

# TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of Destinations Florida | [www.DestinationsFlorida.org](http://www.DestinationsFlorida.org) | December 2025



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## Seven National Radio Stations Live More Floridays in Greater Fort Lauderdale

In October, the VISIT FLORIDA promotions team brought seven different radio stations from across the country to sunny Greater Fort Lauderdale to experience what it means to Live More Floridays. The group got to see it all, and found the new in the known.

Each morning of the trip, the shows from New York, Chicago, Houston, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Cincinnati broadcasted live from the

Riverside Hotel on historic Las Olas Boulevard. They shared what their Floriday included and gave listeners a chance to win their own Florida getaway, including the same experiences they enjoyed.

While numbers aren't final, VISIT FLORIDA is expecting more than 57M impressions from these broadcasts, generating an estimated \$4.9M in media value.

"Welcoming VISIT FLORIDA and seven national radio stations to the heart of Las Olas showcased the energy and diversity of Greater Fort Lauderdale to millions of listeners across the country," said Stacy Ritter, president & CEO of Visit Lauderdale. "This partnership highlights everything our destination has to offer beyond



Radio broadcasters enjoy a Fort Lauderdale Water Taxi tour.

*LIVE MORE FLORIDAYS* continues on pg. 3

## Representing Our Industry

by Robert Skrob



In October, I joined industry leaders in Destin for the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association's fall board meeting and government relations meeting at the Henderson Beach Resort. It was a strong gathering of statewide partners focused on one mission. Promote, Protect, and Prosper.

I had the privilege of representing Destinations Florida on the Government Relations panel alongside

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

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

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DIAMOND PARTNERS



PLATINUM PARTNERS



GOLD PARTNERS



SILVER PARTNERS



# HAPPY Birthday

**Ben Earman**  
**December 3**

**Nerissa Okiye**  
**December 7**

**Darien Schaefer**  
**December 17**

**Nicole Stacey**  
**December 28**

**Gil Langley**  
**January 22**

## DESTINATIONS **FLORIDA** TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of  
Destinations Florida  
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Phone: 850/222-6000  
[www.DestinationsFlorida.org](http://www.DestinationsFlorida.org)

Robert Skrob,  
Executive Director

Suzanne Hurst, CAE,  
Deputy Executive Director

MaryLu Winchester,  
Member Database

### On the Cover

Discover Martin County invites visitor and residents alike to discover the electric energy of historic Downtown Stuart. Dine by the water, browse unique boutiques, catch a live show, explore colorful galleries, and soak in the irresistible coastal charm that makes every visit truly unforgettable. [DiscoverMartin.com](http://DiscoverMartin.com)

## LIVE MORE FLORIDAYS... continued from pg. 1

the beaches and helps inspire travelers to experience it for themselves. We are proud to see the impact of this partnership and look forward to welcoming even more travelers inspired by these stories."

The Live More Fridays campaign aims to showcase experiences that go beyond theme parks and well-known beaches, encouraging travelers to discover Florida's diverse landscapes and activities. Campaign highlights have included horseback riding on Amelia Island, exploring coastal dune lakes at Grayton Beach, birdwatching and kayaking at Merritt Island, cave diving



Floridays participants take a pastry break at New River Cafe & Bakery in Fort Lauderdale.

in Williston, swimming with manatees in Crystal River, ziplining in Ocala, visiting the Salvador Dali Museum in St. Pete, and a partnership with *Wheel of Fortune* that featured Tampa, St. Pete-Clearwater, Pensacola, Kissimmee, and the Florida Keys and Key West.

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

Bryan Griffin, president & CEO of VISIT FLORIDA, and Jason Mahon, deputy secretary of economic development with the Florida Department of Commerce.

During the panel, I recapped what we saw in the last legislative session and outlined our advocacy strategies for 2026. Our message was clear. Protecting tourism promotion protects local jobs, local businesses, and local tax revenues.

That evening, I stayed to attend FRLA's Hospitality Stars of the Industry Gala Dinner. The event was not only enjoyable, it was productive. I connected with chapter leaders from across the state. These local FRLA leaders are important allies for our DMOs, and the conversations



Deputy Secretary of Economic Development Jason Mahon, VISIT FLORIDA President & CEO Bryan Griffin, and Destinations Florida Executive Director Robert Skrob present a panel discussion on government relations with this message: Protecting tourism promotion protects local jobs, local businesses, and local tax revenues.

helped strengthen our shared commitment to keeping Florida's tourism industry growing.

I appreciate the opportunity to represent Destinations Florida and to advocate for Florida's tourism industry. Together, we are building a stronger future for tourism in every corner of Florida.

