

TourismMarketing Today

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



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Bill Talbert Named to Destinations International Hall of Fame

In July, industry stalwart and former Greater Miami CVB President & CEO Bill Talbert was named to the Destinations International Hall of Fame at their annual convention in Tampa. The legacy award recognizes individuals who have changed the future of destination marketing and management for the better.

It's no surprise to Florida's visitor industry, who inducted him into VISIT FLORIDA's Hall of Fame in 2021. William D. Talbert III, CDME—Bill Talbert or Miami Bill as he's known around the world—has been a tireless advocate for tourism, cultural, and business interests, helping steer Greater Miami and Miami Beach's meteoric rise as a world-class destination for more than three decades.

A steadfast champion of the visitor industry, he lived and breathed



HALL OF FAME
WILLIAM
"MIAMI BILL"
TALBERT, CDME
Former President & CEO
Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau
ANNUAL

the Miami brand he helped create for more than a generation, elevating both the destination and the USA on a global stage.

Known for building consensus—and awareness of the critical role tourism plays in a resilient economy—his lasting impact and influence on destination marketing is felt everywhere today. As chair of VISIT FLORIDA, he deftly navigated its threatened demise, galvanizing our industry and successful efforts to keep

BILL TALBERT continues on pg. 4

Preserving TDT

by Robert Skrob



I had the honor of speaking at the Florida Attractions Association annual meeting to discuss the

history and current trends of Tourist Development Taxes.

Bill Lupfer, executive director of the Florida Attractions Association, invited Carol Dover, president of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association, and me for the event at the Florida Equestrian Center in Ocala, Florida.

My key takeaway is that members of the attractions industry are engaged and want

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

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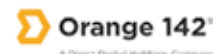
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GOLD PARTNERS



SILVER PARTNERS





HAPPY Birthday

Loretta Shaffer
August 20

Kerri Post
August 26

Debbie Meihls
August 29

Visit Sarasota County Announces Director of Partnership & Community Relations

Visit Sarasota County (VSC) announces the appointment of Hunter Carpenter, APR, as the director of partnership and community relations. Carpenter will oversee the organization's relationships with local businesses by connecting them with opportunities the VSC team offers to showcase their own offerings to visitors around the world. A Sarasota native, Carpenter joins VSC from First Watch Restaurant Group, where he spent several years as the public relations manager. Carpenter holds a master's degree in mass communications from the University of Florida. VisitSarasota.com



Hunter Carpenter

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

to become even more engaged in state legislative affairs.

Many are hosting candidates at their attractions to foster stronger relationships with local and state lawmakers.

The next two legislative sessions will be pivotal for the tourism industry to protect the current uses of TDT.

It's great to know that members of Florida's attractions industry are



Executive Director Bill Lupfer of the Florida Attractions Association, President Carol Dover of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association, and Executive Director Robert Skrob of Destinations Florida discuss TDT at the 2024 FAA annual meeting.

as ready as ever to engage in the educational process of advocacy.



The Official Newsletter of
Destinations Florida
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Robert Skrob,
Executive Director

Suzanne Hurst, CAE,
Deputy Executive Director

MaryLu Winchester,
Member Database

On the Cover
North Jetty at Fort Pierce Inlet State Park

St. Lucie is home to the city of Fort Pierce, the city of Port St. Lucie, and the beaches of Hutchinson Island. Here, visitors can trace their path through miles of pristine beaches, float down diverse waterways, explore heritage trails, or simply drift away into vacation bliss. The destination offers warm South Florida sunshine, blue skies, and a vacation full of serenity or adventure. It's quite simply, the jewel of the Treasure Coast.

NEW MEMBER RESOURCE:

"Tourism Marketing in Florida: A Newcomer's Guide" *The roadmap to mastering destination marketing in the Sunshine State!*

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

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

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



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

<https://bit.ly/NewFDM>



Bill Talbert addresses the crowd at the Destinations International Annual Convention after being inducted into the Hall of Fame.

it funded. Shaping future DMO initiatives, he helped establish the GMCVB's pioneering Black Hospitality Initiative and Multicultural Tourism & Development Department to increase minority participation in the visitor industry.

Florida's native son stewarded his GMCVB team and our industry through significant challenges, from natural disasters and 9/11 to a global recession and pandemic, always guiding both the safe return of visitors and the tourism industry's recovery.

Nationally, the Travel Promotion Act of 2010 that created Brand USA happened with the help of his tireless efforts. He brought a respected guidance and expert perspective to the visitor industry, serving as the only volunteer leader to chair both Destinations International's association and foundation boards, U.S. Travel's board and executive committees, and on the U.S. Travel & Tourism Advisory Board.

Still, after more than 50 years of public service when he left the GMCVB in 2021 ("It was time," he said. "And I knew it was in good hands."), anyone who knew him well knew the GMCVB's longest-serving CEO wasn't retiring. Indeed, shortly thereafter he stepped into an interim role leading Miami-Dade's economic development agency following the sudden passing of his close friend and their CEO, Mike Finney. "He was a good friend and it was the right thing to do."

Today, Talbert offers counsel to a variety of organizations, including his beloved GMCVB. His advice is still the same. Show up. Be counted on. "I always stressed to our team—it's about relationships. And listening."

Listen for what his industry peers are saying ...

Miami Bill! On behalf of everyone at Visit Tampa Bay, I wanted to extend heartfelt congratulations on your well-deserved induction into the 2024 DI Hall of Fame. You've not only shaped the landscape of tourism in South Florida but paved the way for the tourism industry. You once told me "Money doesn't buy you class." Your words of wisdom have stuck with me and serve as a reminder that true success is measured by the qualities you embody so well: integrity, passion, and dedication.

**Santiago Corrada, President & CEO
Visit Tampa Bay**

Throughout my entire career in Florida tourism, Bill has always been a remarkable mentor. I can always count on him not only for advice and guidance but also for a great laugh or two!

**DT Minich, President/CEO
Experience Kissimmee**

Miami Bill, Congratulations on being inducted to the DI Hall of Fame! Your efforts around international tourism not only raised the bar for Miami, but it did so for the entire state of Florida. I am especially grateful for your work in getting the Travel Promotion Act approved. As you like to say, it was a team effort and a team win, but you were a big part of making it happen.

**Tam Pigott, Executive Director
Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and
Neighborhoods**

For more than 40 years Bill Talbert has been a dedicated leader within his community, across the state and nationwide. He

demonstrated how to engage diverse community stakeholders with transparency, meeting every challenge with positivity.

