

TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of Destinations Florida | www.DestinationsFlorida.org | May 2024

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Jay Tusa Appointed Tourism Director for Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB



Jay Tusa, CDME, CTIS, TMP
Photo: Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB

The Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB welcomed Jay Tusa, CDME, CTIS, TMP, as its new tourism director on Mar. 25. Leveraging his 25-plus years of experience

in the travel industry, Tusa says his immediate focus is to connect with key stakeholders and partners in the destination.

"I am looking forward to exploring the wonderful communities that collectively comprise Florida's Paradise Coast. From the authentic experiences that can be found in Everglades City, to the coastal charm of Marco Island and the exclusive

lifestyle and cultural offerings in Naples, there are endless opportunities on the horizon to promote our region to the discerning traveler," he said. "One of my top priorities is to cultivate sustainable and collaborative partnerships that focus on enhancing tourism-related infrastructure and businesses, ensuring the economic vitality of our destination."

Tusa most recently served as assistant airport director, strategy and development at Pensacola International Airport where he was responsible for implementing strategic planning initiatives to foster economic growth and sustainable tourism practices. Prior to this role, Tusa served as executive director of Visit South Walton, and he is

JAY TUSA continues on pg. 3

New Talking Points

by Robert Skrob



There hasn't been a conversation about the direction of the Tourist Development Tax within the Florida

Legislature since 2007; that is, until Feb. 20 when the House Ways and Means Committee held a workshop on TDT.

During this meeting, the staff of the House Ways and Means Committee presented a chart (<https://bit.ly/tdt-chart>) to illustrate how TDT collections have increased. It is true that collections have increased from about \$350 million in 2023 to almost \$1.6 billion in 2023.

E.D.'s MESSAGE... continues on pg. 3

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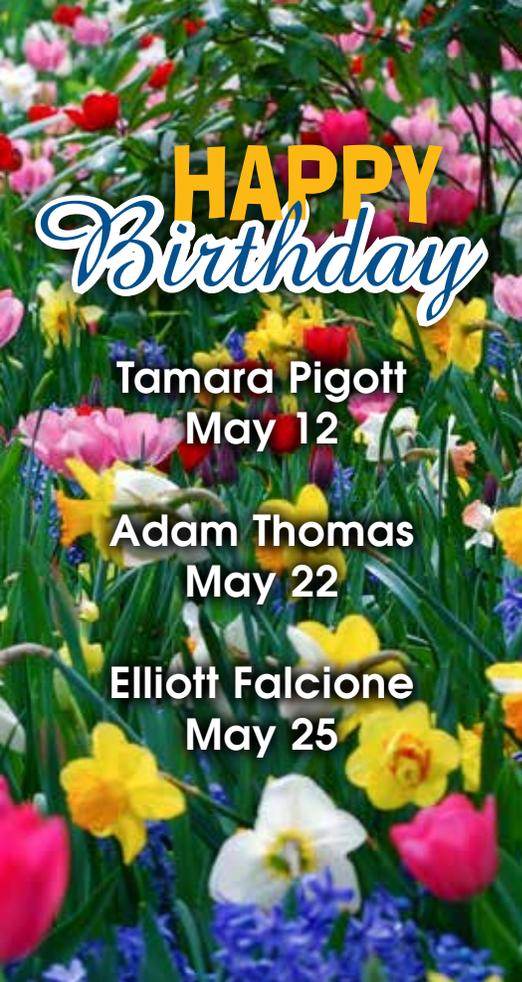


GOLD PARTNERS



SILVER PARTNERS





HAPPY Birthday

Tamara Pigott
May 12

Adam Thomas
May 22

Elliott Falcione
May 25

well-acquainted with Destinations Florida and all the association does to assist DMOs.

“By leveraging the resources and support provided by Destinations Florida, I can enhance my efforts in promoting tourism to Florida’s Paradise Coast,” Tusa said. He listed several areas where he says Destinations Florida’s assistance is invaluable: networking with other DMOs and tourism partners; educational resources for promoting his destination; legislative and regulatory advocacy support at the state level; and research and data analysis services to better understand visitor trends, market dynamics, and consumer behavior.

Tusa’s experience includes other key leadership roles within the tourism industry. He served as director of marketing for Explore Asheville, as corporate director of marketing for St. Joe Hospitality, as director of communications and research for Louisiana Office of Tourism, and as executive director of River Parishes Tourist Commission.

Now he is happily settling into his new community and enjoying life on Florida’s Paradise Coast.



Jay Tusa enjoys a beautiful day at the Naples Zoo and Botanical Gardens.
Photo: Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB

“As a beach enthusiast, enjoying sunset views of the Gulf of Mexico would top my list of activities,” he said. He noted other favorites such as Ten Thousand Islands, the Naples Zoo and Botanical Gardens, and shopping and dining along Fifth Avenue South and Third Street South in Naples.

Tusa holds a BA in communications from Loyola University New Orleans and is recognized with designations such as Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME), Travel Marketing Professional (TMP), and Certified Travel Industry Specialist (CTIS).

