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## **FACT SHEET**

### **LOCATION**

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.

### **DESCRIPTION**

Florida's Beach offers 35 miles of white-sand beaches on some 20 barrier islands along the Gulf of Mexico. The area's 345 miles of shoreline around the peninsula encompass the resort communities of 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 and a host of other colorful communities for day-trips. The semi-tropical setting makes the 280 square miles of Florida's Beach a year-round playground for a variety of outdoor activities.

### **THE NAME**

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." The area boasts an average of 361 days of sunshine each year, making Suncoast an appropriate title.

### **RECORD SUNSHINE**

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. From 1910 to 1986, the St. Petersburg Evening Independent was given away free on those rare occasions when the sun did not shine. The newspaper ceased publication Nov. 8, 1986. In 76 years, the newspaper was given away free 295 times -- less than four times per year.

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### SUNSHINE AND WARM WATERS

With an average of 361 days of sunshine each year, Florida's Beach enjoys an average temperature of 73° F (23° C). The annual average water temperature along the beaches is 75° F (24° C).

	<u>Average High Temp.</u>	<u>Average Low Temp.</u>	<u>Water</u>
January	70.0 21 C	49.5 10 C	63 F, 17 C
February	71.0 21 C	50.4 10 C	64 F, 18 C
March	76.2 25 C	56.1 13 C	69 F, 21 C
April	81.9 28 C	61.1 16 C	73 F, 23 C
May	87.1 31 C	67.2 20 C	79 F, 23 C
June	89.5 32 C	72.3 22 C	83 F, 28 C
July	90.0 32 C	74.2 23 C	85 F, 29 C
August	90.3 32 C	74.2 23 C	86 F, 30 C
September	88.9 32 C	72.8 23 C	83 F, 28 C
October	83.7 29 C	65.1 18 C	77 F, 25 C
November	76.9 25 C	56.4 14 C	70 F, 21 C
December	71.6 22 C	50.9 10 C	64 F, 18 C

### AMERICA'S TOP 10

According to the 1999 "Places Rated Almanac" St. Petersburg-Clearwater-Tampa is the nation's 4th ranked metropolitan area. No other Florida area was ranked in the Top 10. The book ranks areas in the U.S. and Canada on nine factors including: cost of living, transportation, crime, the arts, recreation and climate.

In addition, in the 1999 annual beach survey released by Dr. Stephen Leatherman of Florida International University, the area leads the country in the finest beaches with Caladesi Island State Park ranked #6 and Fort DeSoto Park #7 -- out of 650 beaches surveyed. Clearwater Beach rated as the #1 city beach in Gulf Region. No other destination can offer three of the top public beaches.

### POPULATION

Florida's Beach (Pinellas County) including all 26 communities.....888,612  
St. Petersburg-241,594; St. Pete Beach-9,709; Clearwater-102,558; Dunedin-35,356; Tarpon Springs-17,906; Indian Rocks Beach-4,182; Treasure Island-7,369; Madeira Beach-4,220; and Safety Harbor-16,971.

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POPULARITY

More than 4.39 million visitors vacation in Florida's Beach each year, making it the most popular vacation destination on Florida's west coast. These visitors generate \$2.3 billion in direct revenue, making tourism the area's #1 industry.

INTERNATIONAL APPEAL

In addition to attracting vacationers from every state, the area hosted more than 1.2 million international visitors in 1998. Florida's Beach has been a popular vacation spot for Canadians for seven decades. The dramatic increase in visitors from Europe occurred more recently. Interest from South America is also growing, reaching 41,000 in 1998. International visitor figures follow:

<u>Total</u>	<u>Visitors</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Europe</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>Latin America</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
'83:	3,130,391	464,526	14.8	249,078	7.9		
'84:	3,196,754	584,192	18.0	240,780	7.5		
'85:	3,127,683	581,309	18.5	147,918	4.7		
'86:	3,374,262	581,309	18.5	362,948	9.6		
'87:	3,661,739	558,855	15.3	540,249	14.7		
'88:	3,625,543	601,962	16.6	890,166	24.9		
'89:	3,720,298	670,469	18.0	1,087,367	29.2		
'90:	3,835,094	705,818	18.4	1,035,215	27.0		
'91:	3,740,303	677,018	18.1	776,484	26.8		
'92:	3,792,546	766,670	17.3	844,220	22.3		
'93:	3,857,118	587,750	17.3	859,060	22.3		
'94:	3,891,592	527,448	13.6	664,846	17.1		
'95:	4,016,023	425,071	10.6	786,361	19.6		
'96:	4,140,496	427,459	10.3	865,211	20.9		
'97:	4,251,045	425,109	10.0	852,731	20.1		
'98:	4,398,437	382,337	08.8	890,970	20.4	41,000	0.9

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### ARRIVING BY AIR

The beaches and outlying communities on Florida's Beach are only 30 minutes away from Tampa International Airport, rated the nation's best for the past ten years by the International Passenger Traffic Association and other polls. Tampa International Airport is served by Air Aruba, Air Canada, America West, American, American Trans Air, British Airways, Canadian Airlines International, Cayman Airways, Condor, Continental, Delta, Delta Express, Gulfstream, Midway, Northwest, Southwest, Spirit, TWA, United, USAirways and US Airways Express.

