

TourismMarketing Today

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National Travel & Tourism Week: Celebrating the Power of Travel



Each year National Travel & Tourism Week (NTTW) shines a spotlight on the U.S. travel industry's essential role in driving economic growth, creating jobs, and enhancing the nation's global competitiveness. Travel is one of America's most powerful economic engines—supporting 15 million jobs, generating \$2.9 trillion in economic output, and funding essential public services. It strengthens every sector of the economy, from restaurants and retail to tech, manufacturing and agriculture. Here is a sampling of NTTW events held in Florida:

Visit Sarasota County and the Bradenton Area CVB Team Up for NTTW

Visit Sarasota County and the Bradenton Area CVB put together a collaborative, regional celebration for National Travel & Tourism Week this year. The event was clear for takeoff at the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport's new Concourse A complete with local bites and beverages, live music, and awards from each tourism bureau. The event also featured the pair's recently unveiled co-branded Allegiant airplane, which welcomed attendees for photo-ops and tours. It was fitting to celebrate with more than 200 regional businesses highlighting travel's role in strengthening

NTTW 2025 continues on pg. 3

Standing Strong

by Robert Skrob



As this issue goes to press, the final outcome of the 2025 Legislative Session remains uncertain. But

one thing is absolutely clear: when Florida's tourism industry was called upon, you delivered.

Your efforts helped lawmakers understand that Tourist Development Taxes fuel not only marketing—but jobs, beach renourishment, economic growth, and essential services that benefit every Floridian.

Many lawmakers stood with us. Others expressed support

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

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

FOUNDING PARTNER



DIAMOND PARTNERS



PLATINUM PARTNERS



GOLD PARTNERS



SILVER PARTNERS



HAPPY Birthday

Dan Rowe
June 6

Stacy Ritter
June 8

DESTINATIONS FLORIDA TourismMarketing Today

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On the Cover
Photo: CycleHere Media

Nestled between the south shores of Lake Okeechobee and the pristine wetlands of the northern Everglades, and sitting right on the edge of the Caloosahatchee River, Hendry County, Florida is the perfect combination of untouched, natural beauty and welcoming communities.

communities and the hospitality professionals who keep the industry flying high.



President & CEO Erin Duggan of Visit Sarasota County and Executive Director Elliott Falcione of the Bradenton Area CVB pose with VIPs of their jointly hosted celebration.
Photo: Bradenton Area CVB

Visit Orlando's Action-Packed NTTW Celebration

Visit Orlando's celebration began with a joint chamber event focusing on travel's impact on Orlando, tourism challenges and opportunities, and how chamber members can engage with Visit Orlando and the hospitality industry. Visit Orlando recognized U.S. Customs and Border Protection, TSA, and the Tourist Oriented Policing Squad, attended a proclamation by Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings and county commissioners, hosted its annual Travel & Tourism Event, and held a staff event honoring its team's

contributions in driving the success of Orlando's tourism industry.



Visit Orlando hosts several initiatives during NTTW, including its annual Travel & Tourism Event, a joint chamber celebration, and thanking frontline workers.

Levy County Celebrates With Proclamation, Social Media Campaign

The Levy County Board of County Commissioners approved a proclamation at the regularly scheduled May 6 meeting to recognize the importance and value of travel and tourism to their local economy. The Levy County Visitors Bureau also created an NTTW social media campaign to celebrate the unique ways Levy County contributes to Florida's tourism industry. Levy County Visitors Bureau plans to expand this campaign to launch a summer series of social media content to generate interest in the many

NTTW 2025 continues on pg. 4

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

privately, urging us to keep going even when they were pressured to stay quiet. That kind of quiet support, while less visible, still reflects how persuasive and powerful your arguments were.

No, we didn't get everything we wanted. But we achieved what mattered: We made the value of tourism undeniable. We made our

voices heard. And we reminded everyone in Tallahassee that Florida's economy doesn't run without tourism.

Thank you for answering the call and representing our industry with pride and professionalism. Your advocacy mattered—and I've never been more proud to be on this extraordinary team.

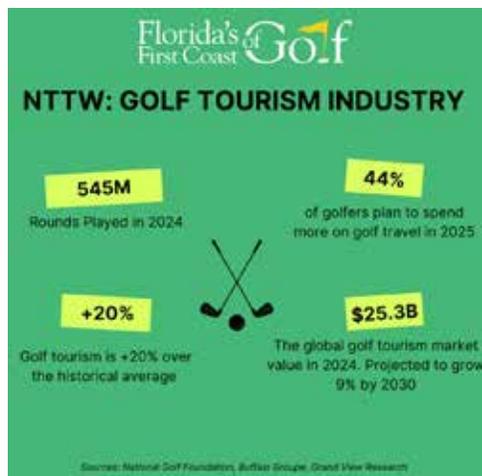
ways to explore the natural resources in Levy County. #LoveLevy



Levy County celebrates its unique contributions to Florida tourism.

Florida's First Coast of Golf Celebrates Rise of Golf Tourism

As we celebrate National Travel & Tourism Week, golf tourism continues to thrive. Over 12 million U.S. adults took golf trips last year—up 20% from historical averages—and 44% plan to spend more in 2025. This surge reflects a growing demand for experiential travel and supports local economies through hospitality, dining, and retail. In Northeast Florida, golf is more than a game—it's a gateway to community, culture, and global connections.



The Rise of Golf Tourism

Florida's Paradise Coast Spotlights Tourism's Impact in Naples, Marco Island, the Everglades

Florida's Paradise Coast celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week by spotlighting the impact of tourism across Naples, Marco Island and the Everglades through impactful partner testimonials and social features. In 2024, visitors contributed \$2.85 billion in direct spending, fueling a \$3.95 billion total economic impact and supporting 32,250 hospitality employees. Tourism generated \$1.4 billion in wages and saved each Collier County household an average of \$1,694 in taxes, with nearly \$50 million invested in beach preservation since 2022.



