

TourismMarketing Today

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



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2024 Flagler Awards Recognize Excellence in Tourism Marketing

The 2024 Flagler Awards drew entries from organizations both large and small. Working independently, a diverse panel of 13 judges evaluated the creativity, innovation, production quality, and effectiveness of each entry. This year, VISIT FLORIDA created a new budget level for annual marketing budgets less than \$150,000 so that small businesses could be more competitive in this prestigious category. DMOs claimed 49 Flagler Awards, 16 of them Henrys (the top award in each category), and three of the four Best of Show awards. Destinations Florida is proud to recognize the award-winning DMOs, highlighted in blue text:



Visit Suwannee County is the proud recipient of a Henry and a Best of Show award in the less than \$150,000 annual marketing budget category, a new category this year. Pictured are VISIT FLORIDA President & CEO Dana Young, Visit Suwannee County's Marketing Coordinator Charissa Setzer and Tourist Development Director Jimmy Norris, and VISIT FLORIDA Chair John Lai.

Creativity in Public Relations

Bronze: Walton County Tourism for South Walton Unpacked
Silver: Visit Jacksonville for the "Lift Ev'ry Voice" Campaign
Henry: The Florida Keys & Key West for Florida Keys 200 Bicentennial

FLAGLER AWARDS continues on pg. 4

Safeguarding the TDT



In week four of the 2023 Legislative Session, a bill was introduced in the House that threatened every county's

Tourist Development Tax and the future of VISIT FLORIDA's funding.

Thanks to a united industry effort, we successfully educated lawmakers on the damaging effects of this proposal—and we won.

But here's the truth: some voices carried more weight than others. Why? Because in the critical weeks after the 2022 election,

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

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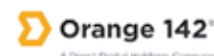
PLATINUM PARTNERS



GOLD PARTNERS



SILVER PARTNERS



HAPPY Birthday

Kimberly Shoaf
October 25

Sky Wheeler
October 27

DESTINATIONS
FLORIDA
TourismMarketing
Today

The Official Newsletter of
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On the Cover

Suwannee County, home to the historic Suwannee River and in the heart of spring country, offers numerous springs, and scenic rivers perfect for kayaking, like the Ichetucknee. With three state parks and stunning landscapes, it's a paradise for nature lovers.

Central Florida's Tourism Industry Reaches Record \$92.5 Billion in Economic Impact in 2023

Visit Orlando, in partnership with Experience Kissimmee, Seminole County, and the Central Florida Hotel & Lodging Association, revealed that Central Florida's travel and tourism industry hit a new milestone in 2023, with an economic impact of \$92.5 billion—a 5.6% increase from the previous year. That's like hosting the Super Bowl nearly twice a week for a year!

According to research by Tourism Economics, visitors spent over \$160 million each day, which saved local households an average of \$7,400 in taxes.

Tourism remains a vital job creator, supporting 464,000 community

jobs across a variety of sectors, from hospitality and attractions to construction, financial services, and more.

In 2023, state and local taxes from visitor activity reached \$6.6 billion, helping fund essential services like fire and law enforcement, schools, and infrastructure.

TOURISM BENEFITS YOU

When 74 million people visit Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties our entire community benefits

ANNUAL TOURISM TO CENTRAL FLORIDA

EMPLOYS
464,000 WORKERS
(3% of the workforce - direct & indirect)



GENERATES
\$92.5 BILLION
in economic impact



PAYS
\$27.3 BILLION
in wages



PROVIDES
\$6.6 BILLION
in local & state tax revenue



Tourism saves each household **\$7,400** in annual taxes

TAXES FROM TOURISM HELPS PAY FOR

ARTS & CULTURE



SCHOOLS



PUBLIC SAFETY



INFRASTRUCTURE



Visit Orlando

KISSIMMEE

SEMINOLE COUNTY

CFLA

Source: Tourism Economics

New study from Tourism Economics highlights remarkable growth in visitor spending, job creation, and tax revenue driven by tourism.

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

DMO leaders and local tourism professionals took action. They met face-to-face with newly elected state lawmakers and attended local delegation meetings, setting the stage for victory.

What we achieved was a transformation. Instead of the usual calls to expand TDT funding, we made it clear that protecting the current uses of the TDT was the priority. This proactive approach paid off in the middle of the session when tourism leaders were able to connect directly with

their lawmakers at the moment it mattered most. Despite powerful backing, the bill failed—because those crucial relationships were built in advance.

It will soon be time to rally again. Florida's tourism industry must engage with lawmakers in the weeks following the election through local delegation meetings. We're gearing up for November to protect the Tourist Development Tax and to ensure Florida's leading economic driver is safeguarded during the next Legislative Session.

Print Advertising

Bronze: The Franklin County TDC for the Dreamscapes Winter Campaign

Silver: The Florida Keys & Key West for The Florida Keys & Key West Print

Henry: The Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB for the ONLY Scent Card

Special Event

Bronze: Rapids Waterpark for "Adults Only Night"

Silver: The Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens for "Asian Lantern Festival: Into the Wild"

Silver: The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing for Martin County Sea Turtle Walks

Henry: Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches for Hang 8 Dog Surfing



The Space Coast team celebrates a Bronze, two Henrys, and a Best of Show award in the more than \$2 million annual marketing budget category. Pictured are VISIT FLORIDA Chair John Lai, & Barr VP, Media and Analytics Dennis Nikles, & Barr Account Executive Danielle Cosme, Space Coast Office of Tourism Marketing Director Laura Beebe, & Barr Account Supervisor Rebekah Essick, Space Coast Office of Tourism Executive Director Peter Cranis, and VISIT FLORIDA President & CEO Dana Young.