E.D.'s MESSAGE... continued from pg. 1

DESTINATIONS FLORIDA

TourismMarketing Today

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Destinations Florida
1400 Village Sq. Blvd., Suite 3-250
Tallahassee, FL 32312
Phone: 850/222-6000
www.DestinationsFlorida.org

Robert Skrob,
Executive Director

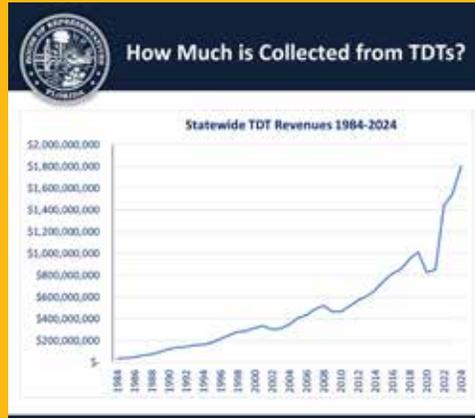
Suzanne Hurst, CAE,
Deputy Executive Director

MaryLu Winchester,
Member Database

On the Cover

With summer around the corner, Lake County is the perfect place for visitors to escape the hustle and bustle while enjoying some fun in the Florida sun! From kayaking and diving in the crystal-clear spring waters to experiencing the thrill of CatBoat and seaplane adventures, Lake County is full of unforgettable summer adventures. *DiscoverLakeCountyFL.com*

Watch the workshop for yourself via the QR code at the end of this report, but the context of the illustration is that the increase in TDT presents a problem to be solved, that counties are raking in a lot of money within this system and perhaps big changes should be made. This gives us tremendous insight into what some legislative staff believe about TDT in Florida.



We need to make the point that increased collections prove the tourism marketing public/private partnership in counties throughout Florida is working! Tourism continues to drive Florida’s economy forward.

Your Destinations Florida Board of Directors met at the Destinations Marketing Summit in April, and based on what we’ve heard they have engaged us

to move forward developing and proving the following arguments to address what we are hearing today.

1. Tourism is the key economic driver of the fastest growing state in the largest and fastest growing economy in the world.
2. Tourism jobs are higher paying than average in the state.
3. Tourism businesses pay all the same utilities and taxes as any other business within a community. PLUS, they collect TDT to support marketing efforts on behalf of the county!
4. TDT helps communities through sustainability investments (environment), facilities, and services for residents.
5. Florida’s tourism industry enables Florida to have no state sales tax, a key driver for economic development efforts throughout the state.

You’ll be reading more about this in the next few weeks. Watching the House Ways and Means Committee discussion is really valuable to hear how House staff and many of the staunch TDT supporters (and critics) talk about the future of TDT in Florida.

Use this QR code to watch:



Triumph Gulf Coast Awards Funding for Groundbreaking Regional Tourism Initiative for Northwest Florida

VISIT FLORIDA has been awarded a three-year grant of \$10.5 million from Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc., to create an innovative regional marketing campaign focused on promoting the region's outdoor and adventure experiences to drive tourism growth and economic development across Northwest Florida. This is the first Triumph-awarded project that benefits all eight counties that were impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

The project, developed in close collaboration with the Northwest Florida Tourism Council and supported by the boards of county commissioners in all eight counties, aims to expand what the region is known for, to extend seasonality, and to take the region into new markets. By promoting the many world-class adventure experiences in Northwest Florida, the campaign will better position the region as a year-round destination.

"This funding award marks a significant milestone in our efforts to promote Northwest Florida as a world-class travel destination. This initiative will elevate our region and benefit every member of the community," said Darien Schaefer, Northwest Florida Tourism Council chair.

Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc., is a nonprofit corporation created to oversee the expenditure of funds recovered by the Florida attorney general for economic damages resulting from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Funds are designated for the recovery, diversification, and enhancement of the eight Northwest Florida counties disproportionately affected by the oil spill. Those counties include Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf, Franklin, and Wakulla.



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Recap of “Penny” Procedures

by Steven M. Hogan

Though we usually wait a year or more before “revisiting” topics in this column, we have received a number of questions recently about the new “penny” procedures implemented by last year’s Legislature. We last addressed this issue a few months ago in a Legal Tips article detailing the new “penny” procedures.



The 2023 revision to the TDT statute changed the ways that some of the “pennies” can be levied by a county.

Photo: Thad Zajdowicz, Flickr.com, CC BY 2.0 DEED

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Because of the recent questions, it seems appropriate to re-run our review of the issue.

As a recap, each “penny” represents 1% of the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) that can be levied under section 125.0104, Florida Statutes (the TDT statute).



Steven M. Hogan

The 2023 revision to the TDT statute changed the ways that some of the pennies can be levied by a county. Below is a list of each “penny,” the statutory section it corresponds to, and notes about changes (if any) in how a county can levy the penny as of July 1, 2023:

| The “Penny” | Statutory Section | Change in 2023 TDT Statute |
|-------------|-------------------|--|
| No. 1 | § 125.0104(3)(c) | No change to levy methodology. |
| No. 2 | § 125.0104(3)(c) | No change to levy methodology. |
| No. 3 | § 125.0104(3)(d) | Removes option to impose via “extraordinary vote of the governing board.” Now requires referendum. |
| No. 4 | § 125.0104(3)(l) | Removes option to impose via “majority vote of the governing board of the county.” Now requires ordinance approved by referendum. |
| No. 5 | § 125.0104(3)(m) | Removes option to impose via “majority vote of the governing board of the county.” Now requires ordinance approved by referendum. |
| No. 6 | § 125.0104(3)(n) | Removes option to impose via “a majority plus one vote of the membership of the board of county commissioners.” Now requires ordinance approved by referendum. |

As summarized above, imposing the additional “pennies” will now generally involve a referendum. 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.



