

FLORIDA'S SPORTS COAST

DESTINATION GUIDE



THE WATER'S FINE

CHOOSE YOUR
WATER ADVENTURE
STYLE

A FAMILY TREASURE HUNT

SEARCH THE WATERS OF
FLORIDA'S SPORTS COAST
FOR SCALLOPS

ON THE TOWN
DISCOVER OUR COMMUNITIES

FLSportsCoast.com





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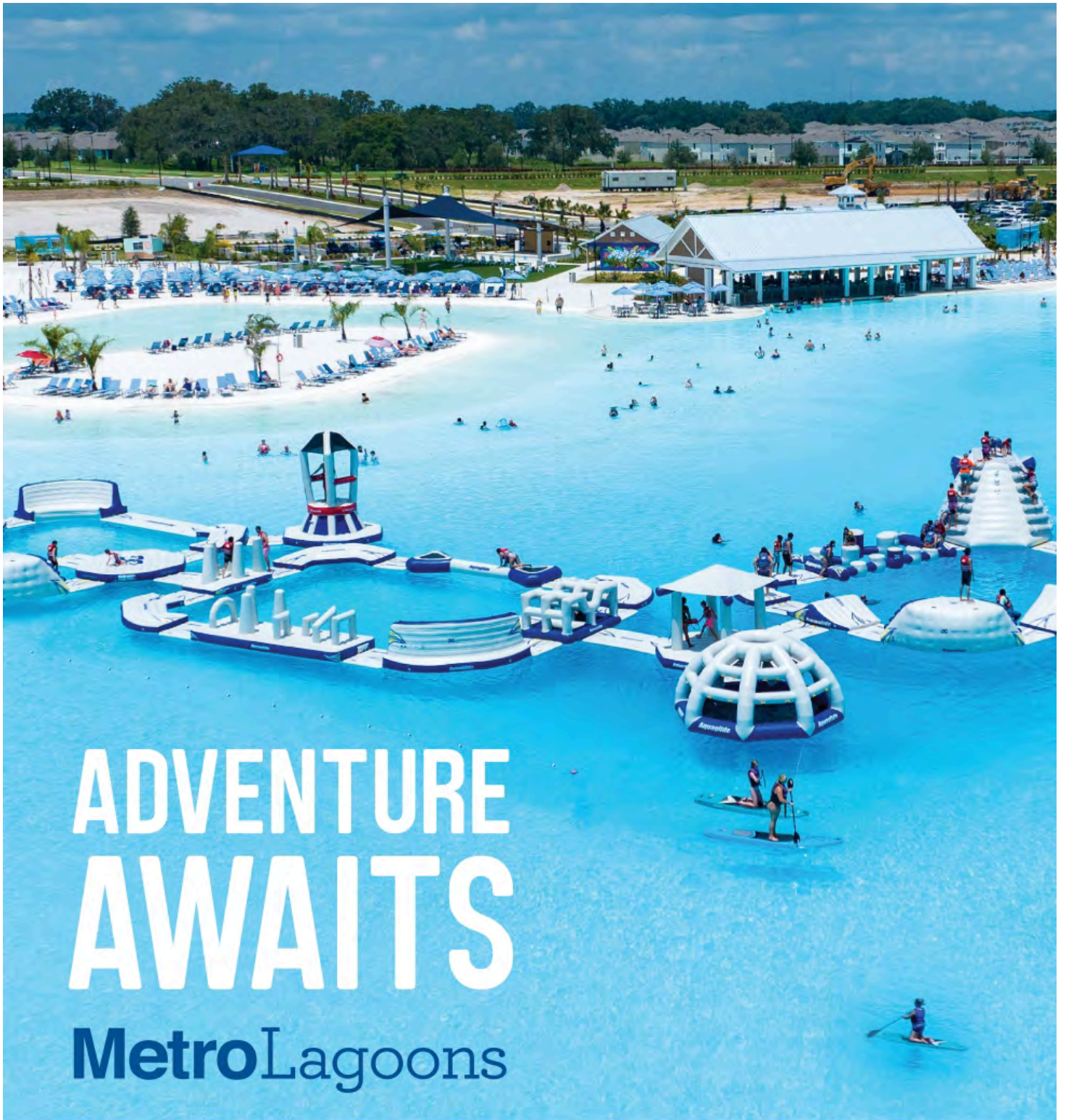
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FLORIDA'S
**SPORTS
COAST**
DESTINATION GUIDE

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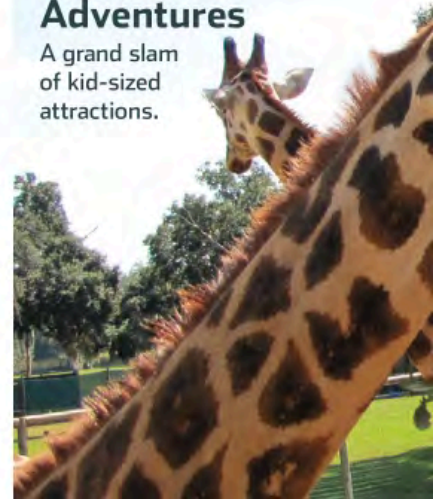
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Mike Winkles

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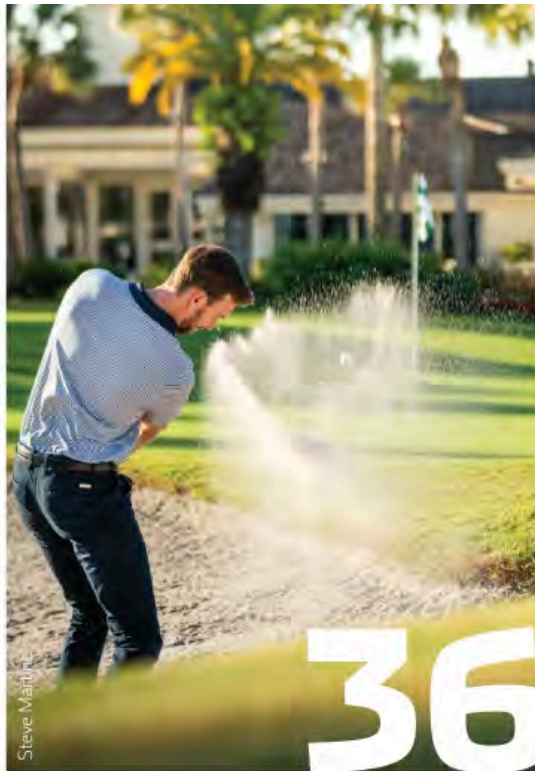
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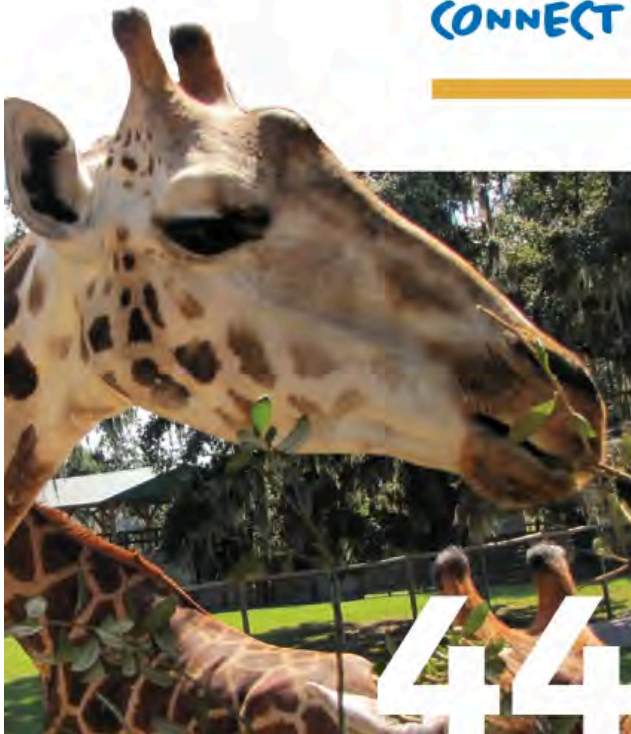
ON THE COVER...

Out here, it's a scalloping paradise. Photo by Mike Winkles



ON THE COVER...

Meet lemurs, giraffes and all species of new friends. Photo by Mike Carlson



FLORIDA'S SPORTS COAST

FLORIDA'S SPORTS COAST

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FLSCOVG 2023-2024



REDISCOVER

New Port Richey



DOWN TOWN NEW PORT RICHEY

A revitalized downtown with a star-studded history is once again a destination not to be missed.

Conveniently situated off of US 19, Downtown New Port Richey is a short drive from Tarpon Springs, Weeki Wachee State Park, Clearwater Beach and 45 minutes from Tampa International Airport.



Shopping

From upscale boutiques, to art galleries and antiques, you'll find a variety of unique small businesses with friendly, welcoming faces.



Dining

Whether you are looking for a casual rooftop brunch, afternoon tea or a fine-dining experience, Downtown New Port Richey satisfies every taste and preference.



Entertainment

Catch a live performance at the Richey Suncoast Theatre, an outdoor movie in Sims Park or dance to live music at one of our many entertainment venues.

More than
30 Downtown
Businesses Voted
Best of the Best
in Tampa Bay!



Visit DowntownNPR.org



Visit OUR HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

Experience Old Florida Hospitality

New Port Richey is a small town rich in history and hospitality. Every corner of downtown is sprinkled with locally-owned shops, restaurants, galleries and experiences.

Dating back to 1924, New Port Richey boasts a long history of welcoming visitors from across the country.

In the 1920s, stars of the silver screen and Broadway, renowned musicians and prominent athletes found their way to this small Gulf Coast Town, purchasing homes and creating their own unique winter enclave.

Today, we celebrate our history while creating a vibrant future. We honor our past by continuing to make New Port Richey an inviting destination for visitors from around the world.

Park your car and explore our town by foot - as just about everything you could want for a relaxing getaway is within walking distance.

Take a stroll along the beautiful "Cotee" River and soak in the sights and sounds of Sims Park and the history museum, then top off your day with a sweet treat from one of our quaint ice cream parlors.

Try a historic walking tour, spooky ghost hunt, sunset paddleboat ride or simply find a rocking chair to watch the sunset over the water.



Our diverse city combines the relaxing beauty of Old Florida with the excitement and glamour of the Silver Screen's Golden Age.

Visit Downtown New Port Richey and discover why our small town is the best place to stay and play in Tampa Bay!



THE HACIENDA

— A Classic 1927 Florida Hotel —

- Stay in one of our 40 comfortably-appointed guest rooms and suites, recreating the floorplan of the original hotel from 1927
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IN THE KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Getting Here

» BY AIR

TAMPA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Located less than 35 minutes south of Florida's Sports Coast, Tampa International Airport (TPA) serves direct flights from hundreds of major destinations across the country and internationally.

ST. PETE-CLEARWATER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

An hour drive away from Florida's Sports Coast, St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport (PIE) offers non-stop service to 50 destinations throughout the country and Canada.

ORLANDO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

About a 90-minute drive from Florida's Sports Coast, Orlando International Airport (MCO) serves flights from more than 130 international and domestic destinations.

» BY CAR

HIGHWAYS

I-75 connects Florida's Sports Coast to the rest of the country, while US 19, US 41, US 98 and US 589 give easy access to the rest of the state.

Getting Around

If you didn't bring your own, you'll want to rent a car to get from activity to activity along Florida's Sports Coast. Plus, there's nothing quite like cruising through Dade City or New Port Richey.

WATCH THE SKIES

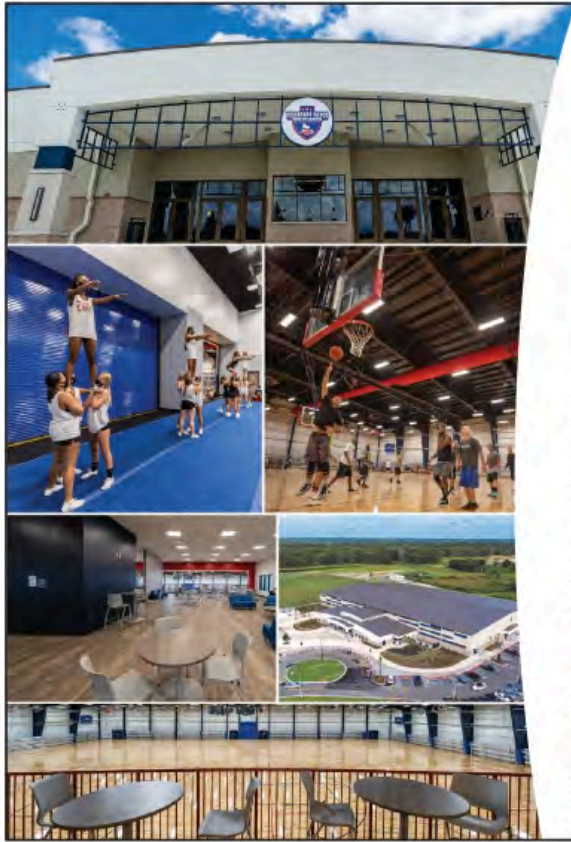
No need to save suitcase space for a jacket—welcome to the great weather along Florida's Sports Coast.