Internet Advertising

Bronze: Experience Kissimmee for the Spring Campaign 2023

Silver: Florida's First Coast of Golf for the Clicktivated Interactive Video Campaign

Henry: The Cultural Council for Palm Beach County for the "So Much Culture, So Little Time" Video Spot

Direct Marketing

Silver: The Franklin County TDC for the Forgotten Coast E-Newsletter

Henry: The Amelia Island CVB for the USAE & Northstar Third-Party Emails

Tourism Advocacy

Bronze: Visit Orlando for the Value of Tourism Video Series

Silver: Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods for "Savor the Shore"

Henry: Visit Tampa Bay for the Tourism Academy for Students

Social Media Marketing

Bronze: Visit St. Pete/Clearwater for the "Like a Local" Influencer Marketing Campaign

Bronze: The Amelia Island CVB for the Amelia Island Social Media Campaign: Blog Posts

Silver: The Florida Keys & Key West for The Florida Keys & Key West Social Media

Henry: Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa for Hilton Sandestin Social Media

Out-of-Home

Bronze: Experience Kissimmee for the Winter Holiday Campaign 2023

Silver: The Cultural Council for Palm Beach County for "So Much Culture, So Little Time" Out-of-Home Times Square/Newark + LaGuardia Airports

Henry: The Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB for the Canada Campaign

Radio Advertising

Bronze: The Mexico Beach CDC for the Mexico Beach Kingfish Tournament Radio Campaign

Bronze: The Space Coast Office of Tourism for Space Coast Countdown

Silver: The Daytona Beach Area CVB for iHeart Radio New York – Beach On

Henry: The Amelia Island CVB for the Amelia Island and iHeart Radio Podcast

Television Advertising

Bronze: Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism for "Awkward" Adventures Lead to Self Discovery in Destin-Fort Walton Beach

Silver: The Florida Keys & Key West for The Florida Keys & Key West Television Advertising

Henry: The Space Coast Office of Tourism for Space Coast Countdown

Mobile Marketing

Bronze: The Ocala/Marion County VCB for the Ocala Marion Travel Guide App

Silver: Visit Pensacola for the Visit Pensacola Cube Installation
Henry: The Amelia Island CVB for the Amelia Island Mobile Marketing

Websites

Bronze: The Amelia Island CVB for Ameliainland.com

Silver: Visit Panama City Beach for the Real. Fun. Beach. Website
Henry: Visit Indian River County, Florida for VisitIndianRiverCounty.com

Niche Marketing

Bronze: The Greater Miami CVB for Greater Miami & Miami Beach "Find Your Voice Miami Beach" Digital Experiential Campaign

Silver: The Cultural Council for Palm Beach County for Go Beyond Basel: Attracting Art Fair Visitors from Miami to The Palm Beaches
Silver: The Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB for ARTE VIVA! A Celebration of Hispanic Arts & Culture

Henry: Visit Gainesville, Alachua County for The Sippin' Seven Alachua County Ale Trail: Serving Up Alachua County in a Brand New Way

Resource/Promotional Material-Consumer

Bronze: The Town of Palm Beach Marina for the "#If You Know You Know" Brochure

Silver: Visit St. Pete/Clearwater for the Gulf to Bay Destination Magazine

Henry: Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods for the Digital Visitor Guide

Resource/Promotional Material-Trade

Bronze: Visit Tampa Bay for Tampa Bay's Guide to Social Inclusion

Silver: Visit Lauderdale for the Convention Center Guide
Henry: The Amelia Island CVB for Meeting Planner Quarterly Emails

Sustainable Tourism Marketing

Bronze: The Florida Keys & Key West for The Florida Keys & Key West Sustainable Tourism

Silver: Discover The Palm Beaches for "Sea to Preserve"
Henry: The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing for Explore Natural Martin

Rural County Marketing

Bronze: The Gulf County TDC for "Lose the Crowds, Find Yourself"

Silver: The Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce for Butts & Clucks Cook-Off on Food Network

Henry: Visit Suwannee County for The Soul of Suwannee

Mixed Media Campaign

Bronze: The Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB for ONLY Paradise Will Do

Silver: The Florida Keys & Key West for The Florida Keys & Key West Mixed Media

Henry: The Space Coast Office of Tourism for Space Coast Countdown



Visit Indian River's Vice President of Tourism & Marketing Ben Earman and Tourism Communications Manager Krista Hoyt celebrate with their Henry and Best of Show award in the \$500,000-\$2 million annual marketing budget category.

Best of Show

Annual marketing budget less than \$150,000: Visit Suwannee County for The Soul of Suwannee

Annual marketing budget between \$150,00 and \$500,000: The Town of Palm Beach Marina

Annual marketing budget between \$500,000 \$2 million: Visit Indian River County, Florida for VisitIndianRiverCounty.com

Annual marketing budget greater than \$2 million: Space Coast Office of Tourism for Space Coast Countdown Television Advertising

Georgia Turner Honored for Community Service, Lifetime of Achievement

Georgia Turner, executive director of the West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority (WVTAA) is the 2024 Roger Pynn Great Communicator. This top honor by the Volusia/Flagler Chapter of the Florida Public Relations Association is the only local award to recognize community service plus a lifetime of achievement for communicators or public relations practitioners.

Turner has more than 40 years of experience in journalism, public relations, marketing, and sales. She held marketing and public relations positions at several destination marketing organizations in Florida and Alabama before landing in West Volusia in 2016. For 10 years, she owned and operated Georgia Turner Group. Her client list at this marketing and communications agency included convention and visitors bureaus, chambers of commerce, and regional and state tourism agencies.

