

TourismMarketing Today

The Official Newsletter of Destinations Florida | www.DestinationsFlorida.org | June 2026

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National Travel & Tourism Week

Postmarked: Essential



Established by U.S. Travel Association, National Travel and Tourism Week (NTTW) brings the industry together each year to spotlight travel's impact—from supporting 15M jobs to generating critical tax revenue that funds public services and infrastructure in communities nationwide.

In 2026, the theme *Postmarked: Essential* highlights a simple truth: travel is not optional—it is fundamental to America's economy, workforce, and way of life. As the nation looks ahead to major global moments and milestones—including its 250th

anniversary—NTTW is a moment to recognize the industry that drives travel to and across America—and the communities it supports. Here is a sampling of NTTW events held in Florida:

Bradenton Area Hosts Luncheon and Awards Ceremony

In honor of NTTW, the Bradenton Area CVB invited valued industry partners to celebrate destination achievements and expressed gratitude for those who make the area “feel like home” to visitors. Hosted in the new Grand Ballroom at the Bradenton Area Convention Center, guests enjoyed a Floribbean inspired luncheon prepared by Gulf Islands Hospitality and an awards

NTTW 2026 continues on pg. 4

Shaping Our Future

by Robert Skrob



I recently had the opportunity to participate in Florida Atlantic University's Executive Certificate

in Hospitality & Tourism Management program, led by Dr. Peter Ricci at FAU's College of Business. It was an honor to contribute a small part to a program designed to help current and future hospitality leaders better understand the opportunities within destination marketing.

What impressed me most was the caliber of leaders sharing their experience with students. The destination

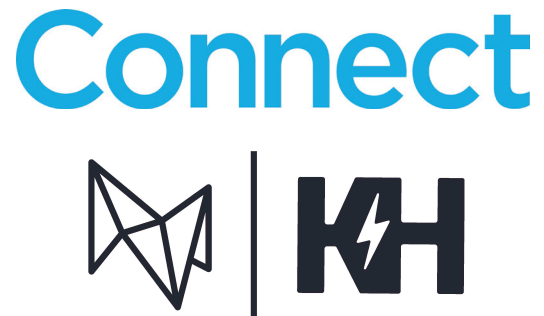
E.D.'s MESSAGE... continues on pg. 3

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

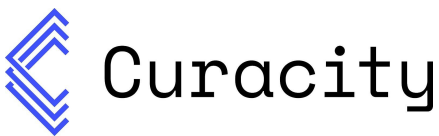
FOUNDING PARTNER



DIAMOND PARTNERS



PLATINUM PARTNERS



GOLD PARTNERS



SILVER PARTNERS



HAPPY Birthday

Stacy Ritter
June 8

Florida Unveils Docuseries Highlighting Florida's History and Contributions to the Republic for America 250FL Celebrations

In commemoration of America's 250th anniversary and to encourage travel and celebration, VISIT FLORIDA is bringing Florida history to life through a new docuseries, *America 250: A Portrait of Florida*. The seven-episode series showcases the people, places, and pivotal moments that have shaped Florida and, in turn, the United States.

Produced by VISIT FLORIDA on behalf of the state's Semiquincentennial Advisory Commission's America 250 commemorations, the series

highlights seven Florida destinations that exemplify the history, heritage, and innovation of Florida: St. Augustine, Pensacola, Tallahassee, Cape Canaveral, Key West and the Everglades, Miami, and Tampa. Each episode offers a compelling look at Florida's enduring influence on the American story.

Learn more at America250FL.com.



DESTINATIONS
FLORIDA
TourismMarketing
Today

The Official Newsletter of
Destinations Florida
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On the Cover

A couple enjoys a walk at Bowman's Beach on Sanibel Island, the Seashell Capital of the World. As executive director of the Lee County VCB, Tam Pigott has promoted the beauty of the area to visitors all over the world. Now she is passing the baton to Pamela Johnson. Learn more on page 13.
Photo: Rob Crosby

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

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY | COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



EXECUTIVE EDUCATION
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

EXECUTIVE CERTIFICATE IN HOSPITALITY & TOURISM MANAGEMENT

marketing section also features insights from Don Welsh of Destinations International, Elliott Ferguson of Destination DC, Casandra Matej of Visit Orlando, Chris Heywood of Brand USA, and Lisa Simon of the International Inbound Tourism Association.

The program is fully online and asynchronous, making it accessible for professionals

across Florida and beyond. It includes 35 contact hours and 3.5 continuing education units focused on leadership, tourism trends, AI, operations, and industry strategy.

Programs like this help strengthen the future talent pipeline for our industry, and I was grateful for the opportunity to help showcase the important work Florida DMOs do every day.

ceremony honoring outstanding individuals going above and beyond in their contributions to tourism in the Bradenton Area.



Kelly Clark (BACVB), Tourism Ambassador of the Year Angela Rodocker, owner of Silver Resorts, Commissioner Amanda Ballard, and Kolby Gayson (BACVB)

Discover Lake County Recognizes Partners for NTTW

In celebration of NTTW 2026, Discover Lake County staff recognized and thanked the many partners who help make Lake County a welcoming destination for visitors. Team members delivered appreciation gift bags to local hotels, attractions, sports venues, and municipalities in recognition of their hard work and dedication to the tourism industry. As part of the week's celebrations, Discover Lake County also partnered with the Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association to create a proclamation officially designating May 3–9 National Travel and Tourism Week in Lake County, Florida.

Daytona Beach Area CVB Honors Businesses & Attractions With Visitors' Choice Awards

The Daytona Beach Area CVB celebrated NTTW with its fifth annual Visitors' Choice Awards, which recognizes businesses and attractions that vacationers enjoyed the most in the destination. The program honors visitors' most beloved attractions and businesses through a survey that was sent to Daytona Beach area visitors in the CVB's database. Honorees included Volusia County Beaches, Daytona International Speedway, the Daytona Aquarium & Rainforest Adventure, and the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse.



The Daytona Beach Area CVB recognizes area businesses and attractions with the fifth annual Visitors' Choice awards at the annual Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association's National Travel and Tourism breakfast at the Hard Rock Hotel Daytona Beach.



Discover Lake County staff delivers gifts to partners.

Lee County Lights Up in Blue

The Lee County VCB invited the community to “Light Up Lee” in celebration of NTTW, May 3–9. Hotel and attractions partners as well as landmarks across the county glowed blue, spotlighting tourism’s role in the local economy. In Lee County, tourism generated \$5.13B in 2025, supporting more than 31K jobs and delivering \$1.19B in wages and salaries across the hospitality industry.



The Crowne Plaza Ft. Myers Gulf Coast by IHG participated in “Light Up Lee” with blue lights while the Luminary Hotel & Co. celebrated with a Passport Punch cocktail made with blue curacao and Cape Coral’s own Wicked Dolphin Rum.