The St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport is served by carriers Air Transat, American Trans Air, Canada 3000, and Sky America; plus other charters from Canada and the United States with Southwest, US Airways, Sun Country, Ryan International and Express One -- especially during the winter season.

### ARRIVING BY CAR

Florida's Beach is linked to the interstate system and is accessible from Interstate 75, Interstate 275, Interstate 4, US Highway 19 and State Road 60. Rental cars are available at both airports and at other locations throughout the area. Driving distances from selected cities include (listed in miles):

Atlanta	470	Montreal	1518
Boston	1390	New Orleans	636
Chicago	1230	New York City	1154
Cleveland	1116	Orlando	84
Detroit	1230	Pittsburgh	1041
Miami	289	Toronto	1487

### ACCOMMODATIONS—More than 30,000 Units

54 Hotels with 9,912 rooms  
434 Motels with 10,735 rooms  
Rental condominiums and short-term apartments with 13,567 units

### LODGING EXPENSE

Lodging costs range from \$30 to more than \$100 per night depending on the location, amenities, etc. The average for room rates during specific seasons are:

January-April	Average \$75.68
May-August	Average \$61.83
September-December	Average \$58.62

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### DINING

There are approximately 2,276 restaurants 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. The average cost per meal throughout the year:

Breakfast	\$3.25
Lunch	\$5.00
Dinner	\$9.00

### MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

Clearwater: Captain Memo's Pirate Cruise, Celebration Station, Clearwater Marine Aquarium, Dolphin Encounter, Pier 60, Ruth Eckerd Hall, Sea Screamer, Sea Life Safari and The Starlite Majesty Dinner Boat

Dunedin: Honeymoon Island & Caladesi Island State Parks, Dunedin Fine Art Center, David L. Mason Children's Art Museum, Dunedin Historical Museum.

Gulfport: Art Village, Gulfport Historical Museum, Gulfport Casino

Indian Shores: Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary

Largo: Heritage Village, Florida Botanical Gardens and Gulf Coast Museum of Art

Madeira Beach: John's Pass Village & Boardwalk, Europa SeaKruz

Safety Harbor: Philippe Park, Safety Harbor Museum of Regional History

St. Pete Beach: Starlite Princess Cruises, Silas Bayside Market, Dolphin Landings

St. Petersburg: 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

Tarpon Springs: Sponge Docks & Spongeorama, Konger Tarpon Springs Aquarium, St. Nicholas Boat Line, St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral, and Island Wind Tours

Treasure Island: SunCruz Casino

### SPORTS AND RECREATION

The beaches and climate provide year-round swimming, sailing, water-skiing, jet skiing, windsurfing, parasailing, diving and shelling. More than 300 species of fish can be caught in area waters, noted as one of Florida's premier fishing spots. Golf and tennis are also played year-round and facilities for both are plentiful. Parimutual wagering is available with greyhound and thoroughbred racing. Professional sports fans have Major League Baseball's Tampa Bay Devil Rays, who play in St Petersburg's Tropicana Field, and the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers, NHL's Tampa Bay Lightning, Major League Soccer's Tampa Bay Mutiny and Arena Football's Tampa Bay Storm in nearby Tampa. The area is baseball's spring training capital with nine teams training within an hour's drive. Area teams include the Tampa Bay Devil Rays in St. Petersburg, the Philadelphia Phillies in Clearwater, the Toronto Blue Jays in Dunedin, and the New York Yankees in nearby Tampa.

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Top golfers from around the world compete in the Tampa Bay Classic, a PGA tour event, in October. St. Petersburg and the Renaissance Vinoy Resort are home to yacht races throughout the year. Tropicana Field was home to the 1999 NCAA Basketball Final Four. The Greater Tampa Bay area will host the 2001 NFL Super Bowl.

#### RECREATION FACILITIES

Parks	250 with total of 7,720 acres
Campgrounds	32
Golf Courses	45 (18 resort/public, 11 semi-private, 16 private)
Tennis Facilities	54 (6 semi-private, 39 public, 9 private) more than 200 public courts
Marinas/Dock Facilities	96
Yacht Clubs	9

#### CULTURAL FACILITIES

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. County and community parks are regular sites for art shows and open-air concerts like the Clearwater Jazz Holiday in October, acclaimed as one of the South's premier jazz festivals. There are 15 community theatres, four professional theatres and 10 museums throughout Florida's Beach.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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