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# FLORIDA

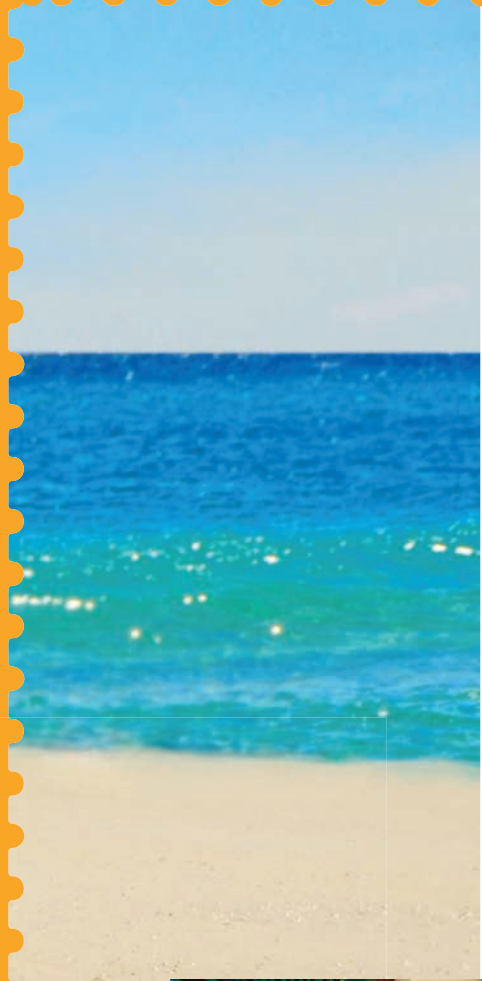
YOUR IDEAL WINTER RETREAT

BY SUSAN B. BARNES

*Daytona Beach, Flagler County,  
Bradenton, Anna Maria Island  
and Longboat Key, Miami,  
Pensacola, Sarasota,  
St. Petersburg/Clearwater*

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**W**ith its tropical climate, varying landscapes, more than 1,000 kilometres of relaxing beaches and direct flights from Canada to various Floridian gateways, it's no wonder the Sunshine State is a popular year-round destination, and even more so during the winter months.

Night owls gather with birds of a feather in hip Miami, while families enjoy friendly activities and beaches in Pensacola or Bradenton, Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key. Nature enthusiasts make a beeline for Flagler County, and art and dolphin lovers flip for St. Petersburg and Clearwater. Those with the need for speed race to Daytona Beach for Speedweeks and the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Daytona 500 whereas culture hounds prefer to recover in Sarasota.

And these are just a few of the areas that Florida has to offer. The thing about Florida is, whatever you're searching for—be it character-filled theme parks, secluded beaches, rolling horse country, glamorous nightlife, sprawling orange groves or spring-training camps—you can find it here. What's more, you can easily travel from one area to the next by car, plane or train.

Which Florida destination will you choose? ■

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**opposite:** A young girl races across a white-sand beach in Pensacola on the Gulf of Mexico. Cheryl Casey/Shutterstock

**above:** Dining in Florida is a culinary experience featuring unique eating establishments to satisfy every taste and budget. Sarasota CVB

**left:** Relax overlooking a tranquil tropical pond at Palma Sola Botanical Gardens, an interactive learning environment in Bradenton. Steve Carroll/Shutterstock

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the beaches of  SANIBEL  
FORT MYERS

# Daytona Beach

## SPEED, SYMPHONY AND SURF



PROBABLY MOST FAMOUS FOR ITS PREMIER NASCAR RACE—THE DAYTONA 500—THERE'S MUCH MORE TO SEE AND DO IN DAYTONA BEACH THAN WATCHING CARS RACE AROUND A TRACK, INCLUDING MUSEUMS, CULTURE AND FESTIVALS, NOT TO MENTION ITS FAMOUS BEACHES!

### TRAVEL PLANNER

For more information on Daytona Beach, visit [daytonabeach.com](http://daytonabeach.com).



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**J**ust an hour east of theme park and character-filled Orlando, Daytona Beach offers visitors a relaxed vibe, perfect for truly getting away from it all.

### TAKE IT ALL IN

The Daytona Beach Symphony Society is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> annual season in 2012 with music, opera and ballet from around the world. Catch performances of Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* by the Moscow Festival Ballet and Verdi's *La Traviata* by Teatro Lirico D'Europa at the Peabody Auditorium. The Nordwest Deutsche Philharmonic and the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra are also on the roster of upcoming highlights.

