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FLORIDA’S SPORTS COAST offers travelers the chance to score once-in-a-lifetime memories with thrilling athletic opportunity.

Home to 742 square miles of rolling green hills, scenic coastlines, countless amateur sports venues and complexes, picturesque trails and rich culture, this active destination offers game-changing experiences for everyone to enjoy—all situated on the beloved Gulf of Mexico just 35 minutes north of Tampa International Airport.

Paying homage to its sports roots, we honor the active traveler, adventurous family, avid angler and lively local in an approachable and spirited way—with our new tagline, “Let’s Play!” The sports-inspired lifestyle is celebrated in numerous aspects of today’s society, and this motto is a promise to travelers that meaningful and epic activities can be found across this energetic destination.

Florida’s Sports Coast has redefined the recreational retreat and serves up endless fun for adventure seekers. With 35 area parks, vibrant nature trails, thrilling zip line courses, hot-air balloon outings, nearby islands with artificial reefs, year-round recreational fishing, paddleboard and kayak trails, the options for exploration are unlimited.

To learn more about Florida’s Sports Coast, visit our new website FLSportsCoast.com or engage with us on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook @FLSportsCoast. Let’s Play!
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FLORIDA’S SPORTS COAST DESTINATION GUIDE 2020-2021

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VACATION LIKE A CHAMP

FLORIDA’S SPORTS COAST has everything to make your trip one for the record books

When it comes to vacationing on Florida’s Sports Coast, you will find a variety of all the Sunshine State has to offer—from pristine, scenic beaches on islands just off shore to inland rolling hills. Throughout the region, there are plenty of ways to keep busy, from outdoor and thrill-seeking adventures to paddling calm waterways and much more. →
If you are drawn to the water, show off your paddling prowess on a paddle board in the Gulf of Mexico, settle into a kayak and meander through miles of trails at Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park in Port Richey, snorkel in the pristine waters around Anclote Key Preserve State Park or learn to wakeboard on a spring-fed lake at The Lift Adventure Park in Hudson.

Rather stay on dry land? Grab your helmet and mountain bike the 12 miles of single-track trail at Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park, or stick to the seven miles of paved trail for a smoother ride. For a longer ride, the paved trail connects to the 42-mile Suncoast Trail, which runs along the Suncoast Parkway through Pasco County and into the two neighboring counties. Guided bike rides, including group and night rides, are hosted by the park—check the calendar for details.

To show that Florida’s Sports Coast isn’t just about warm-weather activities, pull on your sweater and head to Dade City late fall through winter to hit the slopes at Snowcat Ridge Snow Park. The first of its kind in Florida, the newly opened snow park lets you tube down a 60-foot-tall, 400-foot-long snow hill before jumping into the snow dome to play with real snow—in Florida! Stay for the evening after all the fun to watch the park’s light show every night while sipping on hot cocoa in the alpine village at the bottom of the hill. For more icy action, skate down to AdventHealth Center Ice in Wesley Chapel, the largest indoor ice center in the Southeast.
GET FESTIVE

Spending time on Florida’s Sports Coast means lots of activities, so why not celebrate with the community at some of our local festivals? One of our annual favorites is the Pigs in Z’Hills BBQ & Blues Festival in Zephyrhills. For 10 years running, the day-long event showcases a barbecue competition, live music, a kid's fun zone and even a cornhole tournament for more family-friendly fun.

Another local favorite is Florida Bug Jam in Dade City, dedicated to the famous Volkswagen Beetle. Held at the Pasco County Fairgrounds, this weekend event features a variety of vendors, food trucks and live music and entertainment. Of course, you won’t want to miss the parade of VW bugs into downtown Dade City or the iconic cars as they take to the off-road motocross track.

BELOW
Pigs in Z’Hills BBQ & Blues Festival

BOTTOM
Florida Bug Jam
GET SHOPEEN!

For some, shopping is a sporting endeavor. Fortunately for those credit card athletes, there are plenty of opportunities here on Florida’s Sports Coast.

