

# TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of Destinations Florida | [www.DestinationsFlorida.org](http://www.DestinationsFlorida.org) | May 2023



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## Visit Indian River County Welcomes Tourism Director Ben Earman



Ben Earman

Visit Indian River County has a new director of tourism and marketing who has deep roots in the community. Ben Earman was

born in Indian River County and is a fourth-generation resident. His father was captain of the Indian River County Fire Rescue and is a current county commissioner, his mother is executive director of Renaissance Senior Living in Vero Beach, and his younger brother is employed with the Indian River County Sheriff's Office. Earman received an AA in education from Indian River State College and then left the area just long enough to earn a BA in musical theatre from the University of Tampa. It seems safe to say he has come home to stay.

"I previously worked heavily in nonprofit organizations in marketing, events, and community relations, all within Indian River County," Earman says. "My work has mainly been with marketing organizations and their branding within the community. I also have a strong background in public speaking and presenting, which most definitely comes from my background in theatre. While I have not specifically worked in tourism marketing, I do have the knowledge of Indian River County and the marketing and creative skills."

Well acquainted with all Indian River County has to offer, Earman says the destination has much to offer visitors in addition to beautiful beaches and natural outdoor spaces.

*BEN EARMAN continues on pg. 4*



## Legal Tips

### Staycations (All I ever wanted...)

by Steven M. Hogan

Though we all like to travel to faraway locations, sometimes a "staycation" is all you ever wanted (to paraphrase The Go-Go's).



Steven M. Hogan

The question today is whether TDT funds can be used to promote in-county staycations to county residents. The answer, which the author believes to be yes, is based on the definition of the term *tourist* in the TDT statute.

*LEGAL TIPS.. continues on pg. 3*

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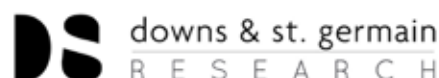
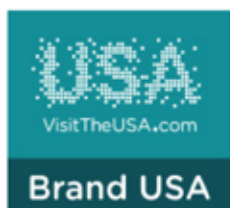
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### On the Cover

Visit Lauderdale, the official destination marketing organization for Greater Fort Lauderdale, promotes the area's 31 municipalities to a global audience of leisure and business travelers as the ideal place for "Everyone Under the Sun" in recognition of the area's diverse and welcoming vibe.

Photo: Visit Lauderdale



Based on the statute, as long as the TDT funds are being spent to get in-county residents to rent transient accommodations, then the TDT applies the same way it would to actions aimed at bringing in people from outside the county.

TDT funds can only be used for the uses enumerated in the statute. One of these uses is to "promote and advertise tourism" to attract "tourists" in Florida. § 125.0104(5)(a)3., Fla. Stat.

The TDT statute in turn defines a *tourist* as "a person who participates in trade or recreation activities outside the county of his or her permanent residence or who rents or leases transient accommodations as described in paragraph (3)(a)." (emphasis added).

The paragraph (3)(a) referenced in the definition defines those transient rentals that are subject to the TDT—like hotels.

Based on this, as long as the TDT funds are being spent to get in-county residents to rent transient accommodations, then the TDT applies the same way it would to actions aimed at bringing in people from outside the county.

Therefore, in-county residents who rent hotels for a staycation close to home would qualify as tourists that TDT funds could target.

Of course, this is based solely on a reading of the TDT statute, and a court (or the Florida attorney general) could always see things differently. Legal counsel should be sought on specific questions, as particular 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](mailto: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.

"Our goals for Indian River County over the next 12 months are to continually increase our tourism numbers and the amount of folks who are coming to enjoy beautiful Indian River County," he says. "We also want to gain a higher reach across all of our media and social media outlets.

I also want to make sure we are promoting more than just our scenic beaches and nature. While we do have exquisite outdoor settings and the ability to do a lot of activities outdoors, we also have a growing arts and culture scene and a great dynamic mix of restaurants. We also are



Ben Earman can often be found on stage, as theatre is a favorite pastime.

always bringing in new and exciting events to Indian River County. I want to promote visitation to those who like the 'social' scene as well as those who like the 'beach' scene."