Highlands County Recognizes Value of Tourism to Local Economy

The Highlands County Board of County Commissioners approved a proclamation recognizing National Travel & Tourism Week on May 5, highlighting tourism’s vital role in the local economy. In 2024, visitors generated \$349.4M in spending in Highlands County, supporting 4,347 jobs and generating \$33.9M in state and local tax revenue. Tourism continues to strengthen local businesses, enhance quality of life, and position Highlands County as a premier destination for outdoor recreation, sports, and authentic Florida experiences.



The Highlands County Board of County Commissioners and local tourism representatives recognize NTTW on May 5.

Florida Keys Leaders Tout Tourism From Paddleboards

Florida Keys officials made waves for the economy as Monroe County Mayor Michelle Lincoln signed a proclamation while standing on a paddleboard in Florida Keys waters to recognize May 4–9 as National Travel & Tourism Week. Kara Franker, president and CEO of Visit Florida Keys, said, “Tourism is the backbone of The Florida Keys & Key West, supporting more than 24,000 jobs and the Keys way of life.”



Paddles up for tourism! Visit Florida Keys President & CEO Kara Franker (left) joins leaders in a celebratory salute after Monroe County Mayor Michelle Lincoln (in purple) signs a National Travel & Tourism Week proclamation on the water at Old Wooden Bridge Marina in Big Pine Key on May 4.

Visit Jacksonville Holds Receptions, a Tour of The Block Jax, & a Volunteer Opportunity

Visit Jacksonville marked NTTW with events celebrating tourism’s impact on their community. Festivities included receptions Downtown at Ruby Beach Brewing and at the Beaches Museum, a behind-the-scenes tour of Jacksonville’s newest attraction, The Block Jax, for local elected officials, and a warm

welcome for attendees of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association's Northeast Florida Tourism Outlook panel. The week concluded with a volunteer opportunity at Rethreaded, supporting its mission to combat human trafficking.



Attendees mingle at Ruby Beach Brewing during one of Visit Jacksonville's NTTW events.

Martin County Highlights Positive Impact of the Tourism Industry

In celebration of NTTW, the Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing shared a special presentation at the May 5 meeting of the Board of County Commissioners. The presentation highlighted the positive impact of the tourism industry and showcased some of the Tourism Office's recent successes. The team also announced a new Advertising Assistance Program, developed to help local tourism-facing businesses elevate their marketing efforts and expand their reach.



Visit Indian River County Celebrates the Power of Tourism

During NTTW, Visit Indian River County celebrated the power of tourism with a special acknowledgment from the Indian River County Board of County Commissioners and recognition of their first-ever Adrian Award for the award-winning "Pawsome Trips to Indian River County" campaign. County leaders, tourism partners, and even Calvin, the destination's beloved pet-friendly mascot, joined the celebration, highlighting the creativity, collaboration, and community spirit driving tourism success across Indian River County.



Ben Earman, Krista Hoyt, and Calvin with IRC Board of County Commissioners

Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches Celebrates NTTW With 'Hats Off to Hospitality'

Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches marked NTTW with a "Hats Off to Hospitality" campaign to honor local tourism employees. As part of the celebration, TDO staff hand-delivered swag bags including destination-branded baseball caps, promotional items, and more to local hospitality workers throughout the week.



Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches TDO pose with hospitality staff from Hammock Beach Golf Resort and Spa during NTTW.

Visit Tampa Bay's America 250-Themed NTTW Luncheon Honors Hospitality Leaders

More than 500 business and community partners joined Visit Tampa Bay for its America 250-themed NTTW Luncheon at the Tampa Marriott Water Street to celebrate the hospitality industry's impact on Hillsborough County. Eighteen individuals and three organizations were honored for creating extraordinary visitor experiences, including eight frontline Hospitality Heroes, while Ron McAnagh received the Gonzmart Family Ambassador of the Year Award for his dedication to Tampa Bay tourism.



Visit Tampa Bay President & CEO Santiago C. Corrada presents Hospitality Hero awards to Austin Wood, Jane Booker, Chef Frederick Jaeger, Arlene Bowman, Sonia Conway, Edith Villar, Barrie Slonim, and Josie Ratliff for going above and beyond to create extraordinary experiences for the millions of visitors to Tampa Bay.

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Celebrates NTTW With Cruise Aboard the Southern Star

In celebration of NTTW, community leaders, partners, and the Destin-Fort Walton Beach team gathered aboard the Southern Star for a scenic cruise and dolphin sighting. The event highlighted the vital role tourism plays in supporting local businesses, jobs, and the region's economy while showcasing the natural beauty and coastal charm that continue to make Destin-Fort Walton Beach a premier travel destination.



Local tourism leaders and community partners enjoy a Southern Star cruise in celebration of NTTW, recognizing the impact of tourism on Destin-Fort Walton Beach's economy and community.

New Smyrna Beach Area Visitors Bureau Hosts NTTW Breakfast

The New Smyrna Beach Area Visitors Bureau hosted the NTTW Breakfast at the Brannon Center in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. Local officials, hospitality partners, and residents attended the event that included a presentation from Joseph St. Germain, PhD, on visitor trends shaping tourism in the region. The morning of connections and insights also included a Hospitality Business Fair.



The New Smyrna Beach Area Visitors Bureau marketing partners pictured from left to right: Roberto Schaps, Relebrand; Angela Southard Winther, Pineapple Public Relations; Debbie Meihls, New Smyrna Beach Area Visitors Bureau; Franci Edgerty, ITI Digital; and Aline Gill, ITI Digital

Orlando North, Seminole County, Celebrates NTTW With Multi-Platform Campaign

Orlando North, Seminole County, celebrated NTTW with a multi-platform campaign highlighting tourism's impact on the local economy and community. The Seminole County Board of County Commissioners issued an official proclamation recognizing the tourism industry while Orlando North shared educational social media content, including impact-focused carousels and visitor

street interviews filmed at a local event. Campaign messaging highlighted tourism's \$4.3B annual economic impact and the 27,100 jobs supported by the industry across Seminole County.



Orlando North, Seminole County social media graphic highlights tourism's economic impact during NTTW.

Experience Kissimmee Showcases Why Tourism Matters

During NTTW, Osceola County's visitor economy shows why tourism matters. Visitors generate more than \$685M in state and local tax revenue—nearly \$4,500 in annual savings for every household—while delivering \$10.6B in local economic impact and supporting more than 40,700 jobs. Experience Kissimmee appreciates the Osceola County Board of County Commissioners, Central Florida Housing & Lodging Association, and their regional partners for strengthening a destination that serves residents and travelers alike today.