Wander back through time at the antique shops and boutiques in charming downtown Dade City, which is considered one of the best antique shopping destinations in Florida. Or, for a modern shopping experience, visit The Shops at Wiregrass. Take advantage of the Florida sunshine at this outdoor shopping center, filled with stores you know and some you will discover for the first time. Find other recognized brand names just down the road at Tampa Premium Outlets, where you will discover deals that cannot be beat. Whether you visit one or all three of these shopping destinations, it is unlikely you will leave empty-handed.
GET RECHARGED

All of the activity found throughout Florida’s Sports Coast is sure to leave you hungry, thirsty and perhaps even tired. Fortunately, we have plenty of ways for you to recharge during your stay.

Slow down and relax at **White Heron Tea & Gifts** in historic downtown New Port Richey. The tranquil setting is ideal for an elegant afternoon tea experience, which includes gourmet tea, sandwiches and scones.

To recharge with a full meal, look to Dade City. **Kafe Kokopelli**, housed in a 1916 building built by Ford Motor Company, is open daily for lunch, dinner and brunch on the weekends, with menus that feature vegetarian and vegan options. As its name implies, **Lunch on Limoges** is open exclusively for lunch and features a menu that changes daily, showcasing seasonal cuisine. Another Dade City favorite is **Green Door on 8th**, dubbed a New American eatery with tempting brunch, lunch and dinner menus. Green Door gives a nod to its local produce by serving its housemade potato chips with a kumquat salsa.

If a bar combined with a classic arcade filled with pinball machines and other retro games from across the decades is more your speed, pull up a seat at **Pete’s Grand Central**, also in New Port Richey. Or, mosey on over to **Sip Wine Bar** and see if you can find the secret speakeasy hidden somewhere inside the quaint bar. Craft beers are on tap and served up by friendly bartenders at **Ordinance One**, which is housed in what was once the old fire station in downtown New Port Richey. If local beers tempt your taste buds, sample suds from the handful of craft breweries throughout Florida’s Sports Coast.

Finishing an extensive $5-million restoration is the historic **Hacienda Hotel** in New Port Richey. Built in 1926 at a price tag of $100,000 and opened in 1927, the original 100-room hotel is being transformed into a 40-room boutique hotel.

Familiar hotel brands like Hilton, Hyatt and Marriott are located throughout the region for your comfort. For a local stay, choose **Saddlebrook Resort**. Not only is the resort a vacation destination, but it’s also one of the leading athletic training facilities in the US and offers two Arnold Palmer Signature Golf Courses.

However you choose to spend your time on Florida’s Sports Coast, one thing is certain—you will vacation like a champ. —FSC
CROSS THIS OFF YOUR BUCKET LIST

4

Exciting Adventures That Will Make Your Vacation Legendary

By Kellilynn Hann

If your daily routine has you craving something new and exciting, it’s time to head to Pasco County, Florida. Known as Florida’s Sports Coast, the area is a mecca for adventure seekers who want to take on a thrilling new challenge.

Recharge your batteries and vacation like a pro by crossing one (or all) of these activities off your bucket list. Ready to play?

Lift Your Spirits with a Hot Air Balloon Ride

A hot air balloon ride is the perfect place to start your bucket list adventure because it lets you experience a new activity without jumping right into the more adrenaline-fueled sports.

That’s not to say that hot air ballooning isn’t exciting. While it’s certainly not an extreme sport, those who have tried it will tell you it gives you a completely unexpected rush. To start, lifting off is an unusual sensation—you’re floating rather than flying—and as you rise higher and higher, you realize there’s nothing between you and the ground but the basket.

Then you get the absolute thrill of watching the scenery expand beneath you. Touring with American Balloons in Lutz, you’ll be treated to views of the many beautiful towns, lakes and unique wetlands that make Florida’s Sports Coast so famous.

Since balloon trips are almost always at sunrise, you’ll be treated to champagne and a hot breakfast after your ride—a perfect way to celebrate crossing a challenge off your bucket list.
Widen Your Horizons with a Tandem Skydive

A lot of people put skydiving on their bucket list, but few actually follow through. It really is terrifying at first—stepping off a plane into nothing, falling 13,000 feet, racing towards the ground at 120 miles per hour... but that's also why it's such a rush.

Luckily, it's easy to go from timid to triumphant with a tandem skydive. At Skydive City in Zephyrhills, a simple 20-minute safety class is all you need to be ready for your first jump. Plus, being harnessed to a qualified instructor means you can relax in safety and soak up the experience without distractions.

You'll definitely want to relive this experience over and over again (and show off to your friends back home), so consider Skydive City's packages that include a video taken by a professional videographer who jumps alongside you.

