

TAMPA

1 MINUTE/1 HOUR/1 DAY GETAWAY

Tampa has realized its potential with an expanded downtown area, redeveloped waterfront and plenty to see and do. Enjoy its beaches, booming dining scene and or a day trip to St. Petersburg or Clearwater and discover its sunny, upbeat style as an important business and cultural center on Florida's West Coast.

1 MINUTE

Friendship Trail **friendshiptrail.org**

Once known as the Gandy Bridge, it was spared being wrecked thanks to the rallying of Pinellas and Hillsborough County citizens. Now it has become a 2.6-mile, car-free stretch of walkers, bikers and other outdoor enthusiasts, making it the "longest over-the-water recreational trail" and a city point of pride.

Clearwater Beach **floridasbeach.com**

Sometimes the best things in life are the most simple. And stopping here for a breathtaking sunset over the Gulf of Mexico is one of them. It was voted one of the best beaches in the area plus, as the sun goes down, there's lively entertainment that heats up thanks to a celebration of musicians and artists each night.

1 HOUR

Salvador Dali Museum **1000 3rd St. S., St. Petersburg • 727-823-3767**

No other museum in the world can match its permanent collection of the surrealist's original works. You can experience 95 oil paintings from 1917 through 1970, plus 100 drawings and watercolors and 1,300 graphics, photographs and sculptures. Many special exhibitions come through the museum, too.

The Pier at St. Pete **800 2nd Ave. N.E., St. Petersburg Waterfront • 727-821-6443**

This modern shopping/dining/ entertainment complex sits in the same spot as many piers before it...starting all the way back to 1899. Today, it's designed like an upside-down pyramid, with boating, fishing and even dolphin tours. Once you head inside, you'll have five stories of galleries, shops, boutiques and restaurants to choose from.

Alderman's Ford Park **9625 Canoe Launch Loop at Hwy. 39, Plant City • 813-757-3801**

In ideal spot to take in Florida's natural beauty, this 1,141-acre park offers hiking trails, paved paths with fitness stations and a system of wetlands boardwalks with stunning views of the local flora and fauna. Enjoy a picnic by the water's edge and keep your eyes peeled for great blue heron, red-bellied woodpecker, wood ducks and ibis.

1 HOUR (CON'T)

Museum of Science and Industry **4801 E. Fowler Ave. • 813-987-6100**

You don't have to be a science nut to have a ball at MOSI. With more than 450 interactive exhibits, expect a truly hands-on experience, including encounters with hurricane-force winds, zero-gravity and the flight simulation. Make a reservation to enjoy a show at the IMAX Dome theater, where you'll be awed by 10,500 square feet of imagery unsurpassed in size, clarity and impact.

Big Cat Rescue **12802 Easy St. • 813-920-4130**

This non-profit sanctuary takes in large cats of all kinds that have been mistreated or retired from shows and homes, and nearly 150 exotic cats, including lions, leopards, ocelots and pumas, now call it home. Get your blood pumping with a guided tour through the 45-acre, tree-filled grounds, where you'll meet these awesome creatures face to face and learn each one's particular story, from abuse to happy recovery. For a truly memorable experience, you can stay overnight for a small donation and observe the staff's round-the-clock efforts first hand.

1 DAY

Ybor City **813-248-3712 • ybor.org**

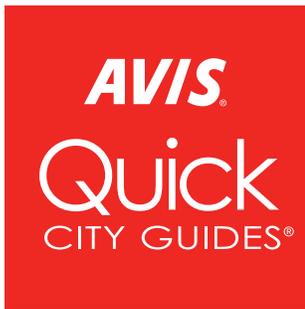
A taste of Latin life right in the heart of Tampa. Alive with history, it was once the cigar capital of the world and touts shops with hand-rolled cigars and old-world Cuban architecture. Centro Ybor is the town's main entertainment complex, with a museum, comedy club, 20-screen cinema, authentic restaurants and lots of shopping.

Tarpon Springs **275N to US-92W**

Tucked into a small harbor at the mouth of the Anclote River just 23 miles NW of Tampa, you'll find one of the most picturesque small towns in Florida. Greek immigrants settled here in the late 19th century to harvest sea sponges which grew in abundance offshore, and today about 1/3 of the population are direct descendants of the original sponge divers. The docks reflect the locals' pride in the industry and their cultural heritage, and you'll find booths offering sightseeing and fishing boat cruises and quaint old buildings housing souvenir shops and family-style Greek restaurants.