CFHLA President/CEO Robert Agrusa, Experience Kissimmee President/CEO DT Minich, and Commissioner Peggy Choudhry, District 1

Florida's Paradise Coast Unites to Celebrate Tourism's Impact

Naples, Marco Island, and Everglades CVB, in collaboration with the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce, Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association, Skål International, and VISIT FLORIDA, proudly hosted a celebratory and educational luncheon at The Ritz-Carlton Naples, Tiburón in honor of NTTW. One hundred eighty hospitality, tourism, and community professionals gathered to celebrate the impact of tourism across Collier County, welcoming more than 1.5M visitors and generating over \$1.7B in direct visitor spending from October 2025 through March 2026 alone.



Florida's Paradise Coast CVB co-hosted a Hospitality Industry Tourism Celebration at The Ritz-Carlton Naples, Tiburón on Tuesday, May 5, with special keynote by VISIT FLORIDA President & CEO Bryan Griffin.

Gulf County Hosts 'Coffee & Conversations' for NTTW

To celebrate NTTW, Gulf County Tourism hosted "Coffee & Conversations" at the Gulf County Welcome Center. Residents, visitors, local partners, and community members stopped by throughout the morning to enjoy local donuts and coffee while connecting with tourism staff and learning more about the role tourism plays in supporting Gulf County's businesses, parks, and quality of life.



Community members gather at the Gulf County Welcome Center during Gulf County Tourism's "Coffee & Conversations" event celebrating NTTW.

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB Presents 2026 Tourism Hall of Fame

The 2026 Tourism Hall of Fame recipient is David Haynes, owner and president of Tarpon Real Estate. Haynes has helped strengthen and promote the region as a premier destination for residents and visitors alike. A native Floridian, Haynes has dedicated years of service to the community through leadership roles including board director of the Englewood Area Board of Realtors, president of the Little Gasparilla Property Owners Association, government affairs director for the Charlotte Chapter of the Florida Restaurant &

Lodging Association, and member of the county's TDC.



County Commissioner Chris Constance, Hall of Fame award winner David Haynes, and Tourism Director Sean Doherty
Photo: Jim Austin

Visit St. Pete-Clearwater Highlights Value of Tourism for All of Pinellas County

Through a series of events, Visit St. Pete-Clearwater used the special week to thank incoming guests on Monday morning at St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport, as well as the entire local tourism and hospitality industry, and also worked with local media to highlight the value of tourism for all residents of Pinellas County. VisitSPC capped off the week joining the Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber in recognizing Bilmar Beach Resort General Manager Clyde Smith as the Tourism Person of the Year for his outstanding service and community passion.



VisitSPC President/CEO Brian Lowakck joins Tourism Person of the Year Clyde Smith and Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber President Charlie Justice.

Walton County Tourism Celebrates NTTW With Industry Partnerships and Community Outreach

Walton County Tourism sponsored a special NTTW lunch in partnership with the Walton Area Chamber of Commerce. During the event, Scott Beck, a consultant for Jones Lang LaSalle, previewed a draft of the destination's 2026-30 tourism strategic plan focused on sustainable growth, economic impact, and long-term stewardship. The week also included a proclamation from the county commissioners, partner visits, treat deliveries, and complimentary goodies from local businesses at the Visitor Information Center.



Visitor Information Center staff members welcome visitors with goodies and giveaways while sharing info about the activities and experiences that make Walton County such a special place to visit.

Community Excellence, Record Tourism, and Miss America Showcased at Travel Rally Day in The Palm Beaches

Discover The Palm Beaches (DTPB) celebrated NTTW with its annual Travel Rally Day, highlighting record-breaking visitation and community impact. The destination welcomed

more than 3.3M visitors in Q1 2026—the highest first-quarter total on record. The event honored Visit Palm Beach as the Providencia Award recipient, launched DTPB's *Tourism Shines in The Palm Beaches* campaign, and saw Miss America name the destination its new home for the next three years.



The DTPB team celebrates Travel Rally Day.

Visit Sarasota County Celebrates NTTW in 1920s Style

Several cultural institutions and cities across Sarasota County mark 100 years in 2026, so VSC's NTTW celebration was once-in-a-century. Set with the stunning backdrop of The Ringling Museum's Art Courtyard, the team gave a nod to the 1920s and an industry worthy of applause. Complete with a pop-up speakeasy, the evening blended history, hospitality, and a little spectacle to honor the impact tourism has on the region and the people who make it so special.



The Visit Sarasota County team gathers for a quick photo during the festivities with the stilt-walker entertainer who was helping to welcome guests.

Visit Central Florida Shows Appreciation for Partners During NTTW

During NTTW, Visit Central Florida's Visitor Experience team visited more than 50 attractions, hotels, businesses, and tourism partners across Polk County to celebrate the professionals who help to create the Real Florida Magic each day in Central Florida. Team members delivered cookies from Spurzile's Bakery and framed art prints by local "Mockingbird Artist" Rebeka Firmin as a thank you for their continued support of tourism.



LEGOLAND Florida Resort is one of the 50-plus attractions to which Visit Central Florida showed its appreciation during NTTW.

H.O.T. Challenge Anchors NTTW in Greater Miami

National Travel and Tourism Week in Greater Miami and Miami Beach featured the 33rd annual H.O.T. Challenge, raising more than \$227K for the GMCVB's VIC scholarship program supporting hospitality's next generation of leaders. The week also highlighted the visitor industry's impact through the launch of a municipal mayor video welcome

series, a proclamation from the City of Coral Gables honoring the industry's contributions, and Miami International Airport activations featuring travel industry messaging on digital signage.



VIC leadership and scholarship recipients celebrate the Greater Miami CVB's 2026 H.O.T. Challenge golf tournament during NTTW.

The People and Heart Behind the Visit: Honoring Alachua County's Tourism and Hospitality Workforce

Visit Gainesville, Alachua County marked NTTW with an original reel celebrating the people who shape the visitor experience. From the airport and attractions to venues, the sports center, and hotels, the video spotlighted workers who welcome, guide, serve, host, and organize with passion and skill. Industry partners received goodie bags and visitor resources in appreciation of their service. The campaign also included a free What's Good® T-shirt giveaway and the May release of Alachua County's 2025 tourism economic impact numbers.



Members of the Alachua County Hospitality Council and local residents celebrate NTTW with limited-edition What's Good® commemorative T-shirts, part of Visit Gainesville, Alachua County's community-centered outreach recognizing the many hands and heartfelt welcomes that shape each visit.

Ocala/Marion County Celebrates NTTW With 'Find Your Freedom Here' Postcard Contest

In celebration of NTTW and America 250, Ocala/Marion County hosted the "Find Your Freedom Here" postcard contest, inviting the public to submit their best photographs showcasing the local spirit. Following 28 submissions and an overwhelming public vote, three entries were announced as winners. The beautiful photos will be printed as official destination postcards and made available for free at the Ocala/Marion County visitor's center.



