TourismMarketing Today

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Neal Duncan Named Director of Polk County Tourism & Sports Marketing

Neal Duncan is stepping into his new leadership role with a deep understanding of Polk County's tourism and sports landscape. The Polk County Board of County Commissioners confirmed Duncan's appointment as director of Polk County Tourism & Sports Marketing, better known as Visit Central Florida, on Aug. 4. He succeeds Mark Jackson, the first director of Visit Central Florida, who retired after 34 years with the county.



Neal Duncan

Duncan brings 26 years of experience in tourism, sports marketing, destination development, and community engagement to the position, most of those years with Polk County. His career began as an intern with Polk County Sports Marketing, making his return to the organization in 2006 especially meaningful. "My career in tourism and community development really began as an intern with Polk County Sports Marketing, so having the opportunity 26 years later to lead the Tourism & Sports Marketing Division is incredibly meaningful," Duncan said.



Neal Duncan addresses the crowd at the ribbon cutting for both Champions Lake and The Orlando Health Stadium at Lake Myrtle Soccer Complex on Aug. 14, 2023.

NEAL DUNCAN continues on pg. 4

Next Five Weeks

by Robert Skrob



Florida's property tax debate is moving into its most important phase. Amendment 3 will appear on the Nov. 3 ballot. If passed, it will significantly increase the homestead exemption for non-school property taxes. Florida TaxWatch has created a nonpartisan Florida Property Tax Resource Center to help Floridians understand the proposal and its potential local impacts.

Wherever you can, please share objective educational resources with your tourism partners to ensure your local

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

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

Robert Skrob,
Executive Director

Suzanne Hurst, CAE,
Deputy Executive Director

MaryLu Winchester,
Member Database

On the Cover

Located between Orlando and Tampa, Winter Haven is home to LEGOLAND Florida Resort (pictured) and the new Peppa Pig Theme Park. In addition, visitors enjoy attractions like Bok Tower Gardens and Safari Wilderness. Lakeland offers the world's largest one-site collection of Frank Lloyd Wright architecture on the campus of Florida Southern College, and Bonnet Springs Park and the Florida Children's Museum are both near Downtown Lakeland.

Florida Tourism Brand Value Reaches $162 Billion

Florida's tourism brand continues to grow in strength and value, reaching an all-time high of $162B in 2026, according to a new independent valuation by Brand Finance. The value represents a 14% increase from $142B in 2024.

Like companies or other well-known products, tourism destinations have brands that carry value. Florida's tourism brand is one of the state of Florida's most valuable assets.

The study found that $137.3B of Florida's tourism brand value is generated by the businesses, products, and services that make up the state's tourism industry, and an additional $24.7B is attributed directly to Florida's strength and appeal as a destination, the "Place Brand Effect" managed by VISIT FLORIDA.

"Florida has built the strongest tourism economy in the country, and this valuation demonstrates the world-wide appeal of the Florida vacation brand," said Bryan Griffin, president and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA. "Through VISIT FLORIDA's work to keep our state top of mind for travelers nationwide and around the world, we strengthen a brand that supports businesses, jobs, and communities across Florida."

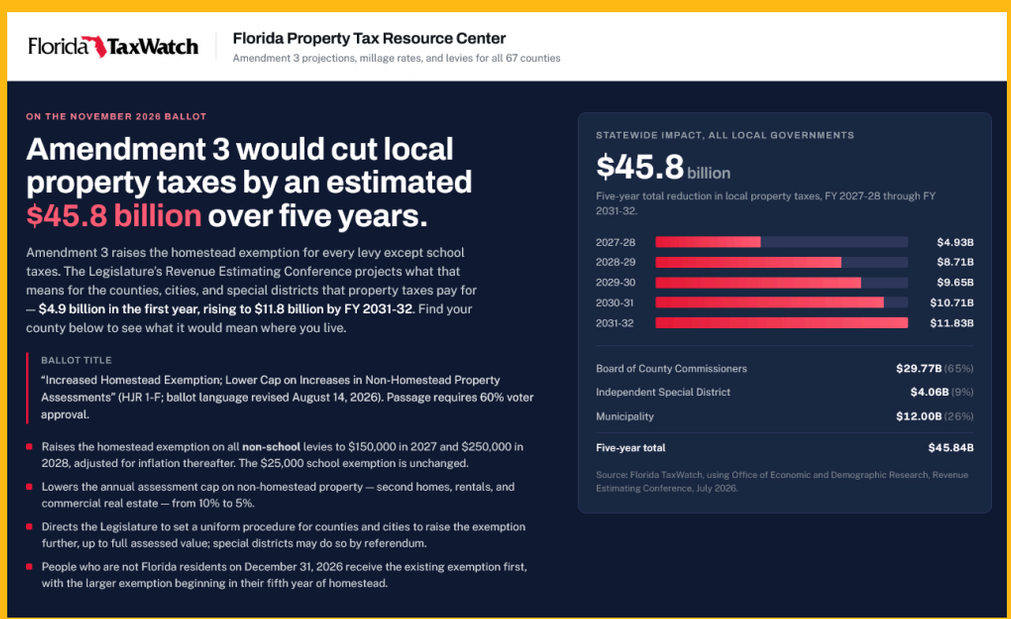
Florida's Brand Strength Index also climbed to 81.2 in 2026, up 1.3 points from 2024. Growing brand value reflects stronger destination appeal and supports continued tourism and broader economic growth.

Brand Finance's June 2026 valuation was prepared for VISIT FLORIDA to measure the growth and development of the brand and benchmark its performance against competitor destinations.

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

tourism industry is prepared to engage and clearly understands the issues your county faces.

Destinations Florida has created a toolkit based on information included in the Florida Property Tax Resource Center. If we can provide additional information or support, please reach out. This is an important battle for all of us to win!



For more information and an interactive county-by-county map, go to *https://bit.ly/tax-3*.

Before returning to Polk County Tourism & Sports Marketing, Duncan began his professional career in 2000 with the Greater Bartow Chamber of Commerce, where he worked with businesses, local government, and community organizations. He said the experience taught him an important lesson: "Relationships are at the heart of successful community and economic development."

Since joining Polk County Tourism & Sports Marketing in 2006, Duncan has held leadership roles in business development, sponsorships, partnerships, sports tourism, and event recruitment. He is particularly proud of the division's success in establishing Polk County as a nationally recognized sports tourism destination, including Visit Central Florida Sports being named the 2025 Sports ETA Sports Tourism Organization of the Year.

Asked about his priorities in leading the division, Duncan said, "My first priority is our people. We have an incredibly talented and experienced team, and I want to make sure they have the resources, direction, and support necessary to continue doing what they do extremely well."

Duncan also plans to build on the foundation established by Jackson while looking for new opportunities to strengthen Visit Central Florida, Visit Central Florida Sports, and the Visitor Experience Team. He emphasized that tourism's impact extends well beyond attracting visitors. "Tourism isn't simply about attracting visitors. It's about supporting local businesses, creating jobs, generating economic activity, and ultimately improving the quality of life for our residents," he said.

For Duncan, the new position represents both a responsibility and an opportunity. "I've spent much of my career promoting Polk County and developing relationships throughout this community, so having the opportunity to now lead the organization is very special to me," he said. "There is a tremendous legacy here, but I believe our best days are still ahead of us."

Away from work, Duncan enjoys golfing and spending time outdoors with his wife, Lee Ann. The couple frequently visits Polk County's nature trails, with Circle B Bar Reserve among their favorite destinations. Family time is also important, and their granddaughters especially enjoy PEPPA PIG Theme Park.

"Whether it's playing a round of golf, enjoying our natural areas, or experiencing an attraction or a street fair with our family, there is always something to do," Duncan said.

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In the News

Lee County VCB Welcomes New Communications Director



Matthew Cummings

The Lee County VCB welcomes Matthew Cummings as its new communications director. He previously led the PR team for a Fortune 500 company. His communications career spans the corporate sector, local government, education, and radio. Since 2006, he has also taught in West Virginia University's Integrated Marketing Communications graduate program. He said he was drawn to the VCB because of its impact beyond destination marketing, including supporting local businesses and the arts, protecting natural resources, creating jobs, and investing in the community's beaches and parks. *VisitFortMyers.com*

DMOs Shine at 2026 Flagler Awards

VISIT FLORIDA announced the winners of the 2026 Flagler Awards as well as the 2026 Florida Tourism Hall of Fame inductee DT Minich during the annual Chairman's Dinner held Sept. 10 at The Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism, now in its 26th year.