## Martin County's Ian Centrone Joins TravelPulse "40 Under 40" List

Ian Centrone, deputy director of the Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing, has been honored among the 2025 recipients of the prestigious TravelPulse "40 Under 40" list. Each year, the program celebrates the rising stars shaping the future of the travel industry. This recognition underscores Ian's dynamic leadership in tourism marketing, his innovative approach to destination promotion, and his commitment to elevating Martin County as a vibrant travel destination. [DiscoverMartin.com](http://DiscoverMartin.com)



Ian Centrone in action at an IMM event in New York City

## A Rare Find: Lee County Honors Ranger Toni With Junonia Award

The Lee County VCB honored retired refuge ranger Toni Westland with its 2025 Junonia Award at its recent annual meeting. Much like the rare and coveted shell it is named for, Toni is a treasured find in Lee County's tourism community. Her creativity at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel—from the Wildlife on Wheels classroom to the Roving Ranger—made nature accessible to all. In retirement, "Ranger Toni" continues inspiring through her eco-inspired art. [VisitFortMyers.com](http://VisitFortMyers.com)



2025 Junonia Award recipient Toni Westland, retired refuge ranger at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, with Tamara Pigott, executive director of the Lee County VCB

## Cape Canaveral Museum Director Receives Communications Award

Jamie Draper, director of the Cape Canaveral Space Force Museum, has been honored with the Harry Kolcum News and Communications Award from the National Space Club Florida Committee. This prestigious award recognizes individuals for excellence in telling the space story along Florida's Space Coast and around the world. Draper credits the museum's dedicated team, the U.S. Space Force Historical Foundation, and mission partners for their passion and commitment to sharing the 75-year story of launch activity from the World's Premier Gateway to Space. [VisitSpaceCoast.com](http://VisitSpaceCoast.com)



Cape Canaveral Space Force Museum Director Jamie Draper receives the Harry Kolcum Award on Oct. 25.

## Florida Trend Recognizes Florida's Space Coast Executives

Peter Cranis, executive director of the Space Coast Office of Tourism, has been named one of *Florida Trend's* 500 most influential executives in different economic sectors in the state. Also recognized from the Space Coast are John W. Murray, CEO & port director of Port Canaveral, and John Nicklow, president of Florida Institute of Technology. [VisitSpaceCoast.com](http://VisitSpaceCoast.com)



Space Coast Office of Tourism Executive Director Peter Cranis is one of three area executives honored by *Florida Trend*.

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## Sunshine Law and Contract "Influencers"

by Steven M. Hogan

The internet has brought about new questions for Destinations Florida members and Florida's robust Sunshine Laws. The question of the day: If a DMO contracts with a social media influencer to provide tourism content, is the influencer's content subject to Florida's Sunshine Laws?



An influencer would likely have arguments that its work under contract with a DMO would not cause the influencer to become an "agency" for purposes of being subject to Florida's Sunshine Laws. However, each situation requires separate scrutiny, both as to the facts of the engagement and the language used in each contract.

Image by freepik

We have looked into the issue, and our conclusion is "probably not, but maybe." The evaluation of this issue would be subject to case-by-case analysis turning on each engagement's particular facts.

Florida's broad Sunshine Laws make most government documents "public records" subject to disclosure under chapter 119, Florida Statutes, and most government meetings "public meetings" that must be accessible to the public under chapter 286, Florida Statutes.

The Florida attorney general has opined that these laws meant that social media pages maintained by government agencies are subject to these Sunshine Laws, and if a social media "post" was made in connection with the agency's "official business," then the post would be a public record that must be retained. Op. Att'y Gen. Fla. 2009-19 (2009).

The situation is more complicated when a government agency contracts with a private party to provide services, including social media content services. In such a case, the analysis turns on whether the contractor is an "agency" within the meaning of section 119.011(2), Florida Statutes, and if so, whether the specific records are created "in connection with the transaction of official business" of the agency under section 119.011(12).

The "agency" analysis is fact-specific and can get complicated. There is a large body of case law on this topic and the various tests that are applied. Fortunately, the Florida attorney general publishes an annual "Government in the Sunshine Manual," which

you can download for free here: <https://bit.ly/sunshine-influencers>. The Sunshine Manual presents the law on various issues in a digestible format. Pages 60-65 of the 2025 manual are most relevant to the contractor/agency analysis.

In most cases, an influencer would likely have arguments that its work under contract with a DMO is not something that would cause the influencer to become an "agency" for purposes of Florida's Sunshine Laws. However, each situation requires separate scrutiny, both as to the facts of the engagement and the language used in each contract.

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](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.



Steven M. Hogan

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**JOIN US FOR  
FLORIDA TOURISM DAY  
at the Capitol  
Tallahassee, Florida  
January 20-21, 2026**



To promote awareness for the importance of tourism marketing to Florida's economy, the Partnership for Florida's Tourism is hosting Florida Tourism Day at the Capitol. This event will feature visits by legislators to our meeting as well as appointments for Destinations Florida members to meet with legislators at the Capitol to discuss the issues that are important to DMOs.

This meeting is being held in conjunction with the following organizations:



**Accommodations:**

The Hyatt House Tallahassee is offering a special rate of \$289 per night for Destinations Florida members attending Tourism Day. To make your reservation please call the (850) 222-0039 and reference the group name: Destinations Florida Tourism Day.

**All reservations must be made before the cut-off date of Tuesday, January 6, 2026.** Be sure to make your reservation as soon as possible because the room blocks will sell out.