AVERAGE TEMPERATURES °F	HIGH	LOW
JANUARY	71	49
FEBRUARY	74	51
MARCH	79	55
APRIL	84	60
MAY	89	65
JUNE	91	71
JULY	92	72
AUGUST	92	72
SEPTEMBER	90	71
OCTOBER	85	64
NOVEMBER	79	57
DECEMBER	74	52

SOURCE: WEATHER.COM

Florida's Sports Coast Milage Chart

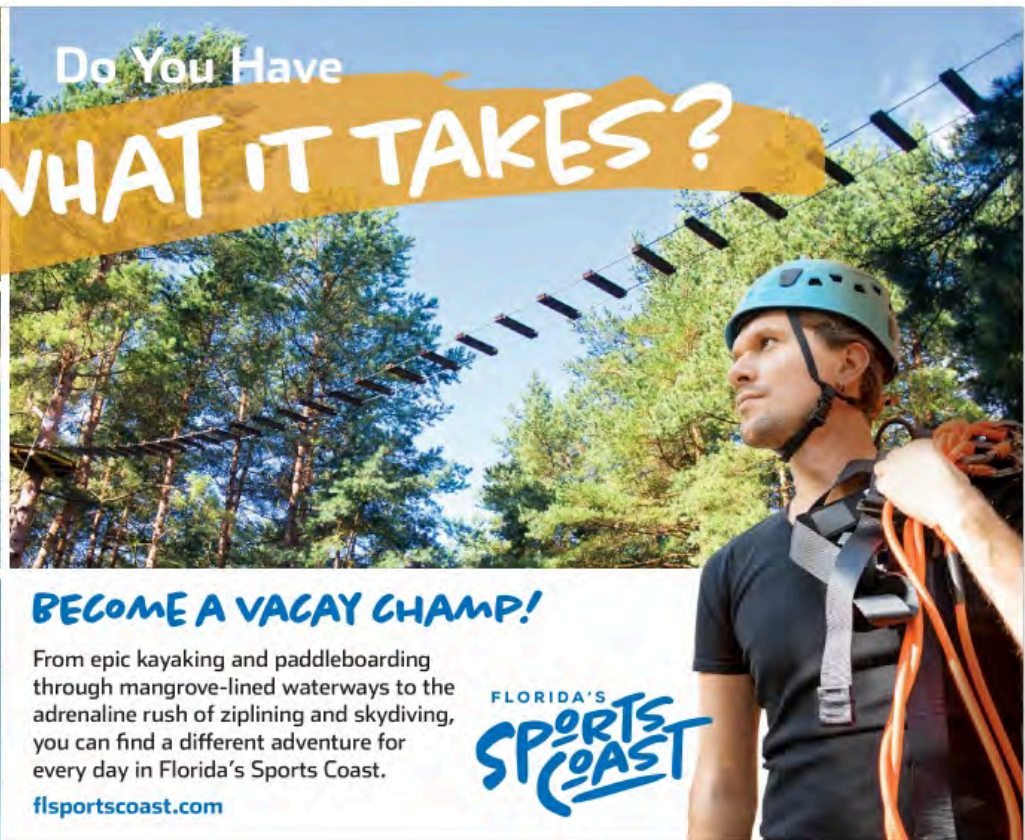
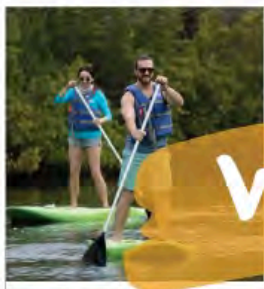
			ZEPHYRHILLS	TAMPA
	DADE CITY	19	11	23
NEW PORT RICHEY	40	28	40	38



LEVEL UP YOUR NEXT SPORTING EVENT

This unrivaled sports facility is a 98,000 square-foot indoor and outdoor venue for hosting epic volleyball and basketball tournaments, dance and cheer competitions and other competitive sports. With fitness areas, a 360-degree viewing mezzanine, meeting spaces, soccer fields, outdoor event fields and an adjacent hotel, this state of the art facility has everything your team or tournament needs all in one convenient location.

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Do You Have

WHAT IT TAKES?

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From epic kayaking and paddleboarding through mangrove-lined waterways to the adrenaline rush of ziplining and skydiving, you can find a different adventure for every day in Florida's Sports Coast.

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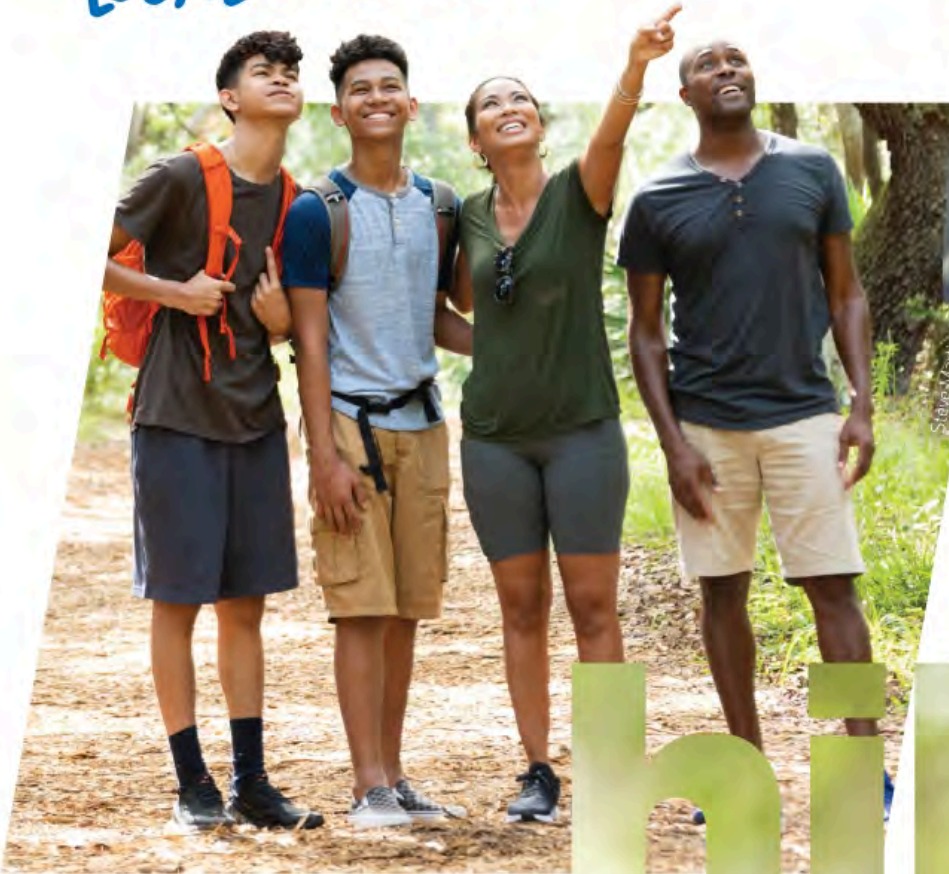




**Adventure across Florida's Sports Coast on two feet,
two wheels and two paddles**

Kevin Wiatrowski

BRING YOUR BINOCULARS
TO SPOT THE DOZENS
OF MIGRATING AND
LOCAL SPECIES.



Steve Marling

LEFT
Discover local flora and
fauna at Jay B. Starkey
Wilderness Park

hike

THE OUTDOORS ARE CALLING your team to adventure along Florida's Sports Coast. Whether you want to hike, bike or paddle, you'll find plenty of ways to put your feet on the trail, your mettle to the pedal or your hand on a paddle. So, get out there and get going. Adventure awaits!

Hiking

With some of the region's largest and most beautiful natural areas, Florida's Sports Coast offers miles of exciting hiking trails to get you hiking or trail-running among Florida's breathtaking landscape and native wildlife. New Port Richey's **Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park** offers 27 miles of well-maintained, marked trails that take you through native live oak forests, along the blackwater Anclote River and through majestic cypress swamps. The trails are interconnected, letting you wander, explore and find your way back to the start.



LEFT
The boardwalk behind Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park's Research Center

BELOW
There's much to discover at Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park



Scan to explore camping at Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park.



You'll find trails that fit every ability level. Take the kids and pets on the paved trails near the nature center and campground or bring your backpack and hiking shoes for some long-distance trails into the untamed backcountry. Starkey Wilderness Park is on the Great Florida Birding Trail, so bring your binoculars to spot any of the dozens of migrating and local species that share the park during the year.

Near Dade City, you'll find even more trails to explore on the West Track of the **Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve**. Despite its name, this portion of the Green Swamp is mostly high and dry, so there's no need to worry about getting your feet wet. The miles of multi-use trails create an extensive network that serves hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders alike across the preserve. That means it's important to know who has the right of way when you encounter other groups on the trail (spoiler: horses always get the right of way).

The 37,500-acre West Tract of the Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve includes miles of the Withlacoochee River and a section of the 1,100-mile-long **Florida National Scenic Trail** (look for the orange blazes on trees) along with a mix of awe-inspiring native landscapes such as longleaf pine forests, live oak hammocks and saw palmetto thickets. In the spring, you can even pick blackberries or blueberries along some trails!

Bordering the Green Swamp Preserve, the **Withlacoochee River Park** offers five miles of paved and unpaved trails through native sandhills as well as views of the ancient cypress trees and tea-colored waters of the Withlacoochee River as it flows north toward the Gulf of Mexico.

bike

Biking

Dozens of miles of bike trails make Florida's Sports Coast a pedaling paradise. Whether you love the Tour de France or racing along single-track in the woods, you'll find your favorite way to get in gear here.

For road riders, the **Suncoast Trail** runs parallel to the Suncoast Parkway for more than 30 miles. The paved route is one of the longest continuous bike routes in Florida. Riders can





access the trail where it crosses several major highways, including State Road 52, State Road 54, and Ridge Road.

The Suncoast Trail has a connection to Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park, letting riders explore the park's 7.3-mile paved trail and the 12 miles of unpaved, single-track mountain biking paths that wind through the park. Riders can discover native Florida plants and animals on their ride.

The 46-mile **Withlacoochee State Trail**, a linear state park that is the longest paved trail in Florida, begins just north of Dade City near the community of Trilby and runs north through historic communities. The level, paved trail runs parallel to the Withlacoochee River as it follows the course of the former Atlantic Coast Line Railroad.

The West Track of the Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve—a few miles east of Dade City—features an extensive network of multiuse trails that are open to mountain biking along with hiking and horseback riding. The trails are mostly dry and sandy, despite being part of a swamp.

To find even more trails to explore, pick up a copy of the Florida's Sports Coast biking map.

THE WORLD BENEATH THE WATER COMES ALIVE.



padding

LEFT
Bikers get ready

BELOW
Biking the Withlacoochee State Trail

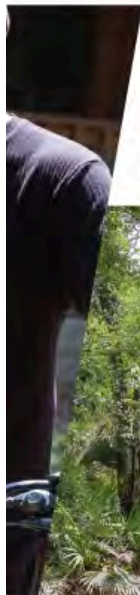
RIGHT
Paddle along our gulf and rivers

A PEDALING & PADDLING PARADISE.

Paddling

Leave your boots and bikes behind and dip a paddle into the sparkling **Gulf of Mexico** along Florida's Sports Coast. Rent a one- or two-person kayak from Salty Dog Kayaks or a stand-up paddle board from Windsong Charters & Boat Rentals and make your way to the open waters. From this vantage point so close above the water, the world beneath comes alive. Catch glimpses of rays, redfish and mullet as they zig and zag away from your paddle. Making your way toward Durney Key, you'll want to get a closer look at the iconic **stilt houses**. Originally built as rough shelters for working fishermen, they're privately owned—you can paddle around them, but cannot climb up.

Bring your own boat to explore the **Withlacoochee River** just east of Dade City. The unique blackwater river passes beneath primeval cypress forests where kayakers can fish or just soak up the silence of unspoiled nature. Paddlers can access the river from Withlacoochee River Park or the West Tract of the Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve.



Steve Martine

Plan a bar crawl along Florida's Sports Coast

Stephen Kubiak



Scan to check out the Florida's Sports Coast Ale Trail.

LIKE BASEBALL, BEER IS ONE OF AMERICA'S FAVORITE PASTIMES.

On hot summer days, like we have in the Sunshine State, nothing beats watching a game with a cold one in hand. Florida is home to a thriving craft brewery scene and Florida's Sports Coast is no exception. From local, Old Florida watering holes to one of the largest craft brewers in the state, the Sports Coast is slinging brews for all tastes. Let's take a quick run around the bases, er, breweries on the local ale trail and have a few samples along the way.

In The Loop Brewing

Located under moss-covered cypress trees along Lake Padgett in Land O' Lakes, **In The Loop Brewing** specializes in IPAs and Belgian-style beers. If you're looking for eats, food trucks are often available and offer everything from Indian cuisine to breakfast fries. Their spacious garden is perfect for families, friends or taking the team out after a game. While the beer menu rotates frequently, be sure to check out their impressive selection of IPAs by ordering a beer flight. If you're looking for a lager with a view of the lake, this brewery is for you.

