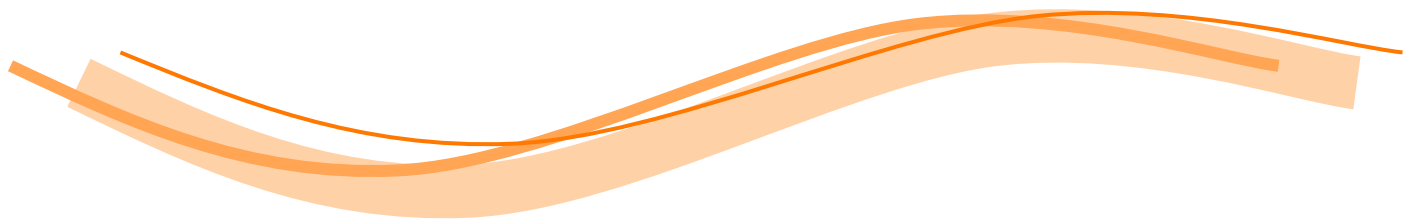




# **Chris' Travel Notes: ST. PETERSBURG CLEARWATER**





**St. Petersburg  
Clearwater**

Groove to the pulse of a place that's "solar powered" and radiating a MILLION MEGAWATTS of possibility - St. Pete/Clearwater! This is where vacation rocks and you can get Gulf splashed and sun kissed.

With record breaking sunshine and 56 kilometres of sugar white sand award-winning beaches - what more can anyone want? How about nature and culture and tons of fun for the kids, including a dolphin that just got a new tail?

Rare is the vacation that blends artistic icons, festive events, vibrant nightlife and family-friendly attractions like the cosmopolitan St. Petersburg Clearwater area. No matter where you're staying, you're never far from beautiful beaches, exciting attractions and intriguing towns and communities.

St Petersburg and Clearwater are perhaps the best known – but there are fascinating and diverse communities to discover. For instance the quaint waterfront town of Dunedin is blossoming with eclectic art, one-of-a-kind boutiques, innovative dining and an active nightlife scene. Just minutes away from its welcoming, walkable and pet-friendly downtown, you'll find some of the best beaches in the US. And Dunedin is where the Blue Jays baseball team carry out their spring training.

Or the historic riverfront town of Tarpon Springs – just 20 minutes north of Clearwater – has a way of transporting you thousands of miles away to a coastal village in Greece. Heavily influenced by Greek culture, the town is best known for its sponge docks, Greek fare and serene beaches.

The city of St. Petersburg has long been known for its scenic setting against the beautiful waters of Tampa Bay and renowned art museums. In recent years, St. Pete has also emerged as a hot spot for shopping, dining, nightlife and entertainment. With a lively downtown area, and a full spectrum of things to see and do, it's no surprise that The New York Times named it a "Top Place To Go" in 2014 and St. Pete Beach was voted TripAdvisor's No. 1 U.S. beach in 2012.

Nature, beaches, sports and recreation - Clearwater has it all. Charming downtown streets, family-friendly attractions like the Clearwater Marine Aquarium and sunsets, sunbathing and water sports on Clearwater Beach (voted the "Best Beach Town in Florida" by USA Today readers in 2013).

