide. While the region has long offered opportunities for art lovers to experience a variety of artistic styles in its many museums and galleries, visitors to the area can now take in outdoor artworks too, with dozens of colorful murals mapped throughout the destination. DaytonaBeach.com



The Daytona Beach Mural Trail showcases some creative and off-the-beaten path street art to visitors in the region.

Visit Lauderdale Launches Lauderdale Loyalist for Travel Advisors

With the support of TravPRO Mobile, Visit Lauderdale has launched Lauderdale Loyalist, a new interactive mLearning training and sales experience for travel advisors. Lauderdale Loyalist changes the game for travel advisors, supporting their destination learning requirements and serving as an ongoing sales enhancement resource. "The Lauderdale Loyalist platform provides state-of-the-art education and sales tools to help agents provide expert advice, start more conversations, and book more travel," says Tracy Vaughan, senior vice president, global trade for Visit Lauderdale. A Spanish language version of Lauderdale Loyalist will be available by late March, and the platform will expand with additional languages next year. VisitLauderdale.com



Advisors may register and begin the web-based program now at LauderdaleLoyalist.com or download the mobile apps from their App Store or Play Store.



UNwineD Returns to Panama City Beach

Panama City Beach is pleased to announce the return of UNwineD, a premier two-day culinary festival held in Aaron Bessant Park, presented in partnership with Southern Living. The sixth annual event took place March 18-19 and featured craft beer, wine, and spirits from around the world in addition to mouth-watering creations from some of the area's leading chefs, live entertainment by Anderson East and Ruston Kelly, along with a variety of vendors and artisans. VisitPanamaCityBeach.com



UNwineD attendees enjoy refreshing cocktails as they relax on the beautiful lawn at Aaron Bessant Park.

Fort Mose Jazz & Blues Series Raising the Roof for Black History on Florida's Historic Coast

In February 2022, the inaugural Fort Mose Jazz & Blues Series drew more than 3,000 music fans from across the country to enjoy nationally recognized, award-winning performances. Fort Mose State Park in St. Augustine is the site of the first legally sanctioned free Black settlement in the U.S. These performances raised \$52K in support of Fort Mose Historical Society's efforts to build a replica of the original fort, and the development of interpretive resources in the park's Visitor Center. FloridasHistoricCoast.com



Jazz enthusiasts enjoy a Fort Mose Jazz & Blues Series concert in St. Augustine. Photo: Stacey Sather

Kissimmee Earns Attention as the Vrbo Top-Booking Destination for Vacation Rentals

Experience Kissimmee is proud to have the Kissimmee area tabbed by Vrbo as the top-booking destination for vacation rentals in North America and the second most booked by Europe and Asia (EMEA) in the 2021 fourth quarter. Vacation homes have been extremely important in the 2021 tourism recovery. In a season where families are spending more time at home, the vacation rental is the perfect setup, giving these families the same look and feel of home. ExperienceKissimmee.com



A Kissimmee vacation home in ChampionsGate Resort, one of the premier luxury vacation rental resorts in the area

World's First Peppa Pig Theme Park Opens in Polk County

Visit Central Florida's recruitment of LEGOLAND® Florida Resort more than a decade ago continues to reap economic benefits for Polk County, now with the opening of the new Peppa Pig Theme Park. Located just steps away from LEGOLAND Florida, Peppa's fabulous standalone preschooler park is designed exclusively for "little piggies" and their families, offering multiple interactive rides and attractions, themed play areas complete with "muddy puddles," and fun live shows. VisitCentralFlorida.org



Polk County's Peppa Pig Theme Park is a fun attraction for preschoolers and their families.

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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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Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Has New 'Photo Spots' at the Punta Gorda Airport

In partnership with the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB, the Punta Gorda Airport has two new "photo spots" for visitors to take selfies. They are strategically placed in highly trafficked passenger areas to grab visitors' attention. One is near the check-in area and is titled "Catch You Later," and one is outside baggage claim and proclaims "Landed In My Happy Place." Hashtags for #BestSideOutside are prominently displayed to encourage sharing on social media channels. *PureFlorida.com*



Passengers in the Punta Gorda Airport are invited to take a selfie at this "photo spot." A second spot features the great fishing the area offers.

The Sinking of JOANN Adds to Artificial Reef in the Gulf

Continuing its quest to make Destin-Fort Walton Beach the dive capital of northwest Florida, the destination's Coastal Resource team (a division of the TDD) added a new reef to the almost 400 artificial reefs offshore. A decommissioned 40-foot tugboat, the M/V MISS JOANN, was deployed, joining two additional vessels at a site dubbed "The Boatyard." The reef will provide habitat for prized fish and a shallower option for visitors that don't wish to dive deeper wrecks. *DestinFWB.com*



U.S. Coast Guard tugboat turned artificial offshore reef, MISS JOANN served as a marine salvage vessel before being deployed as an artificial reef in the Gulf of Mexico.