- Discover The Palm Beaches
- Florida Keys & Key West
- Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau

Discover The Palm Beaches Celebrates 1 Million Social Media Followers

Discover The Palm Beaches (DTPB) has achieved a remarkable milestone: 1,000,000 total followers across the destination marketing organization's eight social media platforms. Noteworthy elements include the organization's YouTube channel boasting an impressive 95,000 subscribers, as well as the in-house social media team of five achieving exponential growth of more than 185% from 350,000 followers three years ago to the current high-level metrics with creative content capturing the essence of the destination.

DTPB's social media journey has been nothing short of extraordinary, thanks to a multi-tiered approach that included

visual content creation and hosting 178 influencers last year alone. Of those hosted influencers, more than 45% of them were DEIA influencers—championing diversity, LGBTQIA+ representation, and accessibility in the destination.

"Our vibrant social media community spans eight major platforms, and together, we've surpassed the million-follower mark," explains Milton Segarra, CDME, president and CEO for DTPB. "It's more than just the number of followers—we seek to be a source of inspiration for travelers worldwide. Our stunning visuals and engaging stories from our dedicated in-house team keep people coming back for more."



Discover The Palm Beaches is celebrating 1,000,000 followers across its social media platforms. The organization promotes unique aspects of the destination to its followers, such as the iconic Worth Avenue clock tower in Palm Beach.



The in-house social media team creates all the content for Discover The Palm Beaches' platforms.

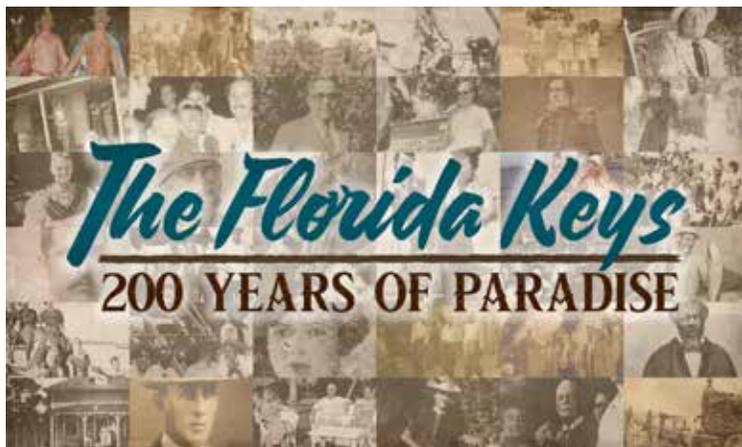


BEST of SOUTHEAST FLORIDA!

Florida Keys & Key West Celebrates Monroe County's Bicentennial With Initiatives, Events

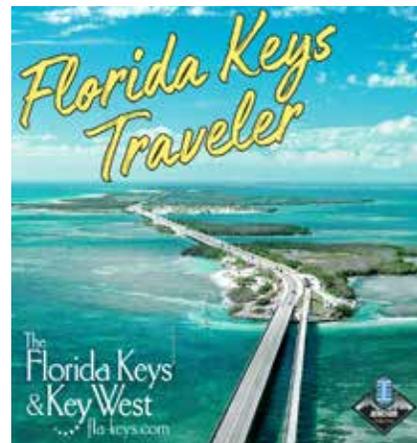
The Florida Keys & Key West launched several bicentennial initiatives in 2023, celebrating the 200th anniversary of Monroe County's establishment by the Florida Territorial Legislature on July 3, 1823.

Initiatives included a "Keys 200" section on the destination's website, dedicated to two centuries of Keys history and including a Keys historical timeline. Also, national distribution of the hour-long *The Florida Keys: 200 Years of Paradise* was produced by South Florida



The documentary *The Florida Keys: 200 Years of Paradise* was partially underwritten by the Monroe County TDC and was carried by 85% of U.S. PBS stations.
Photo: South Florida PBS

PBS for broadcast in 2023 and partially underwritten by the Monroe County TDC. The documentary was carried by 85% of all U.S. PBS stations. Additionally, a 30-episode Florida Keys Traveler podcast series showcased Keys history through voices of local personalities, historians, environmentalists, and adventurers. Distributed globally, the podcast is available on more than 25 platforms. Episodes concluded July 3 featuring an interview with a 104-year-old Key West resident who rode a train on Henry Flagler's Florida Keys Over-Sea Railroad. Air carriers Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd. and Singapore Airlines carried several podcast episodes.



The Florida Keys Traveler podcast presented 30 episodes with one-of-a-kind stories showcasing 200 years of Keys history.
Photo: NewmanPR

A patriotic July 3 bicentennial celebration in the Lower Keys' Big Pine Key featured on-site creation of a giant Key lime pie, the Keys' signature dessert, that measured 13.14 feet in diameter—believed to be the world's largest.