Big Storm Brewing Co.

Arguably the heaviest hitter of the Sports Coast Ale Trail, **Big Storm Brewing Co.** has expanded its locations and distribution all across the South, but Odessa, Florida is where it all started. Once awarded "Best Florida Beer" in the Florida Beer Championship, the taproom keeps around 20 beers available. For those visiting for the first time, try the Wavemaker Amber Ale—a beer that put Big Storm on the map and has been brewed for over a decade.

Escape Brewing Company

Since 2014, this brewery in Trinity, Florida has grown from two guys, a brew kit and a passion for beer to almost 2,000 barrels brewed yearly. **Escape Brewing Company** offers just that, a taproom with a laid-back vibe with a view right into the tap-house. While the Other West Coast IPA will slam your senses with the abundance of hops, the Poolside Chill, a Berliner Weisse with guava, grapefruit and lime, is like summer in a glass.

Cotee River Brewing Company

In historic downtown New Port Richey, Florida, you'll find a brewery that is steeped in the past. **Cotee River Brewing Company**, named for the nearby Pithlachascotee River, offers a rustic atmosphere with old photos from the past 100 years hung along the walls. The beer, however, is quite modern and diverse—from strawberry chocolate stouts to blueberry blondes. When you visit, try the Market Fresh Wheat, it's the first beer they created and is made with tea from a local tea shop.



Zephyrhills Brewing Company

You've probably heard of the water, now check out the beer! The first brewery to open in East Pasco County, **Zephyrhills Brewing Company** brews on a smaller system, which means smaller batches and more room to experiment. The brewery offers your staples, but try something new, like their watermelon Berliner or strawberry goze. How about a Polish Smoked Ale? Bring your spirit of adventure and your pup to this dog-friendly brewery.

Infusion Brewing Company

Beer-loving brothers-in-law James Bishop and Andy Kernaghan started their microbrewery **Infusion Brewing Company** in 2017. Since then, they've held true to their motto: "good beer with good friends." They serve a variety of wheat beers, pale ales and IPAs, as well as some of the best guest taps from around the state. Regularly scheduled live music and trivia nights means more time to spend drinking their good beer with your good friends.

Florida Avenue Brewing Co.

The newest brewery to join the field in Florida's Sports Coast is **Florida Avenue Brewing Co.** Here you'll find a full roster of brews, but you'll want to taste the more inventive creations, such as the award-winning You're My Boy, Blue! blueberry wheat ale and 100 Hues rainbow sherbet Berliner Weisse. You can sample some of the local favorite brews in the expansive tasting room or in the family-friendly beer garden, then grab a meal at the full-service restaurant.




ABOVE

Beer and a lobster roll at Florida Ave. Brewing

LEFT

A selection of Big Storm Brewing's offerings

Big Storm Brewing



Search the waters of Florida's Sports Coast for scallops

Sam Boykin
Photos by Mike Winkles (unless noted)

A FAMILY SCAVENGER HUNT

SCALLOPING SEASON HAD JUST BEGUN along Florida's Sports Coast and we needed snorkel gear and scalloping kits for this adventure. One of Florida's ultimate underwater scavenger hunts, scalloping is a summer tradition and this year our family was trying our hands at it: a day on the water in search of the elusive and edible bay scallop.

My family and I were at the **Bait Depot** in Port Richey preparing for our trip and that's where we met local avid scalloper, Betsy Rutkowski. Having scalloped the Gulf Coast for many years, Betsy advised the first-timers in my family—wife, Melissa, and our kids Scott, 14, and Emily, 11—to start this adventure humbly. “You have to be patient and look for the tiniest of movements underwater,” Rutkowski explained. We perused the store with Betsy as she guided us to the necessary gear while explaining the keys to a successful day on the water.

“You just float and start looking underwater,” she said. “Our kids compare scallop hunting to an underwater Easter egg hunt.”

The typical scalloping kit includes a net, a catch bag and gloves but all you really need is a snorkel, mask, and fins. We



Florida's Sports Coast



also bought snorkel gear, a cooler to fill with ice and dive flags, which are required by law. Scalloping season lasts for 37 days along Florida's Sports Coast, starting the first of July, and thankfully the locals make it easy for even out-of-towners to get in on the hunt.

FIND THE WATER'S BOUNTY

We chose a guided scalloping adventure with **Captain Mark Dillingham** for this first scallop venture, but if you take your own boat, you'll need to apply for a salt-water fishing license prior to your trip. Captain Mark has been leading fishing excursions for years and has a keen eye for the best scalloping spots year to year. (Be aware if you have a big group; most boat charters are limited to four passengers per boat.) A popular launch spot is at Nick's Park boat ramp, which provides access to the Pithlachascotee River leading out to the Gulf waters.

ABOVE
Fun for the family

BELOW
Scalloping boats wave at one another

RIGHT
The crew setting up for a scalloping dive

Our day began with blue skies and a warm breeze as our boat drifted along the Pithlachascotee River, snaking through the grassy marshlands as we made our way to the Gulf of Mexico. Bay scallops, smaller than the larger Atlantic version, are found in both grassy and sandy areas and it wasn't long before we approached known scalloping areas.

It takes a mix of detective work and luck to find the right stopping point for your boat in these areas, but experienced scallopers will tell you if you don't see scallops when you first stop, be quick to move on to your next location. Talk to boaters passing by or look for people stopped in specific areas for further clues.



SCALLOP HUNTING IS AN UNDERWATER EASTER EGG HUNT.

ABOVE
You can't beat the views

LEFT
A day scalloping is a day well spent

BELOW
The unique shape of the scallop shell



Scan to experience scalloping in Florida's Sports Coast.



It's just as much fun to meet other groups are also scalloping and exchange tips on locations and adventures. You can tell by the tips who has more experience scalloping and who understands the methodical approach needed for a successful bounty.

Captain Mark reminded my family to stay focused as our boat made its first stop. Scott and Emily were quick to put on their gear and hop into the water, which was warm and had great visibility.

We learned you can spot scallops, at the right angle, by the reflection of their eyes into the water, which are arranged along the edge of their mantles. Scanning through the seagrass, I finally spotted one hiding among the blades with its shell open, blue eyes shining and dove quickly to grab it. Scallops can swim away, but they are easy to grab once you spot them.

Pleased with my quarry and wanting to show my family who's the fastest scallop hunter, I turned around holding my prize high only to find Emily had beaten me to catching the first scallop!

Among our crew, the friendly competition instead turned into who could find the most scallops. Captain Mark placed his bets on Scott scoring the most, and reminded us that each boat can only take 10 gallons of scallops back to shore.

Swimming in the grassy and sandy areas along the Gulf floor, the water ranged from three feet deep, where you could walk or snorkel, to a bit deeper, where more diving was needed. Once our mesh bags started to swell with scallops, we each came back from our snorkel efforts to compare who had found the most. We counted aloud as we loaded up the cooler together and, thanks to her keen eye, Melissa proved victorious. Scott, who came in second by only two scallops, called for a recount, but he settled down once we opted to evenly split our bounty.



TOP
The Bait Depot has you covered

ABOVE
A day in the sun on calm waters

FEAST ON THE SPOILS

Once we gathered our scallops for the day, we knew there was work ahead of us to clean and prepare the scallops for eating. Captain Mark told us most people use a spoon, but locals are known to use a wet-vac once the shell is pried open and removed to clean off the “goop.” Once cleaned, the meat of the bay scallops is beige colored and needs to be kept on ice.

Just down the road from the dock, we took our spoils to Port Richey Waterfront Park, where we could go about cleaning the catches of the day while still basking under the Florida sun. We divided up our tasks to get our scallops cleaned and it didn't take long before they were ready to cook.

Following Captain Mark's suggestion, we took our cleaned-up scallop meat on ice to Gill Dawg Tiki Bar and Grill, a Port Richey restaurant within walking distance from the boat ramp and the park. There, **Gill Dawg** will prepare your scallops—or any fresh-caught fish—by frying,



grilling or sautéing. Daringly, we asked for all three ways and served with pasta. While we waited for the chefs to work their culinary magic, we sat out on the deck and enjoyed the shimmering sunset views of the bayou.

In whatever manner you like scallops prepared, it was a spectacular way for us to end a day of new family adventures and memories. Our scallops were cooked to perfection, delicious and succulent, and knowing that our family had provided the star feature of the dishes made the meal even better! This was a chance for us to enjoy the food we had captured, cleaned and consumed—a phenomenal finale to an unforgettable day.

BELOW

Scallops are an easy catch for any diver

FAR BELOW

As fresh as fresh can get



THERE'S
PEACE UNDER
THE WATER.

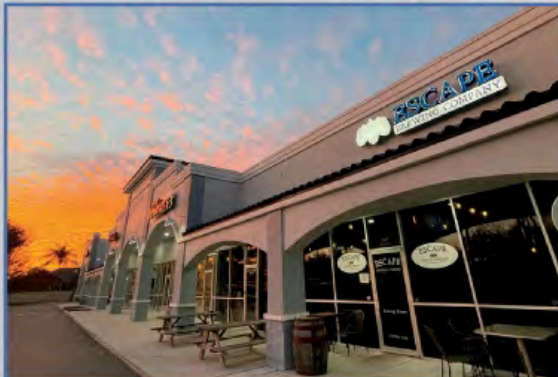
4241 Sky Dive Ln., Zephyrhills, FL 33542 | 813-783-9399 | www.skydivecity.com

WELCOME TO THE WORLD FAMOUS *Skydive City*



Skydiving, What's It Like?

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- Legendary Skydive City Z-Hills
- Make a tandem skydive with us
- See Tampa Bay from the air
- Last minute bookings online
- Sunset Bar and Cafe
- You'll love your videos and pictures



CURRENT LOCATION

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Award Winning Production Brewery & Taproom

16 Beers on Draft

Package Beer to Go

Wine & Seltzers

NEW LOCATION - OPENING SPRING 2024

11495 Trinity Blvd, Trinity, FL 34655

Award Winning Production Brewery, Taproom,

Entertainment Space & Food Hall

20 Beers on Draft

Cocktails

Wine & Seltzers



7 Food Hall Vendors

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Whether you want to make waves with thrilling new experiences in the water or you'd rather chill out and go with the flow, Florida's Sports Coast has the adventure for you.

Andrew Schaeffer

THRILLING

MY PHONE BUZZED—it was a four-word text message from Amy:

“Road trip next week.”

“Where to?” I texted back.

“Florida’s Sports Coast,” came the reply.

Now, Amy the Cruise Director is the queen of travel planning for our little found family. She’s always online researching the next great place for the four of us to explore. So, when she recommends something, the rest of us know it’s a guaranteed good time.

A week later, we were pulling into our hotel in New Port Richey, the one-time winter hangout for old-time movie stars from the 1920s and 30s. We explored the walkable downtown along the Pithlachascotee (Cotee for short) River before settling in for the night. We had an early start in the morning.

Rise & Dive

We were up with the sun and headed toward **Nauti Dawg Scuba Outpost** to start our adventure on Florida’s Sports Coast. It turns out Nauti Dawg offers diving instruction, which would have been great if we had needed it. We could have also gone snorkeling if we hadn’t been SCUBA-certified.

We were fitted out with tanks, fins and masks and, after a brief bit of instruction, we loaded into the boat and headed out into the gulf.

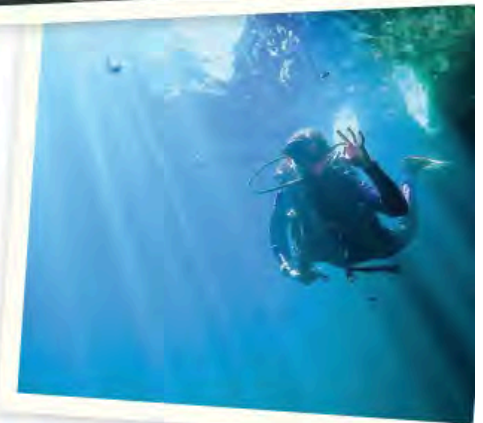
The gulf was like glass beneath a blue sky dotted with puffy white clouds. We zipped along the surface, watching the sun climb into the sky as the coast receded into the distance.



ABOVE
The state of the art
Lift rig

RIGHT
Scuba diving on
Florida's Sports
Coast

BELOW
Wakeboarding
around The Lift
Adventure Park

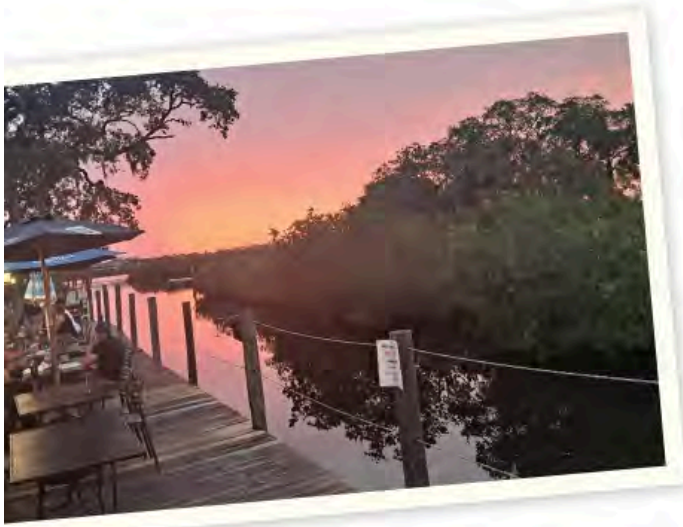


“THIS IS ALREADY AWESOME, AND WE’VE JUST GOTTEN STARTED!”