Earman says he appreciates the established partnerships in both Indian River County and the Treasure Coast and how they helping to grow tourism in the area.

"I'm excited about the opportunity to become the new director of tourism and marketing and the ability to continue to make Indian River County an exciting destination for all who visit and all who live here," he says. "I'm ready to bring my creativity, out-of-the-box thinking, and leadership skills to this position."

Some fun facts about Ben Earman? He previously performed at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay in their live animal show working with 50-plus different types of animals daily. He is also active in theatre, both directing and performing professionally and locally throughout the Treasure Coast and Florida, and is engaged with community organizations serving on different boards and committees.



## In the News

### Visit Lauderdale Welcomes PR & Communications Sr. Manager and VP of Sports & Entertainment

Veteran communications strategist **Mary Haban** was named senior manager of public relations and communications for Visit Lauderdale. A respected tourism and marketing executive, Haban has extensive experience elevating brands, driving results for a multitude of organizations in the hospitality, retail, and broadcasting industries. She is an accredited public relations professional, the recipient of both Emmy and Addy awards, and in 2020 received the Life Achievement award from the Public Relations Society of America. Visit Lauderdale has named **Glen Allen** vice president of sports and entertainment. Allen is responsible for leading a team focused on implementing strategies to identify, solicit, secure, and retain sports competitions, festivals, special events, and other tourism-related segments throughout Greater Fort Lauderdale. The DMO's current sports and festival landscape includes high-profile events such as the Visit Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival, Tortuga Music Festival, Florida Renaissance Festival, and Audacy Beach Festival. [VisitLauderdale.com](http://VisitLauderdale.com)



Mary Haban  
Photo: Visit Lauderdale



Glen Allen  
Photo: Visit Lauderdale

### Greater Miami CVB names Chief Financial Officer

The Greater Miami CVB has named Joseph Yarzabal chief financial officer. The long-standing industry veteran, who most recently served as the organization's vice president of financial services, joins senior leadership at Miami-Dade's leading DMO, reporting directly to President & CEO David Whitaker, the GMCVB's Finance Committee, and its 38-member Board of Directors. "Joe's been with us since 1990. He's seen the destination become what it is today and been instrumental in our financial stability and success," said Whitaker. [MiamiandMiamiBeach.com](http://MiamiandMiamiBeach.com)



Joe Yarzabal



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

## Discover The Palm Beaches Reports Record-Breaking Visitation

Discover The Palm Beaches held a State of the Tourism Industry event at the Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa for tourism partners and community stakeholders. The event highlighted tourism as "A Community Shared Value" and reaffirmed the increasingly important role the tourism industry plays in the economy and quality of life of all residents in Palm Beach County. The tourism marketing organization for Palm Beach County released data that shows it surpassed all its goals for fiscal year 2021-22 with a record-breaking 9.1 million visitors, \$6.7 billion in visitor spending, and \$9.7 billion in economic impact. The Palm Beaches plans to welcome 19 new hotels with 2,533 rooms opening by 2025, contributing to this continued success.

"Post-pandemic, we knew we were well-positioned to rebound our tourism industry quickly with our idyllic climate and ample outdoor spaces and activities, and we are very proud to have surpassed all of our expectations thanks to the strength of our community and our brand," commented Jorge Pesquera, president & CEO of DTPB. "We're optimistic that 2023 will continue to see steady growth in visitation as we deploy innovative sales and marketing strategies and more travelers become aware of our one-of-a-kind, diverse destination."



The team at Discover The Palm Beaches presents a special State of the Tourism Industry event to tourism partners and community stakeholders reaffirming tourism as a community shared value and lauding a record-breaking year.



Discover The Palm Beaches (DTPB) State of the Tourism Industry event speakers include DTPB CSO Kelly Cavers, DTPB CEO Jorge Pesquera, PBC County Administrator Verdenia Baker, MMY Global Founder Peter Yesawich, VISIT FLORIDA CEO Dana Young, Destinations International CEO Don Welsh, and DTPB CMO Milton Segarra.





