



PLAY HARD, EAT WELL

at the

new daytona beach

THIS FAMED SPRING BREAK LOCALE IS NOT JUST FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS ANYMORE

Just about everyone has heard of Daytona Beach. But if you think it's all about Spring Breakers, bikers and their babes, you may be surprised to learn that the area has much to offer folks with other interests, too. Yes, living large is possible in Daytona Beach, but lying low is an equally viable option.

"In the past few years, we have seen a sharp increase in the number of families and mature travelers who vacation here," says Sharon Mock, president and CEO of the Daytona Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. Indeed, a growing numbers of visitors are discovering it's worth the trip.

PLAY HARD

From low-key to high-energy, visitors can easily pursue diverse interests in Daytona Beach. Here are just a few examples:

- > Hard-packed white-sand beaches stretch 23-miles along the Atlantic coast. Soak up the sun, bike, jog, take a leisurely stroll, grab a surfboard or boat, go deep sea fishing and even try parasailing. (Just remember to look both ways before you cross the beach—vehicles are allowed to drive on it.)
- > One of Florida's fastest growing golf destinations, Daytona Beach offers over 19 courses.
- > DAYTONA USA, the official attraction of NASCAR, boasts a 3D IMAX experience, museum, 16-second pit stop challenge plus the opportunity to race around

Daytona International Speedway at 150 miles per hour.

- > TrolleyBoats' amphibious vehicles navigate land and water for a comprehensive sightseeing tour.
- > Florida's tallest lighthouse on the Ponce de Leon Inlet, a 175-foot structure completed in 1887 and now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, promises fantastic views to those who climb its 203 steps. Nearby is the Marine Science Center, a refuge for sea turtles and birds.
- > Spa Terre at The Shores Resort & Spa offers indulgent treatments such as the Atlantic seaweed body mask and Balinese massage.

EAT WELL

Daytona Beach's dining options aren't limited to pizza and tacos anymore; the developing culinary scene offers an evolving range of tempting choices. Baleen's at The Shores Resort & Spa offers a romantic candle-lit setting. The Cellar Restaurant is another romantic setting. Located in the basement of the historic former home of President Warren G. Harding, it's open for dinner only with entrées starting at \$15. Chef and owner Sam Moggio attended the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York and worked in restaurants in Italy prior to purchasing the facility in 2003.

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Daytona Beach Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau

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“I’m happy to offer something that wasn’t offered in the area,” he says of his authentic Italian cuisine. That the restaurant has succeeded by word-of-mouth advertising alone speaks volumes.

Angell & Phelps Café offers a more casual dining option without compromising friendly service, food quality and gourmet preparations. “Our goal is to be just a step below ‘fine dining,’” says owner Al Smith. Serving lunch and dinner since 1999, sales have doubled in the last two years. Lunch features a variety of sandwiches priced under \$10; dinner features tasty chicken, beef and seafood dishes under \$20. To add to the friendly atmosphere, blues, pop and jazz musicians perform every Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening.

Treat yourself to a martini at Martinis On Bay Restaurant/Lounge, where the signature cocktails are just \$1 every day from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Discounting the “extensive and innovative” martini list encourages guests to sample new recipes, says manager Wes

Lenoyne. The food menu changes daily “to keep everything fresh and to keep the chefs creative and interested,” he explains. Entrées like raw, sesame seared ahi tuna with seaweed salad over jasmine rice average \$20.

The Old Spanish Sugar Mill Grill and Griddle House is located approximately 30 minutes west of Daytona Beach in DeLeon Springs State Park (which features an inviting natural spring, so bring your swimming suit.) Here the “do-it-yourself” breakfast options include pancake batter delivered for you to fix on a griddle in the center of the table.

SLEEP EASY

It’s rare to walk into a hotel room, take a look around, and decide that you’ve landed an amazing deal. At Perry’s Ocean-Edge Resort, where oceanfront suite rates start at \$110 per night during off-season and \$144 in high season, guests may just feel that way. Retro-Floridian décor adds charm to the meticulously clean rooms. But what makes the place feel like money well-spent is the generous elbow room with unexpected extras like dining nooks and small kitchens plus a balcony that

offers a private space to linger and enjoy that spectacular ocean view.

More than the beach will lure you from the room. Perry’s boasts one indoor and two outdoor pools, a tiki bar, spa, internet access and more. Perhaps best of all, the second-generation Perry-family owners who currently manage the resort are picky about who they let in—for example, they do not lease rooms to college students—because they know what’s most important to guests: As one manager put it, “Jeez, what’s more important than a good night’s sleep?”

In the morning complimentary donuts make getting out of bed worthwhile. Perry’s bakes 1,500 potato-flour donuts fresh each day for its guests in the 200 rooms because, as one wide-eyed little boy who was carrying a stack of three explained, “This is my second helping!” Warm and flaky, it may be impossible to enjoy only one. The same might be said of Daytona Beach: Visit once and you’ll likely want to come back for more.

Hope S. Philbrick is THE WINE REPORT’S assistant editor.

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