In addition to the area's beaches, nature lovers will want to be sure to check out the endangered manatees in their natural habitat at Blue Spring State Park.

Start your engines and get in on the fun! Daytona Beach starts getting revved up during Speedweeks in anticipation of the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Daytona 500 on February 26.

For a quieter scene, stroll along the beach or the Daytona Beach Pier, browse through the galleries at the Harvey W. Lee Jr. Memorial Gallery-Mary McLeod Bethune Fine Arts Center, or take in a bird's-eye view of the area from the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse, the tallest lighthouse in Florida. You may decide to kayak the area's quiet waterways, or bike the trails—maybe even pack a picnic lunch and simply enjoy the calmness of a local park. It's up to you!

### FEAST ON THIS

All of this activity is sure to inspire a healthy appetite, and you're in luck when it comes to dining options in Daytona Beach. There's fresh seafood served at many restaurants in the area, including Joe's Crab Shack, Chart House and Park's Seafood Riverside. You'll also find Italian, German, Thai and even Honduran-Cuban fusion dining establishments.

With an ever-changing landscape, Daytona Beach recently welcomed its newest oceanfront hotel, the Lotus Inn & Suites. The contemporary, luxurious, elegant hotel brings with it an air of sophistication. And here's a tip—if you're travelling with the family, you may want to book Zen or Sutra as each offers the convenience of a kitchenette.

You may come to Daytona Beach for the speed, however you'll enjoy your time more when you slow down enough to appreciate and savour all the area has to offer. ■

**top left: The Rolex 24 at Daytona showcases the world's best drivers competing for 24 hours on a 5.7-kilometre road course.**

**bottom left: Eight kilometres of the "World's Most Famous Beach" are now reserved for visitors who don't wish to share it with cars. Tom Hirtreiter/Shutterstock**

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# It's more than a beach. It's your widest smile in years.



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# Flagler County

HIKE, BIKE OR KAYAK

LOOKING FOR A QUIETER SPOT  
IN FLORIDA? YOU'RE IN LUCK!



**F**ly into Orlando, drive just under two hours northeast to Flagler County and prepare to disconnect with the world and reconnect with yourself.

**Mother Dazzle (left) proudly shows off her son Hemingway, the newest star at Marineland Dolphin Adventure located in Flagler County. Marineland Dolphin Adventure**

## EXPERIENCE FLORIDA IN A DIFFERENT WAY

Rent a kayak and hit the water for a day of paddling enjoyment. With a variety of launch sites from which to choose, you may opt to stick to tranquil creeks, estuaries or lakes or take the leap and paddle out into the Atlantic Ocean. Whichever you choose, keep an eye skyward for a glimpse of migrating birds, or, if out in the Atlantic, watch for dolphins or turtles.

If you'd rather spend your time on land, there's plenty to do there, too, with more than 145 kilometres of biking and hiking trails to challenge varying levels. Cyclists are increasingly visiting Flagler County to explore its off-road trails, paved tracks with Intracoastal views and those through maritime forests. Trail guides are available.

During your stay, be sure to stop by Marineland Dolphin Adventure to meet Flagler County's newest star—Hemingway, a bottlenose dolphin calf. Named after the author himself, who is said to have visited Marineland in the 1940s, Hemingway is the third generation of calves born in the facility. ■

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## TRAVEL PLANNER

For more information on Flagler County, log onto [visitflagler.org](http://visitflagler.org).



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# Bradenton, Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key

## WEST COAST STYLE

FOR A TASTE OF “OLD FLORIDA”—ONE WITHOUT BEACHFRONT HIGH-RISE HOTELS AND CONDOS, GLITTERING NIGHTLIFE OR CROWDS—VISIT BRADENTON AND NEIGHBOURING ANNA MARIA ISLAND AND LONGBOAT KEY.

**T**his is where Floridians go for a Florida vacation!

Blessed with more than 25 kilometres of wide beaches (some are even dog-friendly) and clear waters on Florida’s southwest coast, flanked on the east side by the Intracoastal Waterway, Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key are ideal beach vacation spots and perfect for families or couples who simply want to get away. Though unpretentious and unassuming, they both feature some of the area’s top-rated restaurants, serving the freshest seafood. On the other hand, for an ultra-low-key dining experience, head to the Rod & Reel Pier Restaurant for a fresh grouper sandwich—a true local favourite.