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<p><b>Travel Show Magic Moment</b></p>	<p>One of my personal memorable times in St Pete Clearwater... <i>Caladesi Island is the real Florida. Although I am just a few minutes north of the buzz of Clearwater Beach, this State Park could be a million miles away. It's accessible only by ferry from Honeymoon Island and the 20 minute boat trip transitions me to a world of mangrove swamps, hiking trails, and some of the most pristine beaches anywhere in the US.</i></p> <p><i>I am spending the day with Carl, a Park Ranger who has been on the island over 20 years. After a bite to eat at the little café, we have taken to the water to explore the tidal mangrove trails in a couple of kayaks. These arced tunnels vein the eastern side of the island and are a unique way to get up close and personal to the mangrove ecosystem. With a four hour maximum stay, my visit is coming to an end much too soon, but I have been privileged to see this bit of "real Florida".</i></p>						
<p><b>Location</b></p>	<p>Florida's Beach is located in the Pinellas County peninsula on Florida's west coast. Home to 26 communities including St. Petersburg and Clearwater, the area is bordered on the east by Tampa Bay and on the west by the Gulf of Mexico. In the center of Florida's Gulf Coast, Florida's Beach is within minutes of Florida's popular attractions - just 30 minutes away is Busch Gardens in Tampa and 90 minutes away are the Walt Disney World Resort, Sea World and Universal Studios Escape.</p>						
<p><b>Geography</b></p>	<p>Florida's Beach offers <b>56 kilometres of white-sand beaches</b> on some 20 barrier islands along the Gulf of Mexico. The area's 550 kilometres of shoreline around the peninsula encompass the resort communities of <b>Clearwater Beach, Dunedin, Indian Rocks Beach, Indian Shores, North Redington Beach, Redington Shores, Redington Beach, Belleair Beach, Madeira Beach, St. Petersburg, St. Pete Beach, Safety Harbor, Tarpon Springs, Treasure Island</b> and a host of other colorful communities for day-trips. The semi-tropical setting makes Florida's Beach a year-round playground for a variety of outdoor activities.</p>						
<p><b>Name</b></p>	<p>Peter Demens, a Russian immigrant, brought his small gauge, Orange Belt Railroad to the Gulf Coast of Florida whose new rail service produced a flood of new residents and visitors to the area. Demens named the city St. Petersburg after his hometown in Russia. The official name for the area encompassing Florida's Beach is Pinellas County. Pinellas comes from the phrase "punta pinal" or "point of pines," a name given the area by Spanish explorers who sailed the surrounding waters in the early 1500s. Florida's Beach is also known as the "Pinellas Suncoast."</p>						
<p><b>Population</b></p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Florida's Beach (Pinellas County) all 26 communities</td> <td>921,482</td> </tr> <tr> <td>St. Petersburg</td> <td>248,232</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Clearwater</td> <td>108,787</td> </tr> </table>	Florida's Beach (Pinellas County) all 26 communities	921,482	St. Petersburg	248,232	Clearwater	108,787
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<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Currency</b>	US Dollars. The current exchange rate is \$1 US = \$0.92 CDN (Aug 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2014)
<b>Tipping</b>	The custom of tipping is a common practice in Florida: 15% to 20% for waiters; 10% to 15% for taxi drivers; \$1 per bag for bellmen. Occasionally gratuities are automatically added to restaurant checks, but not usually.
<b>Documentation</b>	Passports are required for Canadian visitors.
<b>Time zone</b>	Eastern Standard Time, same as Toronto and Montreal
<b>Health</b>	Excellent services available but ensure that you have travellers health insurance as health costs in the US can be very high
<b>Safety tips</b>	This destination is relatively safe for the tourist. One should use the same precautions as when traveling anywhere - try not to travel alone and avoid deserted areas at night

<b>CLIMATE</b>	
<b>General climate</b>	It is safe to say that Florida's Beach enjoys more sunshine than Honolulu. The Guinness Book of World Records credits St. Petersburg with the longest run of consecutive sunny days - 768 days from Feb. 9, 1967 to March 17, 1969
<b>Today's weather</b>	32 degrees Centigrade with sunshine and showers (23 August 2014)
<b>Best time to visit</b>	This is very much a year round destination. High season for accommodation costs is January-April; low season is September-December.

<b>GETTING THERE</b>	The beaches and outlying communities on Florida's Beach are only 30 minutes away from Tampa International Airport, rated one of the nation's best for many years by the International Passenger Traffic Association and other polls.
<b>Flying time</b>	3 hours. There are a number of direct flight to Tampa & St Pete's from Toronto and Montreal.
<b>Cities</b>	St Petersburg, Clearwater and Tampa are all minutes away from each other.
<b>Distances</b>	2400 kilometres from Toronto and Montreal by road
<b>Ferries</b>	There are ferries to Caladesi Island and a daily Egmont Key Ferry from Fort DeSoto County Park in US Coast Guard Certified 46 foot ferry Boats. Refreshments/snacks available and there's covered, comfortable seating with an open deck area and an easy ramp access to the beach.
<b>Car Rental</b>	Car rental from \$60/day, \$80 convertible
<b>Buses</b>	The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority/PSTA (tel. 727/530-9911) operates motorized trolley service along Gulf Boulevard between the Hurricane restaurant in St. Pete Beach and the Sheraton Sand Key