Hyatt House Tallahassee  
1100 Railroad Avenue  
Tallahassee, FL 32310  
(850) 222-0039

**DESTINATIONS  
FLORIDA**

**Schedule of Events**

(All attendees are invited to all events)

**January 20, 2026**

2:00 PM – Destinations Florida Board of Directors Meeting

5:00 PM Hyatt House Tallahassee  
1100 Railroad Avenue  
Tallahassee, FL 32310  
(850) 222-0039

5:00 PM – Destinations Florida Welcome Reception

6:30 PM Hyatt House Tallahassee  
1100 Railroad Avenue  
Tallahassee, FL 32310

**January 21, 2026**

8:30 AM – Destinations Florida Member Briefing

9:30 AM Hyatt House Tallahassee  
1100 Railroad Avenue  
Tallahassee, FL 32310  
(850) 222-0039

10:30 AM – Tourism Day Rally & Partner Briefing

12:00 Noon FSU Dunlap Champions Club  
Doak S. Campbell Stadium  
225 Champions Way Building B  
Tallahassee, FL 32304  
(850) 644-8528

12:00 Noon – Destinations Florida Member Briefing

1:00 PM FSU Dunlap Champions Club  
Doak S. Campbell Stadium  
225 Champions Way Building B  
Tallahassee, FL 32304

1:00 PM – Destinations Florida Member

5:00 PM Appointments at the Capitol  
400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

5:00 PM – Florida Tourism Day Reception

8:00 PM Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association  
230 S. Adams Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32301

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

**Register today at:  
[DestinationsFlorida.org/26TourismDay](http://DestinationsFlorida.org/26TourismDay)**

# BEST of NORTH FLORIDA!



- Levy County Visitors Bureau
- Suwannee County Tourist Development
- Visit Gainesville, Alachua County
- Visit Lake City
- Visit Tallahassee
- Wakulla County Tourist Development Council

## VisitLevy.com Website Revitalization

The Levy County Visitors Bureau team has completed a two-phase project to modernize and strengthen *VisitLevy.com*, making it more engaging, user-friendly, and optimized for both travelers and search engines.

### Phase 1 – Full Website Rebuild

Visit Levy redesigned and rebuilt the entire site with a clean, modern layout that highlights Levy County's attractions. The update includes:

- Fresh photography and visuals to showcase the county's natural beauty and unique experiences
- Improved navigation and structure for a seamless visitor journey
- SEO best practices integrated throughout the site to boost visibility
- Mobile-friendly functionality to ensure easy access across all devices
- Newsletter sign-up to help grow an engaged audience and keep visitors updated
- Social media integrations for easy sharing and stronger cross-platform promotion



One of the beautiful vistas awaiting visitors to Levy County

### Phase 2 – Interactive Business Map

In the second phase, they expanded functionality by building an SEO-friendly, mobile-optimized interactive map. This map was created using their verified database of local businesses, ensuring accuracy and consistency. Visitors can now easily search, filter, and explore lodging, dining, shopping, and activities across Levy County in an intuitive format.

Together, these phases have transformed *VisitLevy.com* into a powerful digital hub that not only inspires travelers but also supports local businesses through increased online visibility and engagement.



The rebuilt *VisitLevy.com* features fresh photography of Levy County's natural beauty.



# BEST of NORTH FLORIDA!

## Alachua County Strengthens Focus on Tourism and Economic Growth

Over the past year, Alachua County has unified its Tourism and Economic Development teams into one department, officially designated by the County Commission as the county's economic development organization (EDO). This integrated approach aligns tourism promotion, business development, and workforce initiatives to strengthen Alachua County's position as a premier place to live, work, and visit.

In this expanded role, the Tourism and Economic Development Department serves as the official destination management organization (DMO), film commission, and EDO for Alachua County. Recent milestones include county management of the



Alachua County's unified Tourism and Economic Development Department drives investment, workforce growth, and visitor experiences countywide. Serving as the official economic development organization, destination management organization, and film commission, the department advances initiatives that strengthen the local economy and enhance quality of life.

Alachua County Sports and Events Center, home to Florida's only indoor banked track. The center has become a major driver of visitor spending and hosted the 2025 World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships, which generated more than \$24M in economic impact.

Additional initiatives include advancing local food systems and agritourism, deploying more than 100M

advertising impressions annually, launching a new hospitality workforce development initiative, and surpassing all prior lodging sales with \$188M+ in annual revenues.

Tourism remains a powerful economic engine, with 2024 visitors contributing over \$766M in total impact and supporting 6,400 local jobs. Through strategic partnerships and reinvestment, Alachua County continues to grow a diverse and sustainable economy.



Representatives from Santa Fe College, Alachua County, and CareerSource North Central Florida celebrate the launch of the Heavy Diesel Mechanic Training Program at the county's fleet operations facility. Supported by the Tourism and Economic Development Department, the program aligns with workforce needs created by the forthcoming U.S. Army Reserve site in east Gainesville.

## Tallahassee Builds on Record Growth in Preparation for the World Stage

Visit Tallahassee continued its surge in 2025, shattering previous benchmarks with \$1.4B in economic impact—an 8.4% leap over 2024. Performance indicators, including visitation, occupancy, and TDT collections, registered strong growth.