When you’re ready for a break from the beach, head back into downtown Bradenton where you’ll find an aquarium, a planetarium and a working artists’ community. If the timing’s right, you may be able to catch a Pittsburgh Pirates’ spring training game at McKechnie Field. Or, if it’s raining, drive a bit farther to the outlet stores in nearby Ellenton.

After a visit to Bradenton, Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key, you’ll understand why the area is such a favourite among Floridians. ■

### TRAVEL PLANNER

For more information on Bradenton, Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key, visit [annamariaisland-longboatkey.com](http://annamariaisland-longboatkey.com).

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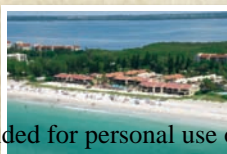
Anna Maria Island  
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AMILBK.com/deals

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Ranked third most impressive in the USA, the shimmering skyline of Miami reflects onto Biscayne Bay on a cloudless evening. FloridaStock/Shutterstock



# Miami

## THE CITY NEVER SLEEPS

GLAMOUR, HIGH FASHION AND BRIGHT LIGHTS AT THE HIPPEST CLUBS GO HAND IN HAND WITH MILES OF WHITE SAND BEACHES, CRYSTAL BLUE WATERS AND ALL THE ADVENTURE YOU COULD HOPE FOR WHEN VACATIONING IN FLORIDA.

**W**here is this magical land? Miami, of course! Hop a flight from Canada, and when the wheels touch down in Miami, the fun begins.

### ALL IN A DAY'S PLAY

Spike it during a volleyball game on Miami Beach, take a spin around Biscayne Bay on a Jet Ski, or try for a hole-in-one on one of the area's top golf courses. View the latest art exhibit at the Frost Art Museum, admire nature's art in the form of delicate orchids at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, or shop for your favourite designers' latest styles at their boutiques in Bal Harbour.

Loads of festivities take place year-round in Miami, so be sure to check the city's calendar of events prior to your visit to take advantage of what's happening during your stay!

When the sun sets in Miami, dine at the best table in the hottest restaurant, dance the night away to live salsa music, take in the ballet, go on a moonlight garden tour at the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, or simply spread out a blanket and sit under the dazzling stars to reflect on the day.

### FAMILY OUTINGS

If your kids are joining you on your trip, there are plenty of family-friendly venues in Miami. There are always the miles upon miles of beaches along Florida's southeast coast, perfect for frolicking in the surf or building sandcastles. Take a trip on board an airboat gliding across Everglades National Park; be sure to keep an eye out for alligators. For tamer wildlife, visit Zoo Miami or watch the dolphins flip out at the Miami Seaquarium. And when you're ready to take a plunge, don your mask and snorkel and sneak a glimpse into the underwater world in Biscayne National Park, the only living tropical reef within the continental U.S.

### CALL IT A NIGHT

After such fun-filled days, it's time to rest up for the next. Complement your time in Miami with a stay at one of the city's storied hotels—the Biltmore. Or, make reservations at the art deco Avalon Hotel on Ocean Drive, or the secluded Standard Spa, Miami Beach. As soon as you lay your head on the pillow, you'll begin to dream of how you'll spend your next day in this vibrant city. ■

### TRAVEL PLANNER

For more information on Greater Miami and the Beaches, visit [MiamiandBeaches.com](http://MiamiandBeaches.com).

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“Just Expressing  
Myself”

Whether it's cheering for the marathoners, going for a jog yourself, surfing at daybreak, or skinny-dipping at midnight, we never take our wonderful weather for granted. Miami inspires you to do the things you couldn't – or wouldn't – do anywhere else.

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# Florida Medical Retreat

RELAX AND RECOVER IN SARASOTA

ONCE YOU'VE MADE THE DECISION TO UNDERGO SURGERY, WHY WAIT?

**C**all the Florida Medical Retreat and you're halfway to recovery!

From your first encounter, you're treated like a VIP with unparalleled concierge services, both medical and leisure. Your in-town patient care coordinator handles everything—from booking flights between Canada and Sarasota for you and your travelling companion(s) to requesting medical records, scheduling doctors' appointments and reserving hotel rooms and car rentals. And when you're ready to return home, your coordinator contacts your primary physician to arrange follow-up care tailored to your needs.