KICK IT UP A NOTCH

If you love the adrenaline rush of your tandem skydive, sign up for an Accelerated Free Fall (AFF) class. With just one day of classes, you'll get to experience the ultimate thrill—facing that jump under your own power. For safety, you'll jump at the same time as two instructors, but you operate your own parachute. How's that for James Bond-style bragging rights?
Learn New Tricks with Cable Wakeboarding

Skimming across the lake at 20 miles per hour, wind and water in your hair, pushing the edge between flying and falling with every move... There are few activities that combine speed, skill and thrill quite like wakeboarding.

If you’ve been pumped to try it but aren’t sure if it’s for you (or don’t want to hassle with hiring a boat and operator), here’s great news—The Lift Adventure Park in Hudson has a System 2.0 cable wakeboarding setup that’s ideal for beginners.

Using a series of cables instead of a boat to generate the momentum means you get a consistent speed, which is especially important for first-timers to get the practice they need. Plus, if you wipe out, the cable operator can return the handle to you and get you going again in no time.

Best of all, it’s hands-down the safest and easiest way to try the sport. Sign up for the Learn to Ride package and get 20 minutes of instruction from a pro, or just wing it! Either way, you’ll have a blast.

Get In The Zone

It’s probably not on your bucket list, but it should be—The Lift Adventure Park also boasts Florida’s largest inflatable aqua course! Race friends, family and maybe a few strangers while you slip, slide and scream to the finish line. Do you have what it takes to win, or will you wash out? Game on.
IT'S LIKE BEING A KID AGAIN
Take the Plunge with SCUBA Diving

SCUBA diving tops many bucket lists for good reason. In addition to the rush of trying something different, it opens up a whole new underwater world to explore. Imagine getting face-to-fin with fish, investigating ships sunk to help build the reef system, playing among the rocks and coral to discover unusual plants and creatures everywhere you look... It’s like being a kid again.

A lot of people dream about it instead of actually doing it because they think getting started with SCUBA is difficult, but it’s easy to try. For example, Mermaid Slayers sets you up on open-water dives with their certified instructors so you can be SCUBA certified safely.

Whether you try one of these bucket list activities or push the envelope and tackle all four, one thing is certain—you will be thrilled with your visit to Florida’s Sports Coast and all the excitement and adventure it brings. -PEC
COMING SOON 2020

We are excited to arrive in the Greater Wesley Chapel area. Florida Avenue Brewing Co. is the first destination brewery in Pasco County! At over 30,000 square feet, our location includes a state-of-the-art production facility, private event space, walk-in beer cave and a full-service restaurant showcasing Florida’s southern roots and international influences.

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> DOG-FRIENDLY

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FLORIDA'S MOST CULTURAL DISCOVERIES

Just a short drive away, treasure awaits in Tampa Bay. From paddleboarding and thrill rides to diving with the sharks and scaling ropes, Tampa Bay is yours to claim. Enjoy a vibrant array of historic sites, Cuban culture and bustling boulevards with unique shopping and dining.

VisitTampaBay.com
Florida is famous for its oranges and grapefruits. But when it comes to fresh produce, citrus is just a drop in the bucket. Along Florida’s Sports Coast, you’ll find acres of farmland overflowing with fresh blueberries, strawberries and kumquats. During the harvest season, many of these fields are open to the public, allowing visitors to pick as much fruit as they can carry while getting a behind-the-scenes tour of a working farm.

Ready to explore? Here are five places where you can sample and celebrate the area’s best produce, including an award-winning winery and one of the most unique fruit festivals in the country.
You've likely seen Starkey Farms' blueberries at your local grocery store. Now you can see where these famous berries—praised for their juicy texture and sweet taste—are grown. The expansive fields of Starkey Blueberry Farms are located just a short drive from town. But once you step foot among the blueberry bushes, you'll feel like you're miles away from it all. There's plenty of space for your group to spread out and see who can fill their pail the fastest. When your buckets get too heavy, bring them to the on-site washing stand so you can start enjoying your bounty right away.