Tallahassee has long established its identity as the Capital of Cross Country. The destination now sets its sights on welcoming visitors from around the world to witness the World Athletics Cross Country Championships on Jan. 10, 2026, the first world championship sports event hosted in Florida's Capital City. Throughout 2025, Visit Tallahassee implemented a comprehensive marketing strategy featuring numerous activations designed to build awareness and engagement ahead of the 2026 Championships, including



Chef Matt Sweezy demonstrates pasta preparation for a group of media attendees at the Hoffman Test Kitchen during the Taste of Tallahassee event in Birmingham.

reaching more than 38,000 runners at the runDisney Half Marathon Health and Fitness Expo and thousands more during the cross country season at Apalachee Regional Park.

To ignite media buzz in the Southeast, Visit Tallahassee employed a dynamic new media-focused activation in Birmingham, Alabama. The Taste of Tallahassee event immersed regional and national media and key content creators in the Capital City's culture. Attendees savored signature dishes from top Tallahassee chefs while receiving a direct, dynamic briefing on Tallahassee's cultural and outdoor assets. This new experiential event generated immediate interest, scheduled media visits, and coverage for the destination.



Visit Tallahassee marketing staff promote the World Athletics Cross Country Championships Tallahassee 25 during the runDisney Health & Fitness Expo.

Looking ahead, Visit Tallahassee anticipates returning to the historic Amtrak Train Station in summer 2026. The landmark, which closed after sustaining damage during a tornado outbreak in 2024, will once again serve as a tourism hub, housing Visit Tallahassee's offices and the main Visitor Information Center and Gift Shop.



## Partner News

### Madden Media and Karsh Hagan Form Partnership

Destinations Florida Diamond Partner Madden Media has joined forces with Karsh Hagan to form a new agency that unites award-winning storytelling with advanced media and analytics to expand opportunities for clients and enhance their ability to deliver bold, purpose-driven solutions that create real impact for their clients and communities. This partnership signals a confident leap forward, redefining a new agency model with a team united by vision, creativity, and results. Together, the agencies bring nearly five decades of purpose-driven storytelling and data-led marketing innovation to deliver measurable impact for clients across industries. [MaddenMedia.com](http://MaddenMedia.com); [KarshHagan.com](http://KarshHagan.com)

"The old agency model is broken. Attention is scarce and trust is at an all-time low," said Dan Janes, CEO of Madden Media. "We are uniting our teams to build the agency for this new reality. By fusing data-driven strategy with powerful, human-centric creative, we are built to help brands earn that trust and deliver transformative results. This is a bold evolution that expands our collective impact."

Together, the newly integrated agency will offer a comprehensive suite of services, including brand strategy, creative development, media planning, public relations and performance analytics, all designed to strengthen communities and the brands that they will serve, tourism and non-tourism alike.

"We didn't take this decision lightly as Karsh Hagan is an established brand in our region," said Kathy Hagan, co-CEO. "However, through our due diligence, we recognized that the Madden team shares not only our vision for delivering purpose and results-driven creative campaigns, but they share our commitment to clients and to ethical business practices. Together, we're poised to make a significant impact on the industry."

"This partnership is a golden opportunity to keep guiding our clients through a changing creative and media landscape," said Pasquale "Pocky" Marranzino, co-CEO of Karsh Hagan. "It's built on shared values and a commitment to helping our clients succeed with fresh ideas, honest collaboration, and real results."

Karsh Hagan will continue to operate from its Denver headquarters, which will serve as a collaboration hub as the teams integrate nationwide over the next year. Clients can expect leadership continuity, a seamless transition, and expanded access to both agencies' expertise.

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# Quick Trips!

## Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB Promotes Outdoor Appeal to Travel Writers

Lois Croft, director of public relations, represented Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB at the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers (AGLOW) Conference in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Two journalists who experienced the destination earlier this year received top honors at the conference. Carrie Zylka of Wisconsin earned first place for her podcast featuring Captain Jay Withers and her February fishing adventure. Scott Mackenthun of Minnesota took third place for his article in the *Mankato Press*, highlighting his unforgettable encounter with a Goliath grouper. [PureFlorida.com](http://PureFlorida.com)



### First Place

Carrie Zylka

*Snook, Redfish & Trout:  
My Florida Inshore Slam  
with Capt. Jay Withers*



The outdoor writers conference provided a valuable opportunity to connect with travel journalists nationwide and spotlight the region's outdoor appeal under the banner "Best Side is Outside."

