

GREATER FORT LAUDERDALE

Embrace the sun at Marriott's luxury oceanfront resorts

As the greyness of winter settles on Canadians, direct flights from Toronto to Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale — and their respective Marriott oceanfront resorts — can help those wishing to escape to year-round sunshine.



Credit: Marriott

- **The Palm Beach Marriott Singer Island Beach Resort & Spa** is now easier to reach with WestJet's new direct flight out of Toronto. The AAA Four Diamond luxury all-suite resort is located on the water, offering views of both the beach and the Intracoastal Waterway. For those seeking a fun-filled luxury getaway, the 'Explore Our Reef Package' includes two signature cocktails upon arrival, two beach chairs and umbrella daily, and rental of snorkel and fins for two.



Credit: Marriott

- Providing the simple pleasures of Florida beach living, **Fort Lauderdale Marriott Pompano Beach Resort & Spa** is an ideal destination for a warm winter escape. The boutique-style resort located in the up-and-coming Pompano Beach area offers a wealth of recreational activities on land and sea, now with nonstop flights from Toronto offered through WestJet. The 'Sun, Sand and SiSpa Package' offers guests two beach chairs and a beach umbrella each day, one 50-minute spa treatment per night at the resort's award-winning SiSpa, and 15% off all spa merchandise.

■ sunny.org

ST. PETE/CLEARWATER

Hotels opening 2,000 new rooms for growing tourism scene

As St. Pete/Clearwater brings in more and more tourists, hotel developers are seizing the moment with 2,000 brand-new rooms in the works — with more than 1,000 planned for Clearwater Beach alone. Here's a rundown of the projects:

Opal Sands Resort, Clearwater Beach:

All 230 rooms have Gulf views in this luxury product, which has placed an emphasis on meetings with 17,000 square feet of waterfront space. Part of the OPAL Collection by Ocean Properties Ltd., this new resort opens on Feb. 20.

Wyndham Grand Resort, Clearwater Beach:

This 450-room, upscale hotel features two 15-storey towers and 24,000 square feet of event space. Currently under construction, it's slated to open in early 2017.

Treasure Island Beach Resort: This luxury property includes 77 one- and two-bedroom suites, all offering a view of the Gulf, with kitchens and porch or balcony. It's also part of the OPAL Collection. It's now taking reservations for an early 2016 opening.

Allure Suites Hotel-Beachfront Resort, St. Pete Beach: Local owners are

renovating and rebranding Plaza Beach Hotel into an independent condo-hotel, expanding from 39 to 66 units. This product will consist mostly of two-bedroom suites, as well as some one-bedroom units. It's targeted to open in the first quarter of 2017.

Hyatt, downtown St. Pete: Scheduled to break ground in early 2016, the 13-storey, 173-room hotel is part of a major mixed-use project that will include a 253-unit condo tower. It's slated to open in late 2017.

Postcard Inn, St. Pete Beach: This chic 196-room hotel is undergoing a major facelift that includes renovating poolside rooms, gutting a restaurant and rebranding it Boathouse Kitchen & Bar, and adding new meeting space. **Beach House Suites by the Loews Don CeSar, St. Pete Beach:** The 70-room sister-property of the Loews Don CeSar is getting all-new one- and two-bedroom suites to the tune of US\$7.8 million. Targeted completion is early 2016.

■ visitstpeteclearwater.com

TAMPA BAY FUN BOAT

See Tampa from a different perspective

Captain D. and crew have launched the Tampa Bay Fun Boat, a 35-passenger vessel operating on the waters of Tampa Bay and the surrounding Gulf Waters. This 36-foot commercial deck boat is available for charter service.

Tampa Bay Fun Boat is a custom-built boat engineered for fun, according to Captain D. Her wide-open deck is ideal for entertaining on the water. And, with 6'3" head clearance below deck, guests can enjoy the clean, comfortable below-deck sitting area.

Captain D. and crew will take guests on a one-hour trip around the waters

of downtown Tampa. The Fun Boat offers free beverages, including its almost-famous Caribbean Punch for thirsty adults. Trips depart out of the Tampa Convention Center docks, at noon, 2 p.m., 4 p.m., 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. Later trips are available upon request.

Guests will see homes of Tampa's rich and famous as the cruise takes them out to Tampa Bay where the dolphins play. On the return, they'll enjoy the sights of downtown Tampa and the University of Tampa along the Hillsborough River.

■ tampabayfunboat.com