## Florida Keys & Key West Launches FloridaKeysTV Streaming Channel With Keys-Dedicated Programming

The Florida Keys & Key West has launched FloridaKeysTV, a free, on-demand globally streaming channel with programming dedicated to the Florida Keys & Key West.

Underwritten by the Monroe County TDC, the streaming channel's programs take viewers on Florida Keys journeys and adventures throughout the 125-mile island chain.

"Our new on-demand streaming channel, free to download and watch, is an easy, convenient way for viewers to experience Keys-dedicated programming," said Stacey Mitchell, director of the Florida Keys tourism council. "Through FloridaKeysTV, viewers can explore the entire island chain, learn about sustainability initiatives such as Connect & Protect, experience deep-sea fishing adventures, and discover the Keys' unique culture and cuisine."



During production of *Only in The Florida Keys*, which can now be viewed on FloridaKeysTV, marine artist Lisa Lee Herman, owner of Gallery of the Arts in Islamorada, showcases the Japanese art of *gyotaku* to host Christina Wilson. Herman greets her *gyotaku*-seeking clients, and the prized fish they want to preserve through art, at Keys docks after angling excursions.

Photo courtesy of Crawford Entertainment

FloridaKeysTV has more than 75 hours of family-friendly one-hour and half-hour episodes focusing on history, environmental stewardship, eco-tourism, fishing, diving, and travel adventures.

Florida-based Crawford Entertainment produced the channel and many Keys programs. Shows include *Florida Keys Protecting Paradise*, *Island Hopping Florida Keys*, *Only in The Florida Keys*, and *George Poveromo's World of Saltwater Fishing: The Pilgrimage* among others.

FloridaKeysTV is available on Amazon, Apple IOS for iPhone and iPad, Android Mobile and Android TV, Apple TV, Fire TV, Roku, Samsung, and LG channels.



Host and Florida Keys resident Christina Wilson prepares during production of *Island Hopping: Florida Keys*. Produced by Crawford Entertainment, the hour-long television program is on FloridaKeysTV and was commissioned by the Monroe County TDC and aired across the United States.

Photo courtesy of Crawford Entertainment

## Now Accepting Donations for the 2023 Dave Warren Silent Auction

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 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 \$55,000 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: May 19, 2023**  
**[DestinationsFlorida.org/23SilentAuction](https://DestinationsFlorida.org/23SilentAuction)**



# BEST of SOUTHEAST FLORIDA!

## Miami Named *bon appétit's* 2023 Food City of the Year

Greater Miami and Miami Beach has been named 2023 Food City of the Year by *bon appétit* magazine. The announcement comes on the heels of additional culinary honors for the destination, including new stars from the *Michelin Guide*, which first arrived in Florida in 2022, and the 2023 James Beard Awards, which recently selected eight local restaurants, chefs, and bakeries as semifinalists and one local bakery as a finalist. National headlines have also spotlighted Miami's dining scene, with media outlets



Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava designates April 5 "Food City of the Year Day" with an official proclamation presented to GMCVB President & CEO David Whitaker. Pictured are Miami Culinary Institute (MCI) students, GMCVB Chairman Brice Orosz, Arlo GM Jennifer Hiblum, Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, Aventura Commissioner Rachel Friedland, GMCVB President & CEO David Whitaker, and MCI Chair Shelly Fano.

*Robb Report* and *Bloomberg* dubbing the city "America's Hottest Dining Scene" and "the most exciting food city in the country."

"This validates our hard work and dedication to building and supporting a vibrant food and beverage community," said David Whitaker, president & CEO of the Greater Miami CVB. "Culinary tourism is a strong motivator for travel. We're just thankful for the chefs, restaurateurs, mixologists, and event producers who make our hospitality industry one of the best in the world."



National accolades continue to spotlight Greater Miami and Miami Beach as a culinary epicenter.

The destination saw a 50% increase in food and gastro-tourism in 2021, surpassing pre-pandemic numbers. Driving the shift is an influx of new dining concepts and top-tier talent, as well as nationally recognized programming such as Miami Spice Restaurant Months and the annual South Beach Wine & Food Festival.