Sports Coast's produce isn't just for eating. The vintners at Strong Tower use the county's harvest to make award-winning wines like Spring Hill Red, a guaranteed crowd pleaser, and Southern Blanc, a delicate dry white that pairs perfectly with seafood. In addition to grape wines, Strong Tower also makes delicious watermelon, blueberry and strawberry blends. Pop into the tasting room to see which wine you like best, and then buy a bottle to enjoy on the veranda. Hungry? Pack a picnic lunch or hit up one of the food trucks that regularly visit the winery. Throughout the year, Strong Tower also hosts events like yoga in the vineyards, arts and crafts classes, and benefit parties.
Enjoy some of the area’s freshest produce at Benedetto’s, a chef-driven Italian restaurant in Land O’ Lakes. Much of the produce on the menu—including the tomatoes on the eggplant caprese and the arugula adorning the fried fish bites—is grown at the restaurant’s farm. Head Chef Ben Pumo grows most of the vegetables himself to create some of the tastiest soups, salads and sides in the region. In addition to all the delicious fruits and veggies, Benedetto’s menu features an extensive selection of Florida-fresh seafood, including locally caught shrimp, clams and grouper. Feeling adventurous? Ask your server about the day’s game menu. Depending on availability, you might be able to enjoy unique meats like ostrich, buffalo or even kangaroo.

KUMQUAT FESTIVAL
-DADE CITY-

Every year, tens of thousands of visitors descend on downtown Dade City to celebrate the kumquat, a tiny fruit with a unique name and even more unique taste. No bigger than your thumb, the kumquat—affectionately known as Nature’s Sweet Tart—starts sweet then finishes with an eye-watering tartness that will make your lips pucker as you ask for another. At the Kumquat Festival, hundreds of vendors sell everything from kumquat pies and cookies to salsas and soaps. Visitors can also tour local kumquat groves and packing houses. The diminutive fruit isn’t the only star of the show. The festival, typically held the last Saturday in January, also features local entertainment, a farmers market and a classic car show. —PCC
GRAb YOUR SNO RKEL AND HEAD UNDERWATER FOR THIS TREASURE HUNT SCALLOP
HIDDEN BENEATH THE WARM GULF WATERS,
they glisten with the bright sunshine. In the
seagrass beds on the sandy ocean floor lies a
sunken treasure of a different kind—and one
that brings visitors out in droves every summer.
On Florida’s Sports Coast, scalloping makes for a family fishing outing that’s often compared to an underwater Easter egg hunt. It’s easy enough for kids, as long as they’re good swimmers, and good fun for just about everyone who loves being out on the water.

**Florida Bay Scallops**

Bay scallops—like oysters, clams and mussels—are bivalve mollusks and live in shallow waters along certain areas off Florida’s Gulf Coast. Bay scallops are smaller than sea scallops and have less meat. They’re typically found in depths between four and eight feet on the sandy ocean floor or on blades of seagrass. They have 20 pairs of tiny, bright blue eyes along their shell edges that detect movement and light. Scallops can “swim” backward by rapidly opening and closing their shells in order to escape predators. But once you’re within an area with a good scallop population, they’re not hard to find or catch. Collect as many as you can—as long as you stay under the daily limit of two gallons (with shell) or one pint of meat per person; 10 gallons with shell or a half-gallon of meat per boat.
Scallop Season: When it is and What You'll Need

In Pasco County, the scallop season begins the third Friday in July and lasts for 10 days. Going with a local guide or charter company is your best bet for finding scallops because they will know the best spots to anchor and will take care of everything for you, from snorkeling gear to a charter fishing license that covers everyone in your group. With this option, little else is needed beyond some reef-safe sunscreen, some water to drink and maybe a few snacks.

If you go it alone, make sure everyone on your boat has a saltwater fishing license (unless age-exempt), snorkeling equipment, a diver-down flag, mesh bags to collect scallops and coolers for storing them.
Scalloping: What to Expect

You'll head out into the shallow waters of the Gulf of Mexico with your group. After you've made it into scallop territory, your guide might test out a few spots before settling on the one that's just right. By now, the sun will be starting to climb, and the sky will be getting bright and blue. The view will be vast, and you might be able to spot other scalloping boats anchored in the distance. Once the anchor goes down and the dive flag goes up, you'll don a mask, snorkel and fins and climb down into the warm gulf water. The visibility will be good, and when you first look under the surface, you probably won't notice much besides a lot of seagrass. But as you snorkel on your belly and scan below, you'll begin to spot them, and the underwater Easter egg hunt begins. One after another, you'll put scallops into your mesh bag, pausing to catch your breath before searching for the next one. Besides scallops, you'll likely encounter other marine animals in the seagrass beds including crabs, pinfish, turtles and more. And don't be surprised if a curious remora decides to follow you.