**Robert Skrob, Executive Director
Destinations Florida**

From what started out as a mission on the north bank of the Miami River, both the cities of Miami and Miami Beach have evolved into world-class international gateways, and William D. Talbert III's fingerprints are all over the past three decades of that transformation. As our sector has evolved from destination marketing to destination management to destination stewardship, Bill Talbert has either led or contributed immeasurably to those paths forward at the local, state, national, and international levels through his unwavering commitment, leadership, and service. We celebrate and congratulate our colleague and my great friend, Miami Bill, for this great honor. Very nicely done!

**Chris Thompson
President & CEO
Brand USA**

Congratulations, Bill! On behalf of the countless number of employees you touched, impacted, and supported during your 31-year career at the Greater Miami CVB, thank you for your leadership, stewardship, vision, and compassion. An equally significant contribution you have made is to the contributions and legacy you created within the ecosystem of destination marketing organizations and the mission of destination marketing and promotion. Forever grateful,

**David Whitaker
President & CEO
Greater Miami CVB**



Bill Talbert celebrates with the Miami team.

FLORIDA MARKETERS

We can help drive inspiration for your destination.



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Contact us today!



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Account Executive

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Remembering Our Founding Member Merrett R. Stierheim September 25, 1933 – July 7, 2024



Today's leaders in Florida destination marketing stand on the shoulders of giants. It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of a giant among giants, Merrett R. Stierheim.

Stierheim was a founding member of Destinations Florida and a strong supporter of the association from its onset. It was Stierheim who created and filed the articles of incorporation for the association, originally named Florida Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus, on Aug. 28, 1996, and served as its first chairman.

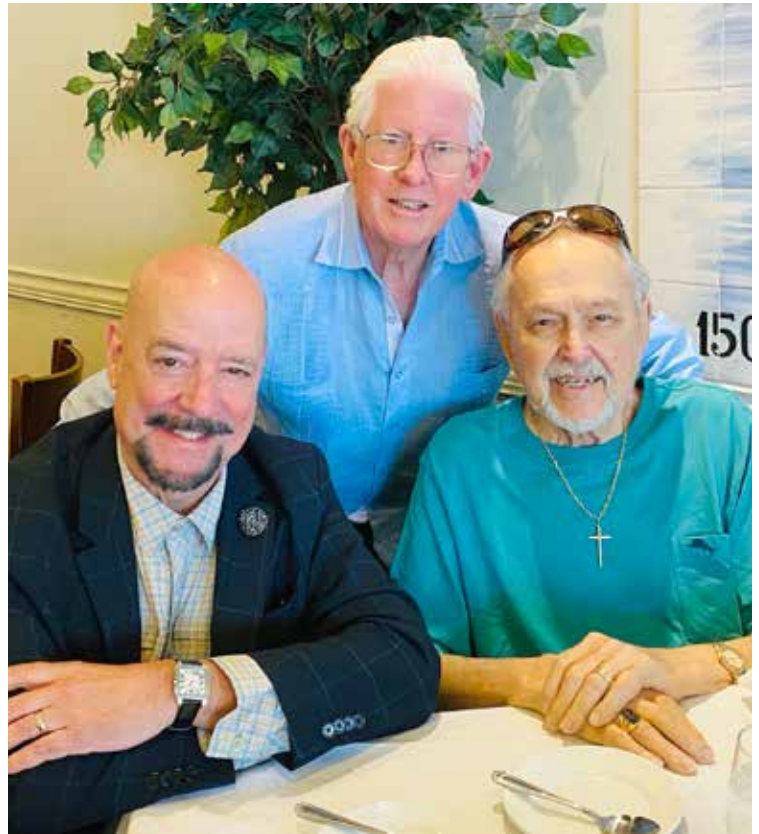
He began his career as an intern at Miami City Hall in 1959 and rose to serve in key positions in Miami and Dade County government including twice as county manager, Miami's city manager, superintendent of county schools, director of the Greater Miami CVB, and interim manager of both Doral and Miami Lakes. He also held early management positions in Clearwater and Pinellas County.

While Stierheim retired more than 20 years ago, his influence is still felt, and his contributions to the industry are remembered by those who had a front-row seat to his illustrious career.

Elaine McLaughlin, former executive director of Fort Myers & the Beaches VCB, served with Stierheim on the first FACVB board of directors. "This is sad news and a great loss to Florida's tourism industry. Merrett was an amazing leader who knew how to work with state and local government to achieve success for our industry. He helped cement partnerships that continue today—especially for Greater Miami and Dade County. In the CVB world, he was considered a leader in destination management as well as marketing."

Stierheim was appointed president and CEO of the Greater Miami CVB in 1990. Working with government and industry leaders, he established the CVB's first dedicated advertising fund with a value exceeding \$5 million.

It was also Stierheim who brought his longtime deputy to the GMCVB, Bill Talbert, who went on to lead Miami's DMO for two decades, and hired a young David Whitaker, today its current president and CEO.



David Whitaker, Bill Talbert, and Merrett Stierheim met annually to enjoy a meal together. They are pictured here at Old Lisbon Restaurant, South Miami, September 2023.

a Corporation pursuant to the Florida Not For Profit
617, Florida Statutes, as amended, has signed these
on this 27 day of August, 1996.

Merrett R. Stierheim, Incorporator

The articles of incorporation for this association were created and signed by Merrett Stierheim.

"His passing is an unimaginable loss for his family, loved ones, and those he touched," said Whitaker. "It's also a bittersweet time to remember and commemorate his vast contributions to the community he so loved. For us, he was the architect that created the Greater Miami CVB. He then stepped in when needed and led the organization from its nascent beginnings to meteoric success (1990-1998). His fingerprints on the destination are best celebrated by the many professionals he mentored and developed including the wonderful legacy Bill (his lifelong colleague and friend) crafted in his footsteps. I'm blessed to have been a small part of his journey and like so many, am forever grateful for his wisdom, leadership, and trust."

Talbert reflected on the influence of his mentor, saying, "Merrett is the founding father of so much of modern-day Miami-Dade—Metrorail, Government Center, ZooMiami, our destination marketing and economic development agencies. More importantly he shaped a generation of leaders. We were raised on the Stierheim Way: ethics, integrity, teamwork, get the job done."