Turner is a VISIT FLORIDA Marketing Council member, a member and past chair of the Southeast Tourism Society, as well as an associate member of the Society of American Travel Writers. She also serves as chair of the River of Lakes Heritage Corridor and on the boards of the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway and Mighty River Recovery. Turner frequently volunteers with The Neighborhood Center and DeLand Pride. In August, she was awarded the "Flamazing Ally" Flamingo Award by the Florida Outcoast Convention for her inclusive tourism marketing.



Board members of the Volusia/Flagler Chapter of the Florida Public Relations Association surprise Georgia Turner with flowers to inform her she is the chapter's 2024 Roger Pynn Great Communicator. The award was presented at the Roger Pynn Great Communicator Award dinner and 50th Anniversary celebration held Sept. 26 in Daytona Beach.

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'Marking' Trade Secrets – Make It Clear!

by Steven M. Hogan

In 2021, we published an article addressing the "trade secret" legislation passed that year by the Florida Legislature and how it impacts you. Destinations Florida has made this available for you here:

<https://bit.ly/df-trade-secret>

Back then, we wrote the following about how to protect your trade secrets:

This leads us to a practical question: how do you know something is a trade secret that is protected from disclosure?

At a high level, the answer is that information is only a trade secret if it fits one of the statutory definitions referenced above, and if the owner of that information takes steps to keep it a secret.

Whether particular efforts are "enough" to show that the owner of a trade secret has really tried to keep it a secret is always a fact-intensive inquiry on a case-by-case basis.

However, the initial threshold of analysis is whether the information is marked as a trade secret when given to or created by the agency. If this is not done, then the trade secret will not be protected!

The law has not materially changed since we wrote our article in 2021.

We periodically receive follow-up questions from Destinations Florida members on a very practical question: *How do you "mark" something as a trade secret?*

The answer is that there is no "one way" to mark documents as trade secrets. The main thing is that the mark, whatever it is, must be clear.

Clear to whom, you might ask? Clear to *the Court!* Ultimately any dispute over whether something is or isn't a trade secret, and therefore is or isn't entitled to protection under the Florida Statutes, will end up in front of a judge who will make the determination. Therefore the audience that your "mark" is directed to will be a judge.

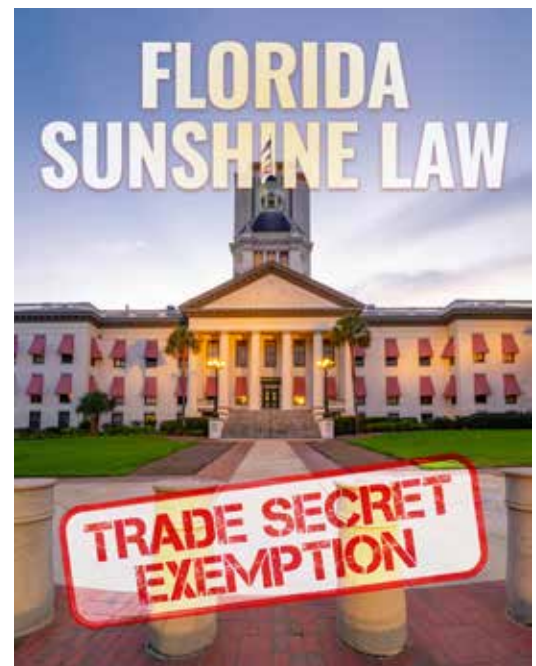
As a practical matter, we often use a notation on the header or footer of a document (so it shows up on each page) when producing something for an agency in a .pdf or something similar.

Keep this in mind when similar questions arise for you. As always, legal counsel should be sought on specific questions, as the facts can 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.



Steven M. Hogan



Destinations Florida offers members a short primer on the "trade secret" legislation passed in 2021 and still impacting DMOs today. Download it at <https://bit.ly/df-trade-secret>.

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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

Daytona Beach Area CVB Expands Guest Pass Program

The Daytona Beach Area CVB recently rebranded and expanded its discount program for convention guests to the destination.

Formerly known as Show Your Badge, the CVB's discount program is now called Guest Pass and delivers discounts to convention guests as well as tour and travel groups and frequent international/independent travelers (FIT).

The CVB is spreading the word about the Guest Pass program to meeting planners, event organizers, and attendees through its website and social media toolkit, communication with meeting



Visitors and residents of the Daytona Beach Area have 23 miles of beautiful beaches to enjoy.

and tour organizers, coupons in attendees' packets, and hotel and facility signage.

To receive the offer, all visitors need to do is present or show their convention badge or Guest Pass Coupon ticket/digital ticket to the participating locations.

"The Guest Pass gives visitors to the Daytona Beach area another reason to step out beyond

the convention activities and to enjoy all the new attractions, restaurants, and activities that our community has to offer," said Lori Campbell Baker, executive director for the CVB. "The Guest Pass is also a great tool for the local establishments to attract not only convention business, but also frequent international/independent travelers and guests visiting through tour and travel groups."

Among the participating attractions and restaurants in the destination that have special offers available for visitors include Dick's Last Resort located in the Ocean Walk Shoppes, the Ocean Deck, Victory Lane at Streamline Hotel, and the Halifax Historical Museum.



Guest Pass delivers discounts to convention-goers, tour and travel groups, and frequent international/independent travelers.