Where to Go and Who Can Take You

If you're going without a guide, contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission or go to myFWC.com for a detailed map of Pasco’s scallop harvest zone. It’s illegal to scallop outside state-designated recreational harvest areas.

Tip: whether you go on your own or with a charter, it’s a good idea to get out on the water early in the morning so you’re finished before the afternoon thunderstorms roll in.

Public Boat Ramps to Launch a Private Vessel

Anclote River Park  1119 Baines Bluff Rd., Holiday
Nick’s Park  7929 Bayview St., Port Richey
Robert J. Strickland Memorial Park  6345 Clark St., Hudson
Sims Park  6345 River Rd., New Port Richey

Scalloping Charters

Florida Backwater Charters  727-919-1221, floridabackwatercharters.com
Captain Greg DeVault  727-919-8666, captgregd.com
Captain Mark Dillingham  727-389-2212, 10033 Chestnut Dr., Hudson
Windsong Charters & Boat Rentals  727-859-0213, windsongcharters.com, 4927 US Hwy. 19, New Port Richey
The Reef Chief Charters  727-271-3575, thereefchiefcharters.com, 5419 Treadway Dr., Port Richey
Hudson Beach Marina  727-863-9093, 6625 Clark St. Hudson

More scalloping charters can be found at flsportscoast.com.
When You’re Done

Fig 1
Use a knife to work the shell open.

Fig 2
Clean out all but the cylinder-shaped adductor muscle.

Fig 3
Slide your knife blade under the muscle to separate it from the shell.

Now that you’ve hauled in the day’s catch, you’re probably pleasantly tired from hours of swimming and hunting scallops, a little sun-kissed, and you’ve worked up a bit of an appetite. But, before you can eat them, you must clean them—or better yet, have someone else do it for you (if you went with a charter, your captain might offer this service and save you that little bit of extra work). Some local restaurants will prep your catch for you, too, like Gill Dawg Tiki Bar & Grill in Port Richey. To clean them yourself, carefully use a knife to work the shells open and clean out all but the cylinder-shaped adductor muscle inside (the part we recognize as the “scallop”). Then, gently slide your knife blade under the muscle to separate it from the shell. If you have the little ones help you out, you can instead use a spoon so the whole family can get involved. After that, how you enjoy them is up to you. Seared, sautéed, broiled or fried—all are a delicious reward for a day’s work.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LUCY SMALL
Extraordinary water experiences await you along Florida’s Sports Coast
Florida has more than its share of magic on the water. Visitors and residents alike know there’s something magical about the many ways you can enjoy being in, on or near the water. And along Florida’s Sports Coast, you can find some of the most unique water experiences in the state. Whether you want to hit the beach, steer a kayak through a mangrove tunnel, fish for redfish or dive in the clear waters and explore man-made reefs, you can do it all here!
WERNER-BOYCE SALT SPRINGS STATE PARK

If you’d rather fish, kayak or paddleboard in more intimate surroundings than fight crowds at the beach, the peaceful inlets and bayous of the Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park are perfect for you. Most of the 4,000-acre park is wetlands made up of salt marshes, mangrove islands and tidal springs, as well as four miles of coastline on the Gulf of Mexico.

The main entrance to Werner-Boyce is off Highway 19 in Port Richey. Park there to unload your kayak, canoe, or paddleboard—or rent a kayak on site. It’s just a short walk to the launch ramp, where you can ease your craft into the water. From there, enter one of the park’s paddle trails, marked by orange buoys. Whichever trail you choose, you’ll explore winding inlets, drift by stands of mangroves and glide beneath overhanging branches. The splash of your paddles, a breeze stirring the palmettos or the cry of an osprey may be the only sounds you hear.

If your paddle trail leads to the Gulf of Mexico, you may see some stilt houses in the distance. Head out for open water to get a closer look at these iconic structures. Originally built as rough shelters for working fishermen, they’re privately owned—you can paddle around them, but cannot climb onto them. Stop on nearby Durney Key to stretch any stiff muscles with a little swimming or shelling before padding the half-mile back to shore.