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	<p>Resort (this entire trip, one-way, takes about an hour), where it connects with the Jolly Trolley (tel. 727/445-1200), which continues on Gulf Boulevard through Clearwater Beach. The PSTA trolley runs daily, every 20 minutes from 5am to 10pm, until midnight on Friday and Saturday. Rides cost \$1.25, or you can buy a daily pass for \$3. One-ride fares on the Jolly Trolley are 50¢ per person, 25¢ for seniors.</p>
<p><b>Passes</b></p>	<p>CityPASS is the way to go!  <b>CityPASS Tampa Bay</b> gives you admission to Tampa’s Lowry Park Zoo and Busch Gardens and The Florida Aquarium and then in addition the Clearwater Marine Aquarium - plus either the Museum of Science and Industry in Tampa or the Chihuly Glass Collection in St Petersburg. All for \$199 for the over 10’s and \$99 for kids 3-9. Buy online at <a href="http://www.citypass.com">www.citypass.com</a> or at any CityPASS attraction for the same low price. Save 39% on Busch Gardens plus 4 more top Tampa Bay / St Petersburg Clearwater attractions. Visit Busch Gardens in Tampa and one other attraction – and you have paid for your CityPASS!          It’s convenient as you get all your attraction tickets in one easy purchase. Plus you save time as you skip most ticket lines with your CityPASS. CityPASS is as flexible as your trip – it is perfect for a weekend but is valid for up to 9 days.          No wonder 12 million CityPASS booklets have been sold to travellers to the various destinations on offer and 97% of users would recommend CityPASS.</p>

<p><b>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</b></p>	<p>There are 54 hotels with 10,000 rooms and 434 motels with 11,000 rooms; Rental condominiums and short-term apartments add another 17,000 units          St. Pete Beach and Clearwater Beach have national chain hotels and motels of every name and description. You can also use the Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater's free reservations service (tel. 800/345-6710) to book rooms at most of them.</p>
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<p><b>TARGET GROUPS</b>  <b>Kids</b></p>	<p>Just 30 minutes to Busch Gardens in Tampa and 90 minutes to Walt Disney World Resort, Sea World and Universal Studios; 3.5 hours Kennedy Space Centre.  <b>Busch Gardens:</b> For thrill seekers – look no further than the roller coasters at Busch Gardens. Cheetah Hunt, the park’s newest mega-attraction and Florida’s first triple-launch coaster accelerates riders from 0 to 60 in a heartbeat. Busch Gardens Tampa Bay is where the unexpected comes together with an unparalleled combination of thrilling rides, world-class live shows and one of the premier zoos in the US with more than 2,500 animals.          Younger kids will love Sesame Street Safari of Fun - filled with kid-size</p>
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	rides, cool water fun, shows and memorable adventures that celebrate the spirit of Africa. Also check out Jungala, a lush jungle village where guests have the chance to connect with the natural world. You'll come nose-to-nose with orangutans, test your strength against a Bengal tiger, explore a three-story play land of climbing nets, mazes and tunnels, and soar above the treetops on a zip line adventure.  <b>Clearwater Marine Aquarium</b> – See below under Museums
<b>Teens</b>	<b>Sea Screamer</b> - Clearwater Municipal Marina, Slip #10, Clearwater Beach, FL 34630. Billed as the world's largest speedboat, this 73-foot craft takes you on both a scenic nature cruise and a thrilling, fast ride in the Gulf of Mexico. <b>Captain Memo's Pirate Cruise:</b> <a href="http://www.captainmemo.com">www.captainmemo.com</a> 2 hour cruises to the less traveled road of briny buccaneers and seafaring seadogs. Set your course with the cool reggae island & steel band music playing throughout the rigging of the Pirates Ransom. Every passenger will enjoy their choice of soft drinks, beer, wine, or champagne, while searching for the bountiful dolphins, while aboard ship. The spirited pirates may belly on up to our full service bar to purchase their favorite libation. The spirited pirates are individually selected by Captain Memo himself. They are chosen not only for their enthusiastic personalities and immeasurable politeness, but also for their knowledgeable seamanship capabilities. Wenches; Panama Pam, Diamond Diane, Money Up Front Michele, Captains; Dastardly Dan, Gangplank Gary, Powder keg Paul and pirates Mutiny Michael, Typhoon Tony, Jewel Thief Julie, Mischievous Melanie, Plundering Pete and Anchors Away Angela are anxious to meet you.
<b>Romance</b>	The Gulf sunsets are world-famous: kindle those romantic sparks with a sunset walk along one of the more deserted beaches and watch for the elusive 'green flash' that sometimes follows a fiery sunset.
<b>Honeymoons &amp; Weddings</b>	<b>Don CeSar Beach Resort and Spa</b> is a classic destination wedding location – dating back to 1928 and on National Register of Historic Places. A wedding license may be obtained between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., at the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court. Offices are in the Clearwater Courthouse
<b>Zoomers</b>	This is a wonderful destination for Canadian "Snow birds" escaping our winter – perfect winter climate and lots of activities arranged for Snow Birds...not to mention copious Seniors discounts.

