



Tampa Bay & Southwest Florida

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Includes →

Tampa	386
St Petersburg	397
St Pete Beach & Barrier Island Beaches	406
Clearwater & Clearwater Beach	409
Sarasota	416
Fort Myers	426
Sanibel Island	431
Naples	435

Best Places to Eat

- Bha! Bha! Persian Bistro (p438)
- Ulele (p391)
- Owen's Fish Camp (p420)
- Brick & Mortar (p402)
- D (p431)ixie Fish Company (p431)

Best Places to Sleep

- Harrington House (p423)
- Gasparilla Inn (p439)
- Hollander Hotel (p401)
- Mango Street Inn (p430)
- 'Tween Waters Inn (p434)

Why Go?

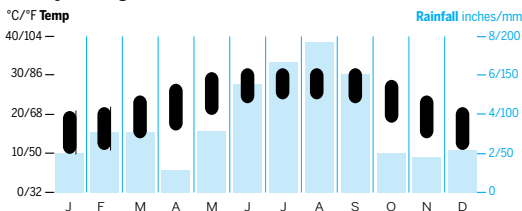
To drive southwest Florida's Gulf Coast is to enter an impressionistic watercolor painting: first, there's the dazzling white quartz sand of its barrier-island beaches, whose turquoise waters darken to silver-mantled indigo as the fiery sun lowers. Later, seen from the causeways, those same islands become a phosphorescent smear beneath the inky black night sky.

The Gulf Coast's beauty is its main attraction, but variety is a close second: from Tampa to St Petersburg to Sarasota to Naples, there's urban sophistication and exquisite cuisine. There are secluded islands, family-friendly resorts and spring break-style parties.

Here Salvador Dalí's melting canvases, Ringling's Venetian Gothic palace and Chihuly's tentacled glass sculptures fit perfectly – all are bright, bold, surreal entertainments to match wintering manatees, roseate spoonbills, open-mouthed alligators and the peacock-colored, sequined costumes of twirling trapeze artists.

When to Go

Tampa Bay



Mid-Feb–mid-Apr
Peak season, ideal weather, high prices. Best for camping, hiking, manatees.

Jun-Sep Hot and rainy. Low season means beach bargains; some places close.

Nov-Dec Snowbirds arrive. Weather cools and dries; decent off-season prices.

Tampa Bay & Southwest Florida Highlights

- 1 St Petersburg** (p397) Sampling craft beer and wandering through Salvador Dalí's dreams in virtual reality.
- 2 Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park** (p412) Paddling the waterways beside slow-moving manatees.
- 3 Ringling Museum Complex** (p416) Juggling art and circus.
- 4 Anna Maria Island** (p422) Finding Old Florida and nibbling on edible gardens.
- 5 Pinellas Trail** (p400) Freewheeling from St Pete all the way to Tarpon Springs, and rewarding yourself with baklava cheesecake.
- 6 Sanibel Island** (p431) Hunting for shells with the kiddos.
- 7 Marco Island** (p439) Cruising by mangrove islands and dolphin-spotting.
- 8 Naples** (p435) Window shopping on Third Street South and attending the symphony.
- 9 Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary** (p438) Admiring bald cypress and wood storks.
- 10 Edison & Ford Winter Estates** (p428) Studying bright ideas from the region's most famous residents.



0 25 miles 50 km

Marco Island 7 (30mi);
Everglades (50mi)

8 Naples