Destination Panama City Hosts Community Grill Out

Destination Panama City celebrated this year's Tourism Appreciation Day with a community grill out at the Destination Panama City Visitor Center, sponsored by Centennial Bank. Locals, visitors, and tourism partners gathered to enjoy burgers, hot dogs, and live music while recognizing the people and businesses that help make Panama City a welcoming destination year-round. The annual event continues to serve as a meaningful way for Destination Panama City to thank the hospitality community and

celebrate the impact of tourism across the city.



Community members and tourism partners gather at the Destination Panama City Visitor Center for this year's Tourism Appreciation Day celebration sponsored by Centennial Bank.

Florida's Sports Coast Unveils Scallop Passport Trail

In honor of NTTW, Florida's Sports Coast kicked off its New Port Richey Scallop Passport Trail. Visitors can unlock exclusive perks while discovering local favorites and exciting new additions throughout Downtown New Port Richey. The journey culminates in the ultimate coastal escape: a chance to win an unforgettable scalloping getaway featuring a paid Gulf charter adventure and a stay at the boutique Historic Hacienda Hotel.



The New Port Richey Scallop Passport is an interactive experience designed to spark exploration and celebrate the destination's vibrant local culture and beloved summer scalloping tradition.

Visit Orlando's Frontline Workers Appreciation

Visit Orlando kicked off NTTW by recognizing frontline professionals who help shape the destination's visitor experience. The team delivered more than 2,000 custom cookies featuring a thank-you message to the Transportation Security Administration, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Orange County Sheriff's Office, Orange County Fire Rescue stations 54 and 57, and local transportation partners including taxi and rideshare drivers. Cookies were delivered to workers at Orlando International Airport and the Orange County Convention Center.



Visit Orlando representatives thank Transportation Security Administration workers at Orlando International Airport.

Visit Pensacola Hosts Weeklong NTTW Celebration

Visit Pensacola celebrated NTTW with a weeklong series of community and hospitality events designed to recognize the tourism industry's impact in Escambia County. Highlights included the Hospitality Olympics featuring 12 local teams, the Hospitality Hero Awards honoring four tourism professionals, Visitor Center open houses, and a museum open house celebrating the launch of the "Road to Revolution" exhibit at the Pensacola Museum of History.



Tourism and hospitality partners gather during NTTW celebrations in Pensacola, including the annual Hospitality Olympics and Hospitality Hero Awards.

A Seamless Transition: Lee County's Tamara Pigott Passes the Torch

After 33 years with Lee County government, including the past 16 years as executive director of the Lee County VCB, Tamara Pigott has made the decision to retire. Her last day will be July 8, and the transition will be seamless with Pamela Johnson, deputy director since 2014, stepping into the lead role.

Leading Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods, Pigott helped the VCB drive visitor demand, expand international outreach through some difficult times, and rebuild the area's tourism infrastructure after three successive hurricanes. During her tenure, TDT revenues supported millions in beach restoration, marketing, and capital projects.

Pigott stressed the importance of the tourism community when she announced her retirement to Lee County tourism partners.

"It has been the honor of a lifetime to work alongside you in shaping and promoting Lee County as a world-class destination," Pigott said. "Together, we have navigated growth, challenges, and recovery, always with a shared commitment to our visitors, our community, and each other. I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished as an industry. The strength, resilience, and



Tamara Pigott, executive director of the Lee County VCB, will retire July 8 after more than three decades with Lee County government.

Photo: Evan Williams, Gulfshore Business

collaboration of this community have always set this destination apart, and I have no doubt that will continue well into the future.

"I am also pleased to share that Pamela Johnson will step into the role of executive director upon my retirement. Pamela brings decades of experience, deep industry relationships, and a strong commitment to this destination. I have full confidence in her leadership and in a seamless transition. The VCB will continue to focus on strengthening our destination, supporting our partners, and building sustainable demand for the future."

Scenes From Tam Pigott's Tenure ...



From top left, clockwise: post-Hurricane Ian beach cleanup 2022; reopening Inns of Sanibel, February 2025; ribbon cutting for Brightwater Lagoon, May 2025, North Fort Myers; 2025 Flagler Awards where Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods takes home a Henry and a Silver award

Friends and Colleagues Congratulate Tam and Pamela

"Congratulations to Tam on an extraordinary career dedicated to elevating the Lee County destination. Your impact on our industry is profound—not only through your marketing leadership, but through your commitment to mentoring the next generation of DMO leaders. At the same time, congratulations to Pam as she steps into this important leadership role. She is uniquely well-suited to carry forward the strong foundation Tam has built. Pam is a thoughtful, strategic leader with a deep commitment to Lee County, and I have every confidence she will continue to elevate the destination and ensure it remains a must-visit location in Florida." – Erin Duggan, CDME, president/CEO, Visit Sarasota County

"Congratulations, Tam, on your retirement! Your leadership, creativity, and resilience over the years have been instrumental in elevating the awareness and desirability of Southwest Florida as a destination of choice for many. Your efforts are greatly appreciated! And to Pamela, congratulations on your promotion. I look forward to working with you for years to come!" – Sean Doherty, tourism director, Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB

"I have had the pleasure and honor to work with Tam since 2000 and Pamela since 1995. We all worked together in Lee County and had great mentors like Bill Barrier and Elaine McLaughlin. A year or so after I moved on to St. Pete-Clearwater, Tam took over as executive director and shortly thereafter Pamela stepped up as deputy director. These two women have been trailblazers in Florida tourism ever since. Their vision, leadership skills, and passion have seen them through good times and some of the darkest times in Lee County history. We all three worked through the recovery of Hurricanes Charley and Wilma but that could not prepare them for the likes of Hurricane Ian in 2022. They have both done a remarkable job of rebuilding the tourism infrastructure and demand after this catastrophic storm. I wish Tam all the best for her well-deserved retirement, and I am looking forward to innovative and exciting things from Pamela in her new role. Congrats to both of you!" – DT Minich, president and CEO, Experience Kissimmee



TDT Exemptions?

by Steven M. Hogan

A question sometimes arises as to whether certain rentals of "transient accommodations" (rentals for a term of six months or less) that are exempt from sales tax under chapter 212 of the Florida Statutes are also exempt from payment of the Tourist Development Tax. Generally, the rule is that any transient rental that is exempt from tax under chapter 212 is also exempt from the TDT.



Generally if a transient rental is exempt from sales tax it is also exempt from the TDT.

This rule comes from the TDT statute itself. For example, section 125.0104(2)(a) states that "[t]he provisions contained in chapter 212 apply to the administration of any tax levied pursuant to this section." This means that any provision of chapter 212 (which governs sales tax) that impacts transient rentals will be applicable to the TDT. Further, section 125.0104(3)(a)1 states that "any living quarters or accommodations which are exempt according to the provisions of chapter 212" are equally exempt from the TDT.



Steven M. Hogan

A quick primer on transient rentals that are exempt from tax can be found in Publication GT-800034 from the Florida Department of Revenue, available here: <https://bit.ly/tdt-transient-rentals>.