## Visit Lauderdale Shines Bright During Seatrade Cruise Global Conference

Stacy Ritter, president & CEO of Visit Lauderdale, welcomed a packed house of international cruise industry executives to the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center for the 38<sup>th</sup> annual Seatrade Cruise Global conference March 27-30. It's the fourth time Visit Lauderdale has hosted the conference.

Ritter kicked off the State of the Global Cruise Industry presentation, featuring a panel of cruise line CEOs who discussed the post-pandemic rebound with 17 million Americans cruising, to an industry goal of obtaining net-zero emissions by 2050.



Visit Lauderdale President & CEO Stacy Ritter takes the stage at Seatrade Cruise Global.

Ritter's speech echoed Visit Lauderdale's new brand campaign *Welcoming Everyone Under the Sun*. Her message of inclusiveness and accessibility resonated with the international cruising community including 500 exhibitors and 10,000 members hailing from more than 80 countries.



Visit Lauderdale President & CEO Stacy Ritter welcomes Seatrade Cruise Global attendees.

This year's conference gave guests a first-hand glimpse at the convention center's impressive \$1.3 billion expansion project, totaling 1.2 million sq. ft. and a forthcoming 801-room Omni Fort Lauderdale Hotel, which will conveniently connect to the expansive waterfront event space.

The conference was a perfect fit for Greater Fort Lauderdale, known across the globe as the Venice of America and Yachting Capital of the World. And with its 24 miles of golden sand beaches and 300-plus miles of navigable waterways, it proved to be a brilliant backdrop for the four-day conference.





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## Experience Florida's Sports Coast Earns Certified Autism Center Designation

Florida's Sports Coast is proud to announce that destination representatives have completed autism-specific training to become a Certified Autism Center, designated by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards. The certification acknowledges that Florida's Sports Coast staff have completed training and certification in best practices when assisting individuals with autism in the destination. "Our goal is to provide the best service and experiences possible to visitors of all abilities," said Florida's Sports Coast Tourism Director Adam Thomas. [FLSportsCoast.com](http://FLSportsCoast.com)



Recently designated a Certified Autism Center, Florida's Sports Coast is working toward becoming a Certified Autism Destination in 2024.

## Kissimmee Land: Play the Game, Experience the Destination

Experience Kissimmee hosted an activation called Kissimmee Land in Tampa and St. Petersburg. The organization created a life-size board game where participants were the game pieces. With just a roll of the dice, players made their way through Coaster Capital, Airboat Valley, ATV Trail, and Gator Swamp all the way to Kissimmee Kastle. All stops on the board game were brought to life by SeaWorld Orlando, Wild Florida, Revolution Adventures, Gatorland, and Jeeves Florida Rentals. [ExperienceKissimmee.com](http://ExperienceKissimmee.com)



People participate in Kissimmee Land, a life-sized board game, in Tampa, Florida, in March.

## New 'Florida Keys Traveler' Podcast Launched

The "Florida Keys Traveler" podcast, a 30-episode series showcasing the continental United States' southernmost island chain from the early 1800s to the present, launched March 20. Voices of locals—historians, wildlife experts, environmental leaders, entrepreneurs, and adventurers—spotlight the Keys' history and five districts. The podcast features two episodes per week, with the final to air Monday, July 3. It's available on more than 25 platforms including Amazon Music, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Spotify. [Fla-Keys.com](http://Fla-Keys.com)



The "Florida Keys Traveler" podcast celebrates the bicentennial of the Florida Legislature's July 3, 1823, establishment of Monroe County.

## Tri-Sport Weekend in Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach

Some 1,850 athletes and their families traveled from throughout the country to spend their spring break in the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach area participating in a week of competition while enjoying the beaches and sunshine. Charlotte BMX Track held the Florida State Qualifying Series, Pickleplex of Punta Gorda hosted the Punta Gorda Challenge, and Port Charlotte's Centennial Park Pool had swimmers racing in Destination Athletes' Centennial National Invite with top USA Swim Club teams participating. [PureFlorida.com](http://PureFlorida.com)



BMX riders are among the athletes who enjoyed their spring break in Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach.