A few miles out, our captain brought the boat to a stop and we tumbled out, eager to see what the crystal blue gulf had in store for us. It did not disappoint.

The sandy bottom was peppered with rocky outcroppings covered with all kinds of amazing sea life. Soft corals and sponges sat anchored to the rocks while crabs scuttled across the sand. Suddenly the bottom erupted in a cloud and something big flew past us. Amy had startled a stingray, which zipped away to find a quieter spot.

After a picnic lunch on the boat, we tried out several other spots to explore the underwater world just along Florida’s Sports Coast. We spent hours diving and couldn’t believe all the amazing creatures we saw!



LEFT
The deck at Gill Dawg

RIGHT
Wakeboarding at The Lift Adventure Park

BOTTOM
The view of The Aqua Park from above

THIS WAS OUR
BEST TRIP EVER!



Scan to check out a video of The Lift Adventure Park.



Dinner and a Show

We arrived at the dive shop around mid-afternoon, which was the perfect time to run back to our hotel and recuperate.

A few hours later, we were all starving. Lucky for us, Nauti Dawg Scuba Outpost is attached to **Gill Dawg Tiki Bar and Grill**. A burger and a beer were just what we needed after our day on the gulf.

We drove back to the open-air, waterfront bar and found a table on the weather-worn deck overlooking Miller's Bayou.

Alongside signature burgers, Gill Dawg's menu was loaded with great seafood, from scallops and shrimp to grouper fresh from the Gulf. Amy, our resident vegetarian, ordered a portabello mushroom sandwich and we all shared a plate of onion rings.

Just past the main building, we could see Gill Dawg's expansive outdoor stage and sand volleyball courts. About the time we finished eating, we heard a sound-check starting on the stage. So, we wandered over, ordered more drinks and settled in for the show.

The band kicked off just as the last rays of sun hung in the western sky. Soon, we were all dancing together under the glowing lights of the pavilion.

Get Air

The next morning, after a late breakfast, Amy announced we were ready for our next adventure: wakeboarding! We hustled into the car and drove a few minutes to **The Lift Adventure Park**, part of the gigantic SunWest Park in Hudson.

The park offers kayaking, a huge floating obstacle course, and a public beach. But we were there to tackle The Lift! Jackson, a member of the staff, gave us all a 20-minute tutorial and a few practice runs on the Beginner Cable before sending us over to take on System 2.0.

Sanjay, the most seasoned wakeboarder among us, was first up, and he pulled some impressive stunts using the ramps and other obstacles built into the course.

Eventually we all took our turns on the cable wakeboard. When my time came, I was a little nervous, but the thrill of the ride quickly turned me into a fan. I couldn't wait to go again.

After four hours of wakeboarding, we were all pretty tired, so we went back to our hotel to rest up and get ready for dinner. Sanjay drove us to **Whiskey Joe's Bar & Grill**, a quintessentially Florida spot with Jimmy Buffett on the speakers, beach bar where you can sink your feet in the sand, and awesome water views at the mouth of the Cotee River.

We grabbed chairs around one of the fire pits, ordered awesome cocktails and spent a couple hours reliving the excitement of our Florida's Sports Coast trip as the setting sun painted the sky vibrant reds and oranges.

Amy, queen of travel, summed it up for all of us: "This was our best trip ever!"



CHILLING



ABOVE
Nothing tops
a day on the boat



RIGHT
The stunning Epperson Lagoon

THE WEIGHT of a gloomy Northeast winter was heavy on my mind as I scrolled through Instagram. A shot of Caribbean blue water caught my eye.

The sparkling water and cloudless sky of **Epperson Lagoon** filled me with the urge to hit the road. I knew exactly who to take with me.

"We've got to go here," I texted Drew with a link to the website.

"That place looks amazing! When?" came the response.

After a few days of checking schedules, we had booked a long weekend in Florida. In the meantime, Drew brought Sam on board and I did more digging for other things to do.

We all love the outdoors and hanging out in the sun—something that's hard to do in New York in the winter. This was going to be just the break we needed.

Basking In The Sun

Soon after we touch down at Tampa International Airport, we pointed our rental car north toward our first destination: Epperson Lagoon.

We had booked our tickets ahead of time, so we breezed through the gate and surveyed the scene: crystal clear turquoise water filled the massive 7.5-acre lagoon ringed with bright white sand. We had our pick of paddleboarding, kayaking, swimming or just hanging out under the gorgeous Florida sun.

Sam rented a paddleboard as Drew and I watched from the lagoon's island with our toes buried in the sand. Sam was a little wobbly at first but soon got the hang of it and spent the next hour paddling all over the place.

Lunch was burgers and beers from The Reef Café, then we were back in the water and basking in the sun while steel drums played over the speaker system. It was hard to believe we weren't on an actual

Caribbean island. I had to drag the other two away from the fun. We had a big day ahead of us and needed to get ready for it.

We drove west across Florida's Sports Coast to New Port Richey for the rest of our outdoor adventure. We found our hotel, got cleaned up and headed into downtown for dinner.

New Port Richey was once the winter getaway for movie stars and athletes. Babe Ruth stayed there. So did Gloria Swanson. New Port Richey is also where the sand wedge was invented, a fact I shared with Sam, our golfer.

For dinner, we chose **The Social** and climbed the stairs to the rooftop bar. We grabbed a table as the sky lit up with oranges and reds of sunset and spent the rest of the night reliving our day on the lagoon over blackened red fish and drinks.

Fishing With History

The next morning, we loaded up our fishing gear and drove to Anclote River Park to meet Captain Curt of **Florida Backwater Charters**. We bought saltwater licenses online, and a few minutes later, we stepped off the boat onto the sugar sand of **Anclote Key Preserve State Park**.

Captain Curt waited for us as we hit the beach for surf fishing. The gulf was calm and glassy and while Drew kept an eye on the rods from the comfort of a beach chair, Sam and I explored the four-mile-long island.

I'm history buff, so I had to check out the island's star attraction: the historic lighthouse built in 1887. I only managed to get a couple selfies with the tower before Drew began shouting "Get over here, you've got something!"

Sam's rod was bending with a fish fighting on the other end. A short fight later, Sam was holding the trout with a huge smile.



LEFT
Anclote Sand Bar is a favorite spot

RIGHT
Stand up paddleboarding

BOTTOM
Wine and dine at Sip on Grand

"THIS WAS AN EXCELLENT IDEA. WHEN ARE WE COMING BACK?"



Paddle And Pedal

A short drive north, we pulled into **Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park** and found **Salty Dog Kayak Rentals**. The staff there fitted us out with sit-on-top kayaks, gave us a map of the paddling trail through the park and off we went.

We've been kayaking up north plenty of times, but it was never like this. We threaded our way among acres of mangrove trees and bubbling salt springs. "Check it out!" Sam shouted from the lead boat. A huge shadow moved just beneath the water. A moment later, a round snout covered in long whiskers broke the surface: a manatee.

We floated along with the gentle giant for a while as it grazed on sea grass.

We paddled back to the kayak launch shortly before closing and headed back to our hotel to freshen up and change.

We found the door to **Sip on Grand** tucked in a corner next to the Richey Suncoast Theater. It felt like a place the Babe might have hung out back in the day, though the menu is probably a little fancier than he was used to.

We aren't what you'd call wine experts, but the staff was happy to help us find wines that worked for us. We found seats in the cozy confines and ordered two plates of charcuterie to eat.

Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* was playing on the big screen along the back wall when I noticed something move out of the corner of my eye. The large bench and coat rack (something like what my grandmother has in her front hall) swung forward. There was a secret room behind it!

Sip on Grand, it turned out, had a speakeasy! The Babe would be proud. We managed to score some time of our own in the secret room and raised a glass to our winter weekend under the sun along Florida's Sports Coast.

"This was an excellent idea," Sam said. "When are we coming back?"



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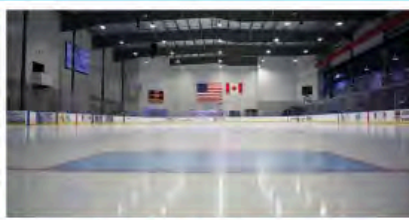
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The sky's the limit for high-energy aerial adventures

Andrew Schaeffer

TAKE YOUR
VACATION
TO NEW HEIGHTS.



ABOVE
Soaring high thanks to
CloudBase PPG

LEFT
Expert skydivers at
Skydive City

EVERYONE ALREADY KNOWS Florida's Sports Coast is filled with exciting escapades on the water and awesome natural areas to explore on land. But if you're still wanting even more epic experiences, look up to discover more adrenaline-pumping adventures above Florida's Sports Coast.

Free Falling

Take your vacation to thrilling new heights with **Skydive City**. Their instructors have been guiding jumpers on skydives for more than 30 years, and know exactly how to coach new jumpers through the exhilaration of that first jump. Once they help you scoot out the door, you'll feel the intense rush as you free fall at 110 miles per hour down to Earth. Your tandem instructor will point out sights as you fall and control the parachute for the landing. Once you're back on the ground, you'll no doubt feel like you can conquer the world! You'll get to relive the experience with a video of your jump, focused on your face as you took your dive. Thanks to the perpetually gorgeous weather here along Florida's Sports Coast, there's no better place to make your first—or fiftieth—jump.

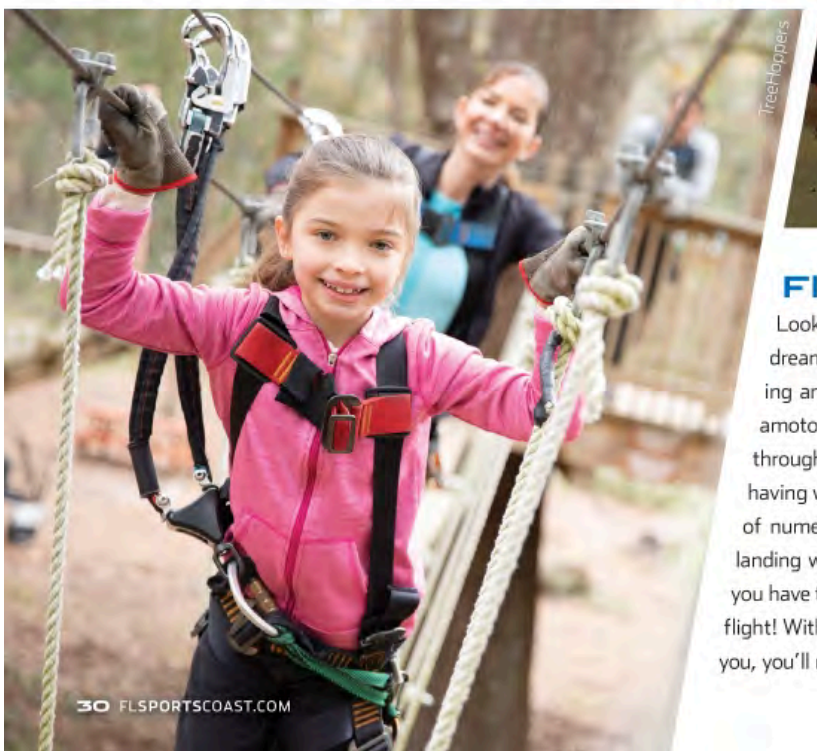


LEFT
Exploring the course
at TreeHoppers Aerial
Adventure Park

RIGHT
All smiles at
CloudBase PPG

Full Swing

Run, climb, balance, zip and swing from tree to tree at **TreeHoppers Aerial Adventure Park**. With 10 courses and more than 100 unique elements to overcome, you'll be challenged both physically and mentally on how to navigate through each trail. Adventurers of all ages and skills are welcome here, and each of the courses is rated by difficulty to ensure your path is exactly as challenging as you'd like. And no need to worry about losing your footing—you'll be strapped into a safety harness to make sure you stay up in the Old Florida forest treetops. To take your experience up a notch, check out the park after dark for the Cosmic Night Climb, complete with dynamic lighting, music, and more.



Flying High

Looking to get into a new hobby that will finally achieve your dream of flying? **CloudBase PPG** can set you up with training and purchasing your new favorite toy. Specializing in paramotoring—think of hang gliding with a motor propelling you through the air—is likely the closest humans will ever feel to having wings of our own. One-on-one training sessions consist of numerous tows so new pilots can experience takeoff and landing without attaching the engine to their backs, and once you have that muscle memory down it's time for your first solo flight! With agile controlling and no firm structure surrounding you, you'll never feel more free.