Tourism partner Robin Rosario of Pure Florida provides a testimonial in celebration of NTTW.

Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches Tourism Development Office Marks NTTW

Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week by highlighting the importance of tourism in Flagler County. The Visit Flagler team received a proclamation from Flagler County Board of County Commissioners marking May 4-10 as NTTW. The destination also shared a series of social media posts showcasing tourism's economic impact, with more than \$4.3 million in TDT in 2024. Additionally, staff made

guest appearances on a radio show to educate locals on the value of tourism.



Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches staff receive a NTTW proclamation from the Flagler County BOCC.

Greater Miami CVB Celebrates Impact of Tourism Throughout the Community

Throughout May, the Greater Miami CVB celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week with events spotlighting tourism's impact on Greater Miami and Miami Beach. Highlights included the H.O.T. Challenge golf tournament, the State of the Travel & Tourism Industry event, and hosting the Meaningful Travel Roadshow kickoff. From cultural vibrancy to sustainability and economic vitality, the message was clear: tourism is a community investment that enriches the area's neighborhoods, supports small businesses, and enhances quality of life across Miami-Dade.



H.O.T. Challenge golf tournament at JW Marriott Miami Turnberry Resort

Daytona Beach Area CVB Presents Visitors' Choice Awards

The visitors have spoken, and the Daytona Beach Area CVB celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week with its fourth annual Visitors' Choice Awards, which recognizes businesses and attractions that vacationers enjoyed the most in the destination. The program honors visitors' most beloved attractions and businesses through a survey that was sent to Daytona Beach area visitors in the CVB's database. Honorees included Volusia County Beaches, Daytona International Speedway, Ponce Inlet Lighthouse, and Museum of Arts & Sciences.



The Daytona Beach Area CVB recognized area businesses and attractions with the fourth annual Visitors' Choice awards at the annual Lodging & Hospitality Association of Volusia County's National Travel & Tourism breakfast at the Hard Rock Hotel Daytona Beach.

Visit Tampa Bay's NTTW Lunch Celebrates Hospitality Industry's Midas Touch

More than 500 business and community partners joined Visit Tampa Bay to honor the hospitality industry during their "Go for Gold" NTTW celebration at the Renaissance Tampa International Plaza Hotel. Nine frontline workers were honored as Hospitality Heroes for creating extraordinary experiences for visitors to Tampa Bay while John Bell, Tampa Theatre president and CEO, was presented the Gonzmart Family Tourism Ambassador of the Year Award for unwavering dedication to Tampa Bay's culture, community, and tourism.



Visit Tampa Bay President & CEO Santiago C. Corrada (far left) and VTB Board Chair Evette Torres (far right) present Hospitality Heroes awards to Marcus Duvermon, Jose Patino, Jane McQuinn, Holden Rasmussen, Nick Smith, Maria Glass, Tim Morrison, Anne Preston, and Brenda Whalen for going above and beyond to create an extraordinary experience for the millions of visitors to Tampa Bay.

Discover Lake County Celebrates Local Tourism Partners

During National Travel & Tourism Week, Discover Lake County celebrated by visiting local partners and showcasing the region's vibrant tourism community. The team connected with businesses and organizations that help make Lake County a top destination. Adding a sweet touch to the visits, The Littlest Bake Shop provided delicious treats, making the week even more memorable. The celebration highlighted the importance of collaboration and community in supporting Lake County's growing travel and tourism industry.



Discover Lake County visits local partners to showcase their contributions to the region's growing tourism community.

Florida Keys Shares Economic Impact Data in State of Tourism Industry Report

Visit Florida Keys presented its State of the Tourism Industry report online to members of

the Florida Keys & Key West community May 6 during National Travel & Tourism Week, highlighting the value of tourism. Recent economic impact data was shared, showing 19,000 Keys jobs are directly supported by the destination's \$3.5 billion in annual visitor spending, with tax savings of \$11,500 per household per year thanks to visitor contributions to sales taxes and Tourist Development Taxes.

HOW DO TOURISM DOLLARS HELP OUR COMMUNITY?



Visit Florida Keys President/CEO Kara Franker shares powerful economic impact data showing how tourism fuels and supports the Florida Keys & Key West community.

Mexico Beach Celebrates NTTW With Punch!

Mexico Beach Welcome Center celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week with the annual Punch on the Porch event. The free event was open to everyone to enjoy light refreshments, score wonderful giveaways, learn more on industry insights, and of course partake in some amazing punch! The event gave visitors and locals an opportunity to engage and celebrate Mexico Beach's tourism industry. There were even visitors who made a trip from Illinois to ensure they were able to attend.



Punch on the Porch at Mexico Beach

Visit St. Pete-Clearwater Presents Bestie Awards

Visit St. Pete-Clearwater celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week by recognizing the Best Of their destination! The awards ceremony crowned winners in 34 categories during a celebration at The Floridian Social in downtown St. Pete. During the evening event, the tourism community also honored Russ Kimball, CEO of the Sheraton Sand Key Resort, for his remarkable 50 years of service at the Sheraton Sand Key Resort.



Visit St. Pete-Clearwater celebrates the Besties of 2025.

Discover The Palm Beaches Celebrates Travel Rally Day

While celebrating Travel Rally Day, Discover The Palm Beaches (DTPB) announced record-breaking tourism numbers for the first quarter of 2025. Visitation increased by 8.8% year over year to 3 million visitors, and visitation spending grew 8%, reaching \$2.44 billion. At the event, leadership presented the Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts with the 33rd annual Providencia Award, and The Singer Oceanfront Resort and Tucan Media Marketing received Partner of the Year awards.



DTPB's team commemorates Travel Rally Day with a group photo.

