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MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS MAKE NEWS
FOR FLORIDA'S BEACH --THE ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER AREA

Here is a roundup of items generating attention on Florida's Beach. For more information, take a virtual visit at www.FloridasBeach.com or call 1-877-FL-BEACH (352-3224).

1. **CVB Offers On-Line Bookings:** The St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention & Visitors Bureau has developed a new web site allowing consumers and travelers to preview and book accommodations in the area. The new web site at www.FloridasBeach.com features instantly updated rates and availability for area properties. For more information, call 727-464-7200.
2. **Museum Features Kennedy Objects:** The Tampa Bay area was one of John F. Kennedy's last stops before his fateful visit to Dallas in 1963. Now St. Petersburg's Florida International Museum is the last stop for the world's largest private collection of the late President's items. The exhibit transports visitors back in time to experience the Kennedy era. Galleries include a re-creation of Kennedy's Oval Office, PT 109 and a life-size facade of his birthplace in Brookline, Mass. Also included are objects relating to the relationship between JFK and his son, John Kennedy, Jr. The exhibit runs through May 29, 2000. 727-822-3693.
3. **Dali Displays Masterpieces:** The Salvador Dali Museum presents *Masterpieces of Surrealism* Jan. 29 – April 16. The exhibit features a selection of major paintings covering the early evolution of Surrealism. It will showcase works by Picasso, Magritte, Ernst, Dali and Masson. 727-823-3767
4. **Anne Frank:** The Florida Holocaust Museum features *Anne Frank: A History for Today* Jan. 16 through January 15, 2001. This array of family photos, diary passages and testimony from Holocaust survivors depicts the story of Anne Frank and teaches a lesson of tolerance. 727-820-0100
5. **Best Beaches:** Florida's Beach leads the nation in great beaches with Caladesi Island State Park ranked #6 and Fort De Soto Park #7 in the best beach category, and Clearwater Beach named the #1 city beach in the Gulf Region. No other destination can offer three top public beaches. The results are from the 1999 beach survey by Dr. Stephen Leatherman of Florida International University who surveys 650 U.S. beaches.
6. **Bird Hospital Expands:** The Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary, one of the largest wild bird rescue operations in the United States, is undergoing a \$350,000 expansion of its "hospital." The Sanctuary is non-profit refuge and rehabilitation center for some 500 injured and permanently crippled birds. The expansion includes a renovated treatment area, new caging, sinks and insulation. 727-393-0933.

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7. CVB Develops Green Map: The St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention & Visitors Bureau has created an area Green Map web site featuring a comprehensive inventory of eco-tourism activities and environmental resources throughout Florida's Beach. The site features information on nature-based tourism locations, interactive web-enabled GIS maps and other links. It is a part of the Green Map System, a globally connected framework of sites located at www.greenmap.com.

8. Copperhead Gets New Skin: The Westin Innisbrook Resort recently completed a \$500,000 renovation of its award-winning Copperhead golf course, which is consistently ranked as "One of America's Top 50 Resort Courses" by *Golf Digest*. Copperhead is home to the Tampa Bay Classic, a new PGA Tour event scheduled for October 16-22, 2000. 727-942-5221

9. Museum of Art and Botanical Gardens: The Gulf Coast Museum of Art opened in September 1999 in Largo. It contains permanent and traveling collections as well as studios enabling visitors to work with artists in various media. A second phase doubling the size of the 22,000 sq. ft. facility will open in spring 2000 along with the opening of the Florida Botanical Gardens. The total 150-acre project called *Pinewood Cultural Park* will combine a cultural, historic and botanical experience at a single destination. The Museum and Gardens will be adjacent to Heritage Village, the area's doorway to the past with 22 historic structures. All attractions will be free. 727-582-2100

10. Recreational Trail: The longest over-the-water recreational trail in the United States opened in December spanning Tampa Bay between Tampa and St. Petersburg. The "Old" Gandy Bridge has undergone a \$7 million transformation into a recreational park called the Friendship TrailBridge. The 13,770.5-foot (2.6-mile) trail is open for all types of non-motorized activities including biking, walking, running, roller-blading and fishing. 813-289-4400

AREA NOTES:

- **Clearwater Beach** has initiated an \$80 million redevelopment plan to include a new fixed-span bridge linking downtown and the beach with pedestrian overlooks, a recreation trail and fishing pier and two four-story beach parking garages. The City of Clearwater has just completed its \$7.5 million Gateway to the Beach project which includes a new traffic roundabout with a water fountain centerpiece that leads to Pier 60.
- **Tarpon Springs** recently completed a \$2.5 million streetscape to its historic sponge docks.
- The **Pinellas Trail** was named as one of the Top 10 places to skate for fitness in the United States by Rollerblade, Inc.
- Historic **Sunken Gardens** reopened in January after being bought and completely renovated by the city of St. Petersburg. One of the most popular roadside attractions in Florida in the 1930s, Sunken Gardens added more than 6,000 plants and a butterfly garden. 727-893-7336
- **Weedon Island**, a 1,500-acre nature preserve near St. Petersburg, will be home to a multi-million dollar Native American Cultural Center focusing on the communities who inhabited this site from 10,000 BC to 1200 AD. 727-217-7208
- **Brooker Creek Preserve**, an 8,500-acre site near Tarpon Springs, offers free, 2 ½-hour guided nature hikes on Saturdays. The Preserve is becoming one of Florida's leading natural attractions with a \$6 million environmental education center to be completed by October 2002. 727-943-4000

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AREA MUSEUM HIGHLIGHTS:

- The **Museum of Fine Arts** in St. Petersburg features *The Fantastical World of Croatian Naïve Art* February 13 through May 28. With more than 100 works by Croatia's most beloved artists, it is the largest and most comprehensive exhibit ever of its kind. 727-896-2667
- **Great Explorations Hands On Museum**, featuring interactive experiences for children, has moved to the St. Petersburg Pier. In April the Museum will launch a new exhibit inviting children and families to experience the excitement of launching a rocket into space. *Mission Control: From the Moon to Mars* features actual Apollo Mission Control desks and an Apollo Space Flight Launch film. 727-821-8992
- The **St. Petersburg Museum of History** features *Nostalgia Trippin'* through May 2000. This exhibit uses a full variety of artifacts showing how the passage of time is symbolized in technology, styles, materials and values. 727-894-1052
- The **Gulf Coast Museum of Art** features *Florida & the Southeast*, the Center's 130-piece collection of contemporary Florida art and American fine crafts. 727-518-6833.

UPCOMING:

BayWalk: Adding momentum to a revitalization of downtown St. Petersburg, the city has unveiled a \$40-million entertainment complex called "BayWalk." A 150,000 sq. ft. open-air, Mediterranean Revival themed plaza, BayWalk will be anchored by a 4,200-seat, 20-screen Muvico Theater complex featuring stadium seating in all theaters. Opening in fall 2000, BayWalk will feature Gap, Gap Kids, Brainfood, Johnny Rockets and other retail outlets. 727-384-6000.

ACCOMMODATION NEWS

Florida's Beach offers more than 30,000 rooms in 26 distinct communities priced to fit any budget, and new properties and more than \$85 million in renovations are underway.

- The Best Western Sirata Beach Resort and Quality Inn Beachfront Resort have merged into the **Sirata Beach Resort & Conference Center** through a \$15 million renovation. The property includes a new eight-story tower with 80 additional one-bedroom suites. The resort now features 13,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. 727-367-2771
- The **Westin Innisbrook Resort** is getting \$50 million in capital improvements over the next five years. A central village with guest registration, a lobby bar, new restaurant, specialty shops, a grocery/deli and golf shop are scheduled to open in 2000 along with a new health club and spa. The resort also refurbished its signature Copperhead golf course. 727-942-5221
- The **Adam's Mark Clearwater Beach Resort** has started a major renovation of all guest rooms. The multi-million dollar project will revitalize all 207 guest rooms and lobby, and be completed in February 2000. 727-443-5714
- The **TradeWinds Resort** opened an 8,000 sq. ft. Grand Palm Colonnade in January. This climate controlled pre-convene area features majestic 23-foot palm trees and a ceiling that soars to 31 feet at its peak. 727-562-1221

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- Celebrating its 75th year, the **Renaissance Vinoy Resort** has added an 11,340 sq. ft. Palm Court ballroom, expanding its health club and retail space and adding an 85-space parking garage with

four scenic rooftop tennis courts. The ballroom can be divided into eight separate meeting rooms, features 5,000 sq. ft. of pre-function space and 22-foot ceilings. 727-894-1000