When you’re ready for a break, there’s also plenty to see if you drift along the shore of the gulf. The park is one of the best bird-watching spots in the state—look for wading and shore birds like roseate spoonbills, egrets or wood storks hunting for their next meal. If you’re lucky, you may catch a glimpse of the elusive black rail or even a bald eagle perched in the shady branches. Keep your eye out for tiny crabs scuttling into the undergrowth, and you might see dolphins, otters or manatees.

Bring your fishing gear: In-shore saltwater fishing is prime in the park, with anglers catching redfish, drum, sheephead, snook, snapper and more.

Back toward the entrance, you’ll find access to hiking trails that lead through the marshes to several of the park’s springs, including the deceivingly deep Salt Spring. While much of its 385-foot depth has been explored by professional diving expeditions, portions remain a mystery.

Werner-Boyce has a way of casting its spell on you, making you feel like you’re miles away from civilization.

Tip: On the first Saturday of the month, park rangers lead free, two-hour kayak tours starting at 10 a.m.
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
Kayaking along the waterways of Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park.
Anclote Key Preserve State Park is perfect for picturesque camping.
Spot interesting birds like the great blue heron at Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park.
Paddle up close to the iconic stilt houses in the Gulf of Mexico.

ANCLOTE KEY PRESERVE STATE PARK

Take a trip even farther offshore and visit Anclote Key Preserve State Park. This park, made up of four largely unspoiled barrier islands, lies three miles off the coast of Holiday, and is accessible only by boat. If you don’t have your own, you can rent one, or book a tour that includes a visit to Anclote Key with one of the local outfitters in Port Richey and New Port Richey. Experienced sea kayakers can also make the three-mile, open-water trip, but it’s not suitable for beginners.

No matter who’s at the helm, the turquoise water will mesmerize you as your boat cuts through the waves. On your way to and from the park, you might be escorted by dolphins or see pelicans diving for fish. Anclote Key, the largest of the islands, looks a little like...
a curving arm. The long sweep of sandy beach on its western side is perfect for shell seeking. Wade through water so clear you can see your toes, don a mask and snorkel to catch a glimpse of fish or rays, or simply relax on the snowy white beach, feeling the sun on your face and the sea breeze in your hair. Grills, picnic tables and pavilions are available, as are two composting toilets, but there's no fresh water on the island, so be sure to bring your own.

Relaxing on the beach not quite your style? The park also has nearly 12,000 acres of gulf water open for boating, fishing and leisure days on the water. Offshore, sea grass beds harbor sheepshead, redfish and sea trout just waiting for you to drop them a line—or dive below and scout for bay scallops among the sea grass. Fishermen also reel in snook in this area.

When it's time to leave, you might not want to return to the mainland after soaking up the sun and serenity of this enchanting, almost-private island paradise.

Tip: If you can't get enough of the tucked away tranquility, you can also camp on the island for the night and get back in the water bright and early in the morning.
THE “COTEE” RIVER

For an excursion that combines both wilderness and urban paddling, look no further than the Pithlachascotee River, or “Cotee” as most residents call it. The Cotee is a blackwater river, deep and slow moving, its name translates to “Boat Building River,” since it was once a place where Seminoles dug out their cypress canoes.

The Cotee is still popular with canoeers as well as kayakers, and one of the best places to put in is the James E. Grey Preserve in New Port Richey. Here the water is dark, stained by the tannins that leach into it from the vegetation that lines its banks. A canopy of trees draped in Spanish moss surrounds the river, and it’s so quiet you might hear the plop of slider turtles leaving their logs as you stroke by. The river twists and turns through the preserve, and if you’re lucky you may see some of the wildlife found in the area, including deer and some of the many bird species.

If you’re ready to end your sojourn in nature, keep following the river past the boundary of the preserve. It flows right into the heart of New Port Richey, where you can admire the homes that border both sides of the river before landing or docking your watercraft at one of the boater-friendly restaurants near Highway 19 in Port Richey.

Tips: If you’d rather let someone else do the navigating while you sit back and enjoy the scenery, a couple local companies offer guided boat tours on the Cotee.