Punta Gorda Englewood Beach Recognizes Tourism Partners

Robin Madden, owner of Islander Properties was inducted into the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach 2025 Hall of Fame. In 2015, she joined the TDC, overseeing the budget and helping guide the Punta Gorda Englewood Beach VCB. The visitor bureau also recognized Babcock Ranch Eco Tours as the Partner of the Year, "Rock Star" employees who work front and back of the house in restaurants and lodging establishments, and the Charlotte Chapter of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association for providing high school students with scholarships and culinary schools with a donation.



Tourism Director Sean Doherty, Robin Madden, owner of Islander Properties, and County Commissioner Chris Constance

Amelia Island CVB Hosts Networking Forum

To celebrate National Travel & Tourism Week, the Amelia Island CVB hosted a Pillows & Promos networking forum at a local brewery. More than 80 attendees including hotel sales managers, event organizations, and local nonprofits participated in a speed-dating-style format, rotating to foster collaboration and boost overnight stays. The event began with coffee and conversation and wrapped with a happy hour featuring local brews and bites. The day highlighted the power

of partnerships in strengthening Amelia Island's tourism economy.



Amelia Island tourism partners cross-collaborate during NTTW.

Visit Sebring/Highlands County Recognize NTTW With Proclamation

Visit Sebring staff and Highlands County commissioners celebrated a proclamation in honor of National Travel & Tourism Week. It highlighted the crucial role that travel and tourism play in driving economic growth, connecting communities, and showcasing the unique attractions in the area. It also underscored the ongoing efforts to promote recent HGTV renovations, which have become major points of interest.



Visit Sebring staff and Highlands County commissioners recognize NTTW with a proclamation.

Florida's Adventure Coast Presents Annual Golden Mermaid Award

Florida's Adventure Coast, Brooksville-Weeki Wachee celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week by presenting the second annual Golden Mermaid Award to Boat Captain Ozzie Winchester of Light Lines and Good Times. Honored for his outstanding representation and support of local tourism, Captain Ozzie exemplifies dedication to the community. The award ceremony took place at Lead Foot City, America's Automotive Theme Park, highlighting the region's unique blend of nature, adventure, and vibrant tourism partnerships.



Manager of Tourism Tammy Heon and Captain Ozzie Winchester of Light Lines and Good Times

Experience Kissimmee Celebrates Tourism's Role in Osceola County

The Osceola County Board of County Commissioners, in collaboration with Central Florida Hotel and Lodging and Experience Kissimmee, presented a proclamation recognizing the significant contributions of tourism to Central Florida. In Osceola County, tourism supports more than 40,000 jobs, generates \$10.3 billion in economic impact, and provides \$665.3 million in local and state tax revenue.

These taxes help fund essential programs across Osceola County, including arts and culture, schools, infrastructure, and public safety.



Jason Holic, chief of destination stewardship at Experience Kissimmee; Osceola County Commissioner Peggy Choudry; Jonathan Watson, executive assistant to the president/CEO of Central Florida Hotel & Lodging Association; and Robert Agrusa, president and CEO of the Central Florida Hotel & Lodging Association

Connecting Locals to Tourism in Seminole County

To celebrate National Travel & Tourism Week, Orlando North participated in Seminole County's Citizens Academy, where locals connected with the tourism team and learned how the industry supports jobs, businesses, and the community's identity. They also launched a social media campaign that spotlighted their incredible partners and thanked the visitors who fuel their local economy. The week was further recognized by a proclamation from the Board of County Commissioners, underscoring tourism's lasting impact.



Director of Economic Development & Tourism Gui Cunha joins with Seminole County hotel partners at Seminole County's Citizens Academy.

Lee County VCB Celebrates With Sing-Along Video and Light Up Lee Initiative

To celebrate National Travel & Tourism Week, the Lee County VCB produced "Take Me Out to Fort Myers," a playful sing-along video featuring reimagined lyrics and more than a dozen partners from Captiva Island to Bonita Springs. The video highlights the people behind local hospitality. The VCB also promoted its Light Up Lee initiative, with landmarks glowing blue to recognize tourism's vital role in the community and economy. Both efforts spotlight the joy tourism brings visitors and the community.



Watch the sing-along video at youtube.com/watch?v=vJ_PJ8Nh8KU.

Ocala/Marion County Celebrates NTTW

The Ocala/Marion County VCB celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week with a proclamation and various initiatives all week long. The VCB released a new "Marion Insider's Guide" episode on YouTube, launched a postcard-themed photography contest showcasing the destination's charm, and offered exciting ticket giveaways to the Rock the Country music festival held May 9-10.



Marion County Board of County Commissioners presents a proclamation recognizing NTTW with the Ocala/Marion County VCB team and TDC chair.

Walton County Tourism Celebrates the County's No. 1 Economic Driver

Walton County Tourism celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week with a mix of education, exploration, and conversation highlighting the county's No. 1 economic driver. As the sponsor of the local Chamber luncheon, they showcased an insightful presentation on artificial intelligence. Additionally, they hosted an interactive open house where visitors received passports that encouraged conversation, challenging them to collect signatures from each department for a prize. Visitors also enjoyed sweet and savory local treats and giveaways.



Team members from Walton County Tourism end the weeklong festivities with an open house and interactive experiences highlighting the economic and cultural impact of tourism in the county.

Celebrating the People Behind the Visit: Alachua County's Commitment to Tourism Excellence

Showcasing Alachua County's leadership in tourism and its commitment to workforce excellence, Visit Gainesville, Alachua County celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week by reaching out to more than 60 lodging properties, delivering informational materials and promotional items to hotel staff. The bureau also launched a Certified Guest Service Professional training initiative, with 97 enrollees to date out of 150 available spots. At the May TDC meeting, Excellence in Hospitality Awards honored

professionals for delivering outstanding guest experiences.