## Discover The Palm Beaches Celebrates Global Meetings Industry Day

The Palm Beaches hosted more than 120 community partners and meetings planners at the Delray Beach Arts Warehouse to celebrate Global Meetings Industry Day. Event attendees learned about creating welcoming environments in business meetings and designing events that inspire authenticity and inclusion, create genuine connection, and have a positive impact on communities. Keynote speakers included local fashion designer Amanda Perna, The Arc of Palm Beach County CEO Kimberly McCarten, and American Express Global Travel Director of Global Strategic Partnerships Meetings & Events Ariana Reed. [ThePalmBeaches.com](http://ThePalmBeaches.com)



Kelly Cavers, Discover The Palm Beaches; Ariana Reed, American Express Global Travel; Amanda Perna, House of Perna; Kimberly McCarten, The Arc of Palm Beach County; Jorge Pesquera, Discover The Palm Beaches; and Milton Segarra, Discover The Palm Beaches

## Discover Crystal River Florida Promotes Destination at ITB Berlin

Discover Crystal River Florida (DCRF) was glad to return to ITB Berlin this spring to promote Crystal River, Homosassa, Inverness, and Floral City on an international stage. Attendees were eager to hear the latest and greatest along the Nature Coast, signaling a promising return of German travelers. DCRF joined ITB Berlin as a co-op stand with eight other Florida destinations in the USA Pavilion, showing Germans that the Sunshine State is ready to welcome back visitors! [DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com](http://DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com)



DCRF joins up with eight Florida destinations to showcase the state at ITB Berlin.

## Visit Central Florida Hosts Journalists From Latin American

Visit Central Florida planned and hosted a press tour for Latin American travel writers in late March. Top-tier media outlets were recruited to participate including major Latin newspapers and magazines. The participating journalists (representing Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico) experienced Polk County attractions, restaurants, shopping, activities, and accommodations, doing research for travel features to entice more tourists to Polk County from Latin America. [VisitCentralFlorida.org](http://VisitCentralFlorida.org)



Latin American journalists visit LEGOLAND Florida Resort.

## Historic Palm Cottage Reopens in Naples

Florida's Paradise Coast is pleased to announce the grand reopening of Naples Historical Society's Historic Palm Cottage™, the oldest house in Naples, on April 4. A seven-month-long restoration project post-Hurricane Ian included the painstaking removal and restoration of the original Dade County Pine flooring, furnishings, and historic treasures. Built in 1895, this much loved landmark located just one block east of the Naples Pier, offers residents and tourists a glimpse into the early days of Collier County through self-guided and docent tours. [NaplesHistoricalSociety.org](http://NaplesHistoricalSociety.org); [ParadiseCoast.com](http://ParadiseCoast.com)



Naples Historical Society's Historic Palm Cottage™  
Photo courtesy of Naples Historical Society





Amelia Island Concours Week Brings Nearly \$40.3 Million in Economic Impact to Region

The Amelia Island CVB has released data on the 2023 Amelia Island Concours Week (March 2-5), which shows a regional economic impact of nearly \$40.3 million—a \$6.5 million (19.2%) increase over 2022 and the largest impact on record. This was the result of estimated total direct expenditures by off-island visitors of \$30.6 million, up nearly \$5 million. Amelia Island Concours Week is one of the destination's signature events, and one of the most high-profile automotive events, attracting visitors internationally. [AmeliaIsland.com](http://AmeliaIsland.com)



Signature events like Concours Week help build a sustainable tourism model that fuels Amelia Island's most important industry.  
Photo: Deremer Studios, LLC

Orlando North, Seminole County Launches Second Influencer Campaign

Orlando North, Seminole County is excited to announce the second round of their local itinerary campaign. With a focus on authentic experiences, this campaign showcases the unique charm of the region through the eyes of local content creators. Each itinerary is carefully crafted to highlight the best of Orlando North. By partnering with local creators, Orlando North is able to share its hidden gems and must-see destinations with a wider audience and capture the attention of those interested in traveling to Central Florida. [DoOrlandoNorth.com/itineraries](http://DoOrlandoNorth.com/itineraries)



