



A REAL PEOPLE PLEASER

Tampa offers fun in the sun for the whole family

By Teree Caruthers

Getting my busy, eclectic family to agree on anything is short of a miracle – and vacations are no different. I had just about given up trying to find a travel destination that would satisfy my sports fanatic husband; my foodie daughter; and my son, the extreme adventurer. Not to mention a place where I could relax and soak up the sun. So when a coworker excitedly suggested Tampa, I took her advice. Tampa Bay's diverse cultural, recreational and entertainment offerings kept everyone smiling, especially me.





GO

If you want to truly walk – paddle, pedal, float or ride – on Tampa’s wild side, schedule one of more than a dozen nature and ecotours. visittampabay.com

Natural Attractions

For non-stop thrills with a side of nature, **Busch Gardens** is a must-visit. Part animal preserve and part amusement park, Busch Gardens literally offers something for everyone. My son spent the day “coasting” on wild rides with menacing names like SheuKra and the Serpent, while the rest of us opted for a ride into the wild on the **Serengeti Safari**. At the **Florida Aquarium** downtown, we swam with the fishes – or sharks to be exact. The aquarium’s Dive With the Sharks program in the Coral Reef Exhibit allows guests with diver certification to get up close and personal with sharks, moray eels and giant sea turtles. This experience measured a 10 on the coolness scale, and my kids couldn’t stop talking about how much fun they had.

Local Flavor

Coming face to face with lions, tigers and sharks – oh my – is sure to work up an appetite, and Tampa doesn’t disappoint. The city is known for its diverse dining options – from fresh seafood served in waterfront bistros to authentic Cuban cuisine and

quaint cafes. We sampled several variations of a Tampa favorite, the Cuban sandwich, a delicious concoction of ham, roast pork, Genoa salami, mustard pickles and Swiss cheese piled high on Cuban bread.

For finer dining, you can’t beat **Bern’s Steak House** and the **Columbia Restaurant** – both local legends. Since it first opened in 1905, the Columbia has served the likes of Rocky Marciano and President John F. Kennedy. The restaurant continues to dish out some of the best Cuban fare in the city. Go for Great Grandmother Carmen Hernandez’s Croquetas de Pollo. Stay for the live flamenco show.

Sporting Season

For my family, eating is a sport, but if you prefer your games played on fields, courts or ice, you’ll score with Tampa, where there is literally a sport for every season. In fact, some of the most famous sports venues in the nation are found in Tampa. In summer, cheer on the Tampa Yankees, the New York Yankees’ farm league team, or the Tampa Bay Rays major league baseball team. Fall brings

Tampa Bay Buccaneers football, followed by Tampa Bay Lightning hockey during the winter months. And spring begins the Tampa Bay Rowdies professional soccer season. The city is passionate about its sports teams, and even visitors get caught up in the excitement and pageantry of game days. With its subtropical climate, Tampa is a haven for weekend warriors as well. Dubbed Florida’s “Golf Coast,” Tampa Bay boasts more than 100 public and private courses open for play year round. For schedules, go to visittampabay.com/visitors/sports.

Play It Cool!

Summer days in Tampa can get pretty steamy. One of the best places to cool off: the new water park at **LEGOLAND Florida**, just a short drive away in Winter Haven. Or head across the bay to the internationally famous beaches of Clearwater and St. Petersburg, whose emerald green water of the gulf is breathtakingly clear. There’s no better way to relax from all of Tampa’s excitement than stretched out across a sparkling, white-sand beach, playing in the surf with your family or just people watching!



Scan the QR code with your smartphone to get in on the action in Tampa Bay.

DO

Check out visittampabay.com/visitors/restaurants/local-recipes for recipes from some of Tampa’s hottest restaurants.

HISTORY HAS ITS PLACE

Experience Tampa’s Cuban culture firsthand in Ybor City (pronounced Ee-Bore), a historic neighborhood founded in the 1880s. As other cigar manufacturers moved their operations from Cuba to Tampa, the neighborhood filled with Spanish, Cuban and Italian immigrants whose vibrant culture can still be seen in Ybor City’s architecture and in its award-winning restaurants. While the cigar factories have long gone, revitalization efforts have turned the neighborhood into a bustling shopping, nightlife and entertainment district. We even took home a piece of Ybor City history from Historical Hand Painted Tiles, a shop that sells the famed ceramics. To get there, take the TECO Line Streetcar from downtown Tampa.





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