Florida's Space Coast Breaks Records, Wins Awards With Summer Campaign

The summer campaign for the Space Coast Office of Tourism was the largest media buy placed by the office in history, at \$4 million. As a result, the office is projecting the largest summer tourism numbers they have seen—even after last year's all-time high. The summer campaign began May 1 and ran through Sept. 30 targeting key Florida markets, the Southeast United States, and Northeast feeder markets to drive followers to Space Coast's social channels, to increase awareness and visitation, and to contribute to the tourism office's annual goals. The audience makeup includes household income of \$100k-\$250k; couples with and without kids; and those with interests in cruises, beach, space, and more across TV, pre-roll, social media, programmatic display, radio, VISIT FLORIDA co-ops, and YouTube, among others. The Space Coast Office of Tourism and marketing firm &Barr won five Addy Awards and four Flagler Awards for this campaign.



Space Coast Office of Tourism's Visitor Information Specialist Elsie Radle received a ROSE Award from the Space Coast Chapter of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association.

The Space Coast was voted #10 in *USA Today's* 10Best Reader's Poll for Best Summer Travel Destination in its first year nominated. Sports Commissioner Terry Parks, MPA, was awarded the Florida Sports Foundation Larry Pendleton Emerging Leader Award, and the Space Coast Sports Commission was one of Playeasy's 2023 Destination Marketing Award recipients.



Travel Trade Coordinator Tom Bartosek hosted travel agents for FAMs and cruise ship inspections and represented the Space Coast at multiple trade missions and conventions.

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Martin County's Ecotourism Program Wins Awards, Offers Thought Leadership Opportunities

The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing launched their ecotourism program Explore Natural Martin on Earth Day 2023 in partnership with Leave No Trace. Since then, the program has seen incredible success, including the development of more than 70 unique eco-experiences, 1,000-plus individual participants, and innovative collaborations with more than 30 organizations. The program has won multiple awards, including the Henry Award (VISIT FLORIDA Flagler Awards), an ESTO Destiny Award (U.S. Travel Association), and an Adrian Award (HSMIAI).



Nerissa Okiye (second from right) presents at the Travel and Tourism Trade Research Association Conference with Kari Hoffman, Maureen McCracken, and Tom Carton.

The program has also offered unique thought leadership opportunities for the Martin County Tourism team to present at leading industry conferences and events. Nerissa Okiye, tourism director, has spoken about the development of the program and the benefits of promoting local ecotourism at conferences including the Destination Marketing Summit (Destinations Florida), the annual Connections Conference (Southeast Tourism Society), the Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (U.S. Travel Association), the Leave No Trace Global Summit, and the Annual International Conference (Travel and Tourism Research Association).



The panel for "Strategy Activators: Using Little Insights to Make Big Impacts" at U.S. Travel's ESTO 2024

"We're absolutely thrilled that the Explore Natural Martin program is resonating so deeply with the tourism industry, in addition to our overnight visitors and residents," said Okiye. "It's always exciting to see our efforts recognized, but it's even more rewarding to share what we've learned with our tourism colleagues."

Learn more about Martin County's award-winning ecotourism program here: <https://bit.ly/4e4MdSP>

Indian River County Wraps Up a Successful Year!

Tourism in Indian River County performed well during the 2023-24 fiscal year, maintaining strong visitor numbers and significantly boosting the local economy and attractions. Visit Indian River County proudly completed numerous projects aimed at enhancing the destination and driving continued tourism growth. Highlights include an upgraded website that won a Henry Award, improvements to the Visitors Center, the launch of inaugural tourism maps for Vero Beach Beachside



Improvements to the Visitor Center in Indian River County include this wall mural depicting some of the many ways visitors and residents can enjoy the area.

and Vero Beach Mainland, a strengthened social media presence, video promotions, and new TV commercials showcasing the county's beauty. Visit Indian River also hosted many successful FAM tours during the fiscal year and showcased its vibrancy to many engaged travel enthusiasts. Visit Indian River County is proud to work with so many great partners that help to grow tourism in the area.



Behind the scenes of a new Visit Indian River commercial that showcases the natural beauty of the county

As Indian River County gears up for its 100th anniversary as an incorporated county in 2025, many exciting events and promotions are planned to mark this milestone.

"From promoting ecotourism along our waterways to celebrating our rich arts and culture scene, we're dedicated to providing fresh and exciting experiences for all our visitors," said Ben Earman, vice president of marketing and tourism for Indian River County. "We're excited about the year ahead and the many new projects we have in store."



Visit St. Lucie Sharpens Focus on Educating New Residents on the Value of Tourism

Made up of a small, but mighty team of three staff members, Visit St. Lucie has intensified its efforts to educate local residents, especially new residents, on the value that tourism brings to the local economy. St. Lucie County and its cities, like many parts of Florida, have experienced tremendous growth in the last several years. The city of Port St. Lucie, one of the county's two municipalities, has ranked as one of the fastest growing cities of Florida and the nation, adding nearly 40,000 new residents since 2020.

In response to this overwhelming growth, Visit St. Lucie has increased its efforts to execute an integrated marketing, public relations, and outreach plan that is vital for fostering a sense of community support and understanding on the value of tourism.



New staff at St. Lucie hotels and attractions participating in Visit St. Lucie's industry FAM tour pose for a picture at the National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum in Fort Pierce.

Recent successes have been made by launching a paid "Locals Only" campaign, which featured incredible discounts for local residents, carrying out an active speakers bureau targeting new HOA organizations and other civic and business groups, increasing attendance and engagement at local community events, hosting an industry FAM tour for new staff working at local hotels and attractions, and more.

As always, these educational efforts go beyond the residential population of the county. Visit St. Lucie continues its efforts to regularly meet with elected officials and state delegates to share the positive impacts of tourism to the county.