As always, legal counsel should be sought on specific issues, as particular facts may 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. Nothing in this article constitutes legal advice. Please seek counsel of your own choosing before making decisions that impact yourself or your organization.

NOTEWORTHY

Visit Florida Keys Appoints Chief Administrative Officer

Visit Florida Keys & Key West has appointed David Burke to chief administrative officer, a newly created leadership role focused on strengthening operational accountability, compliance and intergovernmental coordination across the organization. Burke, a Key West resident and retired U.S. Navy captain, will partner closely with executive leadership to build the systems and infrastructure that support transparent, responsible stewardship of Monroe County's tourism investment.

"David brings exactly the kind of operational rigor and intergovernmental experience this organization needs as we continue building a transparent, accountable tourism economy for Monroe County," said Kara Franker, president and CEO of Visit Florida Keys. "His track record of aligning complex organizations and managing compliance across multiple stakeholders will strengthen the partnerships that make this destination work. I'm thrilled to welcome him to the team."

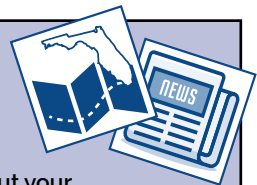
Burke joins Visit Florida Keys & Key West from the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, where he served as deputy superintendent and, most recently, acting superintendent, overseeing operations, budget planning, and management of agreements with partner organizations. He came to the Sanctuary following a distinguished 32-year career in the U.S. Navy.

"The Florida Keys are a special place, and I'm honored to bring my experience in operations and interagency coordination to an organization that plays such a vital role in this community," Burke said. "I look forward to working alongside this team to build the kind of strong, accountable infrastructure that serves residents and visitors alike."



David Burke

Want to See Your DMO's News in *Tourism Marketing Today*?



We regularly publish brief news items from DMOs in *Tourism Marketing Today*. News about your staff will appear in our "In the News" section. We also publish "Quick Trips," and they are your opportunity to share your good news! Your story should be about *past* events, awards, or campaigns to serve as "best practices" for your fellow tourism professionals. Our deadlines typically fall on a Thursday around the middle of each month. 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.

2026 ANNUAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2026

- 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting
- 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm Registration Desk Open
- 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm Reception

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2026

- 8:00 am Registration Desk Open
- 8:00 am – 9:00 am Networking Breakfast
- 9:00 am – 10:30 am State of the State
- 10:30 am – 11:30 am Annual Meeting Program
- 11:30 am – 1:00 pm Networking Luncheon
- 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm Annual Meeting Program
- 5:30 pm – 9:30 pm Miles Evening Extravaganza 



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2026

- 8:00 am – 9:00 am Networking Breakfast
- 9:00 am – 11:00 am Destinations Florida Annual Business Meeting
2027 Legislative Session Outlook
- 11:00 am – 12:00 pm How DMOs and VISIT FLORIDA Can Work
Together to Bring More Visitors



HUTCHINSON SHORES RESORT & SPA

The Hutchinson Shores Resort & Spa is offering a special rate for Destinations Florida meeting participants at \$209 (pool view) or \$259 (oceanview) per night. Please call (877) 502-4653 and reference the group name Destinations Florida Annual Meeting to make your reservation. Reservations must be made before the cut-off date of **Tuesday, September 22, 2026**. Be sure to make your reservation as soon as possible before the room block sells out.

Hutchinson Shores Resort & Spa
3793 NE Ocean Blvd.
Jensen Beach, FL 34957
(772) 334-1950

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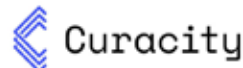
PLATINUM PARTNERS













GOLD PARTNERS























Amelia Island Is Top Island in United States

Amelia Island has once again been recognized as the No. 1 Island in the United States by *Global Traveler Magazine* in its 2026 Leisure Lifestyle Awards, marking the third consecutive year the destination has earned the top honor. Voted on by experienced and frequent travelers, the recognition reinforces Amelia Island's continued appeal as a premier U.S. destination and reflects the strength of the island's hospitality community, natural beauty, luxury accommodations, and wide range of visitor experiences. AmeliaIsland.com



A family enjoys the beach on Amelia Island.

Sopchoppy Worm Gruntin' Festival Is One-of-a-Kind Celebration in Wakulla County

The Sopchoppy Worm Gruntin' Festival is a unique North Florida tradition celebrating the art of worm gruntin', a method used to lure earthworms from the ground. Held each spring in Sopchoppy, the family-friendly event features live music, food vendors, arts and crafts, and the famous worm gruntin' contest. Visitors travel from near and far to experience this quirky, one-of-a-kind celebration of local heritage. VisitWakulla.com



Big determination in a small package! A young participant tries their hand at worm gruntin' during the 24th annual Sopchoppy Worm Gruntin' Festival on Apr. 11.

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TDC Funds Improvement Projects to Draw Visitors to Franklin County

Phase 1 of a \$1 million project to repair a popular fishing pier in Apalachicola is moving forward thanks to infrastructure funding from the Franklin County TDC. The popular "V Pier," located at Battery Park in Apalachicola, was damaged during Hurricane Michael in 2018. The pier is considered a draw for tourists to Apalachicola as it provides access to both the Apalachicola Bay and River. TDC infrastructure funds are also being used to replace dune walkovers on St. George Island and Carrabelle Beach, to fund ball field lighting for sports tourism, and to make roadway improvements within the St. George Island business corridor. FloridasForgottenCoast.com



Work progresses on a million-dollar project using TDC funds to replace an important tourism pier in Apalachicola.

Florida's Historic Coast Featured in National *Wheel of Fortune* Promotion

Florida's Historic Coast was recently featured in VISIT FLORIDA's national *Wheel of Fortune* promotion, aligned with the America 250 campaign commemorating the nation's 250th anniversary. The syndicated version of *Wheel of Fortune* is one of the most-watched programs on U.S. television, drawing 7.5M to 8.5M viewers per episode. This promotional partnership effectively showcases St. Augustine's rich history, culture, and visitor experiences to a broad, engaged audience. FloridasHistoricCoast.com



A St. Augustine prize package including oceanfront lodging, exceptional dining experiences, and unique historic attractions was featured on *Wheel of Fortune* in April.

Discover Crystal River Sponsors Manatee Conservation Celebration at ZooTampa

Discover Crystal River, the "Manatee Capital of the World," served as Presenting Sponsor of the May 2 Manatee Conservation Celebration at ZooTampa at Lowry Park, supporting the zoo's new Manatee Rescue and Critical Care Center. The family-friendly event combined education, entertainment, and conservation programming while giving Discover Crystal River exposure to more than 600K people across ZooTampa's digital channels and direct engagement with attendees through an on-site activation highlighting the destination's renowned manatee experiences. DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com



The Discover Crystal River team celebrates manatee conservation at ZooTampa at Lowry Park.