Influencer photos by Chantel Rodriguez @chooseloveart

Visit Orlando Unveils New Mural to Celebrate #407Day

Inspired by Orlando's longtime area code, #407Day encourages residents to support their favorite restaurants, bars, shops, boutiques, services, and other local businesses. To celebrate the day, Visit Orlando, the City of Orlando, Orange County, and Orlando Economic Partnership united to unveil a new mural in downtown Orlando. An element of Visit Orlando's advertising campaigns under the new global brand for the Orlando region, "Unbelievably Real," the mural made its way around the world and now has a home in Orlando for visitors and locals to enjoy. [VisitOrlando.com](http://VisitOrlando.com)



Located in Downtown Orlando, the "Unbelievably Real" mural brings to life how all aspects of the region shine, from tourism highlights, such as theme parks and outdoor water adventures, to the destination's drive for technology and innovation.

One of Lee County's Top Tourist Destinations Reopens

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island reopened last month after being closed for six months due to Hurricane Ian. Staff and local volunteers worked to restore the habitat, clean, and rebuild. The 6,400-acre refuge, an internationally renowned birding destination, is one of the top tourist attractions in Lee County and receives tourism product development funding from the Lee County VCB. The visitor education center and Wildlife Drive are open Saturday through Thursday. [VisitFortMyers.com](http://VisitFortMyers.com)



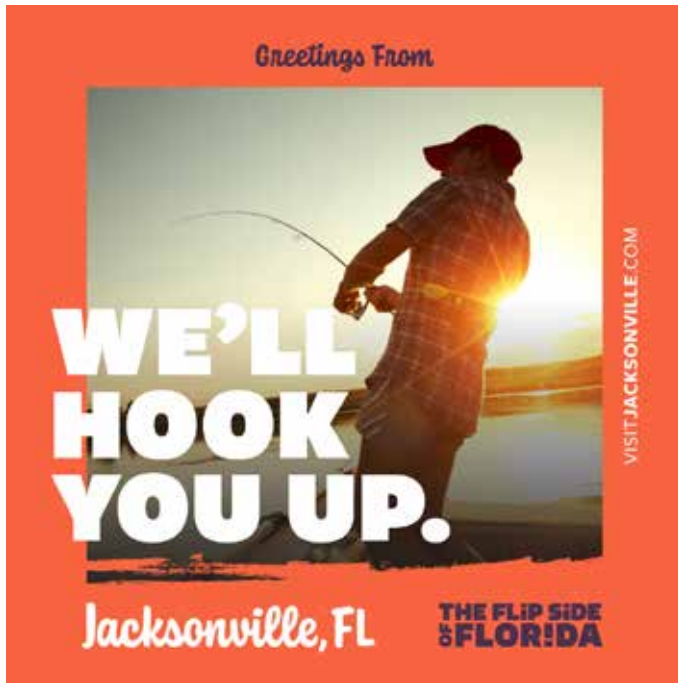
The ribbon-cutting ceremony at the recent reopening of J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island includes biodegradable confetti.





## Visit Jacksonville and the Beaches Promotes 'The Flip Side of Florida'

Visit Jacksonville and the Beaches announced its new advertising campaign positioning the area as the ideal combination of southern hospitality and Florida flare. "It's time to flip what you know about Florida. Busy beaches and theme parks? That's further south. We're talkin' a different style of sunshine state of mind. More magnolias than palm trees. Less shuffleboard, more surfboards. World class golf greens, and delicious collards. Don't worry, you're not flipping out. You've just never been to Jacksonville – The Flip Side of Florida." [VisitJacksonville.com](http://VisitJacksonville.com)



One of the graphics for Jacksonville's new campaign

## Clay County Hosts Florida Roundnet Open

Clay County welcomed 214 participants to the Florida Roundnet Open at the Plantation Sports Complex in early April. Competitors traveled to Clay County from across the United States, Canada, and Germany. Hosted by the Florida Roundnet, the state's official Spikeball Roundnet Organization, the sport is typically described as a cross between volleyball and four-square and played with four people in teams of two. Clay County partnered with Airstream Ventures to produce this multiday event. [ExploreClay.com](http://ExploreClay.com)