In June 2024, Director of Tourism & Marketing Charlotte Bireley addresses a crowd of 75+ realtors about the value and importance of tourism.

NEW MEMBER RESOURCE:

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

The roadmap to mastering destination marketing in the Sunshine State!



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BEST of CENTRAL EAST FLORIDA!

West Volusia Tourism's CoolCraft Summer Beverage Competition Winners Selected

West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority (WVTAA) has announced the winners of its third annual CoolCraft Summer "World Tour" Beverage Competition, which was held throughout West Volusia County from June 28 through Sept. 2, 2024.

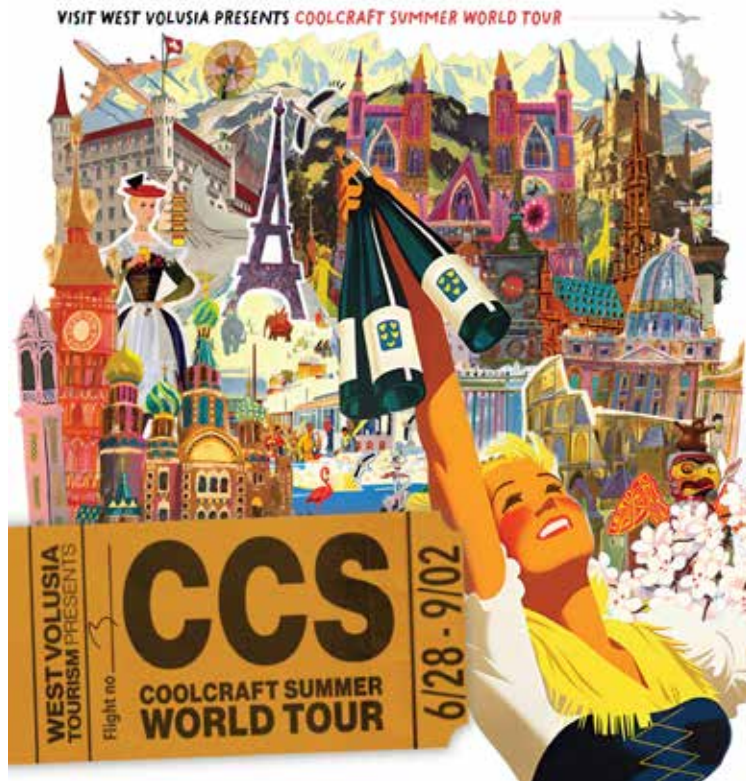
More than 20 local coffee shops, tea purveyors, breweries, and mixologists participated in the third Annual CoolCraft Summer Beverage Competition. Each participating location was tasked with creating a featured beverage based on the event's theme. This year's theme was "World Tour," and drinks were inspired

by various destinations such as Germany, Brazil, the Maldives, Vietnam, and more. Throughout the summer, guests were able to try each drink and vote for their favorite.

This year's competition saw more than 1,000 votes from visitors to the West Volusia Area, each eager to try drinks from around the world. After an entire summer of tasting, the results for the best alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages have been determined. And the winners are ...

- Blue Springs Brewing wins Best Alcoholic Beverage for their Mexico-inspired beverage, "Pancho Chela."
- Parvathy's Kitchen wins Best Non-Alcoholic Beverage for their India-inspired beverage, "Mango Lassi."

"CoolCraft Summer World Tour was a success," said Georgia Turner, executive director of WVTAA. "We had so much fun enjoying all the delicious creations that local businesses concocted for this year's beverage competition, and now the people have spoken!"



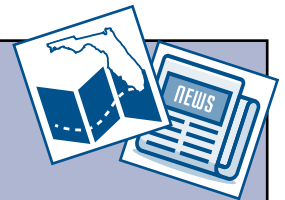
The CoolCraft Beverage Trail by WVTAA is a guide to the best breweries, wineries, pubs, and other craft beverage producers within West Volusia County. Visitors can follow the trail year-round or during specialty events, CoolCraft Summer and CoolCraft Christmas.



The winning beverages are "Pancho Chela" by Blue Springs Brewing and "Mango Lassi" by Parvathy's Kitchen.

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

We regularly publish brief news items from DMOs in *Tourism Marketing Today*. News about your staff will appear in our "In the News" section. We also publish "Quick Trips," and they are your opportunity to share your good news! Your story should be about *past* events, awards, or campaigns to serve as "best practices" for your fellow tourism professionals. Our deadlines typically fall on a Thursday around the middle of each month. If you aren't receiving an email reminder, reach out to Susan Trainor (*editor.trainor@gmail.com*), and she will add you to the mailing list.





Key West Celebrates Jimmy Buffett's Legacy

A Florida Keys inaugural four-day "Just a Few Friends" festivities honored the acclaimed Jimmy Buffett in a Labor Day weekend celebration. In Key West, thousands of revelers marched, clad in festive "Parrot Head" attire, in a second line parade led by musician Will Kimbrough, co-writer of the posthumous "Bubbles Up." Buffett discovered Key West—inspiring his signature hit "Margaritaville"—in the early 1970s. He died Sept. 1, 2023. His sister Lucy Buffett unveiled a Florida Department of Transportation sign designating historic State Road A1A as the "A1A Jimmy Buffett Memorial Highway." *Fla-Keys.com*



Keys troubadour Howard Livingston (left) and Will Kimbrough (right), co-writer of the hit "Bubbles Up," lead a second line parade in Key West, celebrating the life of Jimmy Buffett. Photo: Carol Shaughnessy, Florida Keys News Bureau

Meet Max, the Newest Turtle on Flagler County's Turtle Trail

The Flagler County Cultural Council (FC3) unveiled the newest addition to its "Turtle Trail" public art series in August. FC3's Turtle Trail features large, fiberglass turtles each uniquely painted by local artists and placed in parks and other public spaces. The newest turtle, Max, is the 22nd in the series and was decorated by artist Sheryl Fletcher Coon. Max is located outside of Marineland Dolphin Adventure in Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches. *VisitFlagler.com*



Artist Sheryl Fletcher Coon poses beside Max, the newest addition to Flagler County Cultural Council's Turtle Trail.