DMOs took home 56 Flagler Awards, 18 of them Henrys, as well as all four Best of Show awards.

Destinations Florida is proud to recognize the award-winning DMOs, highlighted in blue text:

Specialty Marketing

Bronze: Amelia Island CVB for "Amelia Island Dining Month"
Silver: Visit Jacksonville for "Soul of Surf 2.0: Sea Gals & Board Stories"
Henry: Visit Tampa Bay for "Doggone Summer: Tampa Bay Unleashed"

Websites

Bronze: St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches VCB for the Nights of Lights App 2025
Bronze: Visit Sebring for VisitSebring.com
Silver: Visit Florida Keys & Key West for "Next-Generation Website for the Future of Destination Marketing"
Silver: Visit Pensacola for the Beach+ Microsite
Henry: New Smyrna Beach Area Visitors Bureau for the New Smyrna Beach Area Website Redesign

Direct Marketing

Bronze: Franklin County TDC for Forgotten Coast Newsletter
Silver: Destination Panama City for "Adventure Letters"
Henry: Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods for The Fort Myers Neighborhood Email Series

Digital Advertising

Bronze: Visit Tampa Bay for "Corporate Transient: From Clicks to Corporate Stays"
Silver: Florida's Sports Coast for "Life's a Game" Digital Advertising
Henry: Walton County Tourism for "The Precision Pivot: A High-Yield Direct Booking Strategy to Combat Supply Oversaturation"



Executive Director Chip Wile of the NASCAR Driver Advisory Council; Welcome Center & Visitor Services Director Tiara Pryor, Marketing & Community Relations Specialist Summer Johns, Marketing Director Rebecca Holley, and STR Specialist Kristen Nichols of Visit Gulf County, winner of Division II Best of Show; and President & CEO Bryan Griffin of VISIT FLORIDA



Executive Director Chip Wile of the NASCAR Driver Advisory Council, President & CEO Santiago C. Corrada of Visit Tampa Bay, winner of Division IV Best of Show, and President & CEO Bryan Griffin of VISIT FLORIDA

Public Relations & Earned Media

Bronze: The Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts for The Frontyard Holiday Festival at Dr. Phillips Center, supported by AdventHealth
Silver: Amelia Island CVB for New Day Cleveland + Midwest Influencers
Silver: Discover The Palm Beaches for "Palm Royale-ty" Set-Jetting in The Palm Beaches
Henry: Experience Kissimmee for the Global Influencer FAM & Summit

Radio & Podcast Advertising

Bronze: The Cultural Council for Palm Beach County for The ArtiGras Podcast 2025: A Branded Cultural Tourism Storytelling Platform
Silver: Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing Radio Campaign
Henry: Discover Mexico Beach for "No Scripts, Just Sun: Experiencing Mexico Beach Through a Local's Lens"

Sustainable Tourism Marketing

Bronze: Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium for "Run for the Turtles"
Silver: Visit Tampa Bay for "Meeting the Moment: Meetings That Leave a Legacy"
Henry: Visit Florida Keys & Key West for the Integrated Ecotourism Program

FLAGLER AWARDS continues on pg. 6

Travel Trade, Meetings, & B2B Marketing

Bronze: Florida's First Coast of Golf for THE PLAYERS Travel Trade Promotion
Silver: Amelia Island CVB for Amelia Island Meetings Videos
Silver: Walton County Tourism for the "Forever" Guide Redesign: Engineering a Best-in-Class B2B Sales Tool for South Walton Weddings
Henry: Ocala/Marion County VCB for "Meet in the Middle: Ocala/Marion County's Planner Engagement Campaign"

Rural County Marketing

Bronze: Franklin County TDC for "Coastal Clues: Forgotten Coast Trivia"
Silver: Visit Gulf County for "A Vacation Worth Wagging About"
Henry: Visit Sebring for "Come Full Circle"

Broadcast & Streaming Advertising

Bronze: Visit Sarasota County for "Their Origin" Campaign
Silver: Discover The Palm Beaches, The Palm Beach County Film & Television Commission, Sinclair's AMP Travel for "Let's Eat: A Culinary Tour Through The Palm Beaches"
Henry: Visit Lauderdale for "Visit Lauderdale: Never Lose Your Splash" TV Advertising

Tourism Advocacy

Bronze: Visit Tampa Bay for "Hospitality Heroes: Championing Tampa Bay's Tourism Workforce"
Silver: Discover The Palm Beaches for "Destination Stewardship in The Palm Beaches"
Henry: Visit St. Pete-Clearwater for "727 Day"

Mobile Marketing

Bronze: Amelia Island CVB for "Inmar Rich Media Unit"
Silver: Visit Florida Keys & Key West for "Key West Duo Scroller"
Henry: Florida's First Coast of Golf for the Mobile Moments Campaign

Out-of-Home Advertising

Bronze: The Cultural Council for Palm Beach County for "Go Beyond Basel 2025: A Cultural Tourism Transit & Billboard Campaign"
Silver: Visit Panama City Beach for "FUN in the SUN, Safety for Everyone" with Carvertise
Henry: Discover Lake County for the Miami Target Market Campaign



Executive Director Chip Wile of the NASCAR Driver Advisory Council, Tourism Director Nerissa Okiye and Deputy Director Ian Centrone of the Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing, winner of Division III Best of Show, and President & CEO Bryan Griffin of VISIT FLORIDA

Special Event

Bronze: The Arching Oaks Arts and Culture Center for Japan Festival Eustis
Silver: Visit Gainesville, Alachua County for "A World Championship in Florida With 98 Countries in Competition"
Henry: Visit Tampa Bay for "Dylan Perry x Europe: Two Cities, One Creative Spirit"

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Executive Director Chip Wile of the NASCAR Driver Advisory Council, Executive Director Kimberly Shoaf of Discover Mexico Beach, winner of Division I Best of Show, and President & CEO Bryan Griffin of VISIT FLORIDA

Print Advertising

Bronze: Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods for the Fort Myers "Just Feels Right" Ads
Bronze: Franklin County TDC for "Embrace The Pace" Spring Campaign
Silver: Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing "AI Means More Here" Campaign and Print Ads
Henry: Amelia Island CVB for the "Find Your Unwind" Leisure

Consumer-Facing Promotional Materials

Bronze: Santa Rosa County Tourist Development Office for Discover Navarre Beach, Vol. 1
Silver: Bradenton Area CVB for the Bradenton Area Wanderlust Bookazine
Silver: Visit Orlando for Orlando's Kitchens: Official Destination Cookbook
Henry: Visit Gulf County for Gulf County Wildlife BINGO

Social Media Marketing

Bronze: Visit Tampa Bay for "First to the Summit: Tampa Bay x Expedia"
Silver: Visit St. Pete-Clearwater for the 727 Society – Local Influencer Program
Henry: Visit Florida Keys & Key West for "Destination Instant Experiences"

Integrated Marketing Campaign

Bronze: Amelia Island CVB for "Find Your Unwind" Campaign
Silver: Destin-Fort Walton Beach for "Shifting Perceptions Through Shared Adventure in Destin-Fort Walton Beach"
Henry: Greater Miami CVB and City of Miami Beach for "Miami Beach: Spring Break Reality Check"

Best of Show

Division I: Discover Mexico Beach for "No Scripts, Just Sun: Experiencing Mexico Beach Through a Local's Lens"
Division II: Visit Gulf County for "Gulf County Wildlife BINGO"
Division III: Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing Radio Campaign
Division IV: Visit Tampa Bay for "Doggone Summer: Tampa Bay Unleashed"

DT Minich Inducted Into Florida Tourism Hall of Fame



President & CEO Bryan Griffin of VISIT FLORIDA, President and CEO DT Minich of Experience Kissimmee, and Executive Director Chip Wile of the NASCAR Driver Advisory Council celebrate Minich's induction into the Florida Tourism Hall of Fame during The Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism held Sept. 10 in West Palm Beach.