Fort De Soto County Park **3500 Pinellas Bayway S., Tierra Verde • 727-582-2267**

Located just across Tampa Bay, this 1,136-acre park made up of 5 interconnected islands offers hiking, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, bicycling, skating, running, nature trails, birding, camping, swimming and a historical fort to explore. But take one look at its rare natural beauty and you may want to spend your afternoon doing absolutely nothing: the park's North Beach offers white sand expanses with waters as clear as a fresh-water stream.



TAMPA

GOURMET DINING AND LOCAL FAVORITES

GOURMET DINING

Bern's Steak House

The décor is as fine as the menu. Over 20 types of caviar, delights like chateaubriand and U.S. prime-aged steaks make it hard to choose. At night's end, you can head upstairs for over 100 dessert selections.

1208 S. Howard Ave. • 813-251-2421

Columbia Restaurant

It's old-world Cuban, from its 1905 roots as a haven for cigar makers to its Spanish tiles and murals. And the food is authentic, too, thanks to tapas-style dishes, paella, chicken and mariscos (seafood).

2117 E. 7th Ave., Ybor City • 813-248-4961

Ashley Street Grille

Views of the Hillsborough River come complimentary with your meal, thanks to its walls full of windows. Plus, the lighting is soft, as are the colors, and the menu is full of American contemporary fare. Starters include the signature lobster strudel, with boursin cheese and fresh lobster, while entrées range from peppercorn-seared tuna to chile-rubbed salmon.

200 N. Ashley Dr. • 813-226-4400

Restaurant BT

Fresh flowers, soft hues and a sleek martini bar make a sophisticated setting for BT's high-end, healthful French-Vietnamese cuisine. The pumpkin soup or escargot crepes start a meal in style, only to be outdone by main courses like filet mignon with chili and lime or sea bass accented with ginger and haricots verts. A bit pricey, but worth the indulgence. Reservations recommended.

1633 W. Snow Ave., Olde Hyde Park Village • 813-258-1916

Catch Twenty-Three

Flavorful Latin and Caribbean inspired cuisine served up in a snazzy but casual setting with an open kitchen and pecan wood grill. Start with the Bahamian conch chowder or crab cakes with mango salsa, then move on to the guava salmon or adobo rib eye marinated in citrus and cilantro. Both locations offer dining al fresco on the patio and live reggae on weekends.

10103 Montague St. • 813-920-0045

2543 Countryside Blvd., Clearwater • 727-723-0045

LOCAL FAVORITES

The Colonnade

A local favorite since 1935, this casual spot has some of the freshest seafood around. It's even got a waterside view of Hillsborough Bay to go along with starters like conch and New England clam chowders, plus menu favorites like grouper, a house specialty, trout and oysters.

3401 Bayshore Blvd. • 813-839-7558

Bella's Italian Cafe

A local favorite of Soho for 20 years, Bella's offers authentic Italian in a relaxed and rustic setting complete with top-notch service and an oak-burning oven brought over from Milan. Expect delectable antipastos, bold pastas and pizzas fashioned from a dough recipe that harkens from Venice. Leave room for the Vesuvio cake, which oozes molten chocolate from its rich, bittersweet core. Late hours and favorable prices heighten Bella's appeal.

1413 S Howard Ave. • 813-254-3355

Kojak's House of Ribs

Charmingly situated in a converted southern bungalow shaded by great live oaks, this laid-back local hangout has been serving up heaps of barbecue ribs, chicken and South Georgia hot links since 1978. Dine outdoors on the fan-cooler veranda, and be sure to leave room for desserts like the homemade apple cake.

2808 Gandy Blvd. • 813-837-3774

Sangria's

Hip, casual and wildly popular, Sangria's fame comes from its boldly flavored tapas. You'll find nearly 40 different kinds here, from baked brie in puff pastry to grilled steak topped with cabrales cheese to Gulf shrimp sautéed in a spicy tomato sauce with sherry and garlic. Expect crowds on weekends.

315 S. Howard Ave. • 813-258-0393

Jackson's Bistro-Bar-Sushi

A hip place to see and be seen, it's where locals and visitors come for unprecedented views of the harbor from the outdoor deck. Inside, you're surrounded by rich mahogany wood and a big menu of salads, chicken sandwiches, fresh seafood and an array of steaks. There's an extensive sushi menu, too.

601 S. Harbour Island Blvd. • 813-277-0112