Great trips are more than a booking.

Audiences don't visit—people do.

For more info, contact:

christie.bierlein@epsilon.com

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Visit St. Pete-Clearwater Launches New Digital Savings Passport

Visitors to America's Best Beaches can now discover more fun—and more savings—with the FunShine Savings Passport. VisitSPC launched the FREE mobile digital passport in September, offering the best savings under the sun at more than 50 experiences in the destination. In partnership with Bandwango, the FunShine Savings



The fun starts at Visit St. Pete-Clearwater's FunShineSavings.com.

Passport is a great way for visitors to discover the hidden gems and top attractions with great savings at museums, attractions, tours, restaurants, and shops. VisitStPeteClearwater.com

Florida's Sports Coast Celebrates Reopening of Pasco Bay Scallop Season

Florida's Sports Coast was thrilled to announce the reopening of the Pasco Zone for bay scallop harvest from Aug. 28 to Sept. 24. Following a temporary closure, this extension presented a fantastic opportunity to boost local tourism. With scalloping enthusiasts flocking back to the area's scenic waters, tourism promoters anticipated a rise in visitation that will positively impact the local economy, benefiting businesses and enhancing the destination's appeal. Join Florida's Sports Coast in celebrating this exciting development and harnessing it to attract even more visitors. FLSportsCoast.com



Maritza Mantilla with Caracol TV International enjoys Pasco Bay Scallop Season. Photo: Raul Nardi, Florida's Sports Coast

Daytona Beach Area CVB Launches Fall Fine Dining Initiative

The Daytona Beach Area CVB is launching a new initiative, Fall Fine Dining Days, designed to showcase the growing number of fine dining options in the destination. Fall Fine Dining Days, which began Sept. 2 and continues through Oct. 13, features participating restaurants throughout the area offering specially crafted Fall Fine Dining menus. Each menu features three-course meals consisting of an appetizer, entrée, and dessert at \$40 and \$50 price points. DaytonaBeach.com



From fresh seafood and other savory creations, Fall Fine Dining Days (FineDiningDays.com) is highlighting the emerging culinary scene in the Daytona Beach area to both residents and visitors.

Photo: Daytona Beach Area CVB

Bubba the Loggerhead Sea Turtle Returned to Ocean Off Florida's Space Coast

The Space Coast Office of Tourism continues to celebrate coverage about Bubba, a 375-pound "great-grandfather" loggerhead sea turtle that was returned to the ocean in July after three months of rehab at Brevard Zoo's Sea Turtle Healing Center. He was found with predator attack injuries to both front flippers and is estimated to be 60 to 75 years old. Coverage spanned Fox Weather, USA Today, New York Post, The Weather Channel, AP, ABC News, the Daily Mail, and more online, on social media, and television broadcast. It was Brevard Zoo's most attended sea turtle release, with more than 300 viewers. VisitSpaceCoast.com



It took seven people to carry Bubba from a cart to the water. Social posts from media outlets saw more than 10 million views.



Visit Jacksonville Hits the Road

In August, Visit Jacksonville brought a taste of Jax to Charlotte. It began with a media dinner at Counter with a 10-course menu featuring Jacksonville ingredients. Then at the Tacos 'N Taps Festival, Visit Jax set up a booth recreating PorchFest, hosting Jacksonville musician Rambler Kane. Festival-goers enjoyed ice pops featuring Bold Bean coffee and Manifest Distilling vodka, both Jacksonville products. They also had the chance to sign up to win a trip to Jacksonville. VisitJacksonville.com



Visit Jacksonville's activation booth at Taco 'N Taps Festival in Charlotte, N.C.

Discover Crystal River Cooks Up Scallops on Great Day LIVE Tampa

Every scalloping season (July) starts with a bang but tends to slow down a bit during the second half (Aug.-Sept.). To help drive late summer visitation, Discover Crystal River shifted the narrative to catch-and-cook options and secured a *Great Day LIVE Tampa* segment featuring restaurant Wallace's at The Greenhouse and charter company Waterfront Adventures. The duo teamed up to share the experience from start to delicious finish—from diving into the grassy shallows to shucking and sautéing—cooking up nearly 1 million impressions. DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com



Janelle, Paul, Wallace, and Java prepare fresh catch-and-cook scallops during a cooking segment on *Great Day LIVE Tampa*.

Amelia Island CVB Partners With Yelp Jacksonville to Kick Off Dining Month

To get things sizzling ahead of the inaugural Amelia Island Dining Month (Sept. 1-30), Amelia Island CVB partnered with Yelp Jacksonville to host a Yelp Elite Kick Off Party. Nearly 70 attendees from the First Coast attended, as three local restaurants and one distillery dished out samples of their Dining Month prix fixe menus on the Summer House rooftop. The event generated 26 reviews and was an incredible jumpstart to the culinary celebration of Amelia Island's dynamic dining scene. AmeliaIsland.com



Yelp Elite influencers attend the Dining Month Kick Off Party.