<b>UNIQUES</b>	
<b>Surprising</b>	<b>Friendship Trail</b> Located at the western end of Gandy Blvd, the "Old" Gandy Bridge spanning Tampa Bay north of St. Petersburg underwent a \$7 million

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	transformation into a recreational park called the Friendship Trail Bridge. This 4.2 km trail is the longest over-the-water recreation trail in the United States.
<b>History</b>	<p>From early Native American settlements, to arrival of Spanish conquistadors in the 1500s, to pioneering citrus farmers, railroad barons and entrepreneurial land developers, Florida's Gulf coast has always attracted people in search of opportunity and adventure. Not only did they help build this thriving region, they left a rich and fascinating legacy.</p> <p>Thousands of years before the Spanish came, Native Americans flourished in the area. Burial mounds from the Pre-Columbian Native Americans are preserved throughout the county and can be seen at Philippe Park and Weedon Island Preserve.</p> <p>Hernando de Soto explored the area in 1539. In his search for wealth, de Soto reportedly discovered five mineral springs near a large Tocobaga Indian village in what is now Safety Harbor. He named the springs "Espiritu Santo" or "Springs of Sacred Spirit".</p>
<b>Books</b>	<p>"Florida, Eh?" – by Isobel Warren and Milan Chvostek, Cedar Cave Books</p> <p>Frommer's Florida</p>
<b>1000 Places to see before you die</b>	<b>Swimming with manatees</b> at Crystal River, 140 kilometres to the north of St Pete.
<b>Must Sees</b>	<p><b>Tarpon Springs</b></p> <p>One of Florida's most fascinating small towns and a fine day trip from St. Petersburg or the beaches (it's 50 kms north of St. Petersburg), Tarpon Springs calls itself the "Sponge Capital of the World." Greek immigrants from the Dodecanese Islands settled here in the late 19th century to harvest sponges, which grew in abundance offshore. By the 1930s, Tarpon Springs was producing more sponges than any other place in the world. A blight ruined the business in the 1940s, but the descendants of those early immigrants stayed on. Today, they compose about a third of the population, making Tarpon Springs a center of transplanted Greek culture.</p> <p>Sponges still arrive at the historic Sponge Docks, on Dodecanese Boulevard. With a lively, carnival-like atmosphere, the docks are a great place to spend an afternoon or early evening, poking your head into shops selling sponges and other souvenirs while Greek music comes from the dozen or so family restaurants purveying authentic Aegean cuisine. You can also venture offshore from here: Booths on the docks hawk sightseeing and fishing cruises. Make your reservations as soon as you get here; then go sightseeing ashore or grab a meal at one of the multitudinous Greek restaurants and bakeries facing the dock while waiting for the next boat to shove off.</p>