NEW MEMBER RESOURCE:

"Tourism Marketing in Florida: A Newcomer's Guide"

The roadmap to mastering destination marketing in the Sunshine State!

Designed for new team members, staff, board members, and industry leaders, this comprehensive collection of video trainings illuminates the path to success in the world of Florida tourism marketing.

With *Tourism Marketing in Florida: A Newcomer's Guide*, you'll:

- Train your team faster by giving them access actionable strategies to elevate your destination.
- Bring TDC and board members a broader understanding of their role through insider knowledge from Florida's tourism marketing veterans.
- Help members of your industry appreciate the full impact of your efforts by demonstrating how to leverage collaborations for maximum impact.

These first-draft videos were created by DMO expert volunteers to serve you. Please watch them and give us your feedback on how to improve them. We expect to incorporate feedback on another version in a few months.



Distribute this link and QR code to members of your team, board, and industry as a free benefit of Destinations Florida.

<https://bit.ly/NewFDM>



Greater Miami CVB Named Certified Autism Center™

The Greater Miami CVB was named a Certified Autism Center™, awarded to organizations that have completed autism training to better understand, welcome, and provide accessibility to autistic and sensory-sensitive visitors and their families.

The designation, presented Apr. 1 by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), marked the beginning of Autism Acceptance Month and is an essential step in serving Greater Miami and Miami Beach's diverse travel community.

"This certification aligns with our efforts to be an increasingly accessible community and builds on other programs, including sustainability, that will make Greater Miami and Miami Beach an even better place to live, work, play and visit," noted GMCVB President & CEO David Whitaker.

Achieving CAC designation is an initial measure in transforming Greater Miami and Miami Beach into a Certified Autism Destination, providing visitors an array of trained and certified entertainment, recreation, and hospitality options.

Already championing accessibility and inclusivity in travel, Miami International Airport hosts MIA Airport Instruction and Readiness (MIAair) tours for children with special needs, allowing them to navigate the airport travel experience from start to finish in a safe and controlled environment, and Miami-Dade County Parks offers sensory equipment specifically designed for neurodivergent children.

"Our focus is on welcoming all visitors and ensuring the travel and hospitality industry recognizes that our continued success is dependent on being the most inclusive destination possible," added Whitaker.



Greater Miami & Miami Beach celebrate Autism Acceptance Month (MiamiandMiamiBeach.com/AutismAcceptanceMonth).



CAC accreditation presented to the GMCVB's Rolando Aedo (left) and David Whitaker (right), alongside IBCCES's Meredith Tekin, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Raquel Regalado, GMCVB Board Chair and Miami Marriott Biscayne Bay GM Julissa Kepner, and from Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava's office, GMCVB Board Member Francesca de Quesada Covey.



In the News

Visit Sarasota County Announces New Director of Sales and Industry Relations

Visit Sarasota County has named Suzanne Hackman, CDME, its new director of sales and industry relations. She is responsible for developing sales strategies to attract overnight business to Sarasota County and managing relationships with local businesses and partners. She most recently served as regional director of sales for PRA Business Events. Previously she was VP of sales and business development for Visit St. Pete/Clearwater for more than 17 years. Hackman is a graduate of University of South Florida with a bachelor's degree in business administration and human resource management. VisitSarasota.com



Suzanne Hackman, CDME



Quick Trips!

Want to See Your DMO's News Here?

We regularly publish brief news items from DMOs in *Tourism Marketing Today*. We call them "Quick Trips," and they are your opportunity to share your good news! If you aren't receiving an email reminder, reach out to Susan Trainor (editor.trainor@gmail.com), and she will add you to the mailing list.

Don't miss your opportunity to submit a Quick Trip from your DMO!



Daytona Aquarium and Rainforest Adventure Opens in Daytona Beach

The Daytona Beach area has its first aquarium offering in the destination with the recent opening of the Daytona Aquarium and Rainforest Adventure, which provides an interactive educational experience featuring animals from both land and sea. The 55,000 sq. ft. facility provides visitors the opportunity to explore close to 40 separate exhibits including a 100,000-gallon shark exhibit and two touch pools including a 12,000-gallon stingray touch pool. There are also habitats for alligators, frogs, and lizards. DaytonaBeach.com



Guests enjoy the 12,000-gallon stingray touch pool at the new Daytona Aquarium and Rainforest Adventure. Phase 2 of the attraction, The Rainforest, is scheduled for opening in 2025 and will feature multiple species including primates, sloths, and tropical birds. Photo: Daytona Beach Area CVB

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Adds Para Division to Pickleplex Challenge Tournament

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach had the honor of hosting the annual three-day Pickleplex Challenge Tournament at the PicklePlex in Punta Gorda. This year they added a para division. This division allowed para-athletes to play one-on-one, mixed doubles, and partners with a standing player. Athletes traveled from throughout the country to Punta Gorda to participate in this tournament including representation from as far as Washington State, Minnesota, and Canada. PureFlorida.com



Divisional participants are pictured with their partners at the Pickleplex Challenge Tournament.

Build destination loyalty.