Visit Tampa Bay's New Immersive Roller Coaster Activation Showcases Tampa Bay's Bold Attractions

Visitors driving to Florida can preview the thrills of Busch Gardens® Tampa Bay as well as the region's unique treasures by experiencing Visit Tampa Bay's newest activation at the VISIT FLORIDA Welcome Center on I-75 South. The refurbished roller coaster car proudly carries the Visit Tampa Bay brand and takes visitors through the heart of Florida's Gulf Coast showcasing not just thrilling ride footage but exquisite art, culture, and gastronomic adventures found throughout Hillsborough County. VisitTampaBay.com



Visitors to the VISIT FLORIDA Welcome Center on I-75 take an exhilarating ride on a refurbished roller coaster car while experiencing Visit Tampa Bay's newest immersive activation.



Dragboat Racing Makes a Splash in the Sebring Area

To bring more racing action to the Sebring area, Visit Sebring helped Southern Outlaw Dragboat Association (SODA) host their first Sebring/Highlands County drag boat race in early September. Nearly 50 race teams from throughout the U.S. and Canada, along with their fans, raced for three days on Lake June in Lake Placid, Fla. Due to the success of the event, SODA and Visit Sebring officials are now planning for two races in 2025. VisitSebring.com



Dragboats bring Sebring's famed racing action to the water in Lake Placid, Fla.

Panama City Beach Is Fun. For. All.

Visit Panama City Beach is thrilled to announce the continued evolution of its Fun. For. All. accessible travel initiative with new offerings and developments including Bay County's first fully accessible beach boardwalk, located at Beach Access Point 22 on Surf Drive. All features at this access point are designed to accommodate those with mobility challenges, including handicapped parking spaces, an accessible beach ramp, and more than 100 feet of mobility mats that extend from the sand to the shoreline. VisitPanamaCityBeach.com



Panama City Beach offers mobility mats for beachgoers using mobility aids such as wheelchairs, walkers, and canes so they can enjoy the beach.

Orlando North, Seminole County Youth Teams Win World Series Titles

Orlando North, Seminole County is proud to announce two major victories in youth baseball! Lake Mary Little League won the Little League World Series, and the Altamonte Baseball Academy's 11U team clinched the Cal Ripken World Series. These remarkable achievements highlight Seminole County's outstanding youth sports programs and the area's reputation as a premier destination for youth sports. DoOrlandoNorth.com



Top: Lake Mary Little League, Bottom: Altamonte Baseball Academy

Experience Kissimmee Honors Rich Cattle History

Experience Kissimmee held its quarterly staff meeting at the Heritage Club in Osceola Heritage Park and celebrated the close of the fiscal year in true Southern style. They were honored by the warm hospitality of Ricky Booth, Osceola County Commissioner, and Randy Booth, Silver Spurs' Big Boss, who shared insights into Osceola's rich cattle and rodeo history. Preserving Kissimmee's local heritage is vital, and thanks to the dedication of Silver Spurs, this important legacy will be passed down from generation to generation. ExperienceKissimmee.com



Osceola County Commissioner Ricky Booth, Silver Spurs' Big Boss Randy Booth, and Experience Kissimmee CEO DT Minich



Discover Lake County, Florida's Newest Sports Tourism Hub

Lake County is home to a variety of regional and national sports tournaments annually, many drawn to the area's stunning outdoor recreation facilities. In late August, USA Triathlon announced the 2024 Women's Collegiate Triathlon National Championships will take place in Clermont this November, bringing incredible athletes from across the nation to Central Florida. Known as a mecca for triathlons, Clermont hosted the first-ever Women's Collegiate Triathlon National Championships in 2014. This year's event will be held at Lake Louisa State Park. DiscoverLakeCountyFL.com



Female athletes compete in Clermont.
Photo: Courtesy of Discover Lake County

Clay County Tourism & Film Dept. Partners With Filmmakers

The Clay County Tourism & Film Department recently partnered with a variety of filmmakers for upcoming commercials and independent movies. A Kg pharmacy filmed a commercial in Keystone Heights, and two separate independent filmmakers are currently in the area filming for movies coming to streaming platforms. Clay County officials assisted site selectors with filming locations and group event services along with assisting filmmakers in securing the necessary county permits. ExploreClay.com



Clay County officials assisted filmmakers and site selectors in securing filming locations and necessary permits during their time in Northeast Florida.

Highlighting The Palm Beaches as an Ideal Business Meeting Destination

To highlight The Palm Beaches as an ideal business meetings destination and showcase its wellness opportunities, Discover The Palm Beaches held a health-inspired sales and media mission in Chicago. The successful event hosted 100+ participants across the three days, including influencers, media, business event strategists, and meeting planners from the Chicago area. Attendees enjoyed facials, engaging activities including trivia games, and learned about the upcoming wellness summit, Eudēmonia, coming to West Palm Beach Nov.1-3. ThePalmBeaches.com



Palm Beaches team and their partners: Opal Collection, Breakers, Boca Renaissance, PGA National Resort, Kirkland Event & Destination Services, and Alamea Palm Beach

Walton County Tourism and Main Street Partnership Is Win-Win

Walton County Tourism has partnerships with several trade and community organizations, including Main Street DeFuniak Springs in the Authentic Walton Tourist Development Tax district. What started as support through events grants grew to marketing and advertising assistance to a limited-resource not-for-profit organization with similar alignment in the mission of building a vibrant community and economic value. In exchange, MSDS opened a non-voting board position to WCT, which gives the DMO credibility in the destination they're promoting. WaltonCountyFLTourism.com



Walton County Tourism, through its affiliation with Keep Walton County Beautiful, sponsored a Clean-Up Day for Main Street DeFuniak Springs in downtown DeFuniak Springs, Fla. Photo: Main Street DeFuniak Springs



Visit Sarasota County's New Five-Year Strategic Plan

Beginning in October, Visit Sarasota County (VSC) will deploy a new five-year strategic plan to give residents, local businesses, and community stakeholders a greater say in the destination's tourism economy. The plan will highlight emergency preparedness, resident sentiment, and a restructuring of VSC's partnership program. These efforts will help the destination seek a balance that respects local concerns yet promotes economic growth, business development, and quality of life through visitation in Sarasota County. *VisitSarasota.com*



The Sarasota Chamber of Commerce building also houses the downtown Sarasota location of VSC's visitor information center. The other location is based in Venice, Fla., to service the southern portion of the county.