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<b>SPORTS ACTIVITIES</b>	Tampa Bay Buccaneers (NFL); Tampa Bay Devil Rays (baseball); Tampa Bay Lightning (hockey) Baseball Spring Training in March each year: the Blue Jays are in Dunedin The beaches and climate provide year-round swimming, sailing, water-skiing, jet skiing, windsurfing, parasailing, diving and shelling.
<b>Golf</b>	<b>20 courses within a few minutes' drive</b> ; 50 public courses close by; Top golfers from around the world compete in the Tampa Bay Classic, a PGA tour event, in September.
<b>Fishing</b>	More than 300 species of fish can be caught in area waters, noted as one of Florida's premier fishing spots. Light tackle inshore bay and flats fishing charters as well as deep-sea charters available. All guides are licensed charter captains specializing in saltwater sport fishing in the Tampa Bay area. The prolific waters of the Tampa Bay area hold everything from pan fish to the mighty tarpon; 8 hours is around \$180 per person
<b>Horse riding</b>	Hire A Pony Riding Academy in Tampa features trail rides and lessons
<b>Hiking</b>	<b>Boyd Hill Nature Trail</b> - 1101 Country Club Way South, St. Petersburg, FL 33705. This area features 216 acres of natural beauty with six trails that lead visitors through Florida's various ecosystems. Wildlife abounds in this park and excellent photo opportunities exist on every trail.
<b>Cycling</b>	<b>Pinellas Trail</b> Located throughout the St. Petersburg/Clearwater area. This 60 km long, 5 metre wide trail is part of the county park system and is one of the longest linear parks in the southeastern United States. It enables visitors and residents alike to bike, in-line skate, jog or walk - all without the hassle and safety concern of being in automobile traffic. There are rental shops for bikes and skates at numerous points along the trail.
<b>Diving</b>	If you don't know where to dive in the Tampa Bay area, Ned DeLoach's "Diving Guide to Underwater Florida" is a must! You can dive on reefs and wrecks with Dive Clearwater (tel. 727/443-6731; <a href="http://www.diveclearwater.com">www.diveclearwater.com</a> ), which also operates the live-aboard boat Plunger V.

<b>CULTURE</b>	
<b>Arts</b>	World-class museums, symphony performances, Broadway shows, rock concerts, ballet and art festivals are presented throughout the year. St. Petersburg's Bayfront Center with the 2,000-seat Mahaffey Theater and an 8,250-seat arena is the scene for many of these activities. Ruth Eckerd Hall, the 2,000-seat theatre in Clearwater's Richard Baumgardner Center for the Performing Arts, offers a wide array of cultural activities.
<b>Music</b>	County and community parks are regular sites for art shows and

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	open-air concerts like the Clearwater Jazz Holiday in October, acclaimed as one of the South's premier jazz festivals.
<b>Films</b>	Ocean's Eleven; American Outlaws; The Punisher; Forever Mine; Summer Rental; To Die For; Filthy; Three-Point Turn; Whispering Thunder; Lethal Weapon 3; Cocoon; Great Expectations; The Break Coupe de Ville; McCinsey's Island; and more...
<b>Museums</b>	<p><b>Dali Museum</b>  When you're ready for a break from the beach, head to the Dali Museum to explore art by the famous Spanish surrealist painter Salvador Dali. Located in an architecturally stunning new building on the scenic downtown St. Pete waterfront, this iconic museum is the perfect jumping-off point to explore the rest of the city.  Visitors to the museum, who often know Dali solely as a surrealist, are surprised at the variety of his art. His early works include landscapes, portraits and still-lives, while his later works capture fascinating double images and immense religious paintings.  The museum is the most comprehensive Dali collection in the world, displaying more than 2,100 items in all including oils, watercolors, sketches, sculptures and more. Of the 18 so-called Masterworks produced by Dali, eight are located in the St. Pete museum.</p> <p>A blockbuster exhibition “<b>PICASSO / DALI, DALI / PICASSO</b>” is headed to the Dali Museum November 8, 2014 – February 16, 2015. It will feature rarely loaned works from more than 25 international art museums and private collections pairing works of these leading artists of our era. Dozens of works - with a focus on paintings, but also featuring drawings, prints and sculpture - will be on display exclusively at The Dali Museum in St. Pete before moving to the Museu Picasso in Barcelona.  Dali and Picasso had a long history together as they first met in the spring of 1926 and worked on a project in 1929. They later grew apart with differing political views but their art converged in an engagement with the great art of the past as they dealt with the history of art's grandest aspirations and their own yearning for artistic sovereignty in this era.</p> <p><b>The CHIHULY COLLECTION</b> is a stunning, permanent collection of world-renowned artist Dale Chihuly's unique glass artwork in a magnificent 10,000 square foot setting designed by award-winning architect Albert Alfonso. Chihuly is the foremost glass artist in the United States. You can't miss the entrance to the Chihuly Collection – a 20-foot vertical swath of cerise-colored “rocks” marks it. The medium is glass, but the textural elements and oversize construction give this everyday material a new identity.</p>