Personal attentive service isn't the only exceptional aspect you experience at Florida Medical Retreat. Many of the highly-skilled surgeons at the top-ranked hospitals perform minimally-invasive procedures, including state-of-the-art da Vinci robotic surgery, which combines robotics and computer technology, and ASI (Anterior Supine Intermuscular) hip replacement surgery. The da Vinci and ASI techniques, among others, allow surgeons to perform delicate procedures with minimal pain and scarring, less injury to tissue, higher accuracy rates and shorter hospital stays.

Regardless of your procedure, your medical professionals have the latest tools and technology at their disposal, ensuring you receive the best possible care throughout your stay.

Following surgery, what better place to recover than in the midst of the finest beaches in the USA, fine dining restaurants and world-class opera, ballet and museums? Once you're ready for an outing, your patient care coordinator handles all the details.

When you choose Florida Medical Retreat for your medical and surgical needs, all you need to focus on is yourself. ■

#### TRAVEL PLANNER

For more information on what the Florida Medical Retreat in Sarasota can do for you, visit [floridamedicalretreat.com](http://floridamedicalretreat.com).

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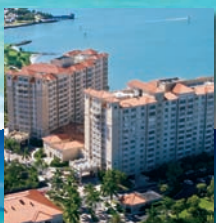
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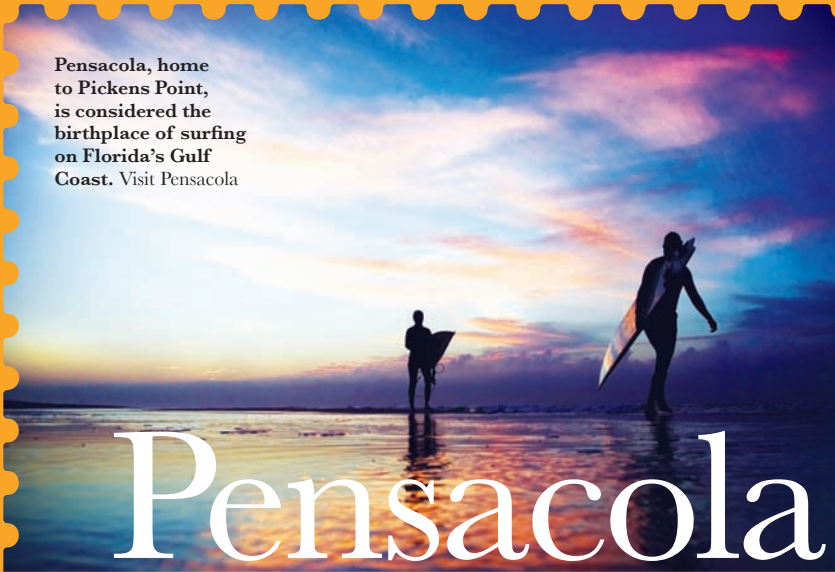
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Pensacola, home to Pickens Point, is considered the birthplace of surfing on Florida's Gulf Coast. Visit Pensacola



# Pensacola

## MASKS, MULLETS AND MARITIME FUN

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A SPRING BREAK/MARDI GRAS DESTINATION THAT'S A RIGHT FIT FOR THE FAMILY, LOOK NO FURTHER THAN PENSACOLA.

Featuring family-friendly activities and gorgeous beaches, it's the perfect escape to beat winter, if only for a few days.

Mardi Gras is in full swing in Pensacola and on nearby islands until February 21, with parades and beads flying through the air. Have you ever wanted to throw a mullet (a ray-finned fish)? Well, you're in luck; the Mullet Toss is happening in April at the Flora-Bama Bar. Go ahead; throw a mullet across the state line into Alabama.

When spring is in the air, Pensacola debuts its free concert series every Tuesday night on Pensacola Beach. Pack a picnic, spread a blanket and listen to the music float through the air while stars twinkle overhead.

Look! Up in the air! It's the world-famous Blue Angels practising their shows twice a week, free of charge, as they prepare for their summer shows throughout the U.S. Be sure to check out their schedule at the National Naval Aviation Museum so you don't miss out.