DT Minich, president and CEO of Experience Kissimmee, is the 2026 inductee into the Florida Tourism Hall of Fame. With more than three decades of leadership, innovation, and service to Florida's tourism industry, Minich is the only tourism executive to have led three Florida DMOs: Lee County VCB, Visit St. Pete-Clearwater, and Experience Kissimmee.

Known for stepping into pivotal moments of transition, Minich arrived as president and CEO of Experience Kissimmee in 2014 following its transition into a modern public-private model. Over the past decade, he grew the organization, established in-country representation across 18 international markets, and oversaw a data-driven strategy that grew Kissimmee's unaided brand awareness from 2% to 30%. Under his leadership, annual visitation jumped roughly 70% to 10.4M visitors.

Central to Minich's legacy is his ability to turn destination assets into global powerhouses. In 2018, he personally directed the strategy that positioned Kissimmee as the Vacation Home Capital of the World®, elevating vacation rentals into a signature Florida product as inventory expanded from 10K to more than 30K homes. He also established the Kissimmee Sports Commission—now driving over $400M in economic impact—and nearly doubled meeting lead volume, earning Kissimmee a top spot among Cvent's Top 50 Meeting Destinations in North America.

Beyond driving record-setting visitation, Minich has been a pioneer in integrating tourism stewardship, accessibility, and community impact into destination marketing. He expanded the Tourism Enhancement Grants Program to directly benefit local communities, spearheaded accessibility initiatives with partners like Wheel the World and Autism Travel Club, and launched conservation efforts like Trees4Travel, which has planted over 115K trees. Minich's holistic approach to tourism has bettered the entire tourism industry in the state of Florida.

BEST of CENTRAL EAST FLORIDA!



- Daytona Beach Area CVB
- Florida's Space Coast Office of Tourism
- Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing
- New Smyrna Beach Area Visitors Bureau
- Okeechobee County TDC
- Visit Indian River
- Visit St. Lucie
- West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority

Exciting Renovations Coming to Daytona Beach Area

Daytona Beach is witnessing significant renovations to two long-standing, cornerstone attractions within the destination.

The Cici & Hyatt Brown Museum of Art, Science & History, known as The Brown, is undergoing a major campus transformation. The Brown will be adding an additional 90,000+ sq. ft. of event space, galleries, visitor amenities, classrooms, outdoor spaces for activation, and state-of-the-art collection storage.

Highlights include the connection of the new museum to the existing Cici & Hyatt Brown Museum of Art via a main entry atrium; a 60-foot tilted, 200-seat Lowell & Nancy Lohman Planetarium and accompanying science gallery; and the Hosseini Family Children's Experience, a 6,000 sq. ft. interactive space designed for families that dives into science, art, and nature. The groundbreaking for the $203M project will occur in early 2027 with a tentative opening in mid-2029.



Artist rendering of the transformation of the Cici & Hyatt Brown Museum of Art, Science & History, which is undergoing a major campus renovation with a tentative opening slated for mid-2029

Jackie Robinson Ballpark continues to blend baseball history with enhanced fan and player experience following a major modernization project that was completed this year. Improvements to the home of the Daytona Tortugas, a Cincinnati Reds Class A affiliated minor league team, include a new multi-story player-development facility, updated clubhouses, indoor batting cages, fitness areas, upgraded dugouts, accessible parking, club seating, team stores, and infrastructure enhancements.

The historic ballpark is where Jackie Robinson played in the first integrated Major League Baseball spring training game in 1946.



The view of Jackie Robinson Ballpark from the new club seating area at the historic ballpark

Rocket Launches Draw Hundreds of Thousands to Florida's Space Coast

The Artemis II launch was one of the largest draws to the Space Coast in recent years, with approximately 346K visitors between Mar. 29 and Apr. 4, and more than 90K out-of-county visitors on launch day (Apr. 1) in the northern half of Brevard County.

"We gathered the data via cellular device-tracking software that monitors domestic U.S. devices of adults whose home locations are outside Brevard County," said Peter Cranis, executive director of the Space Coast Office of Tourism. "This launch was a great success in leading the space race back to the moon and beyond with the next Artemis launches."



Artemis I on the crawler-transporter heading to the launch pad

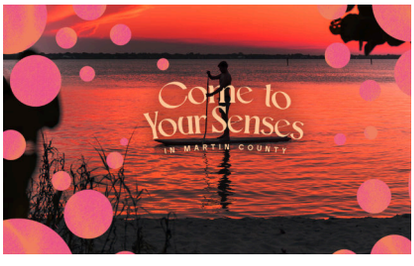
The Artemis I launch saw 226K visitors during launch week in 2022, and other recent major launches (including New Glenn, Falcon Heavy, crewed launches to the International Space Station, and the Polaris program) averaged 55K visitors. Recent research from the Space Coast Office of Tourism shows that a launch viewer's average daily spend is approximately $231. The cellular tracking software revealed the average stay for Artemis II visitors to be two days, bringing the average spend to approximately $462. This equates to over $41M in visitor spending during the launch week.



View of the countdown clock at the NASA press site after the Artemis II launch

Martin County Tourism Office Celebrates Banner Year

The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing is celebrating another banner year, earning 19 awards to date from organizations such as VISIT FLORIDA, the Southeast Tourism Society, PRNEWS, and the Association of Marketing & Communication Professionals.



The new campaign spans print, digital, radio, social media, PR, and more.

The Discover Martin team recently launched "Come to Your Senses," an integrated brand campaign inspired by synesthesia that uses playful, evocative storytelling to encourage visitors to reconnect through immersive sensory experiences. Additionally, the Tourism Office's new "Stay Longer" summer promotion was a massive success, leading to a 20% increase in Tourist Development Tax collections and the destination's strongest summer on record.

The Explore Natural Martin ecotourism initiative was expanded, introducing new eco-tours, improving infrastructure and wayfinding signage, and helping the Comfort Suites Stuart–Hutchinson Island become the first property in Florida to earn the coveted Leave No Trace Gold Standard Hospitality hotel designation.

Stuart and Port Salerno also recently became official Florida Trail Towns, recognized by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Greenways and Trails.

"We're so proud to see both Stuart and Port Salerno earn this exciting designation and to continue highlighting the incredible connections between our trails, waterways, natural areas, and local communities," said Tourism Director Nerissa Okiye.

Additional achievements include hosting 13 media and content creator FAM visits, earning recertification as a Certified Autism Center through IBCCES, and garnering more than $300M in organic earned media value from in-house PR efforts.



ENM leads specially permitted sea turtle nesting eco-tours for visitors and residents.

Coast Catch Restaurant Month: Another Reason to Visit New Smyrna Beach

Coastal Catch Restaurant Month has returned to New Smyrna Beach. The culinary celebration invites visitors and locals to savor the destination's diverse culinary scene with specially curated prix fixe menus at some of its most-loved restaurants. Throughout October, participating restaurants are offering multi-course dining experiences at $39 and $59, providing an enticing way to sample local flavors, discover new favorites, and experience the creativity of New Smyrna Beach's chefs.

"Food is such an important part of the travel experience, and Coastal Catch gives visitors another reason to explore the New Smyrna Beach Area," said Debbie Meihls, president/CEO of the New Smyrna Beach Area Visitors Bureau. "From waterfront dining to longtime local favorites, our restaurants reflect the laid-back, welcoming character of the destination."



Norwood's Restaurant & Treehouse Bar is one of 10 New Smyrna Beach restaurants participating in the third annual Coastal Catch Restaurant Month.

The 2026 participating restaurants include:

- Chases on the Beach
- Ciao Bella
- Flagler Tavern
- Norwood's Restaurant & Treehouse Bar
- Outriggers Tiki Bar & Grille
- River Deck Tiki Bar & Restaurant
- Riverpark Terrace
- SoNapa Grille
- The Grille at Riverview
- Third Wave Cafe & Wine Bar

For more information, visit *VisitNSBFL.com/coastal-catch*.