## Florida's Adventure Coast Hosts Brazilian Influencers

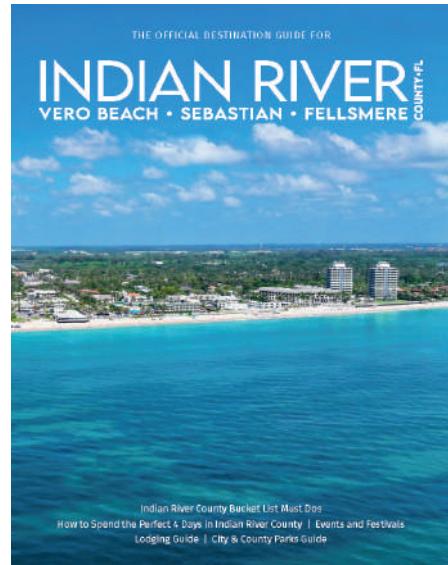
Florida's Adventure Coast, Brooksville-Weeki Wachee recently co-hosted Brazilian influencers André Oliveira and Ilan Neustadt of *Se Liga no Roteiro* in partnership with VISIT FLORIDA. The duo explored local attractions highlighting the area's natural beauty and authentic Florida charm. "Hosting international storytellers like André and Ilan helps us reach new audiences and share what makes our region special," said Tammy Heon, manager of tourism. Their content will spotlight unique adventures found only on Florida's Adventure Coast. [FloridasAdventureCoast.com](http://FloridasAdventureCoast.com)



John Athanason and Halo the Tourism Dog join Mermaid Lexy, host André Oliveira, and Ilan Neustadt at Weeki Wachee Springs State Park.

## Visit Indian River Releases New 2025-26 Destination Guide

Visit Indian River County is excited to unveil their newly redesigned 2025-26 Destination Guide! This annual publication is the ultimate resource for exploring the area—featuring a full calendar of events, a complete lodging directory, the ultimate Indian River County Bucket List, and detailed guides to all city and county parks. Filled with stunning user-submitted photos and fresh, locally crafted content, it's the perfect companion for both residents and visitors. Created by the Visit Indian River County tourism team. [VisitIndianRiverCounty.com](http://VisitIndianRiverCounty.com)



Visit Indian River's Destination Guide is available in print and digital editions.

## Kissimmee, Osceola County Celebrates Tourism Success at Annual Meeting

Experience Kissimmee's annual meeting brought together partners, officials, and staff to reflect on a year of growth. The organization announced Help Now of Osceola as its 2026 Charity Support Program recipient. Outgoing Chairman Russ Kraft was honored for his impactful leadership while incoming Chair Thearon Scurlock was welcomed. Four Rosie Award winners were celebrated for excellence in tourism, and staff led panels that explored the FY26-28 Strategic Plan's pillars: Visitation, Brand Awareness, and Stewardship. [ExperienceKissimmee.com](http://ExperienceKissimmee.com)



The gavel exchange between outgoing Board of Directors Chair Russ Kraft and incoming Chair Thearon Scurlock at Experience Kissimmee's annual meeting, hosted at Embassy Suites by Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista South



## Quick Trips!

### Mobile App the Go-To Guide for Motorcycle Enthusiasts at 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Biketoberfest® in Daytona Beach

Motorcycle enthusiasts gathered in the Daytona Beach area and Volusia County for the 33rd annual Biketoberfest® rally on Oct. 16-19. The four-day motorcycle rally promoted by the Daytona Beach Area CVB attracted thousands of visitors to the destination for the beautiful Florida weather, live music, vendors, bike shows, motorcycle racing, and scenic rides. The CVB's official Biketoberfest® mobile app was redesigned and expanded for this year's event providing the most up-to-date information on everything to see, do, and experience. [DaytonaBeach.com](http://DaytonaBeach.com)



Thousands of motorcycle enthusiasts flock to the Daytona Beach area and Volusia County for the 33rd annual Biketoberfest® rally.

### Visit St. Pete-Clearwater Incentivizes Visitors to Use Paid Time Off

Visit St. Pete-Clearwater is giving travelers the ultimate incentive to take one last trip this year to America's Favorite Beaches. A recent Society for Human Resource Management study found that nearly half of U.S. employees (48%) expect to leave vacation days unused, a fact for which VisitSPC is seeking a remedy. Travelers who book directly through [VisitSPC.com/PTO](http://VisitSPC.com/PTO) for stays through the end of 2025 receive \$50 in gift cards for every vacation day used, up to five nights, simply for doing what they deserve: taking time off. [VisitStPeteClearwater.com](http://VisitStPeteClearwater.com)



### Alachua County to Host 2027 World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships

Alachua County will once again welcome the world in 2027 as host of the World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships at the Alachua County Sports and Events Center and West End Park. Building on the success of 2025, which drew 3,700 athletes from 98 nations and generated more than \$24M in economic impact, the event will showcase the county's world-class facilities, strengthen global tourism ties, and highlight Alachua County's growing reputation as a premier sports destination. [VisitGainesville.com](http://VisitGainesville.com)



Runners from WMA2025 compete at the Alachua County Sports and Events Center, home of the only indoor banked track in Florida. The center was purpose-built with state-of-the-art indoor facilities that can be configured for high-level athletic competition, headline entertainment, trade shows, and everything in between.

### Visit Central Florida Hosts Inaugural Tourism Link-Up

VCF's inaugural Tourism Link-Up took place on Oct. 29, connecting 23 Polk County partners with 11 international tour operators and bed banks through presentations and structured appointments. Following the Link-Up, VCF hosted a two-day International Representative Summit focused on alignment for the new fiscal year. Site visits, strategic planning sessions, and collaborative discussions strengthened communication, deepened market understanding, and expanded opportunities to elevate Polk County's presence in key international markets. [VisitCentralFlorida.org](http://VisitCentralFlorida.org)



Visit Central Florida hosts Tourism Link-Up for partners, international tour operators, and bed bank representatives.