Pensacola's historic downtown is the place to be, what with its wonderful local restaurants, art galleries, museums, and opera and symphony performances. And, later this year, the 12-hectare waterfront Maritime Park is opening and will be home to the Blue Wahoos baseball team, the minor league affiliate of the Cincinnati Reds. ■

[VISITFLORIDA.COM](http://VISITFLORIDA.COM)

### TRAVEL PLANNER

For more information on Pensacola, check out [visitpensacola.com](http://visitpensacola.com).

A collage of three photographs set against a background of a beach with turquoise water and white sand. The left photo shows the interior of a museum with several military aircraft on display. The middle photo shows a man and a woman smiling and holding two large red snappers. The right photo shows a beach with tall grasses in the foreground and the ocean in the background.

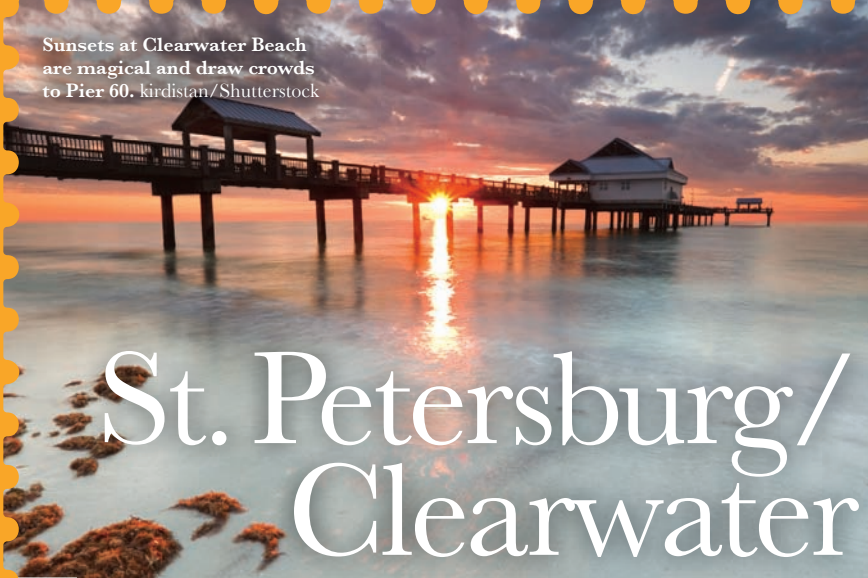
## Snowbirds *Love Pensacola*

From our vibrant downtown, 450 years of history and the National Naval Aviation Museum to the beauty of Gulf Islands National Seashore, the Pensacola Bay Area has more of what you love, and all at a great value. So come on down and make Pensacola your winter home. [Go to VisitPensacola.com/Snowbirds](http://Go to VisitPensacola.com/Snowbirds) for information on Snowbird deals and events.

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VISIT PENSACOLA  
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Sunsets at Clearwater Beach are magical and draw crowds to Pier 60. kirdistan/Shutterstock



# St. Petersburg/ Clearwater

## SURREALISM AND A MOVIE STAR

JUST ACROSS THE BAY FROM TAMPA ARE TWO GEMS, ST. PETERSBURG AND CLEARWATER, EACH WITH ITS OWN UNIQUE CHARACTER AND ATTRACTIONS.

The crown jewel of downtown St. Petersburg is The Dalí Museum, home to the world's largest collection of the artist's masterpieces, including 1,300 graphics, photos, sculptures and *objets d'art*; 96 oil paintings; and more than 100 watercolours and drawings. The surrealism begins before you even walk through the door; the building itself is a work of art!

The shining star of Clearwater most certainly has to be Winter, the dolphin with a prosthetic tail whose life story could recently be seen on the silver screen in *Dolphin Tale*. Now, you can go "behind the scenes" and see where the movie was filmed—and visit Winter herself—at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium. You'll be inspired by her story of perseverance and survival.

Of course, you can't miss the beaches in St. Pete and Clearwater—and all those in between. They are some of the best in the state so you won't want to miss your chance to soak in some rays. As the sun begins to set over the Gulf of Mexico, make your way to Frenchy's on Clearwater Beach (one of the area's few beachfront bars) and toast to another perfect day. ■

[VISITFLORIDA.COM](http://VISITFLORIDA.COM)

### TRAVEL PLANNER

For more information on the St. Petersburg/Clearwater area, log onto [visitstpeteclearwater.com](http://visitstpeteclearwater.com).



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CLEARWATER**