Annual Meeting

Wednesday, October 9, 2024

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Registration Desk Open

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Welcome Reception

Thursday, October 10, 2024

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. – 11:30 a.m. Fresh Lessons on Successful Leadership at Florida DMOs

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Networking Luncheon

1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Florida's First Tourism Improvement District Procedural Ordinance

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Tourism Marketing Best Practices from Around the World

2:15 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Bring Your A-Game: How You Can Increase Your Effectiveness in Leadership in Any Situation

3:00 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. We're Beyond Generative AI 101, It's Time to Develop a Policy for Your Destination

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Miles Evening Event

Friday, October 11, 2024

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Networking Breakfast

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Destinations Florida Annual Business Meeting

2025 Legislative Session Outlook

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. VISIT FLORIDA Marketing Update

12:00 noon Adjourn



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VISIT **FLORIDA**

MEETING LOCATION:

Hotel Haya Ybor City

1412 E. 7th Avenue, Tampa, FL 33605
(813) 568-1200

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS:

The Hotel Haya Ybor City is offering a special rate for Destinations Florida meeting participants at \$189 per night. You may make your reservation online at: <https://bit.ly/DF24Annual>. Or call the hotel directly at (813) 568-1200 and reference the group name Destinations Florida Annual Meeting.

Reservations must be made before the cutoff date of Wednesday, September 18, 2024. Be sure to make your reservation as soon as possible before the room block sells out.

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Sunshine Laws and Contract 'Influencers'

by Steven M. Hogan

The questions we get from Destinations Florida members never fail to raise new and novel issues. A recent question was one we've never gotten before: If a DMO contracts with a social



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

Image by freepik

media influencer to provide tourism content, is the influencer's content subject to Florida's Sunshine Laws?



Steven M. Hogan

After looking into the issue, the answer is "probably not, but maybe." The evaluation of this issue would be subject to case-by-case analysis turning on each engagement's particular facts.

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

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

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

The "agency" analysis is fact-specific and can get complicated. There is a large body of case law on this topic and the various tests that are applied. Fortunately, the Florida attorney general publishes an annual "Government in the Sunshine Manual," which you can download for free here: <https://bit.ly/sunshine-manual>

The Sunshine Manual presents the law on various issues in a digestible format. Pages 62-65 of the 2024 manual are most relevant to the contractor/agency analysis.

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

As always, legal counsel should be sought on specific questions impacting your county.

Steven M. Hogan is a shareholder with the Ausley McMullen law firm in Tallahassee. Destinations Florida has retained Mr. Hogan to consult with our members on the Tourist Development Tax and related legal issues. You can contact Mr. Hogan at shogan@ausley.com. 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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New Upgrades, New Programming at Lohman Planetarium in Daytona Beach

The Museum of Arts and Sciences (MOAS), a Smithsonian-affiliated museum located in Daytona Beach, completed a significant renovation of the Lohman Planetarium. Among the upgrades include a facelift to the lobby, an upgraded projector that is more than twice the power of the planetarium's previous one, and a new projection system. To celebrate the improvements, MOAS is launching Planetarium 2.0, bringing the upgrades together for a new and innovative, immersive, and educational experience with special daily shows and themed programming through Sept. 1. DaytonaBeach.com



The laser show illuminates the newly renovated Lohman Planetarium at the Museum of Arts Sciences in Daytona Beach. Photo courtesy of Daytona Beach Area CVB

Celebrating The Pink Retreat in The Palm Beaches

From all over the country, Lilly Pulitzer enthusiasts came together for the celebration of the fifth annual The Pink Retreat, proudly presented by Discover The Palm Beaches (DTPB). Founder Tosha Williams started The Pink Retreat to bring women together for the most colorful and empowering weekend of the year. Women celebrated their love for fashion and fun at numerous events around The Palm Beaches, including the annual Pink Party at the National Croquet Center. ThePalmBeaches.com



Attendees enjoy the festivities at The Pink Party, the grand finale event at The Pink Retreat.

Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB Office Reopens

Almost two years after Hurricane Ian hit Southwest Florida, the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB's office has reopened to the public. Now visitors and community members can stop in to pick up brochures and information on what to do, where to stay, and where to dine in the destination. The newly decorated office includes a beach theme décor, a visitor center full of information, a conference room to host meetings, and office space for the VCB's 10-person team. PureFlorida.com



Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach VCB's Jerry Jones, Sean Walter, Julie Pennock, Sean Doherty, Aimee Blenker, Bry Phipps, Jeff Berg, Amy Sharpe, Maureen Morgenthien, and Lois Croft celebrate the reopening of their office to the public.

Discover Lake County Hosts National Travel Writers

Discover Lake County recently hosted writers from prestigious national publications such as *Southern Living* and *Thrillist* to showcase the charm and adventure that awaits visitors in this Central Florida treasure. Writers were able to sample the area's great restaurants as well as the locally crafted wine and beer, take part in adventures like seaplane flights and Catboat rides, and cap the night off in beautiful, historic lodgings. These visits resulted in fantastic feature stories that perfectly highlight Lake County's incredible offerings. DiscoverLakeCountyFL.com



Sunset at the Lakeside Inn in Mount Dora. Photo courtesy of Matthew Meltzer

CREATING INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS THAT BENEFIT VISITORS & LOCALS



DESTINATIONS
FLORIDA

COMPILED FROM RESOURCES
AND COMMENTS SHARED AT THE
DESTINATION MARKETING SUMMIT
ON APRIL 3, 2024

Contributor



JENNIFER ADAMS
Destin-Fort Walton Beach, FL

INTRODUCTION

For tourism to thrive, it's essential to be engaged and creative. Exploring new ways to attract visitors, while engaging community stakeholders is an opportunity for the industry to create an environment where everyone contributes and wins together.

Given that TDC funds are strictly limited to initiatives and tactics that impact visitation, Tourism Director, Jennifer Adams, from Destin-Fort Walton Beach found ways to create products that addressed their core challenges and mission, "To make time spent there whether visiting, living, or working more valuable to all."

While the program is robust, it is customized enough to help smaller and new businesses find their way and discover the value a tourism department delivers, far outside a listing within a visitor's guide.

SUMMARY POINTS



Creativity can attract visitors and engage community stakeholders.



Identifying core challenges can prompt new and innovative solutions.



Initiatives like Adventure Anywhere and Venture Out addressed core challenges by getting kids outdoors and stimulating visitation through personalized experiences.



Collaboration with local partners can help overcome resistance and lead to successful initiatives, injecting millions into the local economy.



Staying relevant and aligning programs with community interests can help overcome new and evolving challenges.