Clay County welcomes competitors from across the country, Canada, and Germany for the Florida Roundnet Open.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Sebring Soda Fest Was Fizzy & Busy

The 5<sup>th</sup> annual Sebring Soda Festival "popped" into downtown Sebring during Easter weekend with a record number of attendees and tasting cards sold this year. Attracting visitors from Florida and beyond, Florida's fizziest festival also earned the destination some incredible media coverage with 76 pieces published, including coverage by *Thrillist*, *Le Journal de Montreal*, [365AtlantaTraveler.com](http://365AtlantaTraveler.com), and FOX 13 Tampa Bay. This media coverage had 3.81 million estimated views, 1.66 billion audience members, and 3,280 social media engagements. [SebringSodaFest.com](http://SebringSodaFest.com); [VisitSebring.com](http://VisitSebring.com)



The Sebring Soda Festival brings visitors, media attention to Sebring, Florida.

## Bradenton Promotes Travel Opportunities to Key Nonstop Flight Market

The Bradenton Area CVB targeted Grand Rapids, Michigan, for a media mission in March. The CVB was able to forge dozens of key publication relationships in Michigan—an emerging nonstop flight market—through a multipronged approach of a broadcast television appearance, along with an intimate media dinner. Highlighting Gulf Coast cuisine, along with family-focused fall travel opportunities, the Bradenton Area CVB solidified multiple regional placements and press trip opportunities. [BradentonGulfIslands.com](http://BradentonGulfIslands.com).



Media members from Michigan enjoy their cocojitos.





## Visit Sarasota County Team Members Connect With Community

The whole team at Visit Sarasota County took an outing in a “Fun in the 941” adventure style. In groups, the team surprised and delighted members of the community by giving out gift cards. The outing also included a ride on the new Bay Runner trolley and a scavenger hunt competition for photographing highlights in the destination. Getting out into the community is always an important part of being on the VSC team. [VisitSarasota.com](http://VisitSarasota.com)



Visit Sarasota County team members on the Bay Runner traveling between the beachside and downtown Sarasota

## Greater Miami CVB H.O.T. Supports Next Generation of Hospitality Leaders

The Greater Miami CVB hosted its 30<sup>th</sup> annual H.O.T. Golf Challenge benefiting the Black Hospitality Initiative (BHI). Since its inception, BHI has raised \$3.5 million and awarded 450 scholarships to Black residents committed to working in Miami-Dade’s visitor industry. “Our diverse neighborhoods and rich cultural history make us unique among destinations in the U.S.,” said GMCVB President & CEO David Whitaker. “It’s our priority to lead a workforce that both reflects our community and benefits from tourism’s economic impact.” [MiamiAndBeaches.com](http://MiamiAndBeaches.com)



Greater Miami CVB H.O.T. Challenge at Miami Beach Golf Club

## Stuart Beach Nominated One of the Best Beaches in the South

Stuart Beach has been nominated in the 10Best Readers’ Choice Awards as a “Best Beach in the South.” Selected by a panel of *USA Today* editors, the public is invited to vote for their favorites from April 24 through May 22. Stuart Beach features lifeguards, offers free parking, and is open 24/7. Visitors can also enjoy the recently opened Seaside Café, free rolling beach wheelchairs, and pristine facilities—all without the crowds. [DiscoverMartin.com](http://DiscoverMartin.com)



Stuart Beach serves up breathtaking views thanks to Martin County’s four-story building height restriction, which prevents towering condos and hotels from overshadowing area shores.

## Destin-Fort Walton Hosts Virtual Media Event

Destin-Fort Walton Beach hosted a live, interactive virtual media event for top-tier journalists from across the country to give participants an insider’s look into the latest news and adventures that await travelers in the destination. During the event attendees were introduced to local partners who shared information about the adventures they provide, including fishing, diving, and sailing. Attendees also witnessed the deployment of the RMS ATLANTIS—a 125-foot-long vessel, adding to the destination’s more than 400 artificial reefs. [DestinFWB.com](http://DestinFWB.com)



Jennifer Adams, director of Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism, is joined by partners at four locations, on four different bodies of water during the live virtual show to provide participants in-depth information on all the destination offers travelers.