RELAX **BOLDLY**



TAMPA BAY
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With miles of dazzling waterfront, authentic culture, cuisine and nightlife, Tampa Bay has a million ways to play. All with an easy, laid-back vibe.

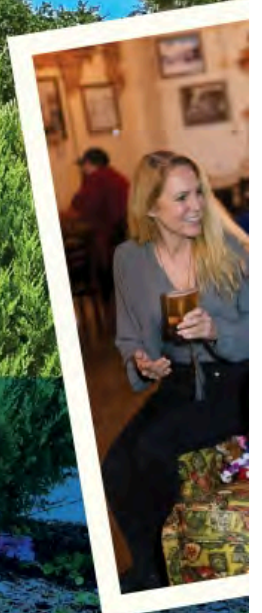
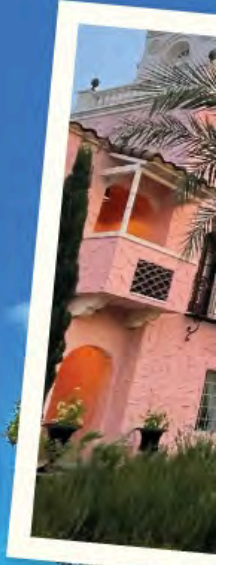
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Find fun in Florida's Sports Coast's communities

Skye Rodgers

On The Town

WHEN IT COMES TO WHERE TO SHOP,
eat and spend some time on Florida's Sports Coast, there is
plenty to discover in the region's main municipalities—
New Port Richey, Dade City, Zephyrhills and Wesley Chapel.



Score Deals and Sip Wine in Downtown NPR

Located close to Gulf shores is charming, historic downtown **New Port Richey**—or, as the locals call it, NPR. Compact and walkable, you can score some sweet deals at the gift shops before hitting up one of the many restaurants and pubs that cluster around Main Street.

Step into the perfectly pink **Hacienda Hotel** and step back in time. Opened in 1927, the Hacienda is one of Florida's original pink hotels and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Spanish-style gem reopened in 2022 following a multi-year renovation. Today, the hotel features 40 rooms and a signature restaurant called Sasha's. Try their popular shrimp capellini—so good!



FEATURED
Hacienda Hotel in New Port Richey

ABOVE
The hotel blushing at sunset

BELOW
Grab a drink at Ordinance One

**Wish You
Were Here!**
ZEPHYRHILLS NEW PORT RICHEY



NPR's downtown also features a vibrant community theater and playhouse, the **Richey Suncoast Theatre**. This historic theater was built in 1925 to show silent movies before being restored and converted. If you feel like catching a show, the theater hosts a variety of events, from comedy shows to musicals to vintage film screenings.

If you're heading out for a night on the town, downtown NPR has plenty of dining and nightlife options. Featuring an extensive bourbon bar, live music and a menu filled with Florida–New Orleans fusion cuisine, **Bourbon on Main** is the perfect place to keep the excitement going. Grab a seat outside and enjoy your meal on the large patio, then head upstairs for games on the deck above the bar. Looking for a delicious craft brew? Head over to **Ordinance One** and sip on one of the 12 ever-changing craft beers on tap. For a different take on local sips, take a seat in **The White Herron Tea & Gifts'** tearoom and experience a relaxed retreat into casual elegance. Introduce the tradition of tea to the next generation, or recapture your love of enjoying a perfect cup of tea, delightful conversation, finger sandwiches, scones and other treats.



Make Dade City Your Home Base

Dade City is the perfect home base for exploring Florida's Sports Coast's inland activities and attractions. The downtown is walkable and has a variety of shops and restaurants to explore. The historic Pasco County Courthouse is downtown's centerpiece and was built back in 1909 to help establish the newly created Pasco County. Today, it's on the National Register of Historic Places.

The stunning **Mirada Lagoon** stretches out as far as you can see in nearby San Antonio. This 15-acre, crystal clear lagoon is Florida's largest, and offers visitors the beach-paradise you only thought was possible in the movies. You can bask on truly white-sand beaches or challenge your crew to a race on the floating obstacle course.

Antique lovers will definitely score big in Dade City, as it's home to several popular antique and vintage stores that attract shoppers, collectors and bargain hunters. Once you've worked up an appetite, it's time to tackle some of the town's dining experiences. Early birds will want to check out **Florida Cracker Lunch on Limoges**, a downtown mainstay serving only breakfast and lunch. Their menu features a variety of Southern favorites that will leave you feeling like a champ.

Head to **Kafe Kokopelli**, located in a renovated Ford Model-T sales-room, for lunch or dinner. Recognized as one of the area's best restaurants, their award-winning menu features a wide variety of American favorites. Also in downtown Dade City is the popular **Green Door on 8th**. This well-known regional restaurant offers lunch and dinner in a stylish yet comfortable atmosphere. Best known for its Wagyu beef and fresh seafood, this restaurant focuses on using local, seasonal ingredients.

LEFT

Relax in style at Mirada Lagoon

BELOW LEFT

Shop and relax at Tampa Premium Outlets

ABOVE RIGHT

Try local fare at Green Door on 8th

MIDDLE RIGHT

Soar higher with Black Diamond Balloon

BELOW RIGHT

Explore the shops at KRATE

Dade City is also known for its annual festivals and events. The beloved annual **Kumquat Festival** is a unique Old Florida event celebrating "the little gold gems of the citrus industry." The festival is held around the historic courthouse, where visitors can enjoy music, eat delicious food and visit dozens of arts and crafts vendor booths. The size of a grape, you'll find the sweet and tart kumquat fruits incorporated into everything from pies to soap.

Another annual event that draws visitors from all over is the **Bay Area Renaissance Festival**. Every February and March, revelers meet in the magical 16th century village of Fittlesworth to enjoy a variety of Renaissance-inspired entertainment, food and crafts. Get in the spirit and dress the part!

If you're feeling brave, then **Scream-A-Geddon Horror Park** is the ultimate challenge. Be ready for a scare when you visit Dade City in September or October. From investigating mysterious disappearances at Bloodwater Bayou to getting chased by a maniacal, chainsaw-wielding clown, these six elaborate haunts will have you screaming for more.

Find the Zip in Zephyrhills

Known as the "City of Pure Water," **Zephyrhills** may be most famous for the Zephyrhills Water company that bottles the pure, refreshing water of nearby Crystal Springs. The spring is located in the **Crystal Springs Preserve**, a 530-acre private sanctuary dedicated to environmental education and preservation.

Also in Zephyrhills is the state-of-the-art **Sarah Vande Berg Tennis & Wellness Center**. This unique tennis center provides players with access to lessons, leagues, socials and tournaments. In addition to a tennis



academy, the SVB Tennis Center offers programs in padel, pickleball, beach volleyball and fitness.

It's hard to beat a good barbecue, but one way to do it is to add great live music, and expand it to become a whole event. The **Pigz in Z'hills BBQ & Blues Fest** is held annually at the Zephyrhills Municipal Airport on the third Saturday in January, and is centered around a Florida BBQ Association sanctioned competition featuring dozens of barbecue teams.

For those seeking adventure, **Skydive City** is where you want to be. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced skydiver, Skydive City supports all types of skydiving activities. On the ground, Skydive City encourages you to stick around and enjoy the amenities, including a pro shop, restaurant and bar and even an RV park and campground if you want to stay onsite.

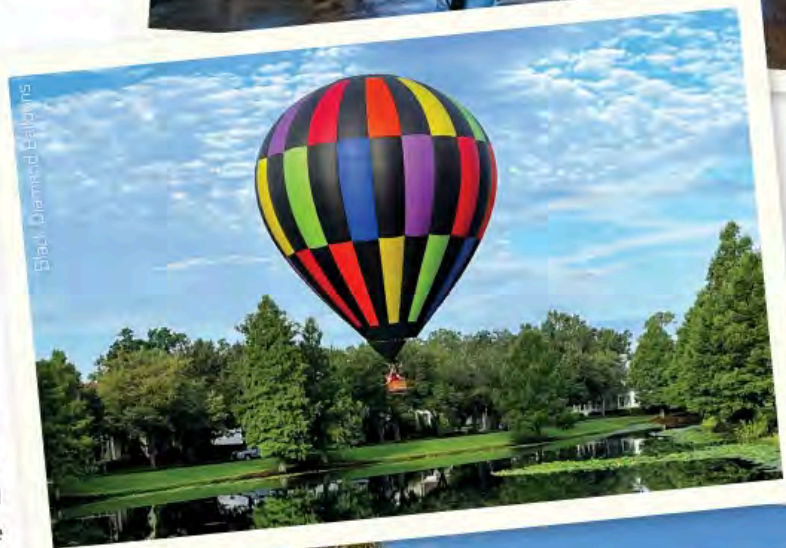
Winning in Wesley Chapel

Visitors to **Wesley Chapel** can access a wide variety of sports and leisure facilities. One unique example is the **Epperson Lagoon**, a 7.5-acre artificial lagoon located nearby. In addition to swimming and sunbathing, there are a variety of water experiences you can choose from, including paddleboarding, a floating obstacle course and a waterslide. When you get tired, just swim up to the bar for a drink or something to eat.

There may be no better way to take in the expanse of Florida's natural beauty and our collection of communities than from a hot air balloon floating gently in the blue skies. Captain Kurt at **Black Diamond Balloons** will help make this experience truly spectacular. Whether you're looking to pop the big question in style or looking to check hot air ballooning off your bucket list, you can make it happen in Florida's Sports Coast.

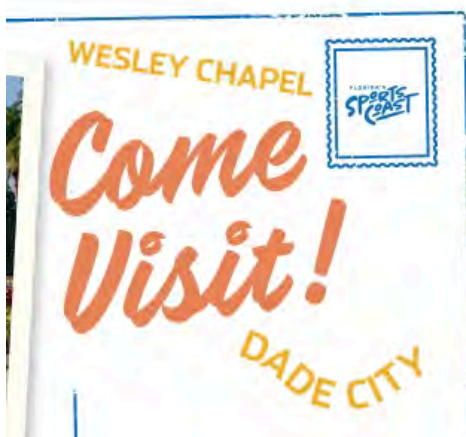
Wesley Chapel is also a mecca for shoppers and features three major outdoor shopping areas.

The Shops at Wiregrass is an open-air lifestyle village with over 100 eclectic stores and restaurants lining the sidewalks. But, if you're a bargain shopper, you'll want to head



straight for **Tampa Premium Outlets** for savings at over 100 designer and brand name retailers.

Another unique shopping area can be found at **The Grove**. Anchored by popular national and regional retailers, this open-air shopping area also features local boutiques and family entertainment. The Grove is also home to **KRATE**, one of the largest container parks in the world, with 94 shipping containers that have been transformed into unique shops and restaurants. Designed to promote locally owned businesses and vendors, visitors enjoy a mix of unique artisan products and ethnic cuisines.



Hitting the links along Florida's Sports Coast

Sam Boykin

TEE TIME



SITUATED BETWEEN TAMPA AND OCALA, FLORIDA'S SPORTS COAST

is a haven for those who love fun in the sun, especially golf. And with its rolling green hills and scenic coastlines, Pasco County is a one-of-a-kind destination with a host of superlative courses, making it the ideal golf getaway. So, call your buddies, pack your clubs and enjoy a round (or three or four) at these top courses.

Saddlebrook Resort

Featuring two on-site courses designed by Arnold Palmer, **Saddlebrook Resort** is a world-class golf destination, featuring rolling fairways and impeccably maintained greens, all in a stunning natural setting. The 6,641-yard, par 71 Palmer course requires both strength and finesse. Many holes have generous driving areas, the fairways resemble a New England course and the greens are surrounded by thick Bermuda rough, creating a fun yet challenging experience. The 6,480-yard Saddlebrook Golf Course is noted for its natural beauty, with cypress and oak trees, low-hanging Spanish moss, and a pond with gators, turtles and birds. But don't let the pleasant scenery of this par 70 course fool you, as it offers plenty of challenges, especially the tricky 425-yard 18th hole, famous for its narrow emerald-ribbon fairway. In addition to the two courses, Saddlebrook Resort also boasts a state-of-the-art training center and pro shop.



FEATURED AND TOP

You'll find pure greens at Saddlebrook Resort

RIGHT

Saddlebrook Resort's spectacular pool

BOTTOM

Sunset at Fox Hollow Golf Club

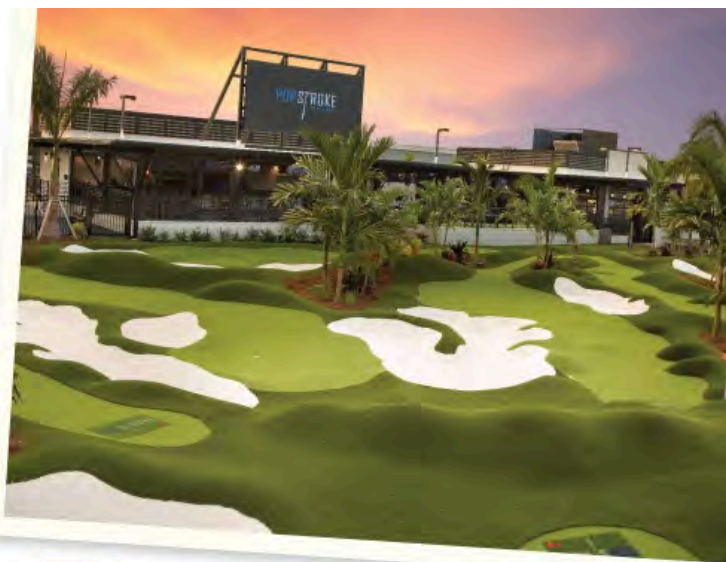
Lake Jovita Golf & Country Club

Noted for its rolling hills and surprising elevation changes, **Lake Jovita Golf & Country Club** offers two beautiful 18-hole courses.