Workforce First—Visit Gainesville, Alachua County led NTTW with a focus on hospitality advocacy, supporting and celebrating the tourism and hospitality workforce through on-site visits, professional development opportunities, and recognition of excellence across Alachua County.

Visit Jacksonville Shares the Importance of Tourism

Visit Jacksonville celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week with events for staff and hospitality partners, including

a hard hat tour of the Hilton at Mayo Clinic, cheerfully welcoming people to the FRLA NE Florida Hospitality Outlook panel featuring President & CEO Michael Corrigan, and a Visitor Center reception honoring a city employee who helped recruit a major conference. They also hosted a behind-the-scenes tour of the Hyatt Regency Riverfront for City Council members and wrapped up the week with a Jacksonville Beach cleanup.



Thomas Waters, director of City of Jacksonville's Neighborhoods Department, receives recognition for bringing the Neighborhoods USA conference to Jacksonville from President & CEO Michael Corrigan of Visit Jacksonville.

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches VCB Recognizes Successful Tourism Industry Employees and Leadership

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches VCB celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week recognizing top employees in tourism and hospitality with award presentations and celebrations at their place of business. Also, during the May 8 annual State of the Tourism Industry event, Vision & Voyage, the VCB presented Tourism Impact Awards to Philip

McDaniel, co-founder of the St. Augustine Distillery, and THE PLAYERS Championship for their lasting, positive impact on the local economy and growth of the destination.



St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches VCB recognizes tourism leaders with the Tourism Impact Award at the May 8 Vision & Voyage Industry celebration.
Photo: Gabriel Giannelli Photography

Visit Panama City Beach Hosts Annual Tourism Appreciation Day

To celebrate Tourism Appreciation Week, Visit Panama City Beach hosted their annual Tourism Appreciation Day on May 7. This event was held at the M.B. Miller Park County Pier and included free food, live music, ice cream, and more. Visit Panama City Beach is proud to host this event each year as a way to thank and celebrate hospitality workers and the many individuals who work to make the community a vibrant destination.



Tourism Appreciation Day draws a crowd to the M.B. Miller Pier on Panama City Beach.

Destination Panama City Celebrates Tourism Appreciation Day With New Community Partnership

For this year's Tourism Appreciation Day, Destination Panama City partnered for the first time with Hotel Indigo and Harrison's Kitchen & Bar to host a bayside cookout for the community. The event brought together more than 250 locals and visitors to enjoy grilled burgers, hot dogs, and live music on the waterfront green space. This new partnership added a fresh, local flavor to the annual celebration and created a welcoming space to thank those who help make tourism thrive in Panama City.



Locals and visitors gather bayside for burgers, music, and community at Destination Panama City's Tourism Appreciation Day cookout.
Photo: Destination Panama City

Visit Tallahassee Recognizes Tourism's Impact and Looks Ahead to Global Spotlight

As part of National Travel & Tourism Week, Visit Tallahassee hosted a luncheon with more than 100 local tourism partners and community leaders. The event highlighted tourism's vital role in Leon County's economy—supporting 12,200+ jobs, welcoming 2.4 million visitors in 2024, and generating a record-breaking \$1.3 billion in total economic impact. The

luncheon also looked ahead to exciting milestones, including Tallahassee's role as host of the 2026 World Athletics Cross Country Championships, which will draw athletes and spectators from around the globe.



Tourism partners and community leaders celebrate NTTW in Tallahassee.

Visit Pensacola Celebrates Record Number of Hospitality Hero Nominations at NTTW Celebration

Visit Pensacola honored four outstanding front-line workers during its annual Hospitality Hero Awards on May 8. The event highlighted a record 34 nominations and underscored the vital role hospitality professionals play in shaping memorable visits to Pensacola, Pensacola Beach, and Perdido Key. "Front-line hospitality and tourism workers are the driving force behind Pensacola's visitor experience. These awards are our way of honoring their dedication and celebrating the vital role they play in the success of our destination," said President & CEO Darien Schaefer.



The 2025 Visit Pensacola Hospitality Heroes – River Russo, Christopher Robinson, Matthews Mabe, and Sherita Gooden

Congratulations to Florida's 2025 eTSY Award Winners and Finalists!

Tourism Economics announced the winners of the 2025 eTSY Awards during the eTourism Summit held Apr. 22-24 in Las Vegas. Congratulations to Experience Kissimmee, Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing, and Ocala/Marion County VCB on being recognized for the most innovative and impactful tourism marketing campaigns of the year in the following categories:

Best Influencer Marketing Campaign

"We're Going to Kissimmee!"
Experience Kissimmee / Southwest Airlines / Matador Network



Experience Kissimmee partnered with Matador Network for a 2024 campaign featuring top travel creator Adam Boro, successfully engaging a Dallas family for an all-expenses-paid trip to Kissimmee, with Southwest Airlines providing airfare. The award-winning campaign achieved impressive results, including 7M video views, 4M minutes viewed, and 25.4K clicks, delivering 415K impressions.

Best Family-Friendly Marketing Campaign

"Positioning Ocala as Florida's Hidden Gem for Travel Enthusiasts"
Ocala/Marion County Visitors & Convention Bureau

Best Use of Sustainability and Social Responsibility Award

"Promoting Ecotourism Through Explore Natural Martin"
Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing

Florida also boasted finalists in the following categories:

Best Use of Video

"Fort Myers: Fairways, Flavors and Cultural Delights"
Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods

Best Seasonal Destination Marketing Campaign

Island Hopper Songwriter Fest Campaign
Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods

Best Website

Meet the Scouts of Destin-Fort Walton Beach
Destin Fort Walton Beach

Visit Santa Rosa – Best Website
Visit Santa Rosa

Best Experiential Marketing Campaign

Elevating Navarre Beach at the Atlanta Dogwood Festival
Santa Rosa County, Florida

Best Social Media Campaign

iVámonos a Kissimmee!
Experience Kissimmee

Best Implementation of TikTok/Reels in Marketing Campaign

"Spotlight on Fort Myers" Social Media Campaign
Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods

Best Use of Innovative Marketing in a Campaign

"A Bird's-Eye View of Fort Myers" Direct Mail Piece
Fort Myers – Islands, Beaches and Neighborhoods



Since launching, Explore Natural Martin has led 130+ free eco-tours for more than 1,860 individual participants. The program has generated more than 235M earned media impressions, and the microsite has become Discover Martin's second-most visited landing page, with more than 120,000 page views to date.