Okeechobee County TDC Invites Visitors to 'Come Outside & Play'

The Okeechobee County TDC offers a strong example of how a simple, memorable tagline can unify destination marketing: "Come Outside & Play."

The TDC uses the tagline prominently in its print advertising, pairing it with compelling photography and concise copy that showcases different aspects of the destination. Two ads illustrate the approach: one features a boat crossing Lake Okeechobee at sunset, highlighting the area's reputation as the Bass Capital of the World; the other showcases cattle sculptures at Cattlemen's Square, emphasizing Okeechobee's ranching heritage and cowboy culture.



Visitors to Okeechobee are invited to experience the best bass fishing waters in the country.



Cattlemen's Square celebrates Okeechobee's agricultural roots and cowboy culture.

Although the advertisements promote different experiences, the consistent tagline creates a recognizable destination brand. Okeechobee County extends that message to airboat rides, locally owned restaurants and shops, rodeos, agricultural events, dark-sky stargazing, and the area's natural landscapes.

Seasonal events provide another opportunity to attract visitors. Christmas in Okeechobee drew more than 110K visitors last year, transforming downtown with lights, displays, and family activities.

By combining outdoor adventure, local culture, and seasonal experiences under one inviting message, Okeechobee County demonstrates how a tourism organization can use consistent branding and varied imagery to tell a destination's story: Come Outside & Play.

Visit Indian River County Celebrates Tourism Growth and Industry Recognition

Visit Indian River County is celebrating a strong year of tourism growth, expanded air service, innovative marketing, and industry recognition.

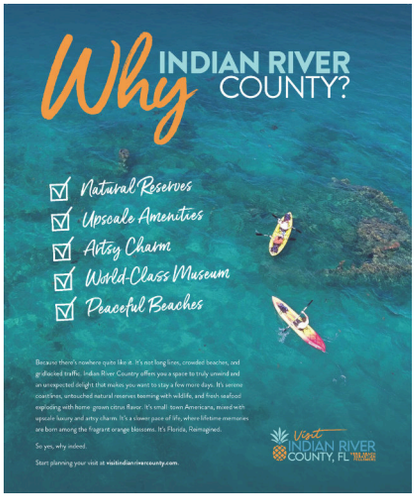
Indian River County's tourism economy continues to show positive momentum, with Tourist Development Tax collections through June 2026 reaching $4.82M, up 3.4% over the same period last year. June collections alone increased 6.8%, demonstrating continued demand for the destination.

The destination also gained increased accessibility with new direct air service at Vero Beach Regional Airport from Breeze Airways, JetBlue, and American Airlines to major U.S. destinations, with more service ahead.



An image of the Vero Beach coastline used in multiple successful campaigns this year
Photo: Joe Semkow

Visit Indian River County has earned significant industry recognition, including two 2026 Southeast Tourism Society Shining Example Awards—Tourism Office of the Year and Best Tourism Marketing within its respective budget categories. Additional honors this year included a Silver HSMAI Adrian Award and a GDUSA Marketing Award, recognizing the creativity and effectiveness of its destination marketing.



One of the ads used as part of Visit Indian River County's extensive "Why IRC?" marketing campaign highlighted this year and used across multiple publications in various formats

The tourism office has also expanded its digital strategy through targeted social media, streaming audio, CTV/OTT, digital out-of-home advertising, search, and data-driven audience targeting.

"We're proud of what our small but mighty team has accomplished, but even more excited about what's ahead," said Ben Earman, vice president of tourism and marketing.

Recent FAMs Put St. Lucie in the Spotlight

Visit St. Lucie recently hosted a series of successful familiarization (FAM) tours for Florida-based influencers and content creators in partnership with the newly opened voco Sandpiper All-Inclusive Resort in Port St. Lucie. The collaborations generated impressive exposure for both the resort and St. Lucie as a destination while also translating inspiration into travel bookings.



Florida-based content creators capture incredible content of Visit St. Lucie's outdoor experiences beyond the resort.

Through collaborative Reels, engaging social content, and authentic storytelling, participating creators showcased the ease and appeal of the all-inclusive experience while highlighting the destination's unique activities, attractions, and experiences. From the resort's amenities to the one-of-a-kind adventures found throughout St. Lucie, the FAMs helped promote the destination to audiences interested in new travel experiences.

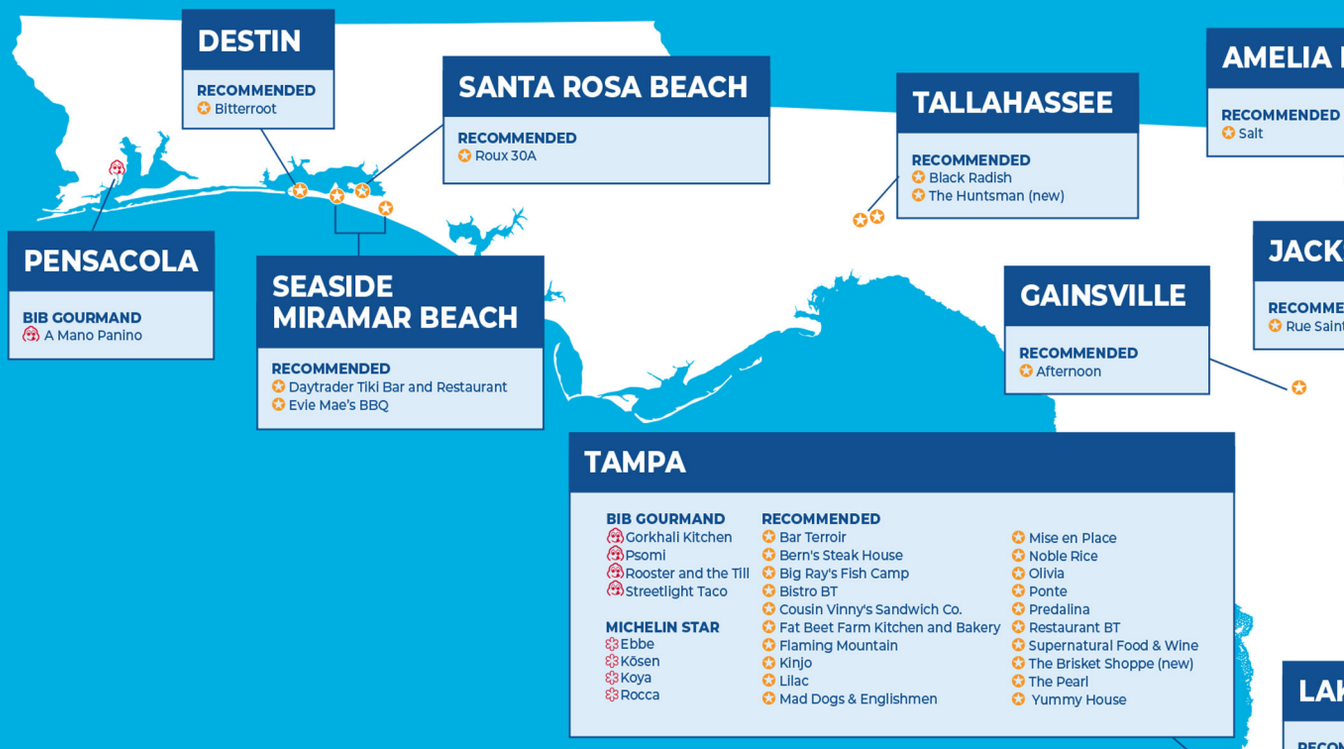
"These partnerships allow Visit St. Lucie to put authentic destination experiences directly in front of engaged travel audiences while providing additional exposure for our local tourism partners," said Charlotte Bireley, tourism director for Visit St. Lucie. "The strong number of shares and saves is especially exciting, helping St. Lucie experiences reach beyond the creators' immediate audiences and inspiring travelers to keep the destination in mind for a future visit."

The success of these FAMs demonstrates the power of partnerships with content creators to drive awareness, engagement, and measurable travel demand for St. Lucie's tourism industry.



A Florida-based content creator/travel influencer posts about her experience at voco Sandpiper All-Inclusive Resort.