High-Speed Splashes: Pro Watercross Racing Returned to Sebring in April

Visit Sebring welcomed the Liquid Moly Pro Watercross National Tour back to Sebring for the sixth consecutive year Apr. 25-26 at Veterans Beach on Lake Jackson. The event attracted 100+ racers and teams from 20 states and several countries, generating overnight stays and national exposure through a post-event broadcast on CBS Sports Network. Event organizers leaned into Sebring's identity as a racing destination by bringing endurance-style racing excitement to the area's freshwater lakes while showcasing Highlands County's outdoor recreation assets to a national audience. VisitSebring.com



Racers rev their engines as jet ski racing returned to Sebring in April.



Discover Lake County Sponsors 2026 Leesburg Bikefest

Discover Lake County proudly sponsored the 2026 Leesburg Bikefest Apr. 24–26 in Downtown Leesburg. Recognized as the nation's largest three-day motorcycle festival, the event continues to be a major draw for visitors and a powerful driver of tourism. This year, Bikefest welcomed more than 100K attendees from across Florida and beyond, generating an estimated \$40M in economic impact for Lake County. Hotels reach near capacity while restaurants, retail shops, gas stations, and local attractions see a significant boost in business throughout the weekend. DiscoverLakeCountyFL.com



Performance at the 2026 Leesburg Bikefest

Martin County's Anna-Grace Agnini Joins DI '30 Under 30' Class of 2026

It was recently announced that Anna-Grace Agnini, manager of the Environmental Resource & Ecosystem Tourism Program for Martin County, has been selected for the prestigious Destinations International "30 Under 30" Class of 2026. This competitive global program recognizes rising tourism leaders and provides year-long professional development, mentorship, and networking opportunities. Agnini's selection highlights her impact through the Explore Natural Martin program and positions her among emerging industry leaders shaping the future of the global tourism industry. DiscoverMartin.com



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New Digital Passes Launch in Indian River County

Visit Indian River County launched two new digital tourism passes designed to boost visitor engagement and countywide exploration. The updated *Treasure Coast Kids Quest: Indian River County Edition* features new family-friendly stops and interactive experiences while the brand-new *Places for Paws* trail offers a comprehensive guide to pet-friendly parks, restaurants, lodging, and attractions throughout Indian River County, supported by a new dedicated companion webpage. Both free mobile passes encourage longer stays, repeat visitation, and discovery of local businesses. VisitIndianRiverCounty.com



Keyla Richardson Returns Home to Pensacola, Showcasing the Destination to Millions of National Viewers

Visit Pensacola partnered with destination stakeholders and the production team behind *American Idol* to support hometown filming for Pensacola native and Top 3 finalist Keyla Richardson. Local attractions, venues, and community partners helped showcase the destination nationally during the televised hometown segment. The feature generated an estimated national audience of 4.7M viewers and an advertising value equivalency of nearly \$300K, highlighting the impact of strategic entertainment and destination partnerships. VisitPensacola.com



American Idol film crews film Keyla Richardson's hometown segment on the beaches of Pensacola.

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Unites Nearly 400 Volunteers for Earth Day Coastal Cleanup Initiative

In celebration of Earth Day, Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Florida partnered with Saltwater Restaurants and numerous local organizations to host beach cleanups across five locations, bringing together nearly 383 volunteers who collected approximately 300 pounds of debris. The community-wide effort also included 79 divers who removed more than 100 pounds of debris from the Gulf beneath The Island Pier. The initiative highlighted the destination's ongoing commitment to protecting its waterways, beaches, and coastal environment through collaborative stewardship efforts. DestinFWB.com



Volunteers gather at The Boardwalk following a community-wide beach cleanup effort in Destin-Fort Walton Beach that spanned five locations and extended beneath the Gulf's surface through an underwater cleanup around The Island Pier.

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Quick Trips!

Visit St. Pete-Clearwater Debuts April's Primo Cookies

What secret ingredient makes the best cookies on the best beaches ... Clearwater Beach's award-winning sugar white sand, of course! VisitSPC had some fun to start off April with a wild tale of making cookies with sugar sand. The results helped drive visitors to the amazing Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival where more than 500 cookies were given away in under two hours! VisitStPeteClearwater.com



VisitSPC gives away "sugar sand" cookies. Check out the full story at VisitStPeteClearwater.com/aprils-primo-cookies.

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Hosts UK Golf Tournament

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach recently hosted a United Kingdom golf tournament featuring several top UK golf tour operators and journalists. The event showcased the destination's premier golf courses to the UK market, including Aileron Golf Club, named "Best in New Courses of 2025" by *Golf Digest*; Riverwood Golf Club, ranked #20 among the Best Public Golf Courses in Florida; and Deep Creek Golf Course, recognized as one of Charlotte County's leading semi-private courses. This year's tournament champion was Graham McKenzie. PureFlorida.com



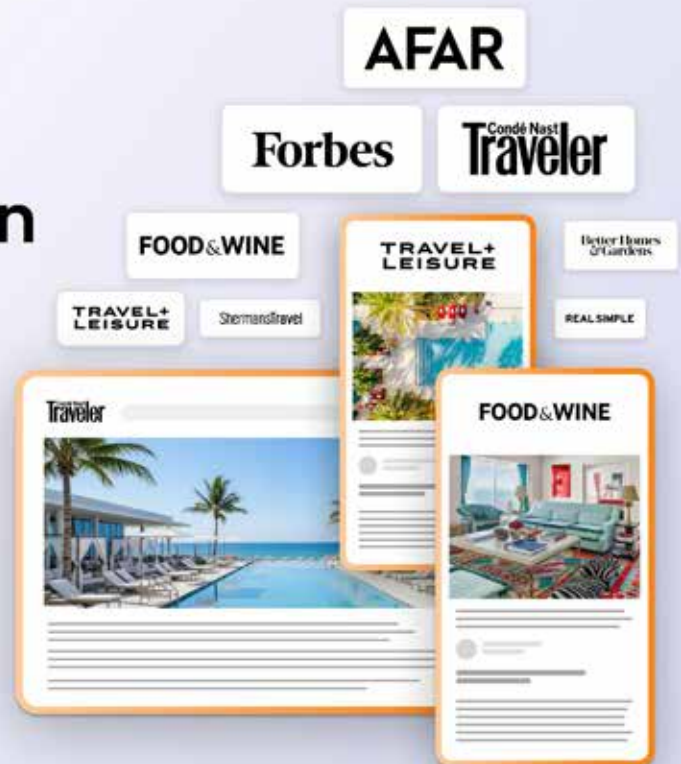
Tourism Director Sean Doherty, Holiday2Tee owner Zac Hassan, Eagle Golf owner Rob Couchman, and UK freelance journalist Graham McKenzie



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The Biggest Pickleball Party Celebrates a Milestone on Florida's Paradise Coast

In April 2026, the Franklin US Open Pickleball Championships marked 10 years in Naples, bringing together more than 55K fans and 3,750 players from all 50 states and 53 countries for an unforgettable week on and off the courts. Florida's Paradise Coast, home to the USOP National Pickleball Center, was once again a proud sponsor of the world-class competition, and this year proved no exception as to why it is known as the Biggest Pickleball Party in the World™. ParadiseCoast.com



Florida's Paradise Coast welcomes record numbers of athletes and visitors to celebrate a decade of the US Open Pickleball Championships in Naples, Fla.