ADDRESSING CORE CHALLENGES

Through stakeholder analysis, Destin-Fort Walton Beach identified three main issues: mobility, accessibility, and a friendliness gap. Two statistics further motivated Jennifer to innovate: over 50% of the nation's children spend less time outdoors than prison inmates, and 49% of parents don't know how to play with their kids.

Her first goal was to get kids outside, then to address mobility issues by acquiring property and improving boating access, and finally, to bridge the friendliness gap by igniting local pride. However, the lack of communication between stakeholders and the scarcity of partnerships made things challenging.

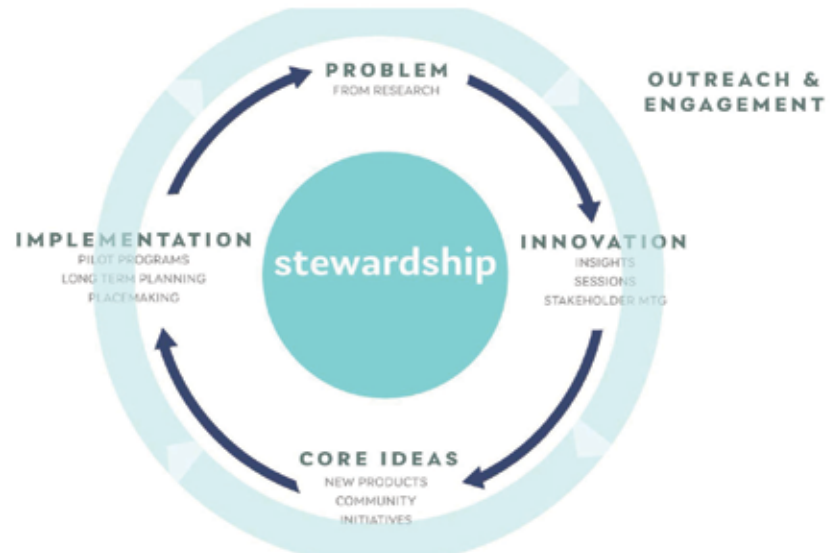
The organization started by rewriting its mission statement, which initially centered around increasing TDT revenues and visitor spend. And simply said, "Make time spent here, whether visiting, living or working, more valuable to all."

Brand pillars were then put in place.

- Believe in getting outside
- Joy, nature, imagination
- Place of initiation
- Kids are the catalyst

Followed by a brand promise, "We get kids outside on the water to give their adventurous side room to grow."

And, finally, to tie it all together, a plan. Destination Stewardship aims to create a movement and a process for innovation, and has received full support from the Board of County Commissioners. Through community engagement and new product development,



the destination is working to create a more valuable place for all.

Adventure Anywhere

During COVID, when kids were stuck at home, Jennifer and her team collaborated with partners to maintain contact with parents and educators, keeping their message relevant while navigating the challenges of shutdowns.

They developed content to encourage backyard exploration, including an email newsletter and a content hub with destination-themed itineraries, educational videos by locals, craft and snack ideas, local storytime, and outdoor activities for parents and teachers. Each activity included a book read by a local educator, with snacks provided by local restaurants.

These activities were promoted on social media with the idea that once the city reopened, kids could experience these adventures in person. This initiative was inexpensive and helped establish valuable partnerships.



Visit Destin-Fort Walton Beach

Mon 4/27/2020 11:05 am EDT

Start your Monday off right with a pirate tour from Captain Crimson and his crew #AdventureAnywhere



Total Engagements



Visit Destin-Fort Walton Beach

Tue 5/5/2020 3:04 pm EDT

Live Q+A all about reptiles from Gator Beach at Fudpuckers. For more reptile fun check out: <https://bit.ly/2z9LAsq> And don't miss our L



destinfbw

Thu 4/30/2020 10:52 am EDT

shaped quesadillas? Yes please. easy #AdventureAnywhere s to make your own! #linkinbio



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destinfbw Make your own Eonfish! (All we ask is that you don't release it into the Gulf when you're finished!) #AdventureAnywhere #DestinFWB #Destin #FortWaltonBeach #OkaloosaIsland #LoveFL #familyvacation #vacation #travel

prime_and_arched_pmu This is amazing 🤩🤩🤩 3w 1 like Reply
jelly15 @jeleniowski this weekend's project idea

ENGAGEMENT RATE

6.1%

ENGAGEMENTS PER IMPRESSION

+201%

VS. PRE-CAMPAIGN

FULL VIDEO VIEWS

23.8K

VIDEO ENGAGEMENTS

+100%

VS. PRIOR-PERIOD 4/21-5/15

TIME ON WEB PAGES

02:59

AVERAGE TIME ON CAMPAIGN PAGE

+40%

VS. DFWS SITE AVERAGE

PARTNER LISTINGS

32,235

PAGEVIEWS

+80%

VS. PRIOR-PERIOD 4/21-5/15

Venture Out



Their next challenge was attracting visitors to the region. Venture Out focused on inviting people back, stimulating local businesses, and broadening their message within a 150-mile to 200-mile radius.

Partners quickly recognized these packs were a success, and together, they invested in media promotions, and created custom content that benefited the tourism office and local businesses.

Capitalizing on their natural resources and utilizing an online chat platform, they promoted Adventure Out packs, developed in collaboration with local businesses. These packs offered discounted experiences, such as a \$400 Breakfast with Dolphins adventure for just \$200, with the tourism office covering the difference.

Promotions for these packs were a hit online and on social media, prompting them to expand their offerings. Some businesses, like the Gulfarium, hesitated due to staffing issues. However, Jennifer, always ready with a solution, proposed holding the adventure after hours and offered to cover the overtime costs, convincing them to sign on. This adventure generated significant buzz and positive impressions.

Venture Out Packs

<p>Pack #1: Breakfast with Dolphins Adventure: Smile N Wave Restaurant: Local Market Retail Price: \$400 Venture Out Price: \$200</p>	 <p>Pack #1</p> <p>Take your family on a private dolphin encounter experience with beautiful snorkeling and lunch prices.</p>	 <p>Pack #2</p> <p>Enjoy a half-day family excursion and lunch at a local restaurant where lunch or dinner will be delivered straight to your boat deck.</p>
<p>Pack #2: Deck and Dine Adventure: Destin Vacation Boat Rentals Restaurant: Harbor Docks Retail Price: \$350 Venture Out Price: \$175</p>	 <p>Pack #3</p> <p>Experience a private interactive with African animals housed by a local business. Your kids will have the opportunity to feed and learn on African program while learning about the local and wildlife birds. Enjoy a picnic lunch at the beach to continue with your day after your private encounter.</p>	 <p>Pack #4</p> <p>Enjoy a private 2 hour experience for your family complete with a good end-of-day light to take home, along with a picnic lunch at Henderson Beach State Park.</p>

Launch with 10 Packs and Build Out

VENTURE OUT DIGITAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

\$60K Spend to Date	7.5M Impressions	9,481 Clicks	198K Video Views (100% Completion)
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Southern Hospitality

After reevaluating core issues, benchmarking showed they'd successfully gotten kids outside, addressed mobility issues by buying some beach access ways and putting in boat basins and launches, but visitors still felt they weren't igniting pride in place.

