



TRAVEL USA

Florida fun for visitors during Toronto Blue Jays spring training



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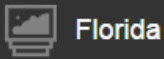


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Clearwater Beach is often voted one of the best in the United States. There's something for everyone on this stretch of sand. JIM BYERS/Special to Postmedia Network

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DUNEDIN, FLA. - You haven't memorized Josh Donaldson's career batting average. Your screen saver doesn't show Jose Bautista's bat flip. Still, you're happy to be headed to see the Toronto Blue Jays play some spring training games in the St. Petersburg-Clearwater-Dunedin region of Florida and, lucky

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for you, it is a diverse, relaxed family destination even for those who are not Jays fans. Here's a list of great things to do from a guy who covered the Jays for six years and makes regular visits to the area.

BEACHES: The core of Dunedin, where the Jays play their games, is on the Intracoastal Waterway, not on the ocean. The city of Dunedin, however, also includes nearby Honeymoon Island, with great beaches with kayaks and paddleboards for rent. Things get quieter to the west, with long, quiet beaches at [Honeymoon Island State Park](#). Take the 15-minute ferry to [Caladesi Island](#), a super-quiet spot where you can walk forever and hardly see a soul. Walk a free interpretive trail that winds through thick stands of palmettos, sable palms and sweet-smelling pines. The ferry costs \$14 for a round-trip for adults, \$7 for kids ages 6 to 12. Take the 10-minute drive from Dunedin to Clearwater Beach, where you will find a children's park, water slides and a long pier. St. Petersburg also has mile after mile of great beaches.

SHOPPING: There are outlet malls nearby, but Dunedin has tremendous shops, like home décor spot Found, with its emphasis on local pieces, and a lovely antique place called Patina. Downtown St. Petersburg has everything from Chico's to Tommy Bahama, as well as more local offerings. Just a few minutes away is the delightful Gulfport area, which feels like a surf town from another era. Beach Bazaar has wares from 23 area vendors and brilliant yellow t-shirts that read "Keep Gulfport Weird."

MUSEUMS: The [Dali Museum](#) is on the water in downtown St. Pete, with a collection of wild works by Salvador Dali. A new exhibit explores the friendship between Dali and Walt Disney. The [Museum of Fine Arts](#) in downtown St. Pete has fantastic European, Asian and North American art of all kinds, including masters such as Renoir. [The Chihuly collection](#), also in downtown St. Pete, features several large-scale installations of Dale Chihuly's famous glass works.

FOOD AND DRINK: Located above a gorgeous Italian shop called Locale Market, the restaurant [FarmTable Kitchen](#) in St. Pete serves up some of Florida's best and most sustainable food. Located in Gulfport with views of the water, [O'Maddy's](#) is a great spot for a \$10 blackened fish sandwich and a local beer or two. In downtown Dunedin, [Casa Tina](#) has a fun atmosphere and serves good Mexican food. Just down the road is the [Dunedin Smokehouse](#), where you'll find fantastic ribs and great fries. [Shor](#) is a fine dining spot inside the Hyatt Regency Hotel on [Clearwater Beach](#).

SLEEPING: The [Hyatt Regency](#) is an all-suite hotel on Clearwater Beach, with upscale furnishings, kitchens and lots of space. Rates start at \$499 US a night for March. Dunedin's [Meranova Guest Inn](#) is a fantastic B&B just off Main Street, with rooms from \$185. In St. Pete, [The Hollander](#) is a retro hotel with a hipster feel and a new pool. Rooms from \$120 a night.

SAVING: The St. Petersburg-Clearwater-Dunedin area is a family destination with reasonable prices. You can save by looking for happy hours at bars and restaurants or by staying off the beach. A Tampa Bay [CityPASS](#) gets you discounts to everything from Busch Gardens to the Chihuly Collection to the Clearwater Marine Aquarium.