Sold-Out Kissimmee Golf Classic Showcases Osceola's Partners – and Gives Back

Experience Kissimmee's annual Kissimmee Golf Classic filled Celebration Golf Club with a sold-out field of partners and creative sponsor activations across all 18 holes—from Fogo de Chão's steak stop to Westgate Resorts' tortilla toss and Shop Orlando's Häagen-Dazs treats in the sun. Partner generosity through raffle prizes has raised nearly \$3,400 for Help Now of Osceola, with more to come. Tournament honors: First, Sunset Walk SlingShot/Island H2O; second, Kissimmee Guest Services; third, Will To Escape. ExperienceKissimmee.com



Experience Kissimmee staff pose in front of Celebration Golf Club's clubhouse.

The Palm Beaches Showcase Culinary Excellence in NYC

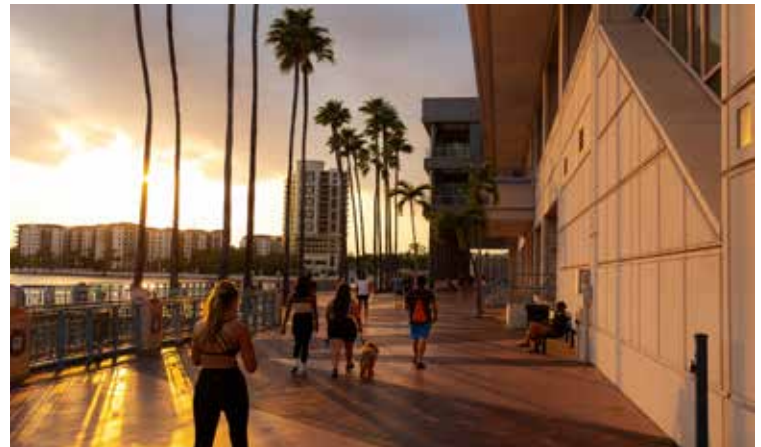
Discover The Palm Beaches' Sales, PR, and Social Media teams hosted a dynamic New York mission in April, welcoming 120+ media, influencers, and partners for a three-hour experience at Delish Kitchen Studios. The event spotlighted the destination's vibrant culinary scene and Cities Collections campaign, featuring MICHELIN-recognized chefs and curated brand moments, including a themed cocktail bar. The mission strengthened relationships and elevated The Palm Beaches' cultural and economic relevance in New York, a priority market. ThePalmBeaches.com



The Discover The Palm Beaches team in NYC
Photo: Eric Vitale Photography

Tampa Bay Tourism Sets All-Time Monthly Revenue Record

March marked the strongest month in Hillsborough County tourism history, with Tampa Bay generating a record \$134.5M in taxable hotel revenue—only the third time the county's hotel revenue has surpassed \$130M—and more than \$8M in TDT collections. The milestone reflects Visit Tampa Bay's continued strategic investment in destination marketing and the collaborative efforts of more than 1,000 hospitality, tourism, city, and county partners. VisitTampaBay.com



Visitors and residents enjoy an evening along the Tampa Riverwalk near the Tampa Convention Center as Tampa Bay continues to see record-breaking tourism performance driven by meetings, events, and leisure travel.



Space Coast Podcast Has Launched!

Launched May 18, the *Cocoa Beach on Florida's Space Coast* podcast gives visitors a deeper way to experience the destination. Host Kelly Bowman shares the stories, people, and hidden details that bring this place to life. From the thrill of catching waves and watching rockets rise along the coast to the quieter, off-the-beaten-path moments just beyond the beach, the series will help visitors experience the Space Coast like a local. Available wherever you get your podcasts. VisitSpaceCoast.com



Accessible Experiences Expand Across Greater Miami and Miami Beach

Greater Miami and Miami Beach continues to advance accessibility through strategic partnerships and industry leadership. The GMCVB collaborates with Wheel the World and International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards to support businesses serving travelers of all abilities. More than 25 local partners are now certified, including the Miami Beach Convention Center and Miami Children's Museum. Recent milestones include Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department earning Certified Autism Center designation and Loews Miami Beach Hotel becoming the destination's first Certified Autism Center hotel. MiamiandMiamiBeach.com



Miami Children's Museum. Loews Miami Beach Hotel

Orlando North Earns National Recognition for Innovative, Story-Driven Campaigns

Orlando North, Seminole County Tourism celebrated national recognition at the 2026 eTSY Awards, earning wins for Best Implementation of TikTok/Reels (Central Florida Farm Tour) and Best Paid Search Campaign, along with finalist distinction for Best Social Media Campaign for its Paranormal Fall Campaign. The award-winning work leans into the power of storytelling, bringing local farms, businesses, and niche experiences to life within a fluid ecosystem of discovery and engagement while demonstrating how thoughtful digital campaigns can meaningfully connect visitors to Seminole County's unique sense of place. DoOrlandoNorth.com



Orlando North, Seminole County Tourism accepts awards at the 2026 eTSY Awards during the eTourism Summit, recognizing the destination's innovative, story-driven digital marketing campaigns.

Destination Marketing Summit

Destinations Florida board members conducted their meeting the morning of the Destination Marketing Summit held at the Bradenton Area Convention Center in Palmetto, Florida.



Back row: Jessica Hurov, Erin Duggan, Kimberly Shoaf, Danielle Hollander, Nerissa Okiye, Robert Skrob, Milton Segarra, Kris Keprios, Paul Beirnes, Ryan Ritchie

Front row: Suzanne Hurst, Georgia Turner, Jennifer Adams, JoLynn Lokey, Charlotte Birely



Florida's Sports Coast Hosts International FAM

Florida's Sports Coast is strengthening its global presence through intentional storytelling and strategic media engagement. In partnership with VISIT FLORIDA and PTG Consulting, the destination hosted an international FAM, welcoming a key editor Maria Alejandra from AND, one of Colombia's most widely read consumer news outlet. Through curated experiences in New Port Richey and Dade City, the visit sparked meaningful conversations and authentic connections—positioning Pasco County as a dynamic destination ready to inspire and attract international travelers. FLSportsCoast.com



David Fernando Morales Viviescas, Natalia Melo, and Maria Alejandra Castellanos Rodriguez

Visit Central Florida Concludes Third Annual Florida Triple Crown of Barbeque With Inaugural Pitmasters in Paradise

Visit Central Florida helped host the inaugural Pitmasters in Paradise BBQ Festival at Camp Margaritaville in Auburndale, Apr. 23–25, the final stop of the Florida Triple Crown of Barbeque. More than 40 teams from across the Southeast and as far as Iowa competed during a sold-out weekend capped by an intimate acoustic concert with Florida native Michael Ray. Lakeland's Double Barrel Smokers claimed the Pitmasters in Paradise title while Jacksonville's King's BBQ took the Triple Crown. VisitCentralFlorida.org



Visit Central Florida Senior Tourism Sales and Marketing Manager Kris Keprios with the Grand Champion of the third annual Florida Triple Crown of Barbeque from King's BBQ of Jacksonville, Fla.