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	<p>Another celebrated St. Pete museum, the <b>Museum of Fine Arts</b> is best known for its collection of French Impressionist paintings, but also displays European, American, pre-Columbian and Asian art. Special exhibits feature works on loan from other metropolitan museums as well.</p> <p>For a more interactive experience, explore the <b>Dunedin Fine Arts Center &amp; Children's Art Museum</b>, which hosts exhibitions, workshops and demonstrations that bring the visual arts to life. It is also home to the David L. Mason Children's Art Museum, featuring interactive exhibits that are sure to spark kids' creativity and appreciation for the arts.</p> <p>Tarpon Springs' <b>Leepa-Rattner Museum of Art</b> opened in 2002 on the campus of St. Petersburg College. The museum's 6,000-piece collection includes works by important 20th-century artists. It displays art from Abraham Rattner's estate, donated by Allen and Isabelle Leepa, including lithographs, tapestries, sculptures, paintings and stained glass.</p>
<p><b>Aquarium</b></p>	<p>A not to be missed attraction is the <b>Clearwater Marine Aquarium</b> - a non-profit organization with a mission to preserve marine life and environment while inspiring the human spirit through leadership in education, research, rescue, rehabilitation, and release.</p> <p>Clearwater Marine Aquarium attracted worldwide attention through the rescue and rehabilitation of Winter the dolphin. Winter had lost her tail in a crab trap but thanks to the expertise of a dedicated marine biologist and the ingenuity of a brilliant prosthetics doctor who provided her with a new tail - Winter has thrived.</p> <p>Winter's rescue was a defining moment for Clearwater Marine Aquarium, in many ways. Not only has she provided a conduit to attract global media attention towards the remarkable work done at Clearwater Marine Aquarium, she has also inspired many people – children and adults alike – who have suffered life-changing injury and illness and have had to struggle, like Winter, to adapt.</p> <p>In 2011 the story of Winter's courage was captured in the film <i>Dolphin Tale I</i>, produced by Warner Brothers and Alcon Entertainment. Winter played herself in <i>Dolphin Tale</i>, together with Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Harry Connick, Jr., Kris Kristofferson, Cozi Zuehlsdorff and Nathan Gamble.</p> <p>Hope is a baby dolphin who was rescued 5 years and 1 day after Winter. She was found near the site where Winter was found and at a similar age – just a couple of months old. After her rehabilitation, she was paired with Winter and they have become the best of friends.</p> <p>In the first ever sequel to a true story, <i>Dolphin Tale 2</i> is the story of</p>

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	<p>Hope and will be released September 19, 2014. Many of the original stars all reprise their roles from the first film, while Lee Karlinsky, Julia Jordan, Bethany Hamilton and several others join the cast. The sequel revolves around more true stories from the aquarium, including both Winter and the baby dolphin, Hope. Also included is the story of the rehabilitated dolphin Mandy, a dolphin that was successfully released back into the wild by the Clearwater Marine Aquarium. Following the success of this heart-warming movie the Aquarium has opened a new facility that gives you an immersive, behind-the-scenes experience. Winter's Dolphin Tale Adventure provides hands-on experiences for children, a comprehensive overview of Winter's prosthetic development, an up-close look at rebuilt sets with actual movie props, an interactive Hurricane Experience exhibit and a large retail shop full of unique gifts for all ages. The Aquarium has a full schedule of daily educational presentations bringing visitors insights into the life of Sea Turtles, Stingrays, Dolphins, Otters and more. There are lots of other hands on opportunities - you can have your photo taken with Winter, feed a stingray, assist with dolphin and otter care and more. You can even book a tour where an expert guide will lead your small group through the marine animal hospital. Watch sea turtles recovering from injuries and illness, walk through the "stranding hall" where all marine animals are admitted and assessed, learn about the diets of the resident animals and visit the surgical suite – you may even see an animal undergoing a procedure.</p>
<p><b>Festivals</b></p>	<p><b>Blue Ocean Film Festival</b>          The global ocean summit and international film festival known as BLUE will take place in St. Petersburg, from November 3-9, 2014. BLUE will showcase over 150 films and combines a film festival, conservation summit, industry conference and educational outreach. The festival will have some star power (eg producer James Cameron) and focus on conservation and our beautiful waters. This global gathering will appeal to visitors and locals alike, and be open to both the general public and industry professionals. Attendees will find an exceptional week-long gathering of renowned scientists, researchers, entertainers, filmmakers and photographers plus workshops, fun social activities including book signings and art gallery displays.</p> <p><b>GeckoFest</b>          August 30, 2014 in Gulfport. The festival brings together strolling street performers, main stage acts, performing artists and vendors with all types of weird and wonderful wares. Over 200 arts, craft and food vendors will be in attendance at this year's event! The day culminates in Gulfport's famous Street Dance</p>

