

# FROMMMER'S

COMPREHENSIVE TRAVEL GUIDE

## TAMPA & ST. PETERSBURG '91-'92

### CITY GUIDE