MICHELIN Guide Restaura



DESTIN

RECOMMENDED
- Bitterroot

SANTA ROSA BEACH

RECOMMENDED
- Roux 30A

TALLAHASSEE

RECOMMENDED
- Black Radish
- The Huntsman (new)

AMELIA

RECOMMENDED
- Salt

PENSACOLA

BIB GOURMAND
- A Mano Panino

SEASIDE MIRAMAR BEACH

RECOMMENDED
- Daytrader Tiki Bar and Restaurant
- Evie Mae's BBQ

GAINSVILLE

RECOMMENDED
- Afternoon

JACK

RECOMME
- Rue Saint

TAMPA

BIB GOURMAND
- Gorkhali Kitchen
- Psomi
- Rooster and the Till
- Streetlight Taco

MICHELIN STAR
- Ebbe
- Kōsen
- Koya
- Rocca

RECOMMENDED
- Bar Terroir
- Bern's Steak House
- Big Ray's Fish Camp
- Bistro BT
- Cousin Vinny's Sandwich Co.
- Fat Beet Farm Kitchen and Bakery
- Flaming Mountain
- Kinjo
- Lilac
- Mad Dogs & Englishmen
- Mise en Place
- Noble Rice
- Olivia
- Ponte
- Predalina
- Restaurant BT
- Supernatural Food & Wine
- The Brisket Shoppe (new)
- The Pearl
- Yummy House

LA

RECOM
- Nine

SAFETY HARBOR ST. PETERSBURG

RECOMMENDED
- Elliott Aster
- Fortu
- Il Ritorno
- in between days
- Sushi Sho Rexley
- The Tides Market

SARASOTA

BIB GOURMAND
- Lucky 8

RECOMMENDED
- Focaccia Sandwich + Bakery
- Tralia

BONITA SPRINGS FORT MYERS

BIB GOURMAND
- Canary Club

RECOMMEN
- Liberty
- The Bohen

ONE AND TWO MICHELIN STARS identify establishments serving exceptional cuisine that's rich in flavor, remarkably executed and infused with the personality of a talented chef.

THE BIB GOURMAND is a designation given to select restaurants that offer good quality food for a good value. Often known as personal favorites among the inspectors when dining on their own time.

THE GREEN STAR honors restaurants that are pioneers in mindful gastronomy.

RECOMMENDED restaurants and professional awards are also highlighted by the Michelin Guide inspectors.

DESTINATIONS FLORIDA

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rant Selections for Florida



MELIA ISLAND

RECOMMENDED
- The Bearded Pig

ATLANTIC BEACH

RECOMMENDED
- Eggboy

JACKSONVILLE

RECOMMENDED
- Rue Saint Marc

ST AUGUSTINE

BIB GOURMAND
- Bar Citra
- Sunday

RECOMMENDED
- Asado Life
- Lotus Noodle Bar

ORLANDO / LAKE BUENA VISTA / MOUNT DORA WINTER PARK / WINTER GARDEN

BIB GOURMAND
- Bánh Mì Boy
- Bombay Street Kitchen
- Coro
- Domu
- Isan Zaap
- Norigami
- Otto's High Dive
- Smokemade Meats + Eats
- Strand
- Sushi Saint
- Taste of Chengdu
- The Ravenous Pig
- UniGirl
- Zaru

MICHELIN STAR
- Camille
- Kadence
- Ômo by Jōnt
- Soseki
- Sorekara
- Victoria & Albert's

RECOMMENDED
- 1921 Mount Dora
- AVA MediterrAegean
- Bacán
- Black Rooster Taqueria
- Capa
- Chuan Fu
- Cítricos
- Edoboy
- Four Flamingos, *A Richard Blais Florida Kitchen*
- Gyukatsu Rose
- Juju
- June
- Kabooki Sushi
- Kai Asian Street Fare
- Kai Kai BBQ & Dumplings
- Kappo Tsan
- Kaya
- Knife & Spoon
- Maxine's on Shine
- Morimoto Asia
- Nami
- Osteria Ester
- Papa Llama
- Pizza Bruno
- Prato
- Primo
- Ravello
- Se7en Bites
- Selam
- Shin Jung
- Smoke & Donuts BBQ (new)
- Sparrow (new)
- Sticky Rice
- Swine & Sons
- The Pinery
- The Polite Pig
- Toledo
- Tori Tori
- Twenty Pho Hour
- Walala Hand-Pulled Noodle House
- YH Seafood Clubhouse

LAKELAND

RECOMMENDED
- Nineteen61

COCOA BEACH

RECOMMENDED
- Koko

WEST PALM BEACH PALM BEACH PALM BEACH GARDENS

BIB GOURMAND
- aioli
- Palm Beach Meats

MICHELIN STAR
- Emelina

RECOMMENDED
- būccan
- Coolinary and the Parched Pig
- Ela Curry & Cocktails
- Moody Tongue Sushi
- Stage Kitchen & Bar
- The Butcher's Club

NORTH MIAMI / MIAMI BEACH / SURFSIDE

BIB GOURMAND
- Barra Callao
- Cotoa
- Lucali

MICHELIN STAR
- Mutra
- Tambourine Room *by Tristan Brandt*
- The Surf Club Restaurant

MICHELIN GREEN STAR
- Stubborn Seed

RECOMMENDED
- Estiatorio Milos
- Hakkasan Miami
- Joe's Stone Crab
- Los Fuegos by Francis Mallmann
- Macchialina
- Mister O1 Extraordinary Pizza
- Pao by Paul Qui
- Taquiza
- The Den at Azabu Miami Beach

FT LAUDERDALE BOYNTON BEACH

BIB GOURMAND
- Heritage

MICHELIN STAR
- Chef's Counter at MAASS

RECOMMENDED
- Daniel's, *A Florida Steakhouse*
- Evelyn's
- Larb Thai-Isan
- Nicholson Muir

NGS

RECOMMENDED
- Liberty
- The Bohemian

NAPLES

RECOMMENDED
- Bicyclette Cookshop
- Tong Yin

MIAMI / CORAL GABLES

BIB GOURMAND
- Bachour
- Chug's Diner
- Double Luck
- El Turco
- Ghee Indian Kitchen
- Hometown Barbecue Miami
- La Natural
- Mandolin Aegean Bistro
- Michael's Genuine
- Phuc Yea
- Sanguich De Miami
- Tam Tam
- Tinta y Cafe
- Zitz Sum

MICHELIN GREEN STAR
- Los Félix

MICHELIN STAR
- Ariete
- Boia De
- Cote Miami
- Elcielo Miami
- Hiden
- L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon Miami
- Le Jardinier Miami
- Ogawa
- Shingo

RECOMMENDED
- Beauty & the Butcher
- Bistro Ocho
- Cafe La Trova
- Elyu Omakase
- Hiyakawa Miami

RECOMMENDED
- Kaori
- Kojin 2.0
- Krüs Kitchen
- Lung Yai Thai Tapas
- Mano Libera
- Niu Kitchen
- Ossobuco
- Palma
- Recoveco
- Sunny's Steakhouse
- Sushi Yasu Tanaka
- The Gibson Room
- Torno Subito Miami
- ViceVersa
- Walrus Rodeo
- Zak The Baker

KEY WEST

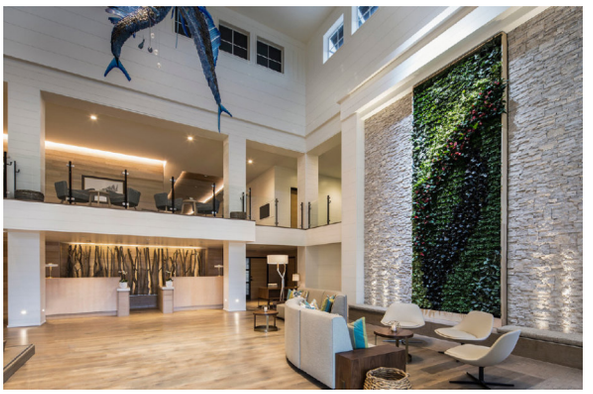
BIB GOURMAND
- Moondog Café & Bakery

RECOMMENDED
- Blue Heaven

C.