To address this, they relied on pure southern hospitality. They engaged the community by giving away popsicles on hot days and offering people golf cart rides back to their vacation homes, so visitors wouldn't have to walk.

It was expensive, but by using local providers, benchmark surveys showed that both locals and visitors felt good.

Little Adventures

Next, they had to convince moms that these adventures were worthwhile. Jennifer hired fifteen local moms to take their kids on these adventures and share their experiences on the Little Adventure webpage, leveraging the power of social proof. The platform included filters for age, price, and time, making it easy for other moms to sort and purchase adventures. It also enabled them to connect through an online chat feature. This idea proved extremely popular — the fifteen moms communicated with over 18,000 other moms last year and booked around 11,000 adventures.

Each adventure also included kid reviews to help moms and their kids choose the right one.



Little Adventure Classes

To further ignite pride in place, they partnered with 40 local businesses to teach kids activities like paddle boarding and snorkeling. Kids can choose between programs like Snorkel Squad, Surf's Up, Join the Pinfish Patrol, See Creatures, Get Yourself OnBoard, Surf's Up Teen, Cast and Conserve, and Cast Away.

By compensating businesses for their time, kids can participate in these classes for free. This serves as a fantastic introduction to new activities while promoting local businesses. They've set up four different outposts: one stationary, two mobile teardrop units, and a sprinter van, which travel all over the county signing kids up. Last year, scouts interacted with 3,500 kids and booked 500 classes. Scouts sign people up directly from the beach during the day, and parents can also register online. Next year, they've set a goal of 700 classes countywide.

This will be the last year that Jennifer's team directly funds these activities. The goal is to empower local businesses to create and price their own products, so that the tourism department no longer needs to fund these

adventures. This approach has already seen success with the Venture Out packs, which are now entirely business-funded.

Reel Time

With 320 partners, the decision was made to shift focus to local staples like the fishing fleet, which needed support and modernization. Home to the largest commercial fishing fleet in the nation, social media wasn't something they were taking advantage of, so Jennifer and her team decided to fly flags on all their vessels this summer. They are also planning a virtual kids' fishing tournament next year, allowing kids to connect to the boats and follow the fishing activities online.



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

The local lionfish population also gave way to new opportunities.

Emerald Coast Open

Hosting the largest lionfish tournament ever, they removed 25,000 lionfish from the fishery last year, helping other species thrive. This even inspired Lionfish Restaurant Week.



5,139
PRETOURNAMENT
FISH



144
PARTICIPANTS

19,560
MAIN
TOURNAMENT
FISH



BROKE RECORDS
FOR MOST, LARGEST
AND EVENT TOTALS
AVERAGE CATCH AT
OR ABOVE PRE-'CRASH'
LEVELS



\$100,000
IN CASH AND
PRIZES



Lionfish Restaurant Week

Journalists from all over the country were invited to dine on lionfish and participate in scuba activities, some even earning certifications while they were there.

However, the lionfish needed a place to go, so they built over 407 structures in their artificial reef program and eight fish aggregating devices from Wakulla County to Escambia County, complete with tracking monitors, so that when a vessel comes and hangs, it tracks and pings them back.

- Seven participating restaurants
- Each receive ~30lbs of fillets at no cost
- All sold out!
- Most of these restaurants are purchasing lionfish from divers and include on menu when available
- La Paz Restaurant was crowned champion this year



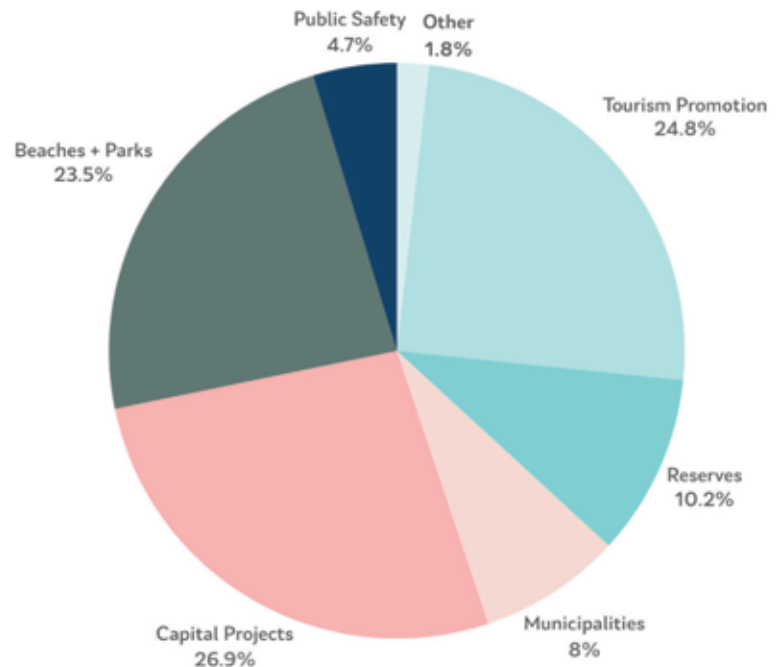
MUNICIPALITIES

	FY 2022	FY 2023	SPEND TO DATE
CINCO BAYOU	\$70,123	\$92,417	\$0
CRESTVIEW	\$403,205	\$531,399	\$14,500
DESTIN	\$1,700,472	\$1,491,115	\$864,077
FORT WALTON BEACH	\$631,103	\$831,754	\$7,197
LAUREL HILL	\$35,061	\$46,209	\$0
MARY ESTHER	\$175,306	\$231,043	\$340,127
NICEVILLE	\$350,613	\$462,086	\$0
SHALIMAR	\$52,592	\$69,313	\$71,422
VALPARAISO	\$87,653	\$115,521	\$0
	\$3,506,128	\$3,870,857	\$1,297,323

REINVESTING TO RECREATE

In Destin-Fort Walton Beach, 63% of the budget is used to purchase land and reinvest in projects that provide long-term, year-round benefits for both the local community and visitors. A portion of the budget goes to the parks and recreation team, responsible for maintaining the beaches and parks, public safety, and capital projects. They've also acquired fairgrounds, rodeos, beach access points, and parks, always keeping the best interests of both visitors and locals in mind.