Whether you opt for a kayak paddle trail through the rustic beauty of a salt marsh, a prime snorkeling spot in crystal clear water or a guided boat trip down a blackwater river, you’re sure to discover the unique magic found in the waterways of Florida’s Sports Coast. —PCG
GET READY FOR THE TAILGATE

Savor the Craft Brews Throughout Florida's Sports Coast

By Kevin Mims
Craft beer and Florida’s Sports Coast go together like... well, sports and beer.

Here, these two worlds converge for an unbeatable experience filled with local flavor. Whether you’re planning a day of fishing off the Gulf of Mexico, tailgating and rooting for your favorite team or just kicking back in the taproom, the breweries of Florida’s Sports Coast have something to please any craft beer connoisseur.
Zephyrhills Brewing Company

Fill a growler and take your party to go or pull up a seat and relax at Zephyrhills Brewing Company. With a selection of more than 20 beers brewed in-house, this family-friendly brewery is truly a one-stop shop for craft beer, good food and entertainment. This place knows a thing or two about beer making—it was founded by a former American Homebrewer’s Association Homebrewer of the Year and the brews use the famous Zephyrhills water, as seen bottled in the grocery store.

Zephyrhills Brewing Company often hosts food trucks along with bingo, trivia and music. The fun doesn’t have to stop there; the axe-throwing venue Molly’s Hatchet is just down the street.

Florida Avenue Brewing

The newest brewery to join the field in Florida’s Sports Coast is Florida Avenue Brewing. Find a full roster of brews—from staples like the Florida Avenue Brewing IPA and lager to the inventive Passion of the Heights hibiscus wheat ale and 100 Hues rainbow sherbet Berliner Weisse. In this expansive new space, you can sample some of the local favorite brews in the tasting room, then grab a meal at the full-service restaurant.

Soak up the Florida sunshine and enjoy your drinks in the biergarten. If you plan your trip right, you can catch some music outside.

Infusion Brewing Co. of Trinity

Beer-loving brothers-in-law James Bishop and Andy Kernaghan started Infusion Brewing Co. of Trinity 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.

Infusion also has plenty to offer on the entertainment front, with regularly scheduled live music and trivia nights.
**In The Loop Brewing Company**

Come for the hops, stay for the scenery. The view from the beer garden alone is worth a trip to **In The Loop Brewing Company**—it’s the only brewery on the water—but it’s the brown ales, pale ales, IPAs, red ales and more that keep people coming back. Their offerings can be enjoyed from the tasting room or from the beer garden, which provides a tranquil view of Lake Paddett.

In The Loop also regularly hosts special events as well as popular local food trucks. Past fare has included wood-fired pizza, barbecue, arepas, Belgian food and Polish food.

**Escape Brewing Company**

What began as two beer-obsessed friends and Florida natives brewing beer in their garages became **Escape Brewing Company** in Trinity, southeast of New Port Richey, which opened in 2014. There, the motto is: “Drink. Enjoy. Escape.”

The dedicated owners and staff of Escape Brewing Company create the unique flavors the company is known for, including their popular The Other West Coast IPA and Scandalous Double IPA, both Best Beer of Florida gold medal winners. And don’t miss out on the Florida’s Sports Coast pilsner. Escape’s remarkable brews are served up with live music on Saturdays.

For more information about Florida’s Sports Coast’s local breweries, visit flsportscoast.com.
COMPETE AND RETREAT

BY JULIE GARISTO
Treat your work team to the great outdoors of Florida’s Sports Coast

Trying to boost company morale? Forging an important alliance? Skip the expensive consultant and pump your team up with a shot of adrenaline and a side of vitamin D in the great outdoors of Florida’s Sports Coast. Tread the Cotee River on a paddleboard. Race kayaks. Shoot targets. Get up close to exotic animals. The possibilities are endless. The area’s many parks and attractions can help you and your team detox and de-stress while leaving them with picture-postcard memories sure to last a lifetime.
Go out on a limb. Monkeying around may be frowned upon at work, but TreeHoppers Aerial Adventure Park allows your staff to make like a macaque to traverse lofty, old-growth canopies. Climb, crawl and zipline through the Dade City adventure park’s eight treetop courses. Color-coded trails mark beginner paths, which are less challenging and closer to the ground, and the expert-level courses. No matter the skill level, your cohorts’ adrenaline will be pumping on these excursions.