Ocala/Marion County VCB's award-winning 2024 campaign delivered more than 14.3M impressions and a 52-second average time-on-content, surpassing industry benchmarks by 73%. Furthermore the campaign yielded 79,542 page views and 205 content shares, marking a 600% increase in earned views from the previous year.

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40 Percent?

by Steven M. Hogan

We sometimes receive questions from Destinations Florida members about the meaning of the "40 percent" provision



Public facilities, such as pedestrian walkways, may be funded by Tourist Development Taxes if at least 40 percent of all TDT revenues are used for promoting and advertising tourism.

Photo: CycleHere Media

under the TDT statute. This provision of the TDT statute states, in pertinent part, as follows:

[TDT funds may be used to] acquire, construct, extend, enlarge, remodel, repair, improve, maintain, operate, or finance public facilities within the boundaries of the county or subcounty special taxing district in which the tax is levied, if the public facilities are needed to increase tourist-related business activities in the county or subcounty special district and are recommended by the county tourist development council created pursuant to paragraph (4)(e). Tax revenues may be used for any related land acquisition, land improvement, design and engineering costs, and all other professional and related costs required to bring the public facilities into service. As used in this subparagraph, the term "public facilities" means major capital improvements that have a life expectancy of 5 or more years, including, but not limited to, transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, and pedestrian facilities. Tax revenues may be used for these purposes only if the following conditions are satisfied:

...

d. At least 40 percent of all tourist development tax revenues collected in the county are spent to promote and advertise tourism as provided by this subsection[.] § 125.0104(5)(a)6.d., Fla. Stat (emphasis added).

In context, the "40 percent" threshold for promotion and advertising tourism only applies when TDT funds are being used for "public facilities" as described in subsection (5)(a)6., like capital

improvements related to transportation and utilities. The 40 percent requirement is only one of several hurdles that a county must clear in order to use TDT funds for public facilities.

The 40 percent level is a backstop against a county being able to use all of its TDT funds for such facilities. Effectively, it ensures that at least 40 percent of all TDT revenues are used for promoting and advertising tourism in the event that a county wants to divert some of the TDT funds to "public facilities" under the statute.

Particular questions about whether the 40 percent threshold applies, and what expenditures would fit within it, require fact-intensive review of a county's TDT collections and expenditures.

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

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A “New” Beach for Mexico Beach!

Discover Mexico Beach has completed its first full-scale beach restoration that provided enhanced storm protection and habitats for nesting shorebirds and sea turtles. Over 1 million cubic yards of sand and 600,000+ plants were placed along the three-plus miles of shoreline. “This project has been a long time coming,” said Kimberly Shoaf, MBCDC president. “We’re grateful to everyone involved. Our new beach is beautiful, and we’re elated to showcase the results of these hard efforts.” *MexicoBeach.com*



Mexico Beach showcases first full-scale beach restoration project completion.

Cleanup Dive Highlights Success of Okaloosa County’s Conservation Efforts

In April, more than 80 divers gathered beneath the Okaloosa Island Pier for the first of two annual cleanup dives, removing nearly 57 pounds of debris—the smallest amount in the event’s history. This milestone highlights the ongoing success of local conservation efforts. The cleanup is a collaborative effort involving several organizations, including the Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park and Okaloosa County agencies. As an added bonus, divers were granted rare access to an area that’s typically off limits. A second cleanup dive is scheduled for late summer or early fall. *DestinFWB.com*



A diver takes part in April’s cleanup beneath the Okaloosa Island Pier, helping remove debris as part of a record-setting conservation effort.

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Living in Color Lights Up Union Station

Discover The Palm Beaches' sales team hosted their Living in Color PCMA Foundation Fashion Show at Washington, D.C.'s Union Station, drawing a record crowd of 550+ industry professionals. The event showcased the vibrant colors of The Palm Beaches, and models including Palm Beach County Commissioner Marci Woodward displayed bold designs by Amanda Perna, founder and creative director of The House of Perna. Local artist Cande Rivers' performances brought the runway to life. ThePalmBeaches.com



A PCMA Fashion Show is a colorful success with the efforts of DTPB's sales team and models.

Martin County Tourism Earns Platinum and Gold at Hermes Creative Awards

The Martin County Office of Tourism & Marketing earned top honors at the 2025 Hermes Creative Awards, winning a Platinum Award in the Public Relations category and a Gold Award in the Digital Advertising category. The team also won a Gold Award in the Podcast category on behalf of Florida's Treasure Coast (Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River counties). Other winners this year included YouTube, Paramount, and PepsiCo, reinforcing the team's reputation for creative marketing efforts. DiscoverMartin.com



The Hermes Creative Awards honor the messengers and creators of the information age, organized annually by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals (AMCP).

The Culinary Scene Is Taking the Stage on Florida's Historic Coast

Florida's Historic Coast has been showcasing its culinary heritage at well-attended events. These grand events include James Beard Dinners in January and April. April's festivals that celebrate the region's culinary heritage and showcase local talented chefs include the St. Augustine Seafood Festival, The Taste of St. Augustine, and the recently revived Hastings Cabbage, Potato and Bacon Festival where 15 of the area's most popular chefs created dishes featuring locally cultivated cabbage, potatoes, and bacon. FloridasHistoricCoast.com



The Hastings Cabbage, Potato and Bacon Festival held annually in April showcases the area's agricultural heritage.