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With third-party cookies on the way out, your brand's future actually looks brighter than the Florida sun. Say hello to the sunny first-party data world—connect with real past visitors, foster relationships and bring them back for another Sunshine State adventure!

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Florida's First Coast of Golf Holds 19th Annual Day at THE PLAYERS Event

Florida's First Coast of Golf (FFCG) had a record turnout with 100 regional golf industry leaders in attendance, representing Northeast Florida's visitor bureaus and VISIT FLORIDA, golf courses, hotels, resorts, JAX airport vacation homes, the Superstore, distilleries, media publishers, golf operators, and special guests. The event opened up with a few words from Lee Smith, executive director of THE PLAYERS Championship, and led into a Q&A by *Golfweek* with FFCG's special guests, PGA Tour professional player Wyndham Clark and his caddie, John Ellis. Florida-Golf.org



FFCG tourism industry professionals enjoy the 19th annual Day at THE PLAYERS event.

Visit Lake City Receives Adrian Award for Brand Recognition

Visit Lake City was proud to receive an Adrian Award for Revitalizing the Columbia County Brand in the Brand Recognition category. In 2023, Visit Columbia County Florida was officially rebranded Lake City, Florida Springlands in recognition of the destination's unique attributes, cultural heritage, and natural beauty. "We continue to amplify our brand message to ensure potential visitors are aware of Lake City, its small town charm, and endless outdoor adventures," said Visit Lake City Marketing Manager Kim Goldsmith. LakeCityFL.com



Kim Goldsmith displays Visit Lake City's Adrian Award beside a photo of the "sign tree," circa 1940, where U.S. Hwy. 90 and U.S. Hwy. 41 crossed in downtown Lake City.

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Island Hopper Named One of 10Best Music Festivals by *USA Today*

Lee County's Island Hopper Songwriter Fest was recently ranked as the fourth-best music fest in the *USA Today* 10Best Readers' Choice Awards. The 10-day event features singer-songwriters who perform on Captiva Island, Cape Coral, downtown Fort Myers, and Fort Myers Beach. This year, Island Hopper celebrates its 10th anniversary, and the dates for the festival are Sept. 20–29. Most of the shows are free, and Island Hopper attracted 13,500 people last year. VisitFortMyers.com



Nashville singer-songwriter Ava Suppelsa on Captiva Island during last year's Island Hopper Songwriter Fest

Brightline Chooses Martin County, City of Stuart for Intercity Station

In March, high speed passenger rail company Brightline officially announced they selected Martin County and the City of Stuart as the site for their next intercity station. The Stuart Brightline station will connect the Treasure Coast region with existing stops in destinations such as Orlando, West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale, and Miami. The station will be nestled in historic downtown Stuart and is expected to open the second half of 2026. DiscoverMartin.com



The official announcement of the Stuart Brightline station was made in March during a press event in downtown Stuart.
Photo: Roaming Railfan via Brightline

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ADRIENNE HENNIS
Account Executive

✉ ahennis@al.com ☎ 251.243.8042



ADRIANNE GLASS
Account Executive

✉ aglass@al.com ☎ 205.325.3419



Visit Jacksonville Launches Jax Coffee & Donuts Trail

Jacksonville's cup is overflowing with local coffee shops and fresh baked donuts for everyone to enjoy, which is why Visit Jacksonville launched the Jax Coffee & Donuts Trail on Apr. 2. Trail-goers can fuel up at more than 30 shops across the city on the self-guided tour. By checking in at each stop on the Visit Jax app, they are eligible for free coffee and donut-themed prizes from Visit Jacksonville. VisitJacksonville.com



The Jax Coffee & Donuts Trail has more than 30 shops offering coffee and sweet treats.

Florida Keys Promote Green Lodging

The Florida Keys & Key West is highlighting state-designated Florida Green Lodging accommodations on its destination website. A Green Lodging leaf graphic, created to encourage visitors to make sustainable lodging choices, is added to listings of 17 current Green Lodging properties—two in Key Largo, two in Islamorada, one in Marathon, two in the Lower Keys, and 10 in Key West—designated by Florida's Department of Environmental Protection. Fla-Keys.com.



This graphic highlights state-designated Florida Green Lodging accommodations throughout the Florida Keys. Image: Monroe County TDC

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Orlando Featured in Hit Netflix Series *Somebody Feed Phil*

Elevating the perception of Orlando as a quality dining destination is a key priority for Visit Orlando. Visit Orlando pitched Phil Rosenthal, creator of *Everybody Loves Raymond* and host of Netflix's hit show *Somebody Feed Phil* to film in Orlando. Now streaming, the dedicated Orlando episode showcases restaurants in Mills 50, the Milk District, Parramore, and more, and airs in more than 190 countries in eight languages. Orlando is one of only eight cities profiled this season. VisitOrlando.com



Phil Rosenthal visits Capa at Four Seasons Resort Orlando at WALT DISNEY WORLD® while filming Netflix series *Somebody Feed Phil*.