Each of the nine municipalities in the expanded taxing district also receives a specific percentage of funds annually. However, these funds cannot be spent without submitting a plan for approval, which must focus on product development. This means funds go to parks or other community enhancements, not on things like water and sewer.



By reviewing and co-branding these projects, they ensure these contribute to the community's growth. Once approved, the team also handles marketing to promote these developments effectively.

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

Collaborating with a variety of partners, particularly lodging partners, presented unique challenges. Initially, there was hesitation about promoting non-contributing businesses and concerns about being perceived as a discount destination.

Jennifer and her team had to get creative to overcome these obstacles by bringing them into the fold as scouts, which helped them see that the sum of all parts was key to growing their rates.

Staff shortages were also an issue, particularly right after COVID. To overcome this, Jennifer promised to cover overtime costs, which also helped bring new partners on board.

So far, they've injected about \$7 million back into the local economy over the years, enhancing community offerings, and turning that initial resistance into enthusiastic participation.

STAYING FOCUSED

As programs grew and more partners entered the fold, product offerings evolved. The "Little Adventures" program, for example, which initially targeted kids between the ages of 3 to 10, evolved to include activities appealing to older children, such as kayaking. This adaptability kept the program relevant for families as their children grew.

But with growth came complexity, however, Jennifer's readiness to adjust has allowed her to align programs with their core mission and the community's needs.



MARKETING NEW PRODUCTS & ACTIVITIES

Jennifer knew she wanted Destin-Fort Walton Beach to be known for its premium activities, not just as a place where families hang out at their vacation homes and shuttle to and from the beach. A big part of her strategy involved social sharing. Recognizing that their destination excelled at reaching their target market but lagged in engaging them upon arrival, Jennifer invested heavily—about a million dollars one summer—to make sure the adventure message was everywhere, from local eateries to beachside billboards.

A team of young scouts was also brought in to capture special moments across social media channels and boost interactions, directly engaging with families to help them sign up for classes and share experiences online.

Jennifer recognized that effective use of social media wasn't just about posting, but about who's posting, and their ability to connect on a personal level.

IGNITING PRIDE IN PLACE

Despite initial resistance, local support grew as the community recognized the benefits of new tourism products. The destination refined its strategy to highlight the tangible benefits tourism brings, such as investments

in parks and beach maintenance. This approach not only educated residents on tourism's impact but also reinforced its importance for the region's economic health.

CONCLUSION

Destin-Fort Walton Beach's initiatives have reshaped local tourism, ensuring that both visitors and residents alike benefit from well-thought-out tourism products. By viewing issues as opportunities, engaging with the community creatively, and continually

adapting to new challenges, Jennifer and her team have set a benchmark for destination management. They've demonstrated that there's power in partnership, proving that growing together only enhances the tourism industry.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Prioritizing community benefits alongside visitor experiences

enhances local pride and economic health.



Investing in social sharing and personalized engagement

can help you reach target audiences and enhance visitor experiences.



Adapting and continuously refining strategies is the best way to meet evolving challenges and community needs.



Collaborating with stakeholders

can help overcome challenges and contribute to the success of tourism initiatives.



Bradenton Area Recognized by Destinations International

The Bradenton Area CVB has successfully renewed its Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) certification. Since 2011, the BACVB has maintained DMAP's more than 100 quality standards to achieve this standing. The BACVB has received this distinction for its work over the past 13 years, including the Love It Like a Local initiative, which heightened awareness of the benefits of responsible and sustainable travel, while also managing the Bradenton Area Convention Center, historic Powel Crosley Estate, and the Premier Sports Campus. BradentonGulfIslands.com



Beach goers enjoy Anna Maria Island. Photo courtesy of Bradenton Area CVB

Savor the Shore Campaign Returns

The Lee County VCB is excited to bring back the Savor the Shore campaign now through Aug. 11. The campaign encourages residents to enjoy access to local restaurants during the off-season. Launched in 2023, Savor the Shore is part of the VCB's efforts to help local restaurants recover from the effects of Hurricane Ian in September 2022. The VCB is committed to supporting the tourism industry by creating awareness and encouraging locals to support hometown businesses. VisitFortMyers.com



The Savor the Shore campaign features TV, print, radio, social media, and digital display ads, each highlighting neighborhoods within the destination.

VisitFortMyers.com

Build destination loyalty.

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

Cookies are history. Time to refresh.

Epsilon[®]





Visit Sebring Hosts AJGA's Third Annual Visit Sebring Preview

The American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) held their third Visit Sebring Preview event at the Citrus Golf Trail's Sun 'N Lake Golf Club. The event attracted youth golfers (plus their families) from 10 U.S. states and 12 countries. Total economic impact to the Sebring area for the three years of the annual tournament is \$580,434.40 with \$85,923.23 in visitor spending at this year's tournament. Social media activity from the event reached 204,225 and had 35,662 engagements. VisitSebring.com



Youth golfers from 10 states and 12 countries attend the AJGA's third annual Visit Sebring Preview.

Discover Crystal River Hosts FAM Tour Focused on Elvis Presley

Discover Crystal River recently shook things up with a media tour centered on Elvis Presley's time in the destination while filming his 1962 musical comedy *Follow That Dream*. By leveraging Elvis's enduring celebrity appeal, DCRF was able to raise awareness of "small town" Inverness and the famous Crystal River. Attending media hailed from Ocala, Leesburg, and national outlets, including AAA. The team is excited to see the dreamy coverage and share its love for Elvis with travelers far and wide. DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com



Media FAM participants gather to watch *Follow That Dream* at the Valerie Theatre.

Amelia Island Honored With Best Island Designation

Amelia Island was recently voted No. 2 on the list of Best Islands in the Continental United States by readers of *Travel + Leisure* magazine. This is the sixth consecutive year Amelia Island has made the magazine's World's Best Awards list. "This No. 2 ranking is a great honor and a testament to the incredible beauty, diverse offerings, and genuine hospitality that really set Amelia Island apart," said Gil Langley, president of the Amelia Island CVB. AmeliaIsland.com



Amelia Island is *Travel + Leisure's* No. 2 Best Island in the U.S.