NCA & NDA Collegiate Championship Celebrates 29th Year in Daytona Beach

For the 29th year, the NCA & NDA Collegiate Cheer and Dance Championship was held in Daytona Beach, Apr. 9-13. This year's event at the Ocean Center and the Daytona Beach Bandshell attracted the nation's top college cheer and dance programs, with more than 470 teams competing. Participating schools utilized 38 hotel partners throughout the area, contributing to the vibrant, high-energy atmosphere that defines this iconic championship experience in Daytona Beach. DaytonaBeach.com



The National Cheerleaders Association (NCA) and National Dance Alliance (NDA) Collegiate National Championship, the premier collegiate cheer and dance event in the world, is held in Daytona Beach for the 29th consecutive year.

Photo: Varsity Spirit



Condé Nast Traveler Features Florida Keys & Key West in 13 Stories

As the result of a hosted research visit by travel writer Paul Rubio to the Florida Keys & Key West, 13 stories appeared in Condé Nast Traveler, including: "15 Best Hotels in the Florida Keys" and "10 Best Bars in Keys West from Duval Street to Stock Island," several of which were syndicated, generating more than 552 million earned media impressions. The stories profile newly renovated and well-established lodging properties across the island chain and celebrate both longtime favorites and new watering holes in Key West. Fla-Keys.com



Featured in *Condé Nast Traveler*, the new Tropicado Mojito Bar is located in the renovated La Concha Key West on Duval Street.

Oak Marsh Golf Course Reopens at Omni Amelia Island Resort

Northeast Florida continues enhancing its golf experience. Omni Amelia Island Resort & Spa proudly announces the May 16 reopening of the iconic Oak Marsh course, following a \$7.4 million renovation by Beau Welling Design. The updates honor Pete Dye's 1972 vision while modernizing play with regrassed greens, rebuilt bunkers, and expanded native areas. This refreshed course blends tradition and innovation—offering a stunning evolution ready to challenge and inspire the next generation of golfers. Florida-Golf.org



A legendary course in Northeast Florida, redesigned for today

Laidback in Levy Campaign 2025

Levy County is working to establish a unique brand they think guests will appreciate. The Laidback in Levy article kicks off a marketing campaign for a vacation destination with family and friends away from the busy and hurried life that we live day to day. This article is the first of many promotions to showcase all the places in Levy County where visitors can relax and enjoy time well spent with the ones they love making memories that will last a lifetime. #LaidbackLevy #LoveLevy #LoveLevyLife VisitLevy.com



The "Laidback in Levy" article marks the beginning of a campaign that promotes vacations in Levy County.

Franklin County TDC Funds Water Rescue Device for Beach Swimmer Safety

The St. George Island Fire Department recently showed off EMILY, its new water rescue device, which was purchased with money from the Franklin County TDC. EMILY is a water rescue drone that allows rescuers to reach a struggling swimmer without having to enter the water themselves. The TDC approved the funding under a rule that allows up to 10% of the county's Tourist Development Tax proceeds to fund eligible public safety services. The investment ensures that the county remains a positive and safe environment for visitors and residents alike. FloridasForgottenCoast.com



St. George Island firefighters with EMILY, a water rescue drone



Meaningful Travel Roadshow Kicks Off in Greater Miami and Miami Beach

The Greater Miami CVB hosted the first stop of Tourism Cares' Meaningful Travel Roadshow in May, connecting travel professionals and local change makers to showcase how Greater Miami blends vibrant culture with sustainability and social impact. The Roadshow explored how collaboration and creativity are transforming Miami-Dade County neighborhoods and natural spaces, immersing participants in local culture, history, and environment and gaining insights from conservationists, accessibility advocates, and industry leaders on innovative ways to promote responsible tourism. MiamiandMiamiBeach.com



Sunrise on historic Virginia Key Beach

Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches Marks Celebrate Trails Day in April

Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches hosted its annual Celebrate Trails Day event in April. Held at Waterfront Park, the event included interactive booths and activities; fun games and crafts like cornhole, chalk art, and turtle painting; and a 30-minute guided nature walk. Celebrate Trails Day is part of Palm Coast and the Flagler Beaches' continued focus on increasing ecotourism opportunities. VisitFlagler.com



Attendees paint ceramic turtles during the Celebrate Trails Day event on Apr. 26.

Sopchoppy Worm Gruntin' Festival Showcases Big Fun in a Small Town

The 2025 Worm Gruntin' Festival drew record crowds to historic Sopchoppy, Florida—officially the Worm Gruntin' Capital of the World. Held Apr. 12 in the heart of the Apalachicola National Forest in North Florida, the event featured worm-grunting demos, the Wiggle Worm Fun Run, vendors, live music, and family activities. Through this event, Visit Wakulla showcased how small-town charm and unique traditions can create big tourism wins and media buzz. VisitWakulla.com



Festival-goers get into the spirit of the Sopchoppy Worm Gruntin' Festival—a quirky, family-friendly celebration of Wakulla County's most unusual tradition.

Celebrating the Success of Bora pra Kissimmee!

Experience Kissimmee proudly launched *Bora pra Kissimmee!* featuring Brazilian celebrities on unforgettable vacations in Kissimmee, Florida. The series showcased unique itineraries and adventures, highlighting Kissimmee's diverse attractions. Renowned personalities shared their favorite activities and personal stories. The campaign achieved 15.7 million views, 128,000 engagements, and drove 417,000 visits to the website, with an estimated \$2.7 million in media value and a total reach of 9.6 million. Check it out on EK's website and social media! ExperienceKissimmee.com



Bora pra Kissimmee! features renowned personalities, including Xuxa—an iconic Brazilian TV host, singer, and actress, affectionately known as the "Queen of Children."



