

Travel

Doing Biz In Tampa, Florida



By Regina Lynch-Hudson

City Smarts: Once a small Indian fishing village, which later became known as the "Cigar City," Tampa Bay is now one of Florida's most invigorating travel destinations. It is the central city of the Tampa-Saint Petersburg-Clearwater metropolitan area focused around Tampa Bay. In addition to its sandy beaches and beautiful sunsets, the Bay Area shines with exciting entertainment and world-class attractions. Tampa Bay is home to rich history and diverse cultures.

Populations: Tampa 313,611; and Tampa Bay Area 2.989 million, it is Florida's third most populous city (following Miami and Jacksonville). Tampa enjoys a temperate, semi-tropical climate marked by an average winter temperature of 62.5 degrees and an average summer temperature of 81.4 degrees. Located on Florida's west coast, its central location makes it easy to romp to the beaches along the Gulf of Mexico and all the attractions throughout Central Florida.

Forbes magazine ranked Tampa as the 17th top spot in the country for business based on high end, local job growth and the number of technology companies. Tampa Bay is also home to about one fourth of all Florida-based private companies. The area's biggest industries are services, retail,



government, finance / insurance / real estate and manufacturing. Tampa's largest employer is the Hillsborough County School District.

Tampa International Airport, Busch Gardens, Delta Air Lines Reservation Center, Continental Airlines Reservation Center and Marriott Corporation are the tourism industry businesses represented among the top 30 employers in Hillsborough County.

Getting Around: Average taxi service from Tampa International Airport (TIA) to downtown is \$16.50. Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HARTline) provides inter-city bus service. HARTline manages 207 buses on 26 routes, nine charming rubber-tired trolleys and eight electric streetcars that connect downtown Tampa with countywide pick up and drop off locations. The "In Town Trolley" runs north and south through downtown and connects to the TECO Line Streetcar System, which runs from downtown to the Channel District/Port and Ybor City.

Survival Kit: Everyone knows that sunglasses, sunscreen and a bathing suit are a must for vacationing in Florida, but don't forget these other items: A cigar cutter for the cigars made daily in Ybor City, a camera to take your picture with the National Hockey League's most coveted prize — Lord Stanley's Cup and your walking shoes for a day at Tampa's Busch Gardens.

Catching ZZZ's: Casting its dramatic reflection onto the Bay, the Tampa Marriott Waterside stands as the newest, largest and most striking hotel in the area. Its downtown location in the emerging Channel district and direct connection to the Tampa Convention Center makes it an ideal spot for business or pleasure. Business amenities include separate modem lines, speakerphone, voice mail, electrical outlets and a two-line phone. The Waterside is located in the heart of downtown Tampa, just 15 minutes from Tampa International Airport. It is a quick 5 minutes from Channelside, Tampa Port, Ybor City and adjacent to the convention center. The

hotel also offers 31 meeting rooms with 50,000 square feet of total meeting space. Contact 888.236.2427, 700 South Florida Ave or www.marriott.com

The Power Lunch: Under the direction of Executive Chef James Blackwell, the casual elegance of Avanzare offers exceptional Italian and American specialties in a relaxing atmosphere at the Hyatt Regency Tampa. The perfect place to dine for any occasion, Avanzare is located nearby Tampa's Performing Arts Center and the St. Petes Times Forum. Whether for a business lunch or a night on the town, the experience at Avanzare is completed with a masterful wine list, relaxing lounge, outstanding service and personal attention. 813.222.4975, 211 N. Tampa St.

Cultural Chow: Florida's oldest and the nation's largest Spanish restaurant, founded in 1905 in historic Ybor City, the Columbia Restaurant has been run by the same family for four generations. Recognized by the likes of Time, Fortune, Holiday, Epicurean and National Geographic, the Columbia (seating 1,700 in 15 rooms extending one city block) also has been awarded the Mobil 4-star award. Classic Spanish and Cuban cuisine are served with flair and Flamenco and classical dance are performed Monday-Saturday nights. 813.248.496, 12117 East 7th Avenue, www.columbiarestaurant.com

Cyberite: You're in luck! Forget about lugging that laptop through airports. Tampa Marriott Waterside's Business Center offers on-site Internet connection and shipping and copying services. 813.221.4900, 700 South Florida Ave, www.marriot.com

To De-Stress: Talk about the ultimate reprieve! Located on 480 acres of lush Florida countryside, Saddlebrook Resort is

just 30 minutes north of Tampa's International Airport. Picture if you will, rolling terrain surrounded by lagoons, tall cypress and palm trees and two 18-hole championship golf courses. The resort's tennis complex features 45 courts in six surfaces. After a long day in meetings, guests can also enjoy night play on five lighted courts. A 7,000 square-foot spa offers a variety of body treatments, facials and salon services in 12 private treatment rooms. There's also a couple's room with soaking tub, a hydromassage tub, whirlpools, saunas, steamrooms, full-service salon and a courtyard terrace. Treatments available to resort guests and visiting tourists alike. 800.729.8383, 5700 Saddlebrook Way, Wesley Chapel, FL.

Networkin': The Ashley Street Grille, located off the lobby in the Radisson Riverwalk Hotel, is a favorite networkin' choice for businesspeople. Just three blocks from the convention center, this hotel bar & grill attracts business travelers who want to grab a cocktail on the patio and glimpse an occasional dolphin playing in the Hillsborough River. 813.223.2222, 200 N. Ashley Dr.

Look Sharp: Impress your client by knowing a little bit more about them before that crucial meeting. High Beam is the Internet tell-all site. With membership, you can search more than 20 million profiles of executives, managers and employees from more than 1 million different public, private and nonprofit organizations.

Search an extensive archive of more than 32 million documents from more than 2,800 sources—a vast collection of articles from leading publications, updated daily and going back as far as 20 years. www.highbeam.com

Footloose and Fancy Free: Busch Gardens Tampa Bay is the ultimate

adventure park featuring an unparalleled combination of world-class animal habitats, thrill rides, and live entertainment. Talk about getting your mind off work, Busch Gardens provides guests with four legendary steel roller-coasters, including three of the world's top-rated coasters: Kumba, Montu and Gwazi. Recognized among the top zoos in North America—there's no better way to get up-close to animals than trekking to Africa.

813.987.5000, 3605 Bougainvillea Avenue, buschgardens.com/buschgardens/fla/

Flight Time: Tampa International Airport is a world-class facility that consistently ranks as one of the world's top airports. 813.870.8700, 5503 West Spruce Street, www.tampaairport.com. AirTran Airways serves Tampa with daily nonstop flights from Atlanta. Check schedules and book a flight at www.airtran.com, 800.AIR.TRAN (1.800.247.8726). In the Atlanta area, please call 678.254.7999.

Someone helpful: Tampa Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau, 813.223.1111, www.VisitTampaBay.com. Tampa Bay Convention & Visitors Bureau, 813.223.1111 ext. 54

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Doing Biz In... features continuously updated coverage of a full spectrum of top cities where readers conduct business. Publicist and travel writer, Regina Lynch-Hudson has penned destination catalogs and articles for companies such as Vacation Express and AirTran Airways. More information on The Write Publicist & Co. can be found at www.thewritepublicist.com.