# Quick Trips!

## Martin County Tourism Receives Gold & Silver Magellan Awards

The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing was recently recognized in the prestigious Travel Weekly Magellan Awards, which honor excellence across the global travel industry. The team earned a Gold Magellan Award in the Destination Marketing – Advertising/Marketing category for its creative A.I. Means More Here campaign, and a Silver Magellan Award in the Destinations Overall – Special Needs category for its ongoing accessibility initiatives promoting inclusive travel experiences in Martin County. [DiscoverMartin.com](http://DiscoverMartin.com)



Other winners in this year's Magellan Awards include Delta Air Lines, Raffles Hotels & Resorts, Tourism Australia, Norwegian Cruise Line, and more.

## Go And You'll Know: Visit Tampa Bay Invites Travelers to Experience the Destination

This fall, Visit Tampa Bay unveiled Go And You'll Know, its newest national advertising campaign targeting leisure travelers in key domestic and international markets to inspire holiday travel and build momentum ahead of Tampa Bay's popular winter season. The new campaign shift is based on Visit Tampa Bay's comprehensive brand tracking study revealing that once travelers experience the destination, Tampa Bay is seen as more peaceful, stress-free, diverse, dynamic, luxurious, and dazzling—confirming the region's ability to consistently exceed visitors' expectations. [VisitTampaBay.com](http://VisitTampaBay.com)



A family of four showcases "This is How We Kick It" at the Aloft Tampa Midtown rooftop pool as part of Visit Tampa Bay's Go And You'll Know national advertising campaign. With tongue-in-cheek and sassy-confident headlines, striking visuals, and creative executions that highlight the variety and contrasts defining the region, the campaign positions Tampa Bay as a destination where travelers can have it all.

## Destin-Fort Walton Beach Featured on Good Morning Texas

VISIT FLORIDA and Destin-Fort Walton Beach partnered with *Good Morning Texas* to produce multiple segments that share the unique characteristics of the destination, emphasizing experiences that are ideal for family travel. Three on-location segments showcased the area's coastal attractions, including scuba diving with ScubaTech Destin among artificial reefs and fishing in the "World's Luckiest Fishing Village" with Natural Resources Chief Alex Fogg. Marketing Chief Kerry Sutsko highlighted Little Adventures from The Island Resort at Fort Walton Beach and the destination's convenient accessibility and connectivity for Texas travelers. [DestinFWB.com](http://DestinFWB.com)



Families soak up the sun in Destin-Fort Walton Beach during a *Good Morning Texas* segment sponsored by VISIT FLORIDA, highlighting the destination's fun, family-friendly coastal adventures.

## Visit Sebring Launches Hospitality Training Program

Visit Sebring successfully launched its new Everyone Matters hospitality training program on Oct. 27. Crafted and led by the dynamic Shellie Phelps, the two 24-person, two-hour sessions filled completely within four days of being announced. Attendees praised the engaging, service-focused curriculum and its immediate relevance to both frontline and management roles. The overwhelmingly positive response underscores the region's commitment to elevating visitor experience and fostering a strong, community-wide culture of hospitality. [VisitSebring.com](http://VisitSebring.com)



Participants display their certificates with instructor Shellie Phelps after completing the first session of the Everyone Matters hospitality training.



## Quick Trips!

### Driving Holiday Spirit: Visit Sarasota County's Grinchy Collaboration

The Grinch might be out to steal Christmas, but with a unique community collaboration, Visit Sarasota County helped him steal the show. The VSC teamed up with one of their local performing arts halls to give the Grinch festive rides around town, making special stops to spread the word about his upcoming stage debut. The VSC-branded RV became his sleigh-on-wheels as he toured the community while promoting tickets for his upcoming performances. [VisitSarasota.com](http://VisitSarasota.com)



The mean green one travels around in VSC's mobile visitor center as part of a creative collaboration.

### Paradise Coast Welcomes Inaugural YMCA National Pickleball Tournament

Naples, Marco Island, and the Everglades CVB proudly served as an All-Star Sponsor for the inaugural YMCA National Pickleball Tournament, held Nov. 7–9 at the USOP National Pickleball Center in Naples. The event hosted by the YMCA of the USA brought together more than 600 players from across the country for three days of spirited competition, camaraderie, and community. Each division winner earned a coveted invitation to register for the 2026 U.S. Open Pickleball Championships, set for Apr. 11–18, 2026, in Naples. [ParadiseCoast.com](http://ParadiseCoast.com)



As pickleball continues to surge in popularity as one of the nation's fastest-growing sports, the demand for tournaments and player experiences continues to rise—cementing Florida's Paradise Coast as "The Pickleball Capital of the World."