Amelia Island CVB Collaborates With Local Partners to Find 'Fur-ever' Homes for Dogs

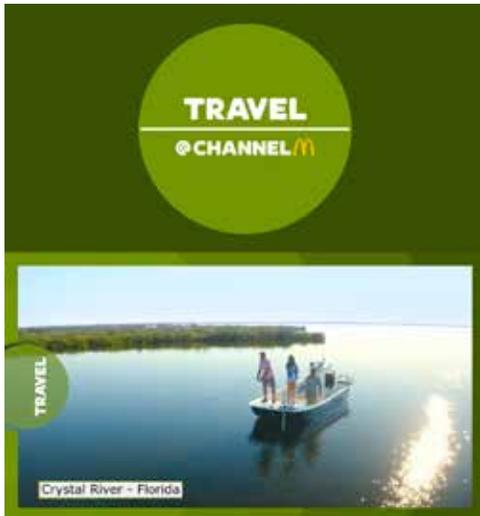
In celebration of Global Meetings Industry Day, Amelia Island CVB partnered with Nassau County Animal Services and three local partners for a Paws-itive Impact Unleashed event. Meetings, sales, and marketing colleagues were treated to ice cream and greeted by dogs up for adoption. The effort showed how it's paws-ible for meeting planners to collaborate with local nonprofits to add a fun Corporate Social Responsibility component to their meeting. As a bonus, three lucky pups found their fur-ever homes! AmeliaIsland.com



Amelia Island CVB is redefining CSR for meeting planners. Photo: Deremer Studios LLC

Discover Crystal River Showcases Destination to McDonald's Patrons in Germany

Discover Crystal River Florida partnered with German production company 3Sixty:TV to deliver featured travel content to Germany, one of its largest markets. The company created a custom promotional video for Crystal River, which will be seen in 660 McDonald's restaurants across the country. Throughout May and June, hungry customers will enjoy a free appetizer of the best Citrus County has to offer. In addition to the great exposure, the promotion didn't cost the VCB a dime. Now that's a happy meal! DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com



Screenshot from Discover Crystal River Florida McDonald's travel content

Destin-Fort Walton Beach, FL Brings Sunshine to NYC

In March, Destin-Fort Walton Beach, FL brought the beach and sunshine to cold NYC as the destination brought local business owners, artists, and chefs to share an inside look of their unique offerings. Media and influencers enjoyed interactive experiences such as sushi making with Yoshi Eddings from HarborDocks, ice cream tasting from Pink Coyote, up-close viewings of Gnarly Harley's artwork, and a touch tank to hold native species right in the palm of their hands! DestinFWB.com

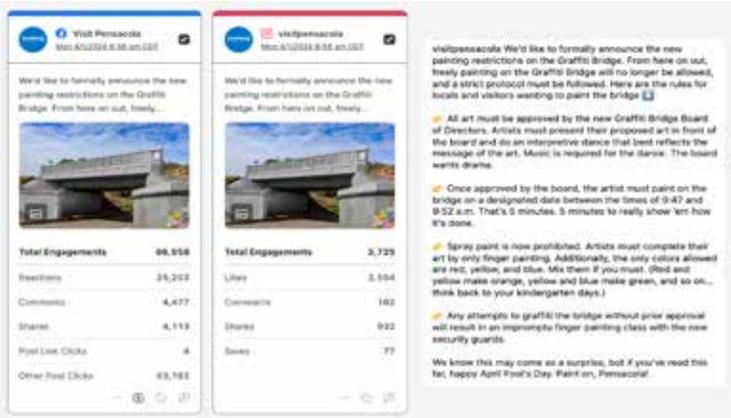


Destin-Fort Walton Beach, FL event setup at Lavan Chelsea New York



Visit Pensacola's April Fool's Joke Goes Viral

In a playful April Fool's joke, Visit Pensacola claimed the iconic Graffiti Bridge was off-limits to artists unless they adhered to new "guidelines," depicting it as a blank canvas. The prank garnered massive attention, reaching 597,000 on Facebook alone, with more than 633,000 across platforms. Shared 4,000 times, it's Visit Pensacola's top post in 2024. Local news even covered the hoax, amplifying its reach and humor throughout the Pensacola Bay Area. VisitPensacola.com



Visit Pensacola pranks the local community through social media by collaborating with city officials on one of the most prized must-see areas.

Olympic Trials Held in Sarasota County

Visit Sarasota County is proud to report the 2024 U.S. Rowing Olympic and Paralympic trials in rowing were held at Nathan Benderson Park, the number one rowing destination in all of North America. The top rowers in the country flocked to Sarasota County in the hopes of earning a spot in the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris. More than 100 athletes raced in the trials, which were free for spectators to come out and watch. VisitSarasota.com



Aerial view of Nathan Benderson Park with multi-level Finish Tower that provides 360-degree views of the course

Discover Lake County Announces Partnership With Star Athletics

Discover Lake County recently announced its partnership with Star Athletics and the incredible track and field Olympians they train. Well-known athletes such as Sha'Carri Richardson and Tee Tee Terry use Lake County as their home base as they train for the 2024 Paris Olympics, and the team at Star Athletics will now be helping promote all there is to see and do in this hidden gem destination. DiscoverLakeCountyFL.com



Discover Lake County staff and members of Star Athletics
Photo: Discover Lake County