- **The Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites – Harbourside** on the intracoastal waterway in Indian Rocks Beach is constructing a 4,500 sq. ft. Key West-style meeting facility. The new facility will accommodate up to 300 people and should be completed in June 2000. 727-595-9484
- The **Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort** recently launched a new children's program called Fun Factory. Staff trained in the arts of "funology" and edu-tainment delight children ages 3-11 from the moment they arrive with Fun Factory check-in, Fun Packs and flexible Fun Factory itineraries. The property just completed a \$5 million renovation to remodel all 425 guest rooms, paint the hallways, and create a brand new front entrance. 727-461-3222
- **The Safety Harbor Resort & Spa**, which was recognized as one of the 'best resort spas for 1999' by *National Geographic Traveler*, announced a \$4 million renovation to maximize use of its famous mineral springs with new spa facilities. Native Americans inhabiting the area thousands of years ago believed the springs had healing qualities, a legend that persists today. 727-726-1161
- The **Bellevue Biltmore Resort & Spa** undertook a \$5 million renewal and expansion last year to reinstate many original design elements. The resort reopened the Carriage Porch, a restored entrance from the days of horse and buggy. The Biltmore also recently opened an amphitheater with multi-level seating for 76. 727-442-6171
- The historic (1924) **Grayl's Lantern Lane Hotel** in downtown St. Petersburg has reopened as a hotel. This 10-room property promises the flair of a bed & breakfast with the privacy of a hotel featuring an atmosphere of the '20s with the luxury of modern conveniences. 727-896-1080.
- The **Belleair Beach Club** has re-opened after completely renovating its 41 rooms. This condo complex features one-bedroom units on an exclusive Gulf of Mexico beach. 727-517-2582.
- The **Travelodge St. Pete Beach**, formerly the Colonial Gateway Inn, recently completed the first phase of a \$1 million renovation. The renovation includes increasing the size of the 200-unit property's efficiencies and updating the furniture, carpeting and bathrooms. 727-363-2711
- The historic **Hotel Ponce De Leon** re-opened this year after a 10-year hiatus. The 80-room property features its original 1922 attendant-operated elevator and outstanding views of the downtown St. Petersburg waterfront at a budget price. 727-550-9300.
- The Howard Johnson Treasure Island has been reflagged the **Best Western Treasure Island** and completed a \$1 million renovation. All 84 rooms were refurbished. 727-360-6971
- The Days Inn Island Beach Resort in St. Pete Beach has been reflagged as the **Best Western Beachfront Resort**. The property features 102 rooms and suites on a 6-acre beach. 727-367-1902

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TRANSPORTATION NEWS

- The **St. Petersburg/Clearwater International Airport** is undergoing a \$6.7 million expansion that will triple the size of its baggage claim to more than 25,000 feet. The airport, which serves more than one million passengers per year with commercial airline service to the United States and international destinations, plans for the expansion to be completed in 2000. 727-531-1451
- **Tampa International Airport**, voted the #1 airport by U.S. travelers in an independent study and #7 in the world by in the 1999 Conde Nast Reader's Choice awards, recently broke ground for an International Plaza Shopping Center adjacent to the airport which will include a Lord & Taylor, Nordstrom and Neiman Marcus. 813-870-8700
- **American Airlines** added three daily round-trip 727 flights between Tampa and Miami. The new jet service started on Nov. 1 and is in addition to eight daily trips by American Eagle. 800-433-7300.
- **United Airlines** recently added two daily nonstop flights from Tampa to Washington Dulles. United's afternoon flight has been rescheduled for more convenient connection with flights to Amsterdam, Brussels, Frankfurt, Milan, Munich and Paris. 800-241-6522
- **Southwest Airlines** is planning to increase its St. Louis – Tampa service from one to two daily flights. 214-792-4847.
- **Delta Express** began daily non-stop service between Tampa and Islip, NY, on Dec. 1. The airline recently added two new round-trip flights from Tampa to Newark, New Jersey. 800-325-5205
- **Sun Country Airlines** now offers scheduled service between the St. Petersburg/Clearwater International Airport and Minneapolis and Milwaukee three times a week. 800-359-6786
- **Midway Airlines** added a fourth daily nonstop flight between Tampa and Raleigh/Durham Oct. 1. The Raleigh/Durham hub provides access to all major destinations up and down the East Coast. 800-446-4392 or 919-595-6399.