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	<p><b>St Pete Artwalk</b>          The second Saturday of every month puts St. Pete's exploding art districts on display with its St. Petersburg Second Saturday Artwalk. In all, five art districts celebrate a late night (5-9 p.m.) of free tours through studios, galleries and warehouses.</p>
<p><b>ATTRACTIONS</b></p>	<p><b>St. Petersburg:</b> The Pier, Salvador Dali Museum, Great Explorations, Museum of Fine Arts, Bayfront Center, St. Petersburg Museum of History, Sunshine Skyway Bridge, Sunken Gardens, Fort De Soto Park, Derby Lane, Tropicana Field, Florida International Museum, Florida Holocaust Museum, Canoe Escape, Sweetwater Kayaks and Duck Tours</p> <p><b>Clearwater:</b> Captain Memo's Pirate Cruise, Celebration Station, Clearwater Marine Aquarium, Dolphin Encounter, Pier 60, Ruth Eckerd Hall, Sea Screamer, Sea Life Safari, Show Queen and The Starlite Majesty Dinner Boat</p>
<p><b>Beaches</b></p>	<p>St. Petersburg and Clearwater beaches have earned accolades throughout the years. They offer sugar-soft sands, sparkling waters and activities to satisfy every type of beachgoer. Most recently, Fort De Soto Park and Anclote Key Preserve State Park won two coveted USA Today awards - Best Family Beach 2014 and Best Hidden-Gem Beach 2014, respectively.</p> <p>In 2013, four of the area's beaches were named to the 2013 TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards Top 25 U.S. Beaches. Led by Fort De Soto Park, which was named fourth best beach in the country and 20th among the coveted Best Beaches in the World, the list also includes Caladesi Island State Park (No. 12), Pass-a-Grille (No. 15) and Clearwater Beach (No. 18).</p> <p><b>Clearwater Beach</b> is lauded for its gorgeous white sand and sparkling waters, not to mention beachside fun for all ages - from kid-friendly water sports and cruises to dining and dancing hot spots. It is a great family beach due to its attentive lifeguards and shallow, warm and clear waters. Throw in a big playground and plenty of showers and restrooms, and it's no wonder that Clearwater Beach is a family paradise.</p> <p>The postcard-perfect <b>St. Pete Beach</b>, including charming Pass-a-Grille to the south, provides soul-soothing, sugar-white sands and welcoming blue waters, plus opportunities for as much adventure or relaxation as you desire.</p> <p>Here, you'll discover historic neighbourhoods, eclectic shopping, fantastic sunset spots and great restaurants. Plus, you can settle into accommodations that suit you – from world-renowned resorts to mom-and-pop motels to quaint bed-and-breakfasts.</p>

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<p><b>Wildlife</b></p>	<p>The Pinellas County <b>Blueways</b> paddling trails stretch the length of St. Pete/Clearwater, from Anclote Key Preserve State Park in the north to Fort De Soto Park in the south. The scenic waterways snake around Gulf Coast barrier islands along the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail, continue inland to Lake Tarpon and wind into Tampa Bay.</p> <p>Start at a local outfitter for canoe or kayak gear. Then prepare to paddle open waters and secluded bayous past parks and preserves that shelter mangroves, shorebirds and other wildlife.</p> <p><b>Turtles:</b> In a typical year, more than 150 loggerhead sea turtles successfully nest on St. Petersburg/Clearwater area beaches, and of those, more than a third will be found on six miles of undeveloped shoreline on Fort De Soto Beach. Loggerheads are one of five species of endangered sea turtles that lay their eggs on Florida's beaches. While the green, leatherback, hawksbill and Kemp's Ridley can be found in local waters, the loggerhead is by far the most common. Peak nesting time runs May through August.</p> <p><b>Clearwater's Original Dolphin Encounter</b> - From Clearwater Beach Marina, this is a Clearwater tradition and offers a dolphin-sighting guarantee.</p>
<p><b>Parks</b></p>	<p>Brooker Creek Preserve offers a nature trail, perfect for day hikes. While Sawgrass Lake Park in St. Petersburg take you back in time, showing the flora and fauna of decades past (and even live alligators of today!)</p>
<p><b>Gardens</b></p>	<p>Explore the tropical paradise of the <b>Florida Botanical Gardens</b>, located in Largo. It's the largest free-standing botanical gardens in Florida with more than 80 acres of lush gardens, including the largest butterfly garden in the US.</p> <p><b>Sunken Gardens</b> This is a 100 year old botanical garden featuring 50,000 tropical plants and flowers, flamingos, butterflies.</p> <p><b>Weedon Island</b> in St. Petersburg offers a 3,000-foot boardwalk will take nature lovers through a mangrove forest to a four-story, 50-foot high observation tower offering panoramic views of Tampa Bay. The park also offers a canoe and kayak trail.</p>
<p><b>Castles/Forts</b></p>	<p><b>Fort De Soto</b>, was built on Mullet Key in 1898 to protect Tampa Bay during the Spanish-American War. The war ended before construction was finished and the fort's cannon were never fired.</p>