Go on a safari or take your team on a camel-back tour of one of the Sports Coast’s most breathtaking expanses of wilderness. Giraffe Ranch spans more than 45 acres of forest and pastures in picturesque Dade City. The wilderness reserve invites your tribe to feed resident giraffes and pet camels or get a rare look at rhinos, Brazilian tapirs and pygmy hippos. Giraffe Ranch also herds tiny Irish Dexter cattle. See all this and more from the stadium seating on the custom four-wheel drive safari trucks or get right in the action on a Segway. After your tour, get some of that pesky paperwork taken care of in an on-site pavilion for rent.

Family-owned and operated for almost 20 years, the working game farm gives visitors an authentic agritourism experience and a lifetime of memories.

Pull! Get your team on target at Tampa Bay Sporting Clays, a 260-acre archery and shooting range in Land O’Lakes. Everyone at this compound gets a shot at fun as there are multiple courses for all experience levels. Take advantage of Tampa Bay Sporting Clays’ group packages, which include golf cart rentals for exploring the wooded terrain, ear protectors and access to the 6,000-sq.-ft. covered pavilion.
SHOW THEM who’s boss

Level the playing field by pitting employees against higher-ups in relay races, scavenger hunts and other field-day style competitions at Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. The 12,000-acre park has primitive campsites, cabin rentals and wide-open spaces for all types of play. The zen feeling of the park and its system of trails—both paved and unpaved—can help your team unwind, and the park’s pavilions are perfect for events.

ON ice

While Florida’s Sports Coast boasts beautiful warm weather, sometimes your team just needs to cool off. Lace up your skates and hit the ice at AdventHealth Center Ice in Wesley Chapel and try your hand at corporate curling. Many teams have taken to the ice here, including the US Olympic Women’s Ice Hockey Team who began training in Fall 2017 here before going on to win the gold medal six months later in the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games. National champions and Olympic figure skaters often practice their routines there, too, and your employees can skate the very same ice.

Whether indoors or out, Florida’s Sports Coast has a wide variety of recreational activities, offering the utmost in quality time with your team—definitely something to build on.

EVENTFUL Events

You know Florida’s Sports Coast has you covered on what to do after the meeting, but you need to still find where to host it. Skip the run-of-the-mill conference rooms and look for something a little more extraordinary to really hit it out of the park.

Need stadium seating and professional quality presentation equipment? Center for the Art at River Ridge in New Port Richey has you covered. With full digital lighting, audio and multi-media services, your event will stand out and you can proudly take your bow.

Show your team how picturesque inland Florida is at Saint Leo University in Saint Leo. Take in the breathtaking views of Lake Jovita and the Spanish Mission architecture from the campus’ rolling hills. You’ll love the audio/visual equipment, and your attendees will love the campus-wide high-speed Wi-Fi.

Let your team come hungry to your next meeting at Heritage Springs in Trinity. With menus for elegant seated meals or buffet service, the intimate rooms and grand ballrooms are perfect for keeping your most valuable players well fed.

Brand new to the meeting scene is Wiregrass Ranch Sports Campus in Wesley Chapel. With a variety of private and semi-private spaces available, Wiregrass can support any size meeting or event. As an added bonus, dining, retail, entertainment and lodging are all right on-site and makes this complex a slam dunk. —PET
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.
Scream-A-Geddon
Late 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
rusty 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.org

Scream Acres
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
Early November
PASCO COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, DADE CITY
Volkskswagen 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

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
January
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
Third Friday in July
ALONG FLORIDA’S SPORTS COAST
During the 10-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 26 for more
information.
SunCoast Art Fest
January
THE SHOPS AT WIREGRASS, WESLEY CHAPEL
The largest fine arts & crafts festival on Florida’s Sports Coast, this free two-day event showcases the work of more than 100 artisans, live entertainment, a kid’s art garden and more.
suncoastartsfest.com

Kumquat Festival
Last Saturday in January
DOWNTOWN DADE CITY
Celebrate this unique little fruit by sampling confections made from kumquats, jamming to live music and exploring a variety of arts & crafts booths.
dadecitychamber.org/annual-kumquat-festival

Crab & Shrimp Festival
Late February
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

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www.facebook.com/HGITampaWesleyChapel
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

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.—pct
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.

Florida’s Sports Coast Milage Chart

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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

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SOURCES: WEATHER.
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