The South Course, designed by Tom Lehman, features wide fairways but still demands focus and accuracy, with multiple ponds and lakes forcing shot making along the way. Be sure to bring your A game to the hilly, scenic North Course, designed by Kurt Sandness. And take in the view at the second hole—where the sloping green is flanked by a deep bunker—which offers five miles of visibility. After a day on the links, enjoy a great meal and your favorite beverage at the resort's main dining room or the more casual bar and grill.

PopStroke

For a different kind of golf experience, check out the new **PopStroke** location in Lutz. Founded in 2018 and with none other than Tiger Woods as a partner and investor, PopStroke offers technologically advanced “golf entertainment” combined with casual dining and hospitality. At the Lutz location, Woods and his team created two 18-hole putting courses, built with synthetic turfs and complete with fairways, bunkers, and rough. You can enjoy beer, wine, or handcrafted cocktails delivered to you on the course, or dine inside at the full-service restaurant. Other attractions include an outdoor gaming area and a playground.



Check out all of Florida Sport's Coast's golf courses.

ABOVE

PopStroke's amazing mini-golf course layout

LEFT

Treat yourself at PopStroke

BELOW LEFT

Above the greens at Fox Hollow Golf Club



ANOTHER ROUND

Check out these other top courses along Florida's Sports Coast:

Fox Hollow Golf Club designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr, features a 7,079-yard course with Seashore Paspalum greens, rolling fairways, and large white-sand bunkers, along with a grass driving range and more than 25 hitting stations.

Put your skills to the test at **Plantation Palms Golf Club**, which boasts a 6,735-yard, par 72 championship course filled with naturally rolling terrain and abundant wildlife.

Enjoy a round of golf and the stunning scenery at the **Lexington Oaks Golf Club**. The 6,748-yard course runs through woods, lakes and marshlands, providing an ideal backdrop for a day on the links.

An old-style course that winds along gently rolling hills, **Scotland Yards Golf Club** offers great conditions with a European flair.

Seven Springs Golf & Country Club is one of the region's most picturesque courses. At 6,566 yards, the challenging par 72 course features generous fairways, velvet greens and immaculate course conditions.



SADDLEBROOK

TAMPA BAY'S QUINTESSENTIAL GOLF & TENNIS RESORT

Saddlebrook Resort welcomes visitors from all over the world to enjoy all we have to offer - from our half-million gallon superpool to our multi-faceted venues for golf, meetings, tennis, dining, vacation getaways, and social events... all within minutes of Tampa International Airport.



Play our two Arnold Palmer signature courses, or let us host your next tournament.



With our 95,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, we are built to hold meetings and conferences that will exceed your expectations.



Home of champions! Our 43 tennis courts are of all four Grand Slam tournament surfaces and several pickleball courts.



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Stories straight from the field show it's always a winning play to book the sports facilities on Florida's Sports Coast



LEFT
Pickleball at Sarah
Vande Berg
Tennis Center

BELOW
AdventHealth Center Ice

THERE'S A REASON PASCO COUNTY

is known as Florida's Sports Coast: With numerous world-class sports facilities spread throughout the region, you'll have no trouble finding the perfect state-of-the-art sports complex to host your next big tournament. While these snippets only highlight a handful of the events at some of the area's sports venues, you can be sure there are plenty more for you to experience yourself.

AdventHealth Center Ice

The whip and *kachink* of blades carving and careening off ice ... ahh. It takes me back to my childhood doing figure eights on my neighborhood pond.

Fast-forward 25 years. We're escaping the heat and feeling the chill on our cheeks, whipping around on an actual Olympic-sized rink. The whole family loves it. The kids are taking their newfound ice love to the next level. Guess who's asking to play hockey? Not my son. He loves figure skating.

Both are free to choose whichever sport fires them up. **AdventHealth Center Ice** gets this. There's hockey and ice skating, lessons and team play, for kids ages 5-17, regardless of skill level. It helps that the coaches are super chill and know how to break the ice (no pun intended!). They make each student feel welcome and encouraged. I gotta say: Watching the kiddos learn to fall without getting hurt can be a nail-biter at first, but the coaches are pros and always put me at ease.



TOP
Starkey Ranch
District Park
Ball Fields

RIGHT
Wiregrass
Ranch Sports
Campus



My other half and I are renting out the center and inviting other parents for a day out. We'll be bobbing and weaving to 80s and 90s hits. The next plan is to persuade the boss to rent out the rink for an annual corporate event. The Center Ice mini rink can fit up to 50 of my coworkers, all of whom I'd love to have bow to the ice-shredder.

When Center Ice isn't hosting families like mine, pro athletes and prestigious ice-centered events like USA Hockey Championships take to the ice. On those days, it's a thrill to grab dinner and a drink at the **Top Shelf Sports Lounge** overlooking two of the rinks to see all the action.

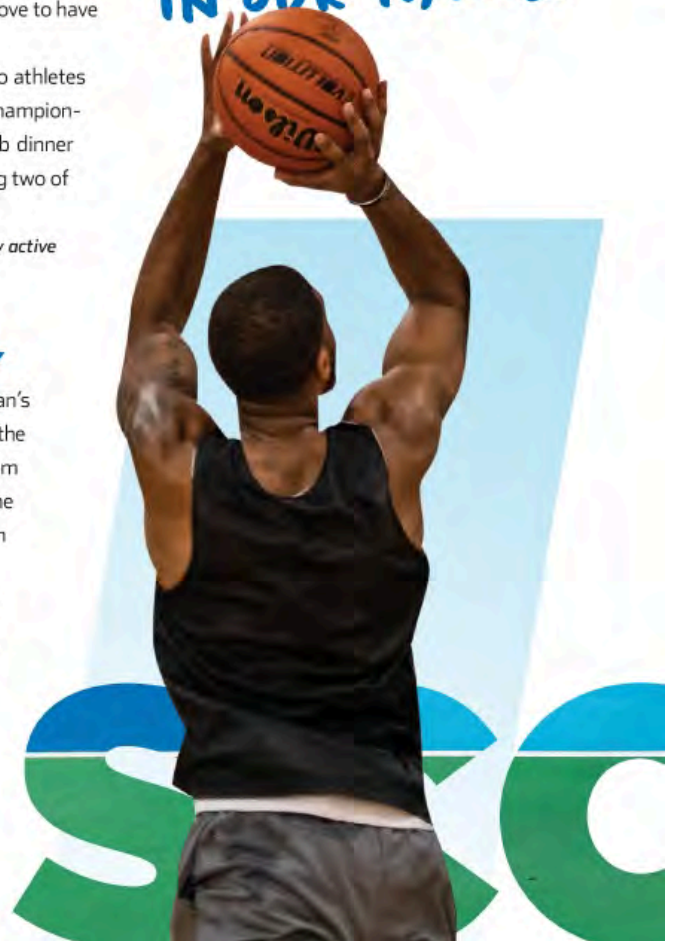
Cecilia is a mother of two in Tampa, Florida, who likes to stay active and stay social.

Wiregrass Ranch Sports Campus of Pasco County

Chin-deep in the fourth period of the girls' big game, Morgan's about to have her big moment, sneakers squealing against the court's floor in a loud rubber symphony. Gasps are audible from the bleachers. A ball is relayed a minute before the buzzer. She shoots. She scores! The girls win their first invitational playoff in one of the biggest U.S. tournaments.

Having as little stress as possible and the impressive feel of the **Wiregrass Ranch Sports Campus of Pasco County (WRSCPC)** takes a load off of me and the players. We're impressed with the next-level feel of the sports campus. Eight basketball courts in one facility! It's bigger and more deluxe than any gym or campus we've ever played. The girls' jaws dropped the moment they entered the 98,000-sq.-ft. facility. With this much space, the campus can host a variety of sports—gymnastics,

"SPORTS" IS
IN OUR NAME.



cheer, volleyball and basketball, just to name a few. And that's not even mentioning the multipurpose fields outside!

Finding the perfect hotel was a no-brainer. **The Residence Inn by Marriott** is right on-site and offers spacious luxury for the players and their families, with only a short walk to the Sports Campus' front doors. Plus, we get to celebrate our victory with dinner—and maybe a drink for coach—at **Skybox Rooftop Bar**.

Tony is a high school basketball coach in Macon, Georgia, who advocates for more accessibility in sports.

Starkey Ranch District Park

My mom reminds me to grab my helmet. She knows my friends and I aren't messing around. We're riding the 12 miles of paved trails around the Starkey Ranch District Park, which is a great way to explore this new area.

Pedaling around the park, we learn that **District Park** is part of a 150-acre site owned by Pasco County and the school district, with plenty of spaces for kids to stay active. We passed by a Little League baseball/softball field, three multipurpose fields for soccer, football or lacrosse, and plenty of space for more to come—one of my friends said they plan to add four more baseball and softball fields and six more multipurpose fields!

The system of trails around the neighborhood is also growing, and soon they will connect to the amazing nature trails in the **Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Preserve**, and then my friends and I will be able to go on real off-road adventures.

As soon as I got home, I told my mom about all the cool things at the park. I'm excited to join one of the leagues that play on a team there!

Caden is a student who recently moved to Odessa, Florida, and loves to explore the outdoors.

TOP AND LEFT
Playing at Sarah Vande Berg Tennis Center



Sarah Vande Berg Tennis & Wellness Center

I'm at **SVB Tennis & Wellness Center** with a friend to work on my backspin. Little did I know, I'd stick around twice as long as expected.

Each time I enter the sleek Art Nouveau-inspired reception area, I feel like I am transported to Monte Carlo. Elegant with a Deco-retro twist, the building was designed by Ranelid de La Cour Studio.

Back to reality. After our brisk game, I peek in on the wellness services at the center. I can feel the stress drain from my body during a professional massage that worked out all of the kinks.

The world-class tennis and wellness facility in Zephyrhills also has courts for a variety of racket-and-net-centric sports. Besides tennis, the center has pickleball and padel, which is like an open-air racquetball court, plus fitness, beach volleyball and beach tennis.

Feeling refreshed, I book a session of SVB's cryotherapy, a freezing-cold-temperature treatment that athletic doctors recommend for chronic pain and rejuvenation. I am also considering their salt therapy. Sports counseling, Replenish IV and physical therapy solutions round out all an athlete's needs. Hungry? **The Bistro at SVB** is an on-site cafe serving cuisine prepared with fresh local and domestic ingredients.

Everyone, kids through seniors, can enjoy recreation options galore. I'm planning to rope my mom and my daughter into going with me next time and making it the ultimate ladies' day. Though not necessary to enjoy all the services and amenities here, locals can take advantage of memberships to help develop their own winning tennis games. Memberships come in different tiers, from Bronze to Silver to Gold, Platinum and Lifetime. Lifetime? Not a bad idea.

Rhonda is a financial analyst in Lakeland, Florida, who plays as hard as she works.

A grand slam of kid-sized attractions

Julie Garisto



DO YOU AND THE KIDS NEED A WIN?

Lucky for you, Florida's Sports Coast scores big with the junior leaguers. From paddling and snorkeling in the Gulf of Mexico to hiking lush nature trails to feeding giraffes and even sloths, the Sports Coast features an all-star roster of kid-friendly adventures.

The life aquatic

Row, row your boat gently through Florida's Sports Coast, where salt-water adventure meets freshwater relaxation. The coastlines along New Port Richey and Port Richey extend from the vast gulf to the sinewy Cotee, Anclote and Withlacoochee rivers.

For a day of island exploration, climb aboard the tour boat with **Island Paradise Charters**. Your excursion will begin with a ride over the waves west to Anclote Key. Once ashore, you'll have plenty of time to relax on the beach, hunt for shells, wade in the warm Gulf waters, see the historic lighthouse and even have a dance party before the lunch bell rings. Grab a plate filled with fresh grilled island cuisine for lunch, or admire one of the most breathtaking sunsets you will ever see for dessert.

Windsong Charters & Boat Rentals knocks it out of the park for all-in-one aquatic fun. Charter a captained boat for a half-day, three-quarter-day and full-day voyage for snorkeling adventures or check out the mysterious shoals of Durney Key where historic stilt houses loom over the water. Or you can cruise by mansions occupied by movie stars. Cap off the day with a twilight pontoon ride as dolphins playfully jump in the wake amidst the golden glow and pink clouds of Florida's gulf sunsets.