### Greater Miami CVB Annual Meeting Spotlights Strength and Momentum

More than 600 partners and stakeholders gathered for the Greater Miami CVB's annual meeting on Nov. 6—a celebration of progress, partnership, and purpose. The event highlighted the destination's strong performance and steady resilience amid global headwinds, with \$21.3B in visitor spending and a 4.5% increase in visitation. Leaders outlined strategies for 2026 focused on major international events, innovative marketing, and community partnerships that continue driving growth and shared prosperity across Miami-Dade County. [MiamiandMiamiBeach.com](http://MiamiandMiamiBeach.com)



Greater Miami CVB President & CEO David Whitaker reports on the DMO's successes in 2025 and strategies for 2026.

### Discover Lake County Sponsors Mount Dora Fall Festival

Fall fun was in full swing in Lake County! On Oct. 18, Discover Lake County sponsored the first annual Mount Dora Fall Festival, bringing families together for a day of seasonal fun. The festival featured live music, food, drinks, games, and a drone show. Visitors filled Downtown Mount Dora to enjoy the fall atmosphere and family fun. [DiscoverLakeCountyFL.com](http://DiscoverLakeCountyFL.com)



The Discover Lake County logo is featured during the drone show.  
Photo: City of Mount Dora



# Quick Trips!

## Walton County Tourism Highlights Strong Economy and Award Recipients at Annual Meeting

Walton County Tourism celebrated the destination's strong 2024 tourism economy at its annual meeting with stakeholders and partners. The destination welcomed more than 4.8M visitors and generated \$4.9B in economic impact. More than \$60M in Tourist Development Tax was collected in 2024. The department also announced recipients of the 2025 Artist of the Year Award, spotlighting a local artist, and the Van Ness Butler, Jr. Hospitality Award, honoring excellence in hospitality and community contributions. [WCFTourism.com](http://WCFTourism.com)



Staff of Walton County Tourism come together at the 2025 annual meeting to celebrate visitor growth and to introduce the new Artist of the Year and Van Ness Butler, Jr. Hospitality Award winners.

## Destination Panama City Celebrates Its 10-Year Anniversary

This October marked a milestone for Destination Panama City, recognizing its official 10-year anniversary. Over the past decade, Destination Panama City has proudly showcased the charm, culture, and coastal spirit that makes their community unforgettable. From signature events to new visitor experiences, the past 10 years have been a celebration of all who call Panama City home and all who discover they belong bayside. [DestinationPanamaCity.com](http://DestinationPanamaCity.com)



Celebrating a decade of showcasing the charm and coastal spirit of Panama City, Florida

## The Palm Beaches Hits Record 10.6M Visitors, Driving \$11.3B Impact

Discover The Palm Beaches drew 400 stakeholders to its annual State of the Tourism Industry event, themed "Ignite. Elevate. Thrive," at the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts on Nov. 6. Officials announced Palm Beach County reached a record 10.6M visitors in fiscal year 2024-25, driving an \$11.3B in economic impact that strengthens residents' quality of life and place. Event highlights included a fashion show-inspired "City Collection Showcase," where dignitaries spotlighted what makes their cities unique. [ThePalmBeaches.com](http://ThePalmBeaches.com)



Discover The Palm Beaches President & CEO Milton Segarra addresses the 2025 State of the Tourism Industry crowd.

## Visit Florida Keys Launches Next-Generation, AI-Powered Website

VisitFloridaKeys.com launched the first AI-powered destination website in Florida featuring the "Conch-cierge," an intelligent, multilingual virtual travel assistant that helps Florida Keys visitors plan trips in more than 45 languages. Developed in partnership with MMGY Global, the site features AI-optimized listings for 2,000-plus tourism businesses to maximize visibility in AI travel searches. President & CEO Kara Franker said, "This launch marks a huge milestone in how we serve our community, partners, and future visitors." [VisitFloridaKeys.com](http://VisitFloridaKeys.com)



Wonder Everywhere You Look

Meet the reef, mingle with tropical fish and discover what makes Key Largo the gateway to the underwater world.

PLAN YOUR DIVE IN →

The new AI-powered [VisitFloridaKeys.com](http://VisitFloridaKeys.com) site invites visitors to dive in for digital tours of all the Florida Keys has to offer, or engage in information-filled chats with the digital "Conch-cierge."



# Quick Trips!

## Discover Crystal River Florida Promotes Destination in London

Discover Crystal River Florida recently participated in Brand USA Travel Week in London, promoting Citrus County to key international markets ahead of Manatee Season. Sales & Marketing Manager Terry Natwick met with more than 40 U.K. and European buyers and media eager to learn about the Manatee Capital of the World. The event also delivered enrichment sessions on emerging travel trends and strong networking opportunities, helping elevate Crystal River's profile with high-value overseas audiences. [DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com](http://DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com)



Terry Natwick promotes Citrus County at Brand USA Travel Week.

## Visit Jacksonville Debuts New Mobile Visitor Center

Visit Jacksonville's new mobile visitor center made its debut in October at the Sea and Sky Airshow at Seawalk Pavilion in Jacksonville Beach. A bright orange, retro-themed trailer, the center offers visitors and locals alike an opportunity to engage with Visit Jacksonville staff to learn more about what there is to see and do in Jacksonville. In the future, the trailer will be at events throughout Jacksonville and the surrounding areas. [VisitJacksonville.com](http://VisitJacksonville.com)



Visit Jacksonville's new mobile visitor center gives visitors and residents a new way to learn about attractions to experience in the area.