JOIN US FOR THE

2026 Annual Meeting



Wednesday, October 14, 2026

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Board of Directors Meeting
4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.	Registration Desk Open
5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.	Welcome Reception

Thursday, October 15, 2026

8:00 a.m.	Registration Desk Open
8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Networking Breakfast
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Florida Destination Marketing Industry State of the State Report
10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Networking Break
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon	Expand Your Spheres of Influence: Leveraging Chamber of Commerce Partnerships for Broader Buy-In
12:00 noon – 1:15 p.m.	Networking Luncheon
1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.	Beyond Tourism: How DMOs Strengthen the Workforce Pipeline
2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Tourism Marketing Best Practices from Around the World
3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Three Essentials That Every Transformative Leader Knows
5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Miles Evening Event at the Elliott Museum

Friday, October 16, 2026

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Networking Breakfast
9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.	Destinations Florida Annual Business Meeting Legislative Update with Mat Forrest
9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	What's Driving International Visitation
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon	Florida Tourism 2031: A Leadership Conversation
12:00 noon	Adjourn

The support from the following partners makes our meetings possible:

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Diamond Partners

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Register at DestinationsFlorida.org



MEETING LOCATION:

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

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS:

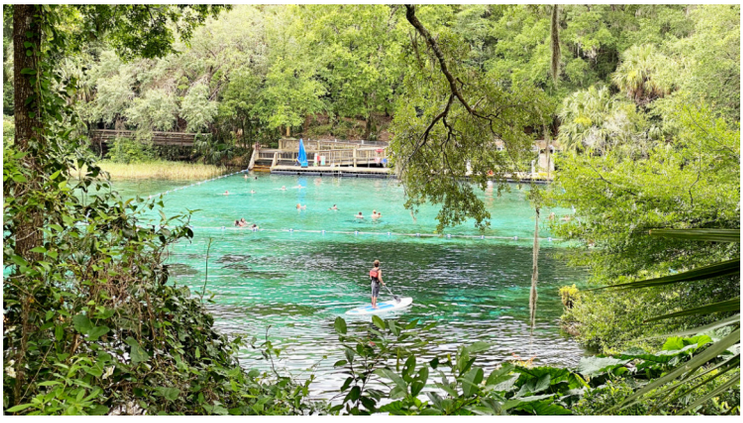
The Hutchinson Shores Resort is offering a special rate for Destinations Florida Annual Meeting participants at $209 per night for Sunset/Pool View rooms, and Oceanfront rooms beginning at $259 per night. Please email Suzanne@DestinationsFlorida.org for assistance with booking your overnight accommodations.

Is That 'Spring' a 'River'?

by Steven M. Hogan

If you have lived in Florida for any amount of time, the odds are you have visited one of the many natural springs that are open to tourists in our state. Whether you swim, dive, or tour the spring by boat, springs offer many opportunities for tourist activities.

With that in mind, it may seem surprising that the only reference to a "spring" in the TDT statute is in the context of facilities for "spring training franchise" facilities.



According to a 1991 opinion of the Florida attorney general, the TDT statute applies to a spring with public access that is connected to a river, and TDT funds can be used for enhancement, cleanup, or restoration.

This begs the question of whether other portions of the TDT statute that apply to lakes and rivers also apply to springs.



Steven M. Hogan

The Florida attorney general reviewed this question in 1991 and found that the TDT *did* apply to springs. Op. Att'y Gen. Fla. 91-62 (1991).

The specific question in Opinion 91-62 was whether the TDT section allowing funds to be used for "enhancement, cleanup, or restoration of inland lakes and rivers to which there is public access" (current section 125.0104(5)(a)5., Fla. Stat.) applied to a spring. The attorney general reasoned that a spring that flows into a river, as did the spring at issue in Opinion 91-62, would qualify as a "river" under the TDT statute. Therefore TDT funds could be used to dredge silt and debris out of the river.

A similar analysis should apply to any spring connected to a river. As always, legal counsel should be sought on specific issues, as particular facts may change the analysis.

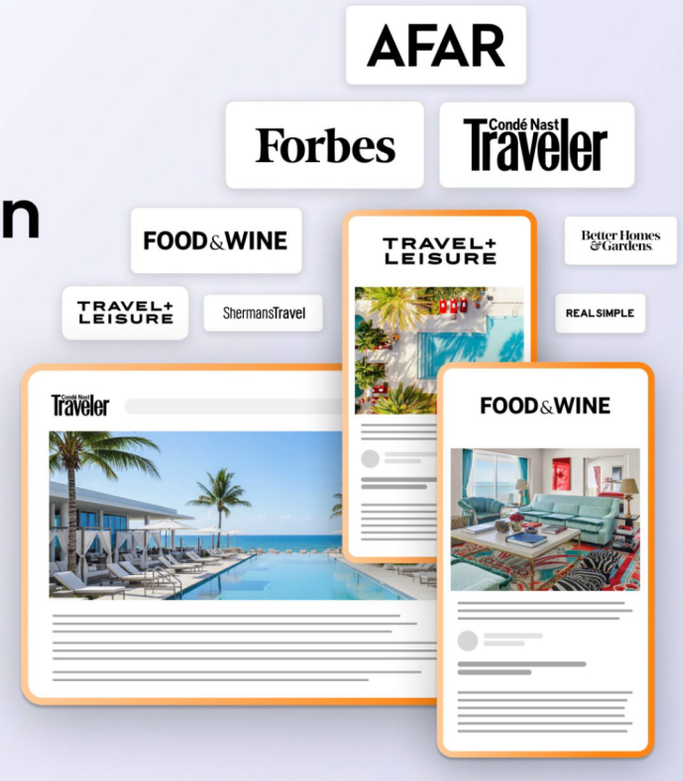
Steven M. Hogan is a shareholder with the Ausley McMullen law firm in Tallahassee. Destinations Florida has retained Mr. Hogan to consult with our members on the Tourist Development Tax and related legal issues. You can contact Mr. Hogan at shogan@ausley.com. Nothing in this article constitutes legal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

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alastair@curacity.com



Visit Sebring Makes Waves With Sports Tourism

Visit Sebring made a splash with water sports tourism in August, using the areas lakes to drive visitation during traditionally slower travel periods. Pro Watercross revved jet ski engines in Avon Park, attracting competitors from 10 states and Brazil. MotoSurf Games America followed in Sebring, plus offered a #SurfSebring experience where locals could try the motorized surfboard. Both events received coverage on CBS Sports, which extended their destination-marketing value to TV and well beyond race weekend. *VisitSebring.com*



Motosurf Games America brings the motorized surfboard racing experience to Sebring.

Island Hopper Songwriter Fest Brings Home Six SunSational Awards

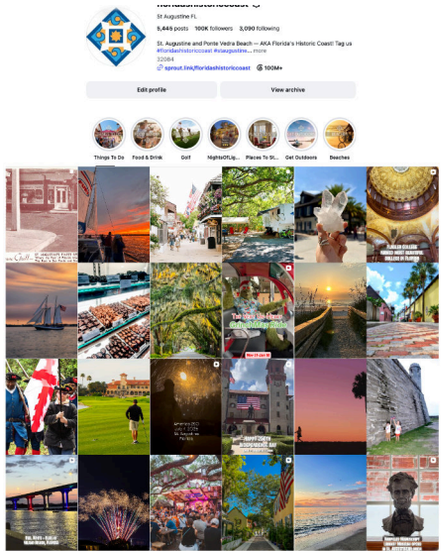
The Lee County VCB's Island Hopper Songwriter Fest team won six SunSational Awards at the Florida Festivals and Events annual conference last month in Fort Myers. Island Hopper earned first place for its street banner and T-shirt, second for its mobile app and social media campaign, and third for its promotional video and website. Now in its 12th year, the festival was held Sept. 18–27 in Captiva Island, Cape Coral, downtown Fort Myers, and Fort Myers Beach. *VisitFortMyers.com*



This is the 12th year for Island Hopper Songwriter Fest.