TOP
Get up close at
Giraffe Ranch

RIGHT
Relax or
paddle on
the river



All that exploring can make you hungry. Take in more scenic water views and watch the game on big-screen TVs at **Widow Fletcher's Restaurant**, located right on the same dock as Island Paradise and Windsong. The expansive menu means there's something for everyone, and the live music makes your dinner even more exciting.

Branch out

Author Henry David Thoreau reminds us: "We can never have enough of nature." For quiet times wandering in the woods, Florida's Sports Coast has the home-field advantage.

Monkey around and swing from tree to tree at **TreeHoppers Aerial Adventure Park**. Climb, crawl and zipline through the park's 10 treetop courses and have fun traversing lofty, old-growth canopies. Color-coded trails mark beginner paths, which are closer to the ground and less challenging, and the expert-level courses. No matter



LEFT
Test your balance at
TreeHoppers

ABOVE
New friends at Hearts & Dreams
Ranch & Retreat

your skill level, this active adventure is sure to leave you feeling like you're Tarzan.

At 406 acres, the **Withlacoochee River Park** will dazzle you with tree tunnels while providing fishing docks, kayaking and hiking trails. It's also a veritable who's who of Florida wildlife with sightings of bald eagles; swallowtail kites, red tail and red-shouldered hawks, turkeys, great blue heron, red and gray fox, bobcats, alligators, gopher tortoises, black bears, river otter, snakes, owls, raccoons and wild hogs, and even the Florida Panther.

Hike the **Suncoast Trail** or hop on the **Central Pasco & Gulf Railroad** with your little ones. The miniature train—which offers free rides on the second Saturday of every month—chugs through Crews Lake Wilderness Park and is an authentic reproduction of a historic, full-sized train system built to miniature scale. Spend more time in this unusually eclectic nature park fishing, canoeing, exploring the botanical gardens or visiting the observatory.

Tooty fruity!

While oranges steal the spotlight in the Sunshine State's fruit basket, the Florida's Sports Coast brims with a cornucopia of fresh blueberries, strawberries, peaches and kumquats. During the harvest season, many fields are open to the public, allowing visitors to pick as many

fruits as they can carry while getting a behind-the-scenes tour of a working farm.

Show the kids the superiority of fresh fruit they pick themselves. You can start by introducing them to the sweet and slightly tart kumquat at **Kumquat Growers** in Dade City, open from November through March. Pick blueberries in spring, blackberries in the summer and strawberries in the winter at **Starkey Blueberry Farm** in Trinity. Go into the country and eat a lot of peaches at **Florida Sweeties/ Peachy Keen Orchards** in Dade City along with seasonal oranges and citrus.

Creature feature

Head east into the farmlands and rolling hills of Dade City to get up close to livestock and other critters at **Hearts & Dreams Ranch & Retreat**. Operated by folks who love sharing a majestic homestead and love of animals with families daily, the Hearts & Dreams Ranch & Retreat provides memorable moments with cows, horses, chickens and other adorable farm friends. Professional photos can be arranged, and on some days, the kids can enjoy recreation like horseshoes, corn-hole, tetherball, yard twister and more. Farm fresh farm eggs and raw cow's milk can be purchased when available. And you can even relax in a hammock in the shade while the kids play!

Meet some gentle, towering beasts you don't typically see roaming the Sunshine State. **Giraffe Ranch** offers a safari-style experience where vehicles lead visitors into a mini savanna to meet and feed the tallest living terrestrial animals and ruminants on Earth. At Giraffe Ranch, you can take a guided tour via Segway, on camel back or in the comfort of your own car. The fun doesn't stop there; visitors can feed lemurs, have an unforgettable sloth encounter, and see hundreds of other creatures up close ranging from zebras, ostriches, Brazilian tapirs, a rhino and a even a pygmy hippo.

Pull!

Take a shot at some unconventional family fun at **Tampa Bay Sporting Clays**. Described as "golf with a shotgun," the shooting range features eight clay pigeon courses for targeting, you guessed it, clay birds, from various stations, or opt for skeet shooting, Olympic bunker trap and archery activities.

Steal away to Florida's Sports Coast for a slam dunk of scenic outdoor recreation with unbeatable, enriching, off-the-beaten-path experiences the whole family will enjoy.




TOP
Camel rides
at Giraffe Ranch

BOTTOM
Delights from
Lunch on Limoges
at the Kumquat
Festival



Scan to learn the
story of Kumquats
in Florida.





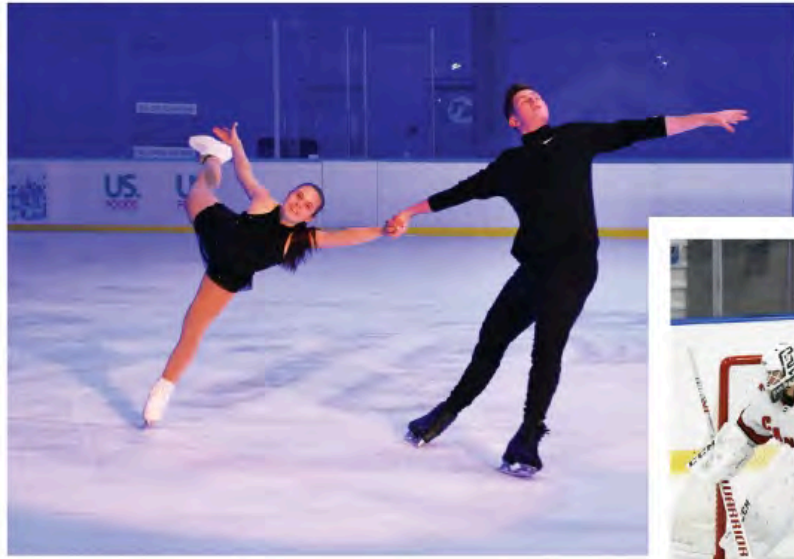
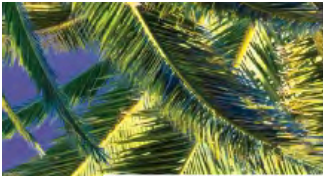
Even in Florida, you can still find a chilly escape

Andrew Schaeffer

COOL DOWN

WITH THE YEAR-ROUND WARM WEATHER

and sunny skies, you wouldn't think you could ice skate or have a snowball fight while visiting Florida's Sports Coast. But the locals here really know how to cool down.



LEFT
Glide along through figure skating



BELOW
AdventHealth Center Ice offers hockey programs from youth through adult leagues

FAR BELOW
Improve your curling at AdventHealth Center Ice

HOCKEY, CURLING, AND SKATING AT ADVENTHEALTH CENTER ICE

AdventHealth Center Ice

For the kids and kids at heart, have some family fun on the ice at the largest ice sports facility in the Southeast. **AdventHealth Center Ice** boasts five ice rinks, ranging in size from an Olympic-sized rink to a mini rink. No matter your skill level, their public skate sessions or hockey leagues are a great way to have some excitement on the ice. If you're looking to get better on skates, check out the learn to skate classes that will build up your fundamentals or refine advanced techniques. Need to nosh before you get back on the ice? You won't have to go far—there's a full-service restaurant, plus a pro shop, fitness center and more right on-site.



Photos: AdventHealth Center Ice

RIGHT
Taking a break at
AdventHealth Center Ice

BELOW
Snowcat Ridge Alpine Snow Park
brings winter to Florida



AdventHealth Center Ice



Left and below: Snowcat Ridge Alpine Snow Park

THE LOCALS REALLY KNOW HOW TO COOL DOWN.

SNOWCAT RIDGE ALPINE SNOW PARK

The first outdoor snow park in the state of Florida, **Snowcat Ridge Alpine Snow Park** in Dade City is a full-blown winter wonderland. Race your friends and family, or ride with them in a 10-person tube, down the 400-foot snow tubing hill, that has nightly music and light shows illuminating the slopes. Practice making—and throwing—snowballs in the indoor snow dome, or make a snowman to see if there's any magic left in that old top hat. Head over to the winding ice skating path and glide across the ice under Florida's sunny skies. If you're in need of a break, chill out at the alpine village with food and drinks, then cozy up next to a fire and roast s'mores.



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Cast your line and catch some fun on the water

Kevin Tall



REEL FUN

SEASONED ANGLERS VISITING THE SUNSHINE STATE

know there's no place better to try to reel in the big one than along Florida's Sports Coast. Located near the greater Tampa Bay region on the Gulf of Mexico, the area has plenty of great options for a day out on the water. And any angler worth their salt—pun intended—knows that there's nothing smarter than to ask the local fishermen when they're looking to cast a line.



Flats Class

Fortunately, Florida's Sports Coast is full of knowledgeable guides who can make sure you have an awesome day of fishing. Captain Curt Romanowski of **Florida Backwater Charters** has been casting lines off of Florida's west coast for decades and has plenty of know-how and gear to help you reel in some fun. Offering inshore packages, tarpon fishing and even corporate charters, Captain Curt & Co. have plenty of options for getting anglers on a boat and fish on the line.

Reel Good Times, with Captain Brennan Taylor, is another choice for fun in the sun. They've got several options, from inshore packages to grouper charters, spearfishing and scalloping, as well as a dolphin tour! Whichever charter you choose, you'll be riding in style aboard a 24-foot Blazer Bay boat.

Looking for deep sea fishing? **The Reef Chief Charters** has got your offshore needs handled with half-day, three-quarter day, full-day and 10-hour options, accommodating up to six people. Your trip starts with a 20-mile journey on a 36-foot Sea Hawk boat, in which Captain Mike Teegarden will take you to spots full of offshore species like grouper, cobia, bonito, kingfish and sharks, though they also offer flats fishing for a less intense experience.

Of course, not everyone needs a boat to have a good time; there's plenty of action in multiple Florida's Sports Coast marinas! Anglers



Reel Good Times

LEFT
Get the camera ready

BELOW RIGHT
The stilt houses are a favorite fishing spot

BELOW LEFT
A catch on one of Captain Brennan Taylor's charters



THERE'S NOTHING SMARTER THAN TO ASK THE LOCAL FISHERMEN.



Florida's Sports Coast

who prefer to keep their feet dry and on-shore can cast their lines at multiple spots like the fishing pier at **Anclote Gulf Park**. Located in Holiday, it's a great place to catch flats favorites like snook, redfish and cobia. The warm water provided by the nearby power plant attracts plenty of fish during the winter months and the fishing pier is open 24 hours a day!

Eagle Point Park in New Port Richey is a beautiful 15-acre portion of a 600-acre nature preserve on Florida's west coast and it boasts three piers for your fishing pleasure. You'll catch redfish, bluefish, snook, sea trout and the occasional stingray in this brackish hidden gem that also has a launch for kayaks or canoes.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



Scream-A-Geddon

Early September–
Early November
**SCREAM-A-GEDDON
HORROR PARK,
DADE CITY**
After you face
your fears in five
horrifying haunted

houses and shoot your way through scores of zombies with your trusty paintball gun, you'll have earned your glass at Bonzo's Beer Garden.
screamageddon.com

Cotee River Bike Fest

Early–Mid October

SIMS PARK, NEW PORT RICHEY

Mount your hog and ride into New Port Richey for this three-day event featuring motorcycle shows and contests, a poker run, live music, vendors and a motorcycle-only downtown.

coteeriverbikefest.com

Huboween

October

JAY B. STARKEY WILDERNESS PARK, NEW PORT RICHEY

Get ready for a night of screams and fright. If you dare, walk through the haunted cabins and trails or take a ride on the haunted hayride.

rebrand.ly/scream-acres

Bug Jam

Mid November

PASCO COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, DADE CITY

Volkswagen Bugs take over the fairgrounds during this weekend-long event, featuring a variety of vendors, food trucks and live entertainment. Don't miss the sporty Beetles tackle the off-road motocross track or cruise into town in a V.W. parade.

floridabugjam.com



Mike Winkles

Symphony in Lights

November–December

THE SHOPS AT WIREGRASS, WESLEY CHAPEL

Come experience center court at the The Shops at Wiregrass as it transforms into a winter wonderland filled with snow, lights and holiday music.

theshopsatwiregrass.com

Dade City Christmas Stroll

December

DOWNTOWN DADE CITY

A Christmas tradition for more than 30 years, stroll historic downtown Dade City and see holiday entertainment, carolers, Santa Claus, carriage rides and more. Get your holiday shopping done with stores offering tasty treats and unique gifts.

rebrand.ly/dade-city-christmas-stroll

Pigz in Z'Hills BBQ & Blues Festival

February

ZEPHYRHILLS COMMUNITY VENUE

Sample great food in the BBQ competition while listening to live blues music. A car show, cornhole tournament, kids fun zone and military history museum round out the festivities.

zephyrhillschamber.org/bbq-blues

Scallop Season

July

**ALONG FLORIDA'S
SPORTS COAST**

During the 37-day scallop season, hit the waters on your own or with a local experienced fishing captain and hunt for the tastiest scallops you can find. Spending the day on the water with your family, you're sure to make memories that will last a lifetime.