## Ocala/Marion County Attends VISIT FLORIDA Domestic Media Mission

Director Loretta Shaffer proudly represented the Ocala/Marion County VCB at VISIT FLORIDA's 2025 Domestic Media Mission in Nashville and New York City in October. At both events, Shaffer connected with top-tier media and influencers, highlighting the destination's scenic outdoor adventures, world-class equestrian culture, and authentic small-town Florida charm. These immersive, story-driven experiences helped elevate Ocala/Marion County's profile among key travel storytellers and content creators across two major media markets. [OcalaMarion.com](http://OcalaMarion.com)



Ocala/Marion County VCB Director Loretta Shaffer at the VISIT FLORIDA New York City and Nashville Media Missions 2025

## Visit Tallahassee Cooks Up the Buzz in Birmingham With Curated Culinary Experience

In October, Visit Tallahassee took a Taste of Tallahassee, a thoughtfully curated culinary experience, on the road to Birmingham, Ala., the South's lifestyle publishing hub. This press event, held at the Hoffman Test Kitchen, featured locally sourced dishes and craft cocktails, created by the city's chefs and mixologists who traveled for the event. The immersive experience, attended by more than 15 top writers, included Tallahassee-inspired decor and ambiance, provided by local tourism partners. The event earned coverage in *Taste of the South*, *Good Grit*, and more. [VisitTallahassee.com](http://VisitTallahassee.com)



Tallahassee Chef Leon Brunson wows media with appetizers at the Taste of Tallahassee event in Birmingham.



## Quick Trips!

### Florida's First Coast of Golf Kicks Off NEFL Military Campaign

Florida's First Coast of Golf officially launched its annual Military Campaign during the Constellation Furyk & Friends PGA TOUR Champions event. From October–January, The initiative spotlights exclusive stay-and-play offers for veterans, inviting them to experience the best of Northeast Florida's golf, lodging, and attractions. Last year's campaign generated more than 17M impressions, underscoring the strong demand and continued impact of military-focused outreach across the region [Florida-Golf.org](http://Florida-Golf.org)



### Orlando North, Seminole County Partners With Local Paranormal Investigator to Highlight Haunted History

Orlando North, Seminole County launched a fall campaign after identifying sustained SEO interest in haunted places and seeking to understand visitor demand for seasonal, story-driven content. The destination partnered with a local paranormal investigator Ashlie Pounds (@ghoststorygirl on Instagram) to highlight local haunted history through a multi-episode investigation series and was supported by a blog featuring 15 haunted locations and legends. Influencer collaborations highlighted fall events, attractions, and dining, and social media giveaways broadened overall audience engagement. The campaign generated strong engagement and increased traffic to fall content. [DoOrlandoNorth.com](http://DoOrlandoNorth.com)



The Ritz Theater in Sanford, Florida

### Historic Direct Air Service Announced Between Orlando and Tokyo

Orlando reached a new milestone for international travel. Orlando International Airport will introduce nonstop passenger charter flights in February 2026 to Tokyo, Japan, marking Florida's first-ever direct connection to the Asia Pacific region. This achievement reflects years of collaboration between Orlando International Airport, Visit Orlando, Disney, and Visit Orlando's Central Florida tourism partners. Collectively, they've worked to make this vision a reality, and now they're opening the door to showcase Orlando to travelers across Asia. [VisitOrlando.com](http://VisitOrlando.com)



Leaders gathered at the Hotel New Otani to mark Orlando International Airport's first nonstop charter flights to Tokyo—Florida's first direct link to the Asia Pacific region.

### Paradise Coast Welcomes Inaugural YMCA National Pickleball Tournament

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## In the News

### Visit Sarasota County Strengthens Its Leadership Team

Visit Sarasota County has announced two promotions to enhance its tourism marketing efforts to attract visitors, drive support of local businesses, and strengthen resident well-being. Jessica Bertolini has moved to Visit Sarasota County's leadership team as director of web & digital engagement, overseeing website, social, and content strategies and ensuring consistency of brand voice, visitor appeal, and alignment with destination goals. Olivia Turpening has stepped into an expanded role as community relations manager, deepening VSC's collaborations with more than 450 local businesses and helping ensure tourism benefits everyone who calls Sarasota County home. Together, these two marketing leaders bring nearly a decade of relationships and expertise to the VSC team. [VisitSarasota.com](http://VisitSarasota.com)



Jessica Bertolini



Olivia Turpening

### Discover Crystal River Florida Welcomes Marketing & Content Manager

Discover Crystal River Florida has named Nick Popham as its new marketing and content manager. A seasoned television news reporter and multimedia storyteller, Popham brings more than a decade of experience in video production, social media strategy, and community-focused storytelling to help elevate the destination's growing visibility. Popham will oversee Discover Crystal River's social media channels, lead digital marketing initiatives, and collaborate with local partners to amplify authentic stories about the people, places, and experiences that make Citrus County a year-round destination. [DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com](http://DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com)



Nick Popham

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