Instagram Engagement Continues to Drive Destination Awareness

Florida's Historic Coast continues to grow its social media influence, with Instagram surpassing 100K followers—a 7.3% year-over-year increase. Authentic Reels highlighting local restaurants, live music, and America's 250th anniversary generated thousands of views and expanded awareness of the destination. Combined with a highly engaged Facebook audience of more than 628K followers, these results demonstrate how strategic social storytelling inspires travelers, strengthens the brand, and delivers meaningful value for tourism partners. *FloridasHistoricCoast.com*



The St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches VCB Instagram community surpassed 100K followers this year, with authentic, destination-focused reels generating strong engagement and helping inspire future visitors to experience Florida's Historic Coast.

Visit Indian River County Earns Two STS Shining Example Awards

Visit Indian River County celebrated a first-time win at the Southeast Tourism Society's 2026 Shining Example Awards held this year in Richmond, Va., earning two honors: Tourism Office of the Year – $1M & Under and Best Tourism Marketing – $500,000–$999,999. The recognition highlights the destination's continued investment in innovative marketing, strategic digital campaigns, strong creative content, and data-driven tourism promotion. For Visit Indian River County, the awards represent an exciting milestone for its two-person tourism team and further validate the impact of its destination marketing efforts.*VisitIndianRiverCounty.com*



VP of Tourism & Marketing Ben Earman and Tourism Communications Manager Krista Hoyt accept Visit Indian River County's awards at the Southeast Tourism Society.

Visit St. Pete-Clearwater Brings One Perfect Day to NYC-Based Media, Meeting Planners

Visit St. Pete-Clearwater brought the destination to life at Platform by The James Beard Foundation with two local chefs creating a coursed meal of One Perfect Day in St. Pete-Clearwater. With dishes inspired by the destination—Small Town Strolls, Out on the Water, Art and Culture, and Nighttime Vibes—the NYC-based media, meeting planners, and others in attendance were treated to the flavors and the creativity waiting to be discovered. As one of the up-and-coming foodie destinations in the country, St. Pete-Clearwater continues to find creative avenues to highlight their ever-expanding culinary culture. *VisitStPeteClearwater.com*



The One Perfect Day in St. Pete-Clearwater table setting at Platform by The James Beard Foundation

New Content Series Features Orlando Celebrities

Visit Orlando and Tripadvisor launched *Common Ground*, a new YouTube series designed to inspire travel to Orlando through authentic stories from local personalities across sports, food, entertainment, and culture. As Tripadvisor's first U.S. destination partner, Visit Orlando is leveraging research showing travelers increasingly seek meaningful connections and memorable experiences. The first three episodes feature Brazilian soccer legend and former Orlando City SC star Ricardo Kaká and Orlando Pride defender Rafaelle Souza; Orlando native and former *NSYNC member Joey Fatone and celebrity chef Richard Blais; and Broadway actor and Orlando-raised Michael James Scott and viral social media stars the Valentine Brothers. *VisitOrlando.org*



Visit Orlando and Tripadvisor launch *Common Ground*, a new YouTube series featuring Orlando celebrities.

Passport Program Invites Visitors to 'Sip. Explore. Discover.' in Crystal River Florida

Discover Crystal River Florida recently launched the Nature Coast Pour Tour, a free passport program connecting visitors and locals with 12 coffee, tea, and smoothie shops; breweries; distilleries; wine shops; and other beverage destinations throughout Citrus County. Built around "Sip. Explore. Discover." the sunrise-to-sunset experience encourages participants to explore local businesses, collect stamps, and earn exclusive prizes. It's a refreshing approach to promoting locally owned experiences beyond the waterways while encouraging residents to explore their own backyard. *DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com*



Discover Crystal River Florida's Nature Coast Pour Tour promotes locally owned businesses.

The Capital of Cross Country Drives Fall Tourism in Tallahassee

Visit Tallahassee recently launched @Visit_TallySports on Instagram to promote events, engage athletes and fans, and position sports tourism as a year-round economic driver. Building on the momentum of the 2026 World Athletics Cross Country Championships, Tallahassee, the Capital of Cross Country, kicked off another major season at Apalachee Regional Park, with nine premier meets expected to welcome more than 25K visitors and generate $5.25M in economic impact. *VisitTallahassee.com*



Runners participate in a race along the oak-lined course at Apalachee Regional Park in Tallahassee.

Quick Trips!

Visit Tampa Bay Helps Bring Connect Marketplace 2026 to Tampa Bay

Visit Tampa Bay welcomed Connect Marketplace, a leading meetings and events industry conference, Aug. 24–26. The event brought 2,783 attendees to Tampa Bay, generating more than 5,800 contracted hotel nights and an estimated economic impact of more than $3M. Visit Tampa Bay and 23 local partners hosted an opening reception and booth activation, showcasing the destination to planners with the potential to bring future meetings and conventions to Tampa Bay. *VisitTampaBay.com*



Attendees mingle in the Tampa Convention Center breezeway over local bites and Gasparilla-themed entertainment during Visit Tampa Bay's "Discover the Bay" opening reception for Connect Marketplace 2026, held Aug. 24 to kick off the three-day conference.

Key West Honors Jimmy Buffett's Legacy With Annual Tribute

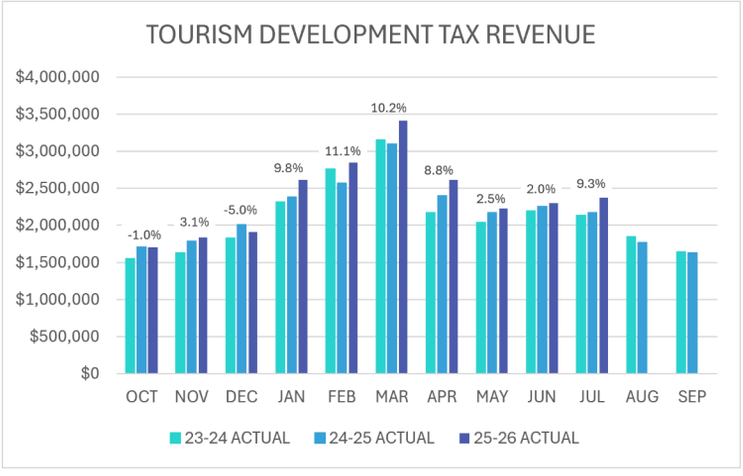
Thousands of Jimmy Buffett fans filled Duval Street Sept. 6 for the signature Second Line Memorial Walking Parade during *Just a Few Friends Key West*. The five-day Labor Day weekend festival celebrates Buffett through music, storytelling, and gatherings at places connected to his life and work. The event grew from an impromptu 2023 community tribute following Buffett's death, honoring the artist whose Key West years helped shape his signature sound. *VisitFloridaKeys.com*



Fans toast Jimmy Buffett on Duval Street to start the annual Second Line Memorial Walking Parade honoring the life and music of Key West's favorite son.

Florida's Space Coast on Pace for Best TDT Collections

Florida's Space Coast Office of Tourism recently projected that Tourist Development Tax collections for the year should reach $27M, a new high for the organization. Spring 2026 was the best spring season ever, and summer 2026 is also pacing to be the best summer. TDT growth has been driven by new hotel inventory, additional cruise ships at Port Canaveral, increases in the number of rocket launches, and overall marketing efforts increasing visitor volume. *VisitSpaceCoast.com*



Florida's Space Coast expects record TMT collections this year.

Two Oceanfront Hotel Openings Coming to Daytona Beach This Fall

The Daytona Beach area will see the opening of two new oceanfront hotels this fall. The Residence Inn by Marriott, located in Ormond Beach, will be a 137-room, five-story property. Amenities will include a lobby pool bar, meeting space, complimentary breakfast area, and elevated outdoor pool with ocean views. Located in Daytona Beach, the 123-room TownePlace Suites by Marriott Daytona Beach Oceanfront will feature spacious suites with full kitchens, oceanfront event space, and a bar/lounge. *DaytonaBeach.com*



The Residence Inn by Marriott and the TownePlace Suites by Marriott will be the latest oceanfront hotels to open in Daytona Beach this fall.