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Daytona Beach Area CVB Takes 'Message in a Bottle' to Atlanta Dogwood Festival

The Daytona Beach Area CVB recently attended the Atlanta Dogwood Festival to promote the destination. Embracing the creative spirit of the three-day event that attracts an estimated 200K attendees, the CVB featured a 20-foot "Message in a Bottle" inflatable. Staff members distributed information and there was a QR code for an Enter to Win contest for a vacation to Daytona Beach. Dogwood is the city's favorite springtime tradition and a staple for more than eight decades in Atlanta showcasing fine art and live music. DaytonaBeach.com



The Daytona Beach Area CVB and its hyper-realistic 20-foot "Message in a Bottle" inflatable at the Atlanta Dogwood Festival, one of the city's iconic and long-standing arts festivals held annually

Walton County Tourism Hosts Shoulder-Season FAM Trip Highlighting Expanded Air Service

Walton County Tourism hosted a shoulder-season FAM trip highlighting new nonstop airlift from New York, Boston, and Miami. The itinerary showcased effortless luxury with chef-driven dining, a beach bonfire, wellness experiences, off-beach activities, and a visit to nationally recognized Alaqua Animal Refuge, a no-kill animal shelter and sanctuary. Timed around events like the Sandestin Wine Festival, the program demonstrated how expanded air service and seasonal events help drive year-round visitation. WCFLTourism.com



Media guests gather during a beach bonfire and seafood boil, an experience made possible through strategic partnerships with local businesses to create authentic experiences in Walton County.

Visit Sarasota County's Championship Moment With the Senior PGA

The greens met the gulf when the region welcomed the Senior PGA Championship last month. Visit Sarasota County leveraged mobile app integration and on-site assistance via the mobile visitor center "AVA" (area visitor assistant). Everything was carefully designed in conjunction with Manatee County and The Concession Golf Club with one goal in mind: turning event attendance into deeper community engagement and future visitation. Through visionary leadership, strategic public investment, strong private-sector partnership, and a coordinated effort, VSC's goal is to continue to transform opportunities like the Senior PGA Championship into long-term economic and community benefit. VisitSarasota.com



Visit Sarasota County team members Jennifer Dolgetta and Camille Seabrook at the team's mobile visitor center stationed near the entrance of the Senior PGA Championship

Guests Plan the Perfect St. Lucie Stay With Trip Builder

Visitors to Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie, and Hutchinson Island are using the Trip Builder app featured on the Visit St. Lucie website to organize their stay and explore more of what the destination has to offer. With Trip Builder,



guests can create a customized itinerary and print it, save it to their phone, or share it with friends and family, keeping their plans right at their fingertips. The app is an easy way to enhance the guest experience, inspire exploration, and help visitors make the most of their time in St. Lucie. VisitStLucie.com



Official Ocala/Marion County Online Store Launches

The Ocala/Marion County VCB launched its official online store featuring a curated collection of Ocala/Marion County merchandise for visitors, residents, and local businesses alike. From branded hats and drinkware to promotional items and professional supplies, the store offers a new way to showcase destination pride. Local partners can also purchase items for guests, events, and giveaways. Visit Shop.OcalaMarion.com to explore the full collection. OcalaMarion.com



Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches Celebrate Trails Day

Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches Tourism Development Office held its annual Celebrate Trails Day event in late April. This year's festivities included a trail mix bar, butterfly release, arts and crafts, games, food trucks, and educational information on the 130+ miles of scenic trails in the destination. Visit VisitFlagler.com



Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches provide a "Make Your Own Trail Mix" bar during Celebrate Trails Day in April.

DON'T MISS IT! Registration for GC26 Is Open!

The Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism (GC) is the premier educational conference for Florida's tourism industry. This year's event is taking place Sept. 9–11, 2026, at the Palm Beach Convention Center. The conference brings together 1,000 tourism industry professionals, advertising agencies, travel experts, and state leaders to network and to explore the latest trends and opportunities for the tourism industry.

VISIT FLORIDA's goal is for attendees to leave GC26 with tangible takeaways about latest trends, opportunities, and actionable strategies for challenges in addition to new connections and growth opportunities.

Early bird registration expires June 14. Don't miss out on the discounted rate!

Learn more here: FloridaTourismConference.com



Orlando Sets New Visitation Record

Orlando welcomed 76.7M visitors in 2025, reinforcing tourism's role as a major economic driver for Central Florida. The total represents nearly 2% growth over 2024 and was announced May 8 at Visit Orlando's Travel & Tourism Event at the Orange County Convention Center. Key findings included a record 70.3M domestic visitors, growth from key international markets, and a 3.1% increase in group meetings. VisitOrlando.org



Visit Orlando President & CEO Casandra Matej, Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings, and Visit Orlando Board Chair Barb Bowden.

Tourism by the Numbers: 2025 Impact Report Highlights Alachua County's Visitor Economy

According to recently released economic impact reporting by Downs & St. Germain Research, in 2025, visitors to Alachua County who stayed in paid overnight accommodations generated a \$711.7M economic impact. More than 1.34M visitors accounted for 1.4M room nights and spent more than \$530M on lodging, dining, shopping, groceries, and transportation, a 3.4% increase over 2024. Visitor activity also supported 5,400 jobs, generated \$213M in wages, and produced \$58M in tax revenue, translating to an annual tax savings of \$458 per Alachua County household. VisitGainesville.com



An aerial view of Downtown Gainesville highlights the unique blend of culture, connection, and community that makes Alachua County's visitor economy so strong.

Fort Lauderdale Air Show Offers Something for Everyone

The annual Fort Lauderdale Air Show took flight again, May 9–10, over the Fort Lauderdale beach. The event offered something for everyone, with free viewing from the sand, a variety of upgraded ticket options, as well as a VIP experience. Some viewers even watched the high-flying entertainment from the water. Whatever their vantage point, the show's attendees were treated to incredible aerial displays by the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds and Red Bull Air Force, making for an exciting weekend in sunny Fort Lauderdale. VisitLauderdale.com



USAF Thunderbirds in action

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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



**AUSLEY
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