Visit Tampa Bay Scores With Globally Recognized FC St. Pauli

Visit Tampa Bay announced a Kapitan (captain) level partnership for two seasons with recently promoted German Bundesliga football (soccer) club FC St. Pauli beginning July 1. The initial deal includes media opportunities, Tampa takeovers, a presence at St. Pauli's Millerntor Stadium for home games, and more. Visit Tampa Bay is also committed to emphasizing the shared values of its partners—especially the promotion of inclusion, acceptance, and diverse, equitable, and inclusive business practices—and like FC St. Pauli wants to strengthen the local progressive community. VisitTampaBay.com



FC St. Pauli Commercial Director Wilken Engelbracht, Visit Tampa Bay Chief Marketing Officer Patrick Harrison, Visit Tampa Bay Director of Global Sales Stefanie Zinke, and AVIAREPS Germany General Manager Jurgen Salzer celebrate their organizations' strategic partnership for the next two seasons by holding up FC St. Pauli home and away jerseys emblazoned with Visit Tampa Bay in Hamburg, Germany.



Top Athletes Compete in Orlando North, Seminole County at NCAA Division II Championship Festival

From May 19 to May 25, Orlando North, Seminole County hosted the NCAA Division II National Championships Festivals, welcoming top athletes for the softball and tennis championships. This major event, part of a larger festival across Central Florida, reinforced Orlando North, Seminole County as a prime destination for sporting events. By hosting two out of six national competitions, Orlando North, Seminole County continues to establish itself as a leading destination for high-caliber sports events and tourism. DoOrlandoNorth.com



A Division II athlete competes at Sanlando Park.

Visit Sarasota County Hosts Global FAM

Visit Sarasota County loves to spread the word about all the world-class attractions they have to offer on a regular basis. Recently, they hosted a familiarization trip in the destination that included tour operators from both Germany and the UK. The eight tour operators and the Travel Trade representatives from both the German-speaking market and the UK market had a packed itinerary, but still had the opportunity to enjoy a sunset at the beach. VisitSarasota.com



Participants in Visit Sarasota County's recent global FAM trip enjoy a beautiful evening at the beach.

Greater Miami CVB Annual Planning Workshop Powered by Expedia a Sold-Out Success

The Greater Miami CVB hosted its Annual Planning Workshop Powered by Expedia in July to a sold-out audience of more than 400 stakeholders. With 18 breakout sessions focused on sales and marketing initiatives, stakeholders were able to provide valuable input, get a sneak peek at new campaigns being launched, zero in on key research and emerging trends, and learn more about Greater Miami and Miami Beach sustainability and inclusivity efforts. MiamiandMiamiBeach.com



David Whitaker addresses the sold-out audience at the Greater Miami CVB's Annual Planning Workshop Powered by Expedia.

Experience Kissimmee Showcases Tourism Growth at Destination Update

Experience Kissimmee recently hosted 270 partners for a Destination Update at the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate. The event showcased Osceola County's tourism growth and upcoming projects. Highlights included tourism projections, a sneak peek of Universal's Epic Universe, and development plans for Everest Place with Mysk Orlando and Nickelodeon hotels. Additionally, Experience Kissimmee presented a check to The Opportunity Center, with donations raised during the 2024 Kissimmee Golf Classic earlier this year. ExperienceKissimmee.com



President and CEO DT Minich of Experience Kissimmee presents a donation check to Executive Director Kristen Lafferty of The Opportunity Center during the Destination Update



A 'Dream Wedding' in Key West

The Florida Keys & Key West launched a "dream wedding" partnership with Equally Wed—a leading LGBTQ+ wedding and honeymoon magazine, directory, and educational platform—for an LGBTQ+ wedding contest on social media platforms and outlets. Entrants competed with photographic entries for the wedding package that included airfare, ground transportation, Key West Lighthouse wedding ceremony, ceremony setup, flowers, photography, officiant, multi-tier cake, accommodations, and dinner. Fla-Keys.com



The Florida Keys and Equally Wed partnered in a "dream wedding" contest that includes a wedding cake for a lucky LGBTQ+ couple.

Photo courtesy of Moondog Café & Bakery, Key West

Ocala/Marion County Hosts FAA's 75th Annual Conference

The Ocala/Marion County VCB proudly hosted the Florida Attractions Association's 75th Annual Conference for the first time. Held at World Equestrian Center in June, FAA welcomed more than 240 attendees for educational breakout sessions, networking opportunities, and off-site activities at Silver Springs State Park and Vintage Farm. The VCB booth won a Best in Show award for its stunning backdrop, interactive elements, and unique promo items. OcalaMarion.com



Left: Attendees gather for a photo to celebrate the start of the conference at World Equestrian Center. Right: VCB sales team members Bryan Day and Corry Locke network with an attendee at the VCB booth.

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Discover Martin's Tourism Director Joins Panel Discussion at Destinations International Convention

Martin County Tourism Director Nerissa Okiye was recently invited to join the Marketing Masterclass panel discussion "Marketing that Matters: A DMO Lens on Industry Trends" at the Destinations International Annual Convention. Led by Andrew Van der Feltz, senior director of business development at Expedia Group, and joined by Shelley Hall, VP of marketing at Visit Austin, this fun and informative conversation covered the latest marketing developments in the travel and tourism industry. DiscoverMartin.com



The 2024 Destinations International Annual Convention was held in Tampa July 16-18.

New Age of Commercial Aviation Begins With First Flights Out of Lakeland

A new age of commercial aviation began last month, with Avelo Airlines' first flights taking place on June 13 between Lakeland International Airport (LAL) and Tweed New Haven Airport (HVN) in Connecticut. During the afternoon, there was extensive media coverage, with TV stations from every local outlet and print media, causing the event and its visuals to go viral. Flights between the two destinations take place on Thursdays and Sundays. VisitCentralFlorida.org



The inaugural Avelo Airlines flight crew for the first flight from Lakeland International Airport and Tweed New Haven (Conn.) Airport

Orlando Named No. 1 Meeting Destination in North America by Cvent

For the ninth time, Orlando has been named the Top Meeting Destination in North America by Cvent, an industry-leading meetings, events, and hospitality technology provider. Group business is vital to Orlando as they support local businesses, vendors, and hospitality workers, and they also make an indelible impact on the community through charitable donations and endeavors. In Orlando, meetings and conventions, including citywide and in-house events, booked by the Visit Orlando convention sales team in 2023 and beyond, will bring an approximately \$4 billion impact on the local economy. VisitOrlando.com



Cvent names Orlando Top Meeting Destination in North America, the ninth consecutive honor for the destination.