Bradenton Area CVB Hosts Local Colors-Themed Event for Cleveland-Based Media

In March, the Bradenton CVB team brought a little sand and sunshine to the Cleveland area during their target market media event. A Cleveland-based artist led writers through a painting class where they used the Local Colors of Anna Maria Island to create their own rendition of the Anna Maria Island Pier while watching a live feed of the sunset over the Gulf island's seashore. BradentonGulfIslands.com



Members of the Bradenton Area CVB team and Cleveland-based journalists show off their completed works of art.
Photo: Bradenton Area CVB



Florida's Historic Coast Embraces Rural Charm and Southern Hospitality of Hastings, Florida

The town of Hastings' history is rich like St. Augustine, and the VCB is using marketing resources to support its revitalization. Hastings was founded in 1890 to support St. Augustine's grand hotels with fresh produce. This Florida Main Street Community is already enjoying new hospitality businesses and great events like the Cabbage, Potato and Bacon Festival held Apr. 27–28. FloridasHistoricCoast.com



Florida's Historic Coast focus on rural tourism in Hastings includes celebrating small town culture, agriculture, and outdoor events.

Greater Miami and Miami Beach Shine Even Brighter During Rainbow Spring

Famously diverse year-round, the LGBTQ+ welcome mat shines especially bright throughout Rainbow Spring in Greater Miami and Miami Beach. The program, in partnership with Expedia, highlights spring experiences, events, and special offers of interest to LGBTQ+ visitors, including Miami Beach Pride, OUTshine Film Festival, and LGBTQ+ welcoming hotels. Following the success of its 2023 domestic launch—resulting in 27,000-plus bookings—the program was expanded to target international markets including Toronto, London, Mexico City, and São Paulo. MiamiandMiamiBeach.com



Miami Beach shines even brighter during Rainbow Spring.

12 Hours of Sebring Race Festivities Launched at Downtown Fan Fest

Fans kicked off the 72nd annual 12 Hours of Sebring at the 6th annual Fan Fest in historic Downtown Sebring with pit crew demonstrations, a transporter parade, race cars, and drivers answering questions and signing autographs. The highlight of the event is the Kids Power Wheel Race. This year 70-plus kids ages 3–6 years old raced their battery-operated vehicles through downtown Sebring. The evening ended with the playing of the movie *Herbie Fully Loaded*. VisitSebring.com



Young 12 Hours of Sebring race fans rev their engines in the Kids Power Wheel Race in historic downtown Sebring.

Tail-Wagging Fun in Orlando North, Seminole County

Sanford's Pints n' Paws Craft Beer Festival, returned for its 12th year on Mar. 23 in Historic Downtown Sanford. The pet-friendly event had craft beer, delectable food, and live music, all in support of local animal charities. Last year's festival raised a record-breaking \$115,000. With over \$600,000 contributed throughout its history, Pints n' Paws continues its tradition of supporting four-legged companions in need. DoOrlandoNorth.com



Attendees and their furry friends enjoy Sanford's Pints n' Paws Craft Beer Festival.



Visit Tallahassee Hosts Bicentennial Media Tour

In celebration of Tallahassee's 200th anniversary, Visit Tallahassee organized a special Bicentennial media tour in March, hosting five travel writers to experience the diverse historic and cultural offerings of Florida's Capital City. The FAM included journalists from *The Local Palate*, *Orlando Magazine*, and *Global Traveler Magazine*, among others. The journalists enjoyed their experiences including morning yoga at the Grove Museum, historic eats at The Edison in the former power plant and Amicus Brewing Ventures in the former city waterworks building, and a tour of the Tallahassee Museum. VisitTallahassee.com



Visit Tallahassee hosts five travel writers on a visit to Mission San Luis.

Experience Kissimmee Named Official Partner for 2024 MLB World Tour: Mexico City Series

Partnering with Major League Baseball (MLB), Experience Kissimmee secured exclusive rights for 2024 World Tour: Mexico City Series. With promotional privileges, including in-stadium activations and social media exposure, the destination was on display during the Houston Astros vs. Colorado Rockies games at Estadio Alfredo Harp Helú held Apr. 27–28. This partnership aims to boost awareness of the destination, especially in Latin America, tapping into the important travel market from Mexico. ExperienceKissimmee.com



Experience Kissimmee is the Official Partner for 2024 MLB World Tour: Mexico City Series.

Avelo Airlines to Start Nonstop Air Service Out of LAL

On Mar. 27, Lakeland Linder International Airport (LAL) announced multiple agreements with the City of Lakeland, Visit Central Florida, and Avelo Airlines, Inc., paving the way for the reinstatement of commercial air service in Polk County. Avelo will have biweekly nonstop flights from LAL to Tweed New Haven Airport (HVN) starting June 13. Additionally, VCF and Avelo have established terms for an Airline Marketing Partnership, promoting Polk County across destinations served by the airport. VisitCentralFlorida.org



Avelo Airlines Head of Commercial Trevor Yealy, Polk County Commissioner Martha Santiago, and Visit Central Florida Executive Director Mark Jackson

Florida's Space Coast Meets With Travel Advisors in Home Cities

Tom Bartosek, travel trade industry coordinator for Space Coast of Florida, attended the Peninsula Shows in April to market the destination directly to travel advisors in their home cities. He met with 111 travel advisors in Atlanta, Ga., 75 in Greenville, S.C., 104 in Charlotte, N.C., and 86 in Greensboro N.C. The Peninsula format includes typical trade show tables to greet the agents and distribute brochures, and also a speed meeting section where advisors at tables get 5 minutes with each exhibitor. VisitSpaceCoast.com



Tom Bartosek markets Florida's Space Coast to travel advisors during a Peninsula Shows speed meeting.