Visit St. Pete-Clearwater Helps Launch New Hospitality Course at Local College

To meet the needs of the future hospitality workforce, Visit St. Pete-Clearwater and St. Petersburg College have teamed up to re-imagine the school's "Introduction to Hospitality" course. Launching this summer, the class leverages VisitSPC's resources, including hands-on access and insights from local industry leaders, to offer students an immersive look into the hospitality sector. From hotels to event planning and operations, VisitSPC will provide coursework and direction while weaving in real-life experiences to prepare students for thriving careers in Florida's booming tourism and hospitality industry. VisitStPeteClearwater.com



Visit St. Pete-Clearwater and St. Petersburg College are collaborating on the school's hospitality intro course.

Babcock Ranch Eco Tours Wins 2025 Partner of the Year Award

The Punta Gorda Englewood Beach VCB Partner of the Year award celebrates a tourism partner who demonstrates a high level of engagement. The 2025 Partner of the Year has significant roots in Charlotte County, with a history spread over all or part of three centuries. In the mid-1980s, this attraction began providing public tours for the first time, guiding visitors through four different ecosystems, with up-close views of wild boars, deer, turkey and, of course, alligators. Today, their Swamp Buggy Eco-tours carry nearly 3,000 visitors a week during high season. PureFlorida.com



Tourism Director Sean Doherty, Manager Roger Klatt of Babcock Ranch Eco Tours, and County Commissioner Chris Constance

Run By Visit Central Florida, Silver Garlands Brings Polk County's Brightest and Best Together

With a record crowd at the Historic Ritz Theatre in downtown Winter Haven, winners of the 2025 Silver Garlands were rewarded for their efforts. Silver Garlands, run by Visit Central Florida, is a celebration of civic-minded high school senior leaders from Polk County. Three finalists are chosen in each of the 14 categories—Aerospace, Art, Athletics, Citizenship, Communications, Computer Science, Culinary, English/Literature, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Music, Performing Arts, Science, Vocational/Technical—with the winner receiving \$1,000. VisitCentralFlorida.org



2025 Silver Garlands winners. Back row: Paola Alexandria Bravo Quinonez (Communications), Christiania Zidor (English/Literature), Nicolas Miller (Music), Caroline Mank (Athletics), Ishak Abukhdair (Citizenship), Patricia Clark (Art), Tanner Hamer (Computer Science), Brayn Depaz-Esteban (Mathematics); Front row: Guadalupe Denova (Foreign Language), Katherine Narramore (Performing Arts), Hannah Hitchcock (Vocational/Technical), Haley Schulz (Culinary), Syed Rob (Science), Nicolas Barrios (Aerospace)

Sarasota County Hosts Major Rowing Events

USRowing takes over Sarasota this June with four major events, starting with the 30th anniversary of the Youth National Championships, June 12-15 at Nathan Benderson Park. Featuring 5,000 athletes, it caps the youth season with elite racing and festival vibes. The U19 National Team Trials follow at the same venue, June 16-17. Action then shifts to Lido Key Beach for the Youth Beach Sprints Nationals (June 16-18) and Beach Sprint Team Trials (June 20-22). VisitSarasota.com





Seminole County Scores Big With Easter International Cup

Easter week kicked off with a win for Seminole County as they hosted the Easter International Cup for the first time, Apr. 16-19. The tournament welcomed more than 65 girls' soccer teams and 1,000+ athletes and spectators from across the country. Held at Seminole County's premier sports complexes, the event generated an estimated \$1.1 million in direct economic impact, reinforcing the county's growing reputation as a top-tier destination for youth sports tourism. DoOrlandoNorth.com



Athletes compete during the 2025 Easter International Cup, hosted for the first time in Seminole County.

Orlando Remains No. 1 Most Visited Destination in the U.S.

Orlando welcomed 75,333,800 visitors in 2024, a 1.8% increase over 2023. This news was shared at Visit Orlando's annual Travel & Tourism Event at the Orange County Convention Center. Domestic visitation grew by 1.4% to 68,840,300 visitors, while international visitation rose by 5.9%, totaling 6.5 million visitors. Canada remained the top international market with 1.29 million visitors, followed by the UK, Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. The Blue Man Group, opening a permanent location in Orlando in 2026, joined Visit Orlando executives and Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings for the announcement. VisitOrlando.com



The Blue Man Group; Barb Bowden, Visit Orlando board chair and area managing director of operations at Loews Hotels at Universal Orlando; Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings; and Visit Orlando President & CEO Casandra Matej announce Orlando's 2024 visitation number at Visit Orlando's Travel & Tourism Event.

Amelia Island Redefines the Meeting Experience

The Amelia Island CVB aimed to redefine the meeting experience with the Island Inspired Meetings campaign that ran Jan. 2024–Mar. 2025, blending wellness, sustainability, and immersive storytelling to meet planners' evolving needs. With nearly 9.4 million impressions, 238 RFPs, and record-breaking engagement, Amelia Island was perfectly positioned as the go-to destination for meaningful, high-impact events. AmeliaIsland.com



Amelia Island's Island Inspired Meetings campaign assets

Panama City Featured in *Southern Living* as a Must-Visit Destination

Panama City recently earned a spotlight in *Southern Living* with a feature highlighting the Best Things to Do in Panama City. The article showcased the city's diverse offerings, from outdoor adventures on St. Andrews Bay to vibrant arts and culture, eclectic shopping, and standout local dining. The national recognition reinforces Panama City's growing reputation as a dynamic coastal destination with authentic charm and year-round appeal. DestinationPanamaCity.com



Southern Living highlights the best of Panama City, from waterfront experiences to local flavor and artistic flair.