Florida Keys History Contest Celebrates Old Seven Mile Bridge

To raise awareness of the reopened Old Seven Mile Bridge, the Florida Keys & Key West launched an "Old Seven Middle Keys Adventure" history trivia challenge with a three-night getaway prize. Included are accommodations at Isla Bella Beach Resort, air travel and car rental vouchers, and Middle Keys activities. The contest—running March 14-28 and promoted on the Keys' Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages—attracted more than 1,500 participants in just two days. *Fla-Keys.com*



A scenic 2.2-mile section of the Old Seven Mile Bridge, serving as a linear park and gateway to tiny historic Pigeon Key, reopened in mid-January after extensive renovations.

Photo: Florida Keys News Bureau

Space Coast Spring Campaign Showcases Local Scenes, Rocket Launches

The Space Coast Office of Tourism has launched its spring marketing campaign with a budget of \$1.1 million. It continues the "Only Here" feel, showcasing local scenes juxtaposed with space imagery or showing a rocket launch over popular Space Coast activities and attractions. The campaign targets Millennials, Gen-X adults, and families with kids with a household income over \$100K who are interested in cruising, beaches, space, and nature from Florida, the Southeast USA, and Northeast feeder markets. *VisitSpaceCoast.com*



In this campaign image, a dad and his daughter watch a rocket launch over the Atlantic Ocean on Florida's Space Coast.



Visit Tampa Bay Expands Inclusion Outreach

As part of its continued outreach to underserved markets, Visit Tampa Bay’s updated destination video now includes American Sign Language (ASL). Welcoming visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing, the message invites them to be part of the story with an “I love Tampa Bay” message. This effort along with many others is another example of Visit Tampa Bay’s longstanding focus on inclusive marketing and creating content that truly reflects the diverse communities that make up Tampa Bay. VisitTampaBay.com



Visit Tampa Bay team presents welcome message in American Sign Language.

Baseball Makes a Homerun Return to Sarasota

As spring gets into full swing, Sarasota County is geared up for an exciting year of baseball, giving locals and visitors a chance to enjoy much anticipated Spring Training games throughout March and April. Reigning World Series Champions’ Atlanta Braves Spring Training will be played at CoolToday Park, and the Baltimore Orioles Spring Training will be held at Ed Smith Stadium. Fans can see both teams play from March 18 through April 5. VisitSarasota.com



Fans gather to watch a highly anticipated Spring Training baseball game at CoolToday Park.

Songs from the Sofa Returns to Promote Island Hopper

Lee County VCB welcomed the return of *Songs from the Sofa*, a virtual concert series promoting the Island Hopper Songwriter Fest on Instagram. The livestream event features singer-songwriters who will be performing at the event Sept. 16-25. Along with a live performance, host Miriam Dotson of the VCB interviews performers and gets the stories behind the songs. *Songs from the Sofa* and *Songs from the Sand* have become popular components of the Island Hopper event. VisitFortMyers.com



Nashville singer-songwriter Hailey Steele and *Songs from the Sofa* host Miriam Dotson of the Lee County VCB

Condé Nast Traveler Highlights St. Pete as an Art Destination

St. Pete, Florida was recently featured in *Condé Nast Traveler* highlighting the city as an art destination. The piece highlights six smaller cities “that prove you don’t need a pricey trip to Europe for a transcendent cultural vacation” calling out institutions such as The Dali Museum and recently opened Fairgrounds St. Pete, among others. This tops off a recent string of high-profile publication features for St. Pete-Clearwater, including *AFAR*, *Travel + Leisure*, and *AARP*. VisitStPeteClearwater.com



Condé Nast Traveler touts the art scenes of small cities, including St. Pete.

Would you like to distribute a PDF of this newsletter to your TDC, elected leaders, or industry members? Visit the Destinations Florida members-only website to get the PDF for distribution: <https://www.destinationsflorida.org/tourism-marketing-today>



Bradenton Area Welcomes New Breeze Airways Route From Hartford

Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport (SRQ) announced in early March the welcoming of not only a new route but also a new airline. On June 4, Breeze Airways will begin service from SRQ to Bradley International Airport (BDL) in Hartford, Conn., aboard an Airbus A220 and with introductory fares starting at \$69. Breeze Airways joins the ever-growing list of new airlines serving SRQ and offers yet another option to connect the destination with the Northeast. This is the second consecutive month for a new route and airline announcement from SRQ. BradentonGulfIslands.com



Breeze Airways will begin service from SRQ to BDL on June 4.