**See the Scallop
Season feature on
page 14 for more
information.**



Kumquat Festival

Last Saturday in January

DOWNTOWN DADE CITY

Celebrate this unique little fruit by sampling confections made from kumquats, jiving to live music and exploring a variety of arts & crafts booths.

dadecitychamber.org/annual-kumquat-festival

Crab & Shrimp Festival

Early March

SUNWEST PARK, HUDSON

Feast on savory seafood while enjoying the sounds of live bands during this weekend event for the whole family. For more fun, don't miss the carnival rides, crab-eating contest and crab races.

facebook.com/SunwestCrabandShrimpFestival

Loquat Festival

March

FRANCIS AVENUE PARK, NEW PORT RICHEY

Get a taste of this delightfully sweet fruit with vendors selling jellies, jams, compotes and cans, then peruse the Loquat Art Show and Loquat Literary Festival to gain more appreciation for this little yellow fruit.

facebook.com/

[FloridaLoquatFestivalNewPortRichey](https://facebook.com/FloridaLoquatFestivalNewPortRichey)



Chasco Fiesta

Late March–Early April

SIMS PARK, NEW PORT RICHEY

This nine-day festival helps local not-for-profits raise funds to continue doing good along Florida's Sports Coast. Help the community while having fun with a street parade, live entertainment, local craft vendors, food trucks and more.

chascofiesta.com

Blueberry Season

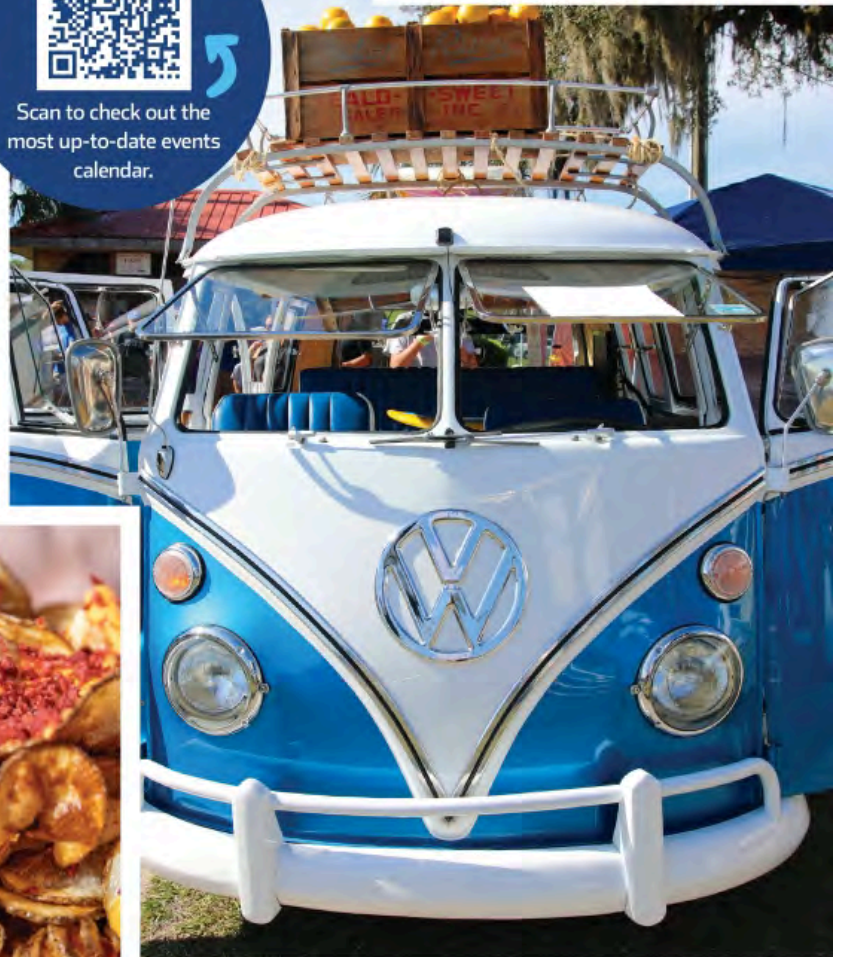
Late March–April

FLORIDA'S SPORTS COAST

Farms all along Florida's Sports Coast are proud to serve up their sweet blueberries. Grab a bucket and head to a U-Pick farm to fill it up with your family.



Scan to check out the most up-to-date events calendar.





@MYPROPERSHARE



@NARCOSIS27



@CORVALIS64

LAST SHOT

#FLSPORTSCOAST



@WILLHUD99



@NARCOSIS27



@DANE.NASHVILLE

We love seeing all our visitors' action shots while they play along Florida's Sports Coast, and we're happy our Instagram feed is full of them! Here are just some of our favorites.

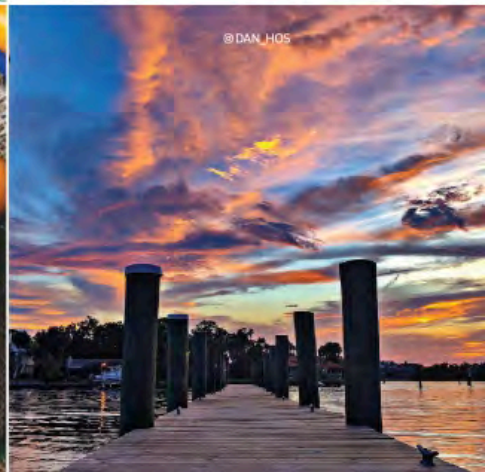
Join in on the fun by following us [@FLSportsCoast](#) and tag photos with [#FLSportsCoast](#) to share your adventure.



@RIDETHET



@LEATHERBACKNATURALS



@DAN_HOS



Tampa
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YOUR **GATEWAY** TO
FLORIDA'S
SPORTS COAST

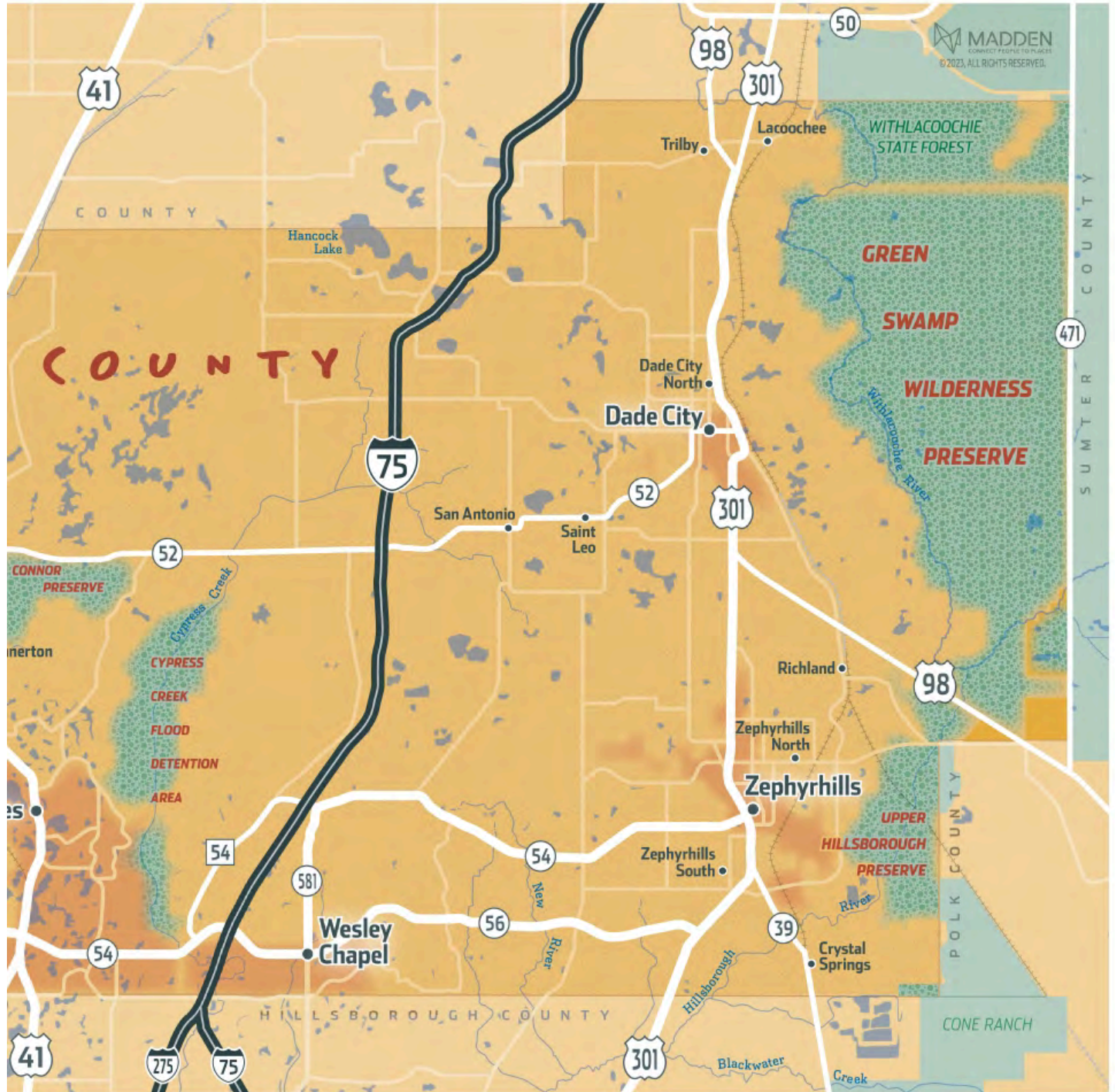
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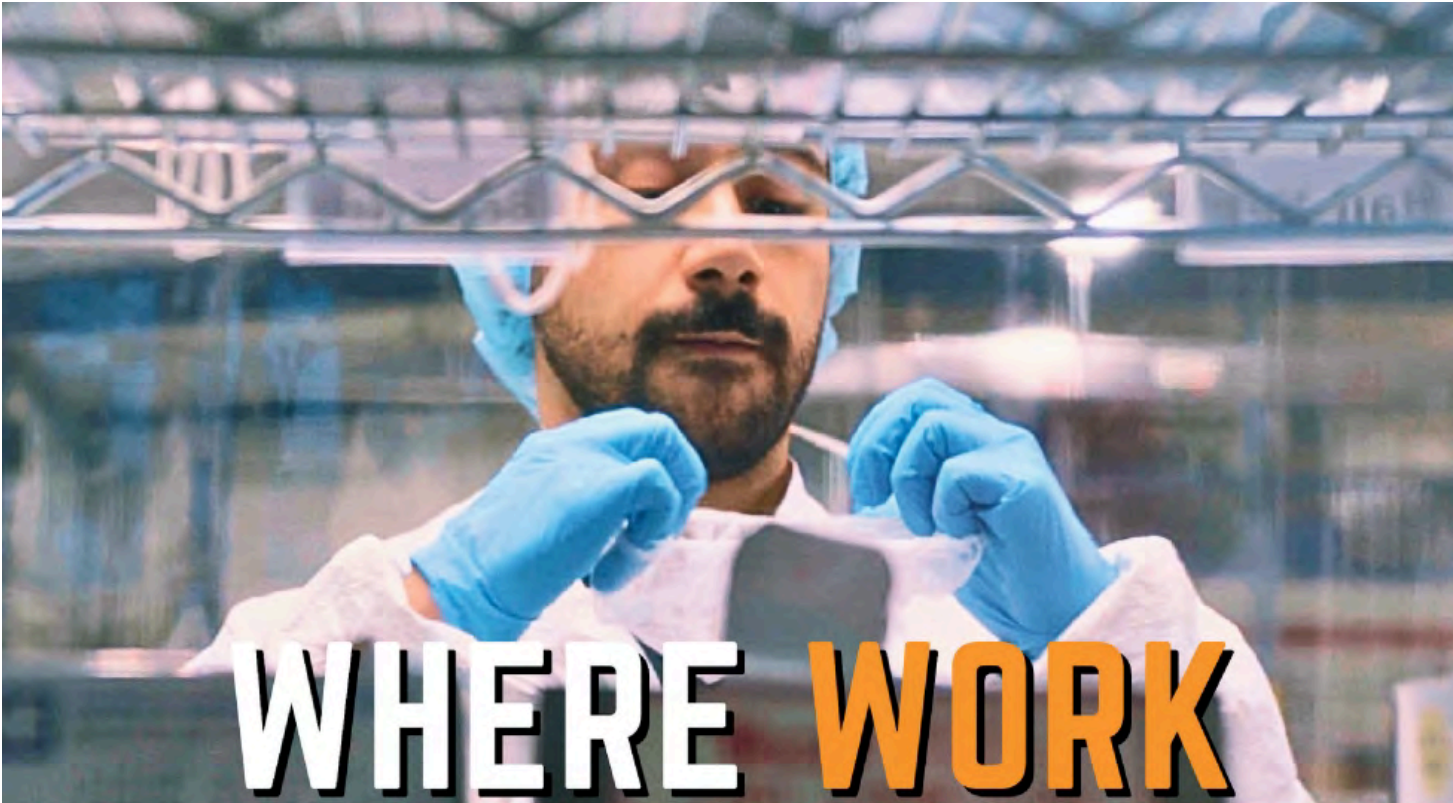
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