Quick Trips!

Walton County Tourism Brings Sense of South Walton to Incentive Travel Trade Show

Walton County Tourism (WCT) participated in its first Global Meeting & Incentive Travel Exchange, held Apr. 7–10 in Orlando, with the goal of driving more incentive group business to South Walton. GMITE is the industry’s only event held in private suites, allowing exhibitors to create an activation-style, immersive experience. WCT had 27 one-on-one appointments with qualified meeting planners to showcase Walton County as a unique and memorable destination for future groups. WaltonCountyFLTourism.com



The private-suite display allows WCT Sales Director Karen Morris and Marketing Director Kelli Carter to create an immersive experience connecting all the sights, smells and sounds—including soothing waves—that make Walton County such a desirable travel destination for both for business and leisure. Photo: Walton County Tourism

Monopoly: Tampa Edition Is Now a Reality

In partnership with MONOPOLY, Tampa Bay has passed GO with the launch of a brand-new MONOPOLY: Tampa Edition game. Created by Top Trumps USA and licensed by Hasbro, the Tampa Bay-inspired game features cultural sites, historic landmarks, charitable organizations, and businesses on the game’s classic squares. Visit Tampa Bay also released a new limited-edition token based on the iconic crossed keys and keyhole logo. MONOPOLY: Tampa Edition is available in select stores and online, including the Unlock Tampa Bay Visitors Center. VisitTampaBay.com



Santiago C. Corrada shows off the Tampa-inspired version of MOLOPOLY during the game’s launch at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay.

Destination Panama City Finds Success With Referral Program

Earlier this year, Destination Panama City (DPC) announced the rollout of their new incentive-based referral cards with one simple goal: to build a stronger relationship with local tourism partners. Businesses are encouraged to hand out cards to their guests sending them to the Visitors Center to win a free prize. Since the rollout, business owners have expressed their satisfaction, and an influx of tourists have journeyed to the visitor’s center eager to claim their prize. DestinationPanamaCity.com



The DPC Referral Program is designed to build a stronger relationship between Destination Panama City and their tourism partners.

The Palm Beaches Travel Trade Portal Is a New Tool for Travel Advisors

Discover The Palm Beaches (DTPB) has created a new resource to help travel professionals learn, sell, engage with, and promote The Palm Beaches. The Palm Beaches Travel Trade Portal is an online learning platform tailored specifically for travel advisors as the ultimate tool to teach comprehensive insights into America’s First Resort Destination®. “Travel advisors are tremendous ambassadors for our destination, and we’re hopeful they will find the portal a valuable resource to help increase awareness of why we are a great place to visit,” said Milton Segarra, CDME, president and CEO of DTPB. ThePalmBeaches.com



The Palm Beaches Travel Trade Portal provides a learning platform for Travel Advisors.



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



**AUSLEY
MCMULLEN**

Enclosed is your copy of Tourism Marketing Today
a publication of

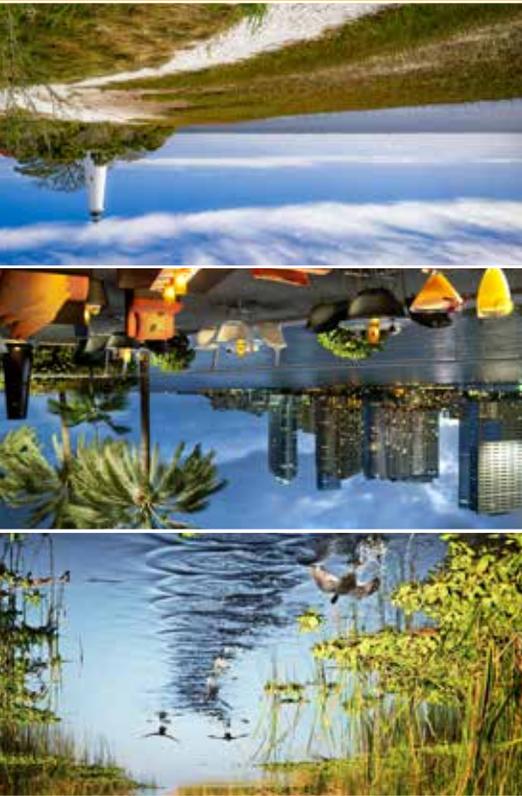
DESTINATIONS FLORIDA

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

INSIDE: Groundbreaking tourism initiative will benefit all NW Florida counties.

Executive Director Robert Skrob | Lobbyists Brian Ballard and Mat Forrest, 850/577-0444
1400 Village Sq. Blvd., Suite 3-250, Tallahassee, FL 32312, USA | Phone: 850/222-6000 | Fax: 850/222-6002 • www.DestinationsFlorida.org

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 56 official county DMOs that promote their communities throughout the world. Tourism promotion activities help to attract 136 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

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