South Walton Brings Beach Vibes to Music City

Walton County Tourism brought beach vibes to Music City with a rooftop happy hour for Nashville meeting planners. Guests connected over hors d'oeuvres while learning more about South Walton's 16 beach neighborhoods from lodging partners and Walton County's Artist of the Year, Sarah Page. From art and gift cards to branded merchandise, each guest left with a reminder of South Walton to inspire future group travel planning. WaltonCountyFLTourism.com



Walton County Tourism brings a splash of coastal charm to Nashville, hosting meeting planners for an evening of connection, creativity, and community.

Visit Jacksonville Welcomes New Flights

Working closely with Jacksonville International Airport, Visit Jacksonville created special welcome bags for passengers of the inaugural flight from Des Moines, Iowa, to Jacksonville on Allegiant Airlines. With an early morning flight time, the bag promoted the Jax Coffee & Donuts Trail with a donut-shaped stress reliever, stickers, and more. Visit Jacksonville is also working to welcome new flights from Toronto Pearson International Airport on Air Canada, Akron-Canton Airport (Ohio) on Allegiant Airlines, and Wilmington Airport (Delaware) on Avelo Airlines. VisitJacksonville.com



Items included in the Jax Coffee & Donut Trail themed welcome bag for passengers arriving at Jacksonville International Airport on an inaugural flight

New Parks Pass Offers Fun, Prizes, and Outdoor Adventure in the Fort Myers Area

The Lee County VCB recently partnered with Lee County Parks & Recreation to launch Parks, Points & Perks, a free pass that encourages locals and visitors to explore more than 30 parks, preserves, beaches, and recreation sites through May 2026. Participants can earn points and win prizes by checking in at locations like Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve, Dog Beach, and Bowditch Point Park. Visitors are invited to get outdoors and start their adventure today at VisitFortMyers.com/ParksPass.



Parks, Points & Perks makes it easy to enjoy the outdoors and discover new adventures in Lee County.

Visit Pensacola Hosts UK Roadshow in London & Manchester

Building on a strong media and trade engagement year, Visit Pensacola launched 2025 with an enhanced strategy to support UK travel agents and tour operators through a dedicated roadshow in London and Manchester. The initiative included 20+ strategic meetings with UK media and trade professionals, combining public relations and trade efforts. Tailored training, digital content, and educational newsletters were provided to increase destination awareness and equip agents, journalists, and freelancers with the tools to promote and sell Pensacola confidently. VisitPensacola.com



Vice President of Destination Development Nicole Stacey, Director of Sales and Services Kaya Man, and UK agency representative Becky Fairlie-Clarke meet with UK media and trade partners as part of Visit Pensacola's 2025 roadshow to strengthen travel trade and public relations efforts.



New Visit Tampa Bay Campaign Proclaims It's Time to Play in Tampa Bay and Summer Like Never Before

Visit Tampa Bay is inviting travelers to press play on their best vacation yet with the launch of its new Time to Play in Tampa Bay campaign. Designed to boost summer visitation to Hillsborough County, the campaign focuses on key drive markets including Atlanta, Orlando, and Miami-Fort Lauderdale, reaching both English- and Spanish-speaking audiences with messaging centered on themes like Time to Play, Time for Adventure, Time to Savor, and Time to Breathe, encouraging vacationers to make the most of their time. VisitTampaBay.com



Colorful macaws delight guests at ZooTampa at Lowry Park, one of the many world-class attractions highlighted in Visit Tampa Bay's new multi-channel marketing campaign that positions the destination as a must-visit getaway for both families and luxury travelers.

Tallahassee Rocks Spring With Star-Studded Concert Series

Visit Tallahassee struck a high note this past spring with a series of unforgettable concerts at the Adderley Amphitheater in Cascades Park. The lineup featured Alison Krauss & Union Station and the Violent Femmes with the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, which both saw sold-out attendance, alongside popular performances by Kirk Franklin, Tasha Cobbs Leonard, and Wilco. The combined 52 GRAMMY Awards and 80 nominations of the artists underscored the amphitheater's premier status in the region. VisitTallahassee.com



Strategic collaborations with the LeMoyné Chain of Parks Art Festival and Word of South Music & Literature Festival amplified the success of Tallahassee's spring concert series, attracting sold-out crowds and broadening Tallahassee's appeal for live music.

Tourism Delivers Jobs, Revenue, and Results: Alachua County Releases 2024 Tourism Economic Impact Insights

In 2024, visitors staying in paid accommodations generated \$766.3 million in total economic impact, according to data from Downs & St. Germain Research. A total of 1,398,300 visitors accounted for 1,423,700 room nights and spent \$513.3 million on lodging, dining, shopping, groceries, and transportation. Their activity supported 6,400 jobs, \$250.8 million in wages, and \$75.3 million in state and local tax revenue. Visitor spending represents 26% of all local consumer spending, underscoring tourism's essential role in Alachua County and Florida's economy. VisitGainesville.com



Alachua County achieved a record-breaking year in Tourist Development Tax collections in FY24, driving economic growth, supporting local jobs, and strengthening businesses across the community.

Discover Crystal River Florida Travels to Boston, Philadelphia

Discover Crystal River Florida was elated to participate in a coveted Domestic Sales Mission that took place in Boston and Philadelphia with VISIT FLORIDA in April. Sales & Marketing Manager Terry Natwick attended the mission, which included four engaging events. Terry proudly presented the destination to nearly 180 travel agents and sales professionals, allowing for in-person introductions and networking. These coveted opportunities keep Citrus County top of mind and lead to real visits down the line. DiscoverCrystalRiverFL.com



Terry Natwick staffs the Discover Crystal River Florida booth at the Florida's Marketplace evening reception

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Inside This Edition of Tourism Marketing Today

16



**Living in Color Lights Up
Union Station..... 16**

**Sopchoppy Worm Gruntin' Festival
Showcases Big Fun
in a Small Town18**

**Panama City Featured in *Southern Living*
as a Must-Visit Destination..... 20**

**Tallahassee Rocks Spring With
Star-Studded Concert Series.....22**

20



18



22