Gatornationals Return to Gainesville Raceway

The Amalie Motor Oil NHRA Gatornationals returned to the Gainesville Raceway this March following pandemic-related setbacks in 2020 and 2021. Rain in the forecast didn't stop loyal fans from catapulting this iconic and beloved Alachua County event into success in 2022. Gatornationals was supported with a \$40K Visit Gainesville, Alachua County Destination Enhancement Grant. According to STR, direct hotel revenue for the week was up by over \$1.3 million over last year, an increase of 43%, and contributed to a 90% + hotel occupancy rate. VisitGainesville.com



The Gainesville Raceway is a quarter-mile dragstrip famous for hosting the NHRA's prestigious Gatornationals event since 1970.



In the News

Visit Jacksonville Welcomes Four to Support Meeting and Convention Efforts

Visit Jacksonville has welcomed four members to the sales, marketing, and destination experience teams. As the national account manager, **Laura Gonzalez** is focusing on the sports tourism market to promote Jacksonville as a premier destination for youth, amateur, collegiate and professional sports as well as sports conventions. Prior to this role, she was director of sales and marketing at Tru by Hilton in Jacksonville. In the role of assistant destination experience manager, **Lauren Hickox** assists visitors through Visit Jacksonville's numerous Visitor Centers, as well as those visiting as a part of a conference or group, with requests for information, maps and brochures, referrals, and trip planning services. Most recently, Hickox was an events and marketing intern at the American Heart Association in Jacksonville. As



Laura Gonzalez



Paloma Martin



Lauren Hickox



Kelly Sanderson

the destination experience manager, **Paloma Martin** works as a liaison between local businesses and provides referrals and amenities to individuals, groups, and meeting planners who are coming to Jacksonville. Previously, Martin was an event manager at Hyatt Regency Jacksonville-Riverfront. In the role of convention sales marketing manager, Jacksonville native **Kelly Sanderson, CMP**, is responsible for marketing initiatives and strategies associated with helping the Visit Jacksonville sales team bring conventions and groups to the city. Most recently, Sanderson was the destination service director for PRI Productions. VisitJacksonville.com

Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB Names New Arts and Culture Manager

The Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB is pleased to announce the appointment of John R. Melleky as arts and culture manager. Melleky will be responsible for enhancing the arts programming and services available in Collier County. A priority will be to strengthen, adapt, and diversify the county's programs to address the changing needs of the community while encouraging a rich arts and cultural environment designed to increase tourism. ParadiseCoast.com



John R. Melleky

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The Streamsong Resort is offering a special rate for Destinations Florida meeting participants of \$199 per night. Please call (844) 207-8079 and reference the Destinations Florida 2022 Marketing Summit group rate. Reservations must be made by Friday, April 29, 2022. Be sure to make your reservation as soon as possible because the room block will sell out.

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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, 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 from all different staff levels, at both large and small DMOs, people who can help you
3. Hear very 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.

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Wednesday, May 25, 2022

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Board of Directors Meeting and Working Lunch
2:00 PM – 2:45 PM	DMO Norms, Trends, and Practices in Florida
2:45 PM – 3:30 PM	Navigating the Future: New Opportunities From the Revolution in Travel
3:45 PM – 5:30 PM	Destination Marketing State of the State Report
5:30 PM – 6:30 PM	Welcome Reception at Streamsong Resort
6:30 PM	Dinner on own

Thursday, May 26, 2022

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Networking Breakfast	
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	The Evolution of DMOs: From Marketing to Management	Turning Data Into Actual Visitor Outcomes
10:00 AM – 10:45 AM	Creating Champions of Tourism for Your Local Community	Rethinking ROI for the Modern DMO
11:00 AM – 11:45 AM	In-Source Your Digital Media to Improve Results	Traveler Insights to Capture Demand for Destinations
11:45 AM – 1:00 PM	Networking Luncheon Legislative Update With Mat Forrest	
1:00 PM – 1:45 PM	Alexa, Launch Visit Orlando – Connecting With the Connected Home	Maximizing Vacation Rental Manager Collaboration and Partnership
2:00 PM – 2:45 PM	Destination Stewardship: Actions Speak Louder Than Words	The Unseen Visitor – Shedding Light on Overnight Stays of All Types
3:00 PM – 3:45 PM	Non-Tourism Partnerships to Drive Brand Awareness and Increase Business	Strategy: A Research Program Design for Destination Organizations
5:00 PM – 8:30 PM	Connect Evening Event	Sponsored by Connect

Friday, May 27, 2022

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Networking Breakfast
9:00 AM – 9:30 AM	Locals' Perceptions of Tourism in Florida: Perceptions Relevant for DMOs
9:30 AM – 10:00 AM	Economic Impact Assessments for Your Attractions, Destinations, and Counties: From Budget Allocations to Investment Predictions
10:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Destination Marketing 2025
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM	Innovative Destination Collaborations and NEW Winter Co-op
12:00 Noon	Adjourn

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INSIDE: 2022 Legislative Session ends with great news for tourism.

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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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