<p><b>OTHER ACTIVITIES</b></p>	
<p><b>Shopping</b></p>	<p><b>International Plaza and Bay Street</b> – over 200 stores, pedestrianised, 35 kms from St Pete.</p>

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	<b>John's Pass Village and Boardwalk</b> - Casual and charming, albeit touristy, this Old Florida, turn-of-the-last-century fishing village on John's Pass consists of a string of simple wooden structures topped by tin roofs and connected by a 1,000-foot boardwalk. Most of the buildings have been converted into shops, art galleries, restaurants, and saloons.
<b>Markets</b>	<b>Wagonwheel Flea Market</b> is held every weekend in 125 acres with 2000 booths.
<b>Nightlife</b>	If you haven't already found it during your sightseeing and shopping excursions, the restored fishing community of John's Pass Village and Boardwalk, on Gulf Boulevard at John's Pass in Madeira Beach, has plenty of restaurants, bars, and shops to keep you occupied after the sun sets. Elsewhere, the nightlife scene at the beach revolves around rocking bars that pump out music until 2am. Located five floors above downtown St. Petersburg and over a kilometre out into Tampa Bay, <b>Cha Cha Coconuts</b> is one of the coolest spots in town. This bar/restaurant features entertainment nightly. <b>Dan Marino's Martini Bar</b> , Second Avenue N. St. Petersburg - The place to see and be seen. Listen to the smooth bluesy sounds of a live band while sipping on a Marino Margarita.
<b>Casinos</b>	<b>The Casino Royale</b> is a Las Vegas-style gaming vessel featuring over 500 slot machines and table games including Black Jack, Craps, Roulette and Mini-Baccarat; also featured is the Poker room and exclusive High Limit room.

<b>CUISINE</b>	
<b>Food</b>	<b>Lobster Pot</b> , Redington Shores – finest seafood and recommended by Frommer. <b>Ted Peters' Famous Smoked Fish</b> – bring your own to be smoked.
<b>Drink</b>	<b>Craft beer</b> St. Pete/Clearwater is the epicenter of Florida's booming craft beer renaissance, home to the state's oldest and some of its newest and most highly regarded craft breweries. Fourteen independently owned breweries and brew pubs, along with a branch of a Maine brewery, thrive here. And more keep popping up every couple of months. The St. Pete/Clearwater Craft Beer Trail runs from Tarpon Springs to Treasure Island.
<b>Restaurants</b>	There are approximately <b>2,300 restaurants</b> capable of seating a total of more than 200,000 people throughout Florida's Beach. They offer everything from elegant to the most casual, barefoot dining and moonlight dinner cruises. <b>Fourth Street Shrimp Store</b> is perhaps the best bargain for eating in St Pete's.

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<b>MORE INFO</b>	
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<b>PERSONAL EXPERIENCES</b>	I have broadcast the Travel show on location in St Pete’s several times – here are some of my memorable treats: Dolphin Beach Hotel Segway Tour Salvador Dali Museum History Museum Tarpon Springs: sponge dive cruise and Mykonos Restaurant Fort De Soto Park Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary Don CeSar Resort and Spa: the Maritana Grille The Hurricane Restaurant, St. Pete Beach Parkshore Grill, Beach Drive Check out my Travel Blog at <a href="http://www.chrisrobsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/20/St-Petersburg-Clearwater.aspx">http://www.chrisrobsontravelshow.ca/Blog/tabid/400/EntryId/20/St-Petersburg-Clearwater.aspx</a>
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