Okaloosa County Expands Options for Hosting Groups

Options for hosting groups in Destin-Fort Walton Beach are growing, as Okaloosa County has now purchased the Fort Walton Beach Fairgrounds and Event Center and taken over operational management of the Baker Recreation and Equestrian Center. Since finalizing the deals, the county has been leading renovations and improvements needed to accommodate future groups and events. Furthermore, 420 acres of the Shoal River Preserve was also purchased with a vision of making the unique property an ecotourism destination. *DestinFWB.com*



Okaloosa County has recently assumed operational management or acquired several properties on and off the water, including Shoal River Preserve seen here, to diversify their tourism products.

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Fostering Economic Growth and Empowerment Across Miami-Dade

The Greater Miami CVB celebrated Black Business Month throughout August, amplifying their importance and impact throughout Miami-Dade and promoting a variety of events, seminars, and more. This included showcasing Black-owned businesses and restaurants during the organization's annual Partner Expo and Miami Spice Restaurant Months, partnering with the Miami-Dade County Economic Advocacy Trust, and continuing the work of the GMCVB's Tourism Business Enhancement Program to help small businesses thrive. MiamiandMiamiBeach.com



Miami-Dade Dept. of Transportation & Public Works Director Eulois Cleckley, Miami-Dade Chamber CEO Eric Knowles, GMCVB SVP Connie Kinnard, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Kionne McGhee, GMCVB President & CEO David Whitaker, Miami-Dade County Black Affairs Advisory Board Director Retha Boone-Fye, and Miami-Dade Economic Advisory Trust Executive Director Bill Diggs

Martin County Tourism Wins Shining Example Award

The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing was recently honored with a Shining Example Award in the Best Niche Marketing category, presented by the Southeast Tourism Society (STS). An industry fixture since 1985, the annual awards program honors 13 winners across 10 categories for their outstanding contributions to tourism in the Southeast United States. The 2024 Connections Conference took place in Auburn, Ala., Sept. 10-12. DiscoverMartin.com



The team was recognized for their multifaceted marketing campaign promoting their Explore Natural Martin ecotourism program.

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Quick Trips!

USS Richard M. McCool, Jr. Commissioned in Pensacola

Pensacola proudly hosted the historic commissioning of the USS Richard M. McCool, Jr. on Sept. 7. Drawing stakeholders and military personnel from around the country, the ship, now activated, will serve critical global missions, contributing to national defense and humanitarian efforts. With Pensacola Bay and Fort Pickens as the backdrop, the USS Richard M. McCool, Jr.'s arrival reaffirmed the destination's status as a premier destination for military heritage and tourism. Visitors were captivated by the naval traditions and the unique opportunity to witness history in the making. VisitPensacola.com



USS Richard M. McCool, Jr. in Pensacola, Fla., for the historic commissioning

Ocala/Marion County Hits a Home Run With Cal Ripken World Series

This summer, Ocala/Marion County successfully hosted the Cal Ripken World Series for the eighth year in a row! The week-long tournament featured teams from across the country and internationally, generating an estimated economic impact of nearly \$785,000. Ocala was the only Florida city to host a division of Cal Ripken World Series this year and will be the only one in 2025. Making the impact even bigger, Ocala/Marion County added another age group for the tournament next year, hosting 8U and 16-18U, Aug. 1-9, 2025. OcalaMarion.com



Congratulations to the 2024 Cal Ripken World Series Champions in the 8-Year-Old Machine Pitch Division!

Alachua County Delegates Travel to Sweden to Promote 2025 World Masters Athletics Indoor Track and Field Championships

Michele Lieberman, Alachua County manager, Jessica Hurov, tourism development director, and members of the local organizing committee recently traveled to Sweden to showcase Alachua County in advance of the WMA Indoor Championship, scheduled for March 2025 at the Alachua County Sports and Event Center at Celebration Point. The international event attracted thousands of athletes from around the world, providing local representatives with a prime opportunity to position Alachua County as a premier destination for both training and competition, strengthening sports partnerships, and driving international visitation. VisitGainesville.com



Athletes from more than 140 countries are poised to attend the 2025 WMAic to be held in March at the Alachua County Sports and Events Center at Celebration Point.

Island Hopper T-Shirt Wins Top SUNsational Award

The Lee County VCB recently won a first place SUNsational award for its Island Hopper Songwriter Fest T-shirt at the Florida Festivals & Events Association (FFEA) 30th annual convention. The program recognizes innovation, individuality, and creative collaboration. The performance T-shirt has become an annual collaboration with Tunaskin Aquatic Apparel, a locally owned business on Fort Myers Beach. The VCB also brought home two third-place wins for promotional video or video recap and promotional/marketing poster. VisitFortMyers.com



The Island Hopper Songwriter Fest T-shirt designed by Tunaskin

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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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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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Photo: Andy Newman,
Florida Keys News Bureau

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**ROGER PYNN
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