Visit Jacksonville Hosts Sound Bath at Museum of Contemporary Art

In June, Visit Jacksonville hosted a sound bath at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Downtown Jacksonville as part of their Explorers series, which showcases attractions throughout the city. The event, conducted in collaboration with Soundbath Jax, attracted around 60 participants who enjoyed the immersive listening experience. Following the sound bath, attendees received free admission to MOCA to explore its various galleries. VisitJacksonville.com

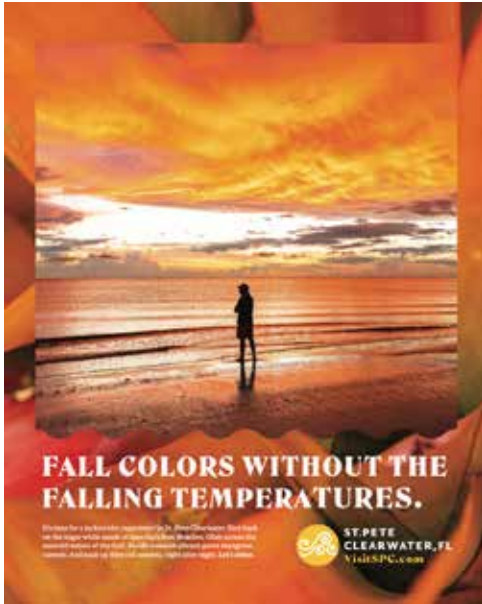


Guests enjoy the sound bath experience at MOCA Jacksonville.



Visit St. Pete-Clearwater Redefines Fall Colors

Visit St. Pete-Clearwater is reminding the Northeast along with the Florida drive markets that a set of vibrant colors can be found at America's Best Beaches in St. Pete-Clearwater. In their new fall campaign, VisitSPC is reminding travelers they have their own beautiful palette in St. Pete-Clearwater with the opportunity to soak in the fiery red, brilliant orange, and golden glow during each night's sunset, dig their toes in the sugar white sand, and swim in the emerald green waters. VisitStPeteClearwater.com



VisitSPC offers a kaleidoscope of fall colors along the 35 miles of award-winning beaches, surrounding natural beauty, and art and culture in St. Pete-Clearwater.

Color Your Summer Snapper Red

The Color Your Summer Snapper Red campaign, recently launched by Visit Panama City Beach, aims to celebrate and promote Red Snapper season. The initiative invites visitors to dive into the excitement of fishing or simply enjoy the Gulf waters and sugar-white beaches. To enhance the experience, the campaign includes partnerships with local restaurants, encouraging them to craft snapper dishes, and vibrant, snapper-colored drinks for a special "Snappy Hour." VisitPanamaCityBeach.com



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Destin-Fort Walton Beach Introduces Conservation Conversations

Hosted by the tourism organization's Natural Resource team, Destin-Fort Walton Beach has introduced a new, free monthly educational seminar series inviting attendees to hear from local experts and special guests, including researchers and experts in the field. During the session, experts, including those currently conducting research in the area, share insight into wildlife conservation and how to help preserve the land and marine life. Each month the conversation is focused on a different topic, for example, on sea turtles, terrapins, or tiger sharks. DestinFWB.com



Host hotel The Island Resort invites attendees to enjoy a social hour following the educational session to discuss key takeaways and meet new people who share a passion for conservation.

Walton County Tourism Honored for Industry Achievements

Walton County Tourism has been recognized for re-accreditation of its Destination Marketing Accreditation Program. "Earning our DMAP accreditation is a tremendous accomplishment for our team, and I'm incredibly proud of the time and effort they put into this," said Matt Algarin, tourism director. "The DMAP accreditation shows our commitment to maintaining a high level of standards and accountability." Karen Morris, sales director, has also earned the industry's highest educational achievement, Certified Destination Management Executive. WaltonCountyFLTourism.com



Walton County Tourism Sales Director Karen Morris is recognized for her CDME achievement, and Tourism Director Matt Algarin accepts Walton County Tourism's DMAP re-accreditation at the recent Destination International Annual Convention in Tampa.

Allegiant Announces New Flights to Melbourne

Allegiant announced new air service from Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG) to Melbourne International Airport (MLB) beginning this fall. The twice weekly service will start with fares as low as \$49. Allegiant also flies from MLB to Pittsburgh and Allentown. VisitSpaceCoast.com



Tallahassee Partners With Ology for Bicentennial Cocktail

In celebration of Tallahassee-Leon County's Bicentennial anniversary, Visit Tallahassee partnered with Ology, the city's premier distillery, to create a signature Bicentennial cocktail. In addition to the cocktail being featured in the Visit Tallahassee Visitor's Guide and available at all Ology locations, the cocktail is also being offered at local restaurants and bars, serving as a contemporary nod to history while showcasing the power of strategic partnerships with local businesses.



Tallahassee-Leon County's signature Bicentennial cocktail

"Innovative partnerships like this one with Ology have helped reach a new audience during our Bicentennial year and allows us to support local businesses in imaginative ways," said Kerri Post, executive director of Visit Tallahassee. VisitTallahassee.com



Alachua County's Orange Lake Makes List of Top 10 Bass Fishing Lakes in the Country

Orange Lake is the centerpiece of one of the most picturesque vistas just south of Gainesville, Florida. This beauty just made the list of the Top 10 Best Bass Lakes in the country by *Bassmaster Magazine*. The selection was backed with research of actual fish caught, fish weight, and more, as compared to other top locations. This year, it was the only Florida lake on the list and the highest ranked in the Southeast. VisitGainesville.com



Orange Lake is the largest lake in the North Central Region at 12,550 acres with TrophyCatch bass documented by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation. Land surrounding the lake is protected in part by the Alachua Conservation Trust.

Florida's Historic Coast Celebrations Reflect Region's Important Black History

Celebrating cultural heritage has always been part of the St. Augustine experience. Florida's Historic Coast recently honored its important Black History from the 16th century through the 20th century Civil Rights Movement through a series of events. The community and visitors celebrated art exhibits, a reenactment of the Battle of Bloody Mose, tours of Historic Lincolntonville, a film festival, musical performances, and commemorative events recognizing Juneteenth and the 60th anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement. FloridasHistoricCoast.com



St. Augustine, Florida was the Florida location of the reading of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1865. Black History in St. Augustine is a celebrated part of the American story.

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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



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