The Philadelphia Phillies have begun spring training in Clearwater, and soon fans of the team will be flocking to Florida as well.

Rejoice, Phillies fans. After a long offseason, spring training has finally arrived. Pitchers and catchers reported to Bright House Field on Wednesday, and began their first formal workouts yesterday. The full squad of position players will join them early next week.

In just a couple of weeks, the Phils will begin their Grapefruit League schedule. The first game is actually now just ten days away, on Sunday, February 29th against the University of Tampa. Two days after that, on Tuesday, March 1st, the Phils will welcome the Yankees for the first official big league game.

With that, thousands of Fightins' fans will flood into the Clearwater/St. Petersburg area to enjoy a brief escape from the bitter cold up north. If you've never been down for spring training, you should really try to make the trip at some point. Tickets are usually easy to come by, the weather is usually fantastic, and there is plenty to do, even if you are not a baseball fan.

For those who are lucky enough to make the trip down south to the Sunshine State to get their baseball and fair weather fix, here are five things you absolutely should try to do while you are in town.

1. VISIT A “FRENCHY’S”

Frenchy’s restaurants are famous in the Clearwater area, and for good reason. Among the five locations, there is sure to be something for everyone to enjoy. Frenchy’s Rockaway Grill, their largest restaurant, is situated right on the beach. It has open-air seating and is just a few minutes down the road from the Carpenter Complex.

Frenchy’s specialize in grouper sandwiches, as well as their seafood appetizers. But for those who aren’t seafood fans, the chicken sandwiches are just as delectable. Luckily for fans catching a game at Bright House Field, there’s also a Frenchy’s bar located just beyond the left field Bleachers with tons of tasty drink options.
2. HIT THE BEACH

Pretty self-explanatory here. With its white-powder sand and emerald-green water, Clearwater Beach has consistently been ranked as one of the United States’ top beaches. It was even named the top beach in the state of Florida in 2013 by USA Today. According to the Clearwater Beach website, the average high temperature for March is a perfect 77 degrees, and water temperatures hover around a comfortable 74 degrees. Located right on the Gulf of Mexico, Clearwater beaches also provide some of the more gorgeous sunsets in the country.

3. ROAD TRIP

Check out one of the other Grapefruit League venues while you’re in the Sunshine state. Florida Auto Exchange Stadium in Dunedin (Toronto Blue Jays) is less than 15 minutes away by car, and the Phillies travel there for four of their 29 exhibition games.

George Steinbrenner Field in Tampa (New York Yankees) is just a half hour away, and is one of the more modern minor-league stadiums in Florida. Joker Marchant Stadium in Lakeland (Detroit Tigers) is about an hour drive, as is McKechnie Field in Bradenton (Pirates) and Ed Smith Stadium in Sarasota (Orioles). If you’re like me, you’ll want to enjoy all of the baseball experience that you can.

4. THE BERM at BRIGHT HOUSE FIELD

The Carpenter Complex is one of the most pristine baseball spring training complexes in all of the Grapefruit League, and maybe in all of Major League Baseball.

While taking in a game at Bright House Field is a great experience anywhere you sit, soaking in the rays of the warm Florida sun while sitting in the outfield berm is one of the most relaxing and fun atmospheres a fan can be a part of.

A spot on the berm is also the cheapest seat option you can buy during spring training (just $14 for most games, $17 for select “premium” games). You might even catch a home run ball while you’re out there!

5. BREAKFAST at “LENNY’S”

Before you head out to Bright House Field or hit the road for another stop at an away Grapefruit League game, make sure to start your day with some grub at Clearwater’s best breakfast option.
whether it's the complimentary basket of danish you get with most meals, the omelets, home fries, etc., you'll be sure to find something that you love on their extensive menu.

For those not in a breakfast mood, Lenny’s also serves mouth-watering burgers, deli sandwiches, and fresh salads. But make sure to get there early, the lines can get especially long with the amount of visitors in town. Make no mistake, you won't want to eat breakfast anywhere else during your trip!

These are just some of the great options for you to enjoy. The pictures included here were all taken by our editor Matt Veasey on his trip down to Spring Training in March of 2011. His group even got to enjoy a Pirate Ship beer cruise on the Gulf one evening! Do a little research ahead of your trip, there is plenty to see and do besides baseball on a trip to the Clearwater area.