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Sept. 8 Is Orlando Cat Café Day in Lake County

The Lake County tourism community celebrated a decade of impact from Orlando Cat Café, located in Clermont, Florida, which marked its 10th anniversary on Sept. 8. During a special Lake County Board of County Commissioners' proclamation, the BCC officially designated Sept. 8 as Orlando Cat Café Day, recognizing the café's commitment to animal welfare in Lake County and its work with SPCA Florida to help more than 3,700 cats and kittens find loving homes. This milestone showcases how tourism businesses can create unique visitor experiences while making a meaningful difference in the communities they serve. *DiscoverLakeCountyFL.com*



The Lake County Board of County Commissioners designates Sept. 8 as Orlando Cat Café Day. Pictured at the commission meeting are Commissioner Sean Parks and café owner Sandra Cagan and her husband, Jeff.

Connect Meeting Planners Join Visit Sarasota County Team for FAM

Following Connect Marketplace, Visit Sarasota County (VSC) hosted a familiarization (FAM) tour for a group of meeting planners who also attended the trade show held in Tampa. The group explored attractions and beaches, had hands-on culinary experiences, and got to see what Sarasota County can offer for meetings and groups. VSC showcased many different hotels, vendors, and partners, leaving the FAM attendees with a firsthand appreciation for the entire region. *VisitSarasota.com*



FAM participants and the VSC sales team enjoy the sunset on Siesta Key Beach.

Miss America Expands Destination Visibility for The Palm Beaches

For the first time, The Palm Beaches welcomed Miss America to America's First Resort Destination® as part of a new three-year partnership. The iconic national event brought contestants, families, and supporters to the area, driving activity across local hotels, restaurants, attractions, and businesses while reinforcing the area's ability to host high-profile national events. The Palm Beaches were showcased to audiences nationwide through the online show, custom delegate experiences shared across social media, and national media coverage. *ThePalmBeaches.com*



Miss America 2027 Regan Hutsell is joined by fellow finalists at the Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach.

Ocala/Marion County Secures Wings Over Ocala 2027 Airshow Featuring U.S. Navy Blue Angels

The Ocala/Marion County VCB and Ocala International Airport have partnered with JLC AirShow Management to host the inaugural Wings Over Ocala Florida Air Show (*WingsOverOcalaFlorida.com*) set for Apr 30–May 2, 2027. Featuring the headlining U.S. Navy Blue Angels, the three-day festival-style event includes night shows, drone displays, fireworks, and top aerobatic performers. The partnership highlights the destination's growing capacity for major events. *OcalaMarion.com*



Quick Trips!

Greater Miami CVB Partner Events Build Industry Connections

Nearly 600 industry stakeholders participated in the Greater Miami CVB's annual Partner Planning Workshop, powered by Expedia Group. More than 18 breakout sessions covered destination research, emerging trends, and GMCVB sales and marketing initiatives, helping partners prepare for the year ahead. The GMCVB's annual Partner Expo also brought tourism and hospitality businesses together to connect and discover local resources. Both events reflect the GMCVB's commitment to helping partners learn, build relationships, and grow alongside the visitor economy. *MiamiandMiamiBeach.com*



President & CEO David Whitaker welcomes nearly 600 industry stakeholders to the Greater Miami CVB's annual Partner Planning Workshop at the Miami Beach Convention Center.

Amelia Island Strengthens Its Presence in the Atlanta Market

This August, Amelia Island strengthened its presence in the Atlanta market through a targeted media mission combining an in-person media event with a television opportunity. The simulator golf "drive" destination event sparked meaningful conversations with Atlanta-area travel and lifestyle media and generated 580K impressions, 7K views, and 300+ engagements. The effort was further amplified by a daytime TV segment that aired three times, adding 2M impressions and significantly extending the campaign's reach. *AmeliaIsland.com*



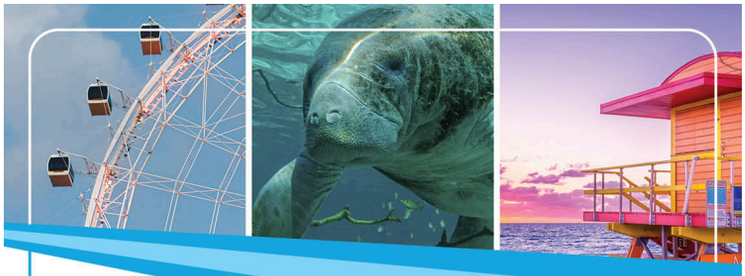
Amelia Island goes on-air to give a taste of Amelia Island.

Taking Teamwork on the Road: Destin-Fort Walton Beach Strengthens Partner Connections



Destin-Fort Walton Beach's monthly Partner Team Days bring destination tourism teams and local partners together to connect, collaborate, and exchange ideas in person.

As part of an ongoing series, last month the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Marketing, Destination Services, and Sales teams took their work on the road for a Partner Team Day. This new initiative rotates throughout the destination to multiple tourism partners and welcome centers. These valuable meet-and-greets provide partners an opportunity to connect with the teams in person to ask questions, share ideas, and strengthen relationships. By stepping away from the inbox, the program fosters collaboration while giving the team a look at the partners they serve. *DestinFWB.com*



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Destination Panama City's Award-Winning Adventure Letters Campaign Inspires Travel



Destination Panama City celebrates earning a Silver Flagler Award for the Panama City Adventure Letters at the 2026 Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism.

Destination Panama City earned a 2026 Silver Flagler Award in the Direct Marketing category for the Panama City Adventure Letters. The series offers a creative approach to trip inspiration, bringing the destination directly to travelers through a series of mailed letters. Each installment introduces recipients to another side of Panama City, highlighting waterfront experiences, locally owned businesses, outdoor adventures, arts and culture, and historic neighborhoods while building inspiration for a future visit. *DestinationPanamaCity.com*

Gainesville's Afternoon Earns MICHELIN Recognition

Gainesville's Afternoon restaurant earned a recommendation in the 2026 MICHELIN Guide Florida, becoming the first Gainesville restaurant recognized by the prestigious guide. Selected among 200 restaurants statewide and one of just 38 restaurants earning the distinction, Afternoon brings a distinctly Florida-inspired menu to its brunch setting, with seasonal ingredients and from-scratch dishes. The honor shines an international spotlight on Gainesville's culinary scene and gives food-focused travelers another reason to add Alachua County to their Florida itinerary. *VisitGainesville.com*







Clockwise from top right: Afternoon Restaurant owner Kyle Spor, left, accepts the restaurant's MICHELIN Guide recognition placard at the Visit Gainesville, Alachua County office; a bicycle outside Afternoon Restaurant in Gainesville, beneath the restaurant's distinctive logo; and sourdough bread pudding topped with toasted caramel crème anglaise and house-made cherry jam, from Afternoon's rotating menu of specials.

Experience Kissimmee Showcases Culture, Gastronomy, and Community During First U.S. Hispanic FAM



FAM participants enjoy a guided mural tour through Downtown Kissimmee.

Experience Kissimmee hosted its first U.S. Hispanic FAM, welcoming 12 journalists from leading Hispanic and Latino media outlets in Central Florida, Miami, Washington, D.C., and Chicago. During the visit, participants learned about the impact of Osceola County's Hispanic and Latino community, which represents nearly 60% of the population. Journalists also explored Experience Kissimmee's recently expanded Latin Culinary Trail, connecting with local business owners and discovering authentic flavors, cultural traditions, and recipes passed down through generations that shape the destination's identity. *ExperienceKissimmee.com*

Visit Pensacola Turns National Beach Day Into Partner Exposure and Audience Growth

Visit Pensacola celebrated National Beach Day with a destination-inspired giveaway designed to support local partners and grow its consumer audience. The $1K prize package featured products from 12 area businesses while entry required signing up for Visit Pensacola's newsletter. The promotion generated 35,765 impressions, 1,127 engagements, and 348 newsletter sign-ups, creating immediate partner exposure while building a stronger audience for future trip-planning inspiration. *VisitPensacola.com*



Visit Pensacola brought its National Beach Day Giveaway to life with playful, beach-inspired creative showcasing prizes donated by 12 local partners. The campaign paired colorful product cutouts and destination imagery with a personal touch, culminating in an in-person celebration with giveaway winner Brandy and her $1K Pensacola-inspired prize package.

Enclosed is your copy of Tourism Marketing Today
a publication of

DESTINATIONS FLORIDA

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Tallahassee, FL 32312

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