## New Mural Added to Ocala/ Marion County Visitors Center

Ocala/ Marion County, as part of its brand evolution, recently updated the exterior of the visitors center located in downtown Ocala. The building is now a serene blue with an art deco design that complements the downtown area's cultural vibe. The VCB hosted two artists to paint a large mural, aptly titled "Around the Corner," that wraps the southwest edge of the building and reflects Ocala/ Marion County's natural environment. Artist David Carmack Lewis is a nationally renowned muralist who led the project, partnering with local artist Jordan Shapot. [OcalaMarion.com](http://OcalaMarion.com)



Artists David Carmack Lewis and Jordan Shapot paint the mural titled "Around the Corner" at the Ocala/ Marion County visitors center in April.

## Walton County Tourism Promotes Destination at Connect Spring Marketplace

The Walton County Tourism sales team took care of business at Connect Spring Marketplace, held April 11-13 in Las Vegas. The team engaged in one-on-one appointments with meeting planners interested in learning about Walton County as a top meetings destination, participated in networking and educational opportunities, and showcased former Walton County Artist of the Year Mary Hong, who helped attendees create one-of-a-kind art keepsakes. Learn more about the Walton County sales team by visiting [MeetInSouthWalton.com](http://MeetInSouthWalton.com).



The Walton County Tourism Department setup for the Connect Spring Marketplace in Las Vegas

## Celebrating What's Good in Alachua County

The Flagler Award-winning What's Good weekly event guide turned four in 2023, and there's a lot to celebrate! In a recent survey of subscribers, 99% of respondents stated that they found the guide a useful tool when making plans for entertainment and relaxation and 98% stated that they attended between one and five events based on information they learned about in What's Good. With the overwhelmingly positive reception of the guide, Visit Gainesville, Alachua County plans to celebrate What's Good with a new masthead and merchandize, just in time for National Travel and Tourism week. [VisitGainesville.com](http://VisitGainesville.com)



With 20,000 subscribers, an average email open rate of 40%, plus thousands more readers online, the award-winning What's Good weekly events guide is a preferred resource by visitors and locals for planning time together in Gainesville and Alachua County.

## Visit Tampa Bay Expands Accessible Travel Initiatives

Internationally recognized as an industry leader in accessible travel outreach and one of the first members to join Travelability's Destination A11Y program, Visit Tampa Bay announces an expansion to its commitment with a new partnership with Wheel the World, an online travel agency for people with disabilities to book accessible travel accommodations and experiences. Expanding its role with TravelAbility, Visit Tampa Bay has been working diligently since January to survey its 750-plus partners to gather as much information as possible about Tampa Bay's accessibility efforts. [VisitTampaBay.com](http://VisitTampaBay.com)



Following on the success of its Riverwalk Attraction Pass, Visit Tampa Bay has also introduced an Accessible Tampa Riverwalk Pass.





## Quick Trips!

### Daytona Beach Hosts College Basketball Invitational

March Madness came to the Daytona Beach area for the third straight year with the Discount Tire College Basketball Invitational (CBI) at the Ocean Center. The CBI is a postseason college basketball tournament for teams that didn't qualify for the NCAA tournament. The tournament, which was won by the Charlotte 49ers, spanned five days and featured 16 teams with games broadcasted on ESPN2 and Flo Hoops. *DaytonaBeach.com*



Daytona Beach's Ocean Center is just a short walk from the beach.



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## 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*



Enclosed is your copy of Tourism Marketing Today  
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1400 Village Sq. Blvd., Suite 3-250  
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INSIDE: Read about best practices in tourism promotion from around the state.

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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 57 official county DMOs that promote their communities throughout the world. Tourism promotion activities help to attract 137.6 million visitors to Florida, adding \$101.9 billion to Florida's economy and supporting more than 1.7 million jobs. These activities are made possible by Tourist Development Taxes provided by Florida Statutes Section 125.0104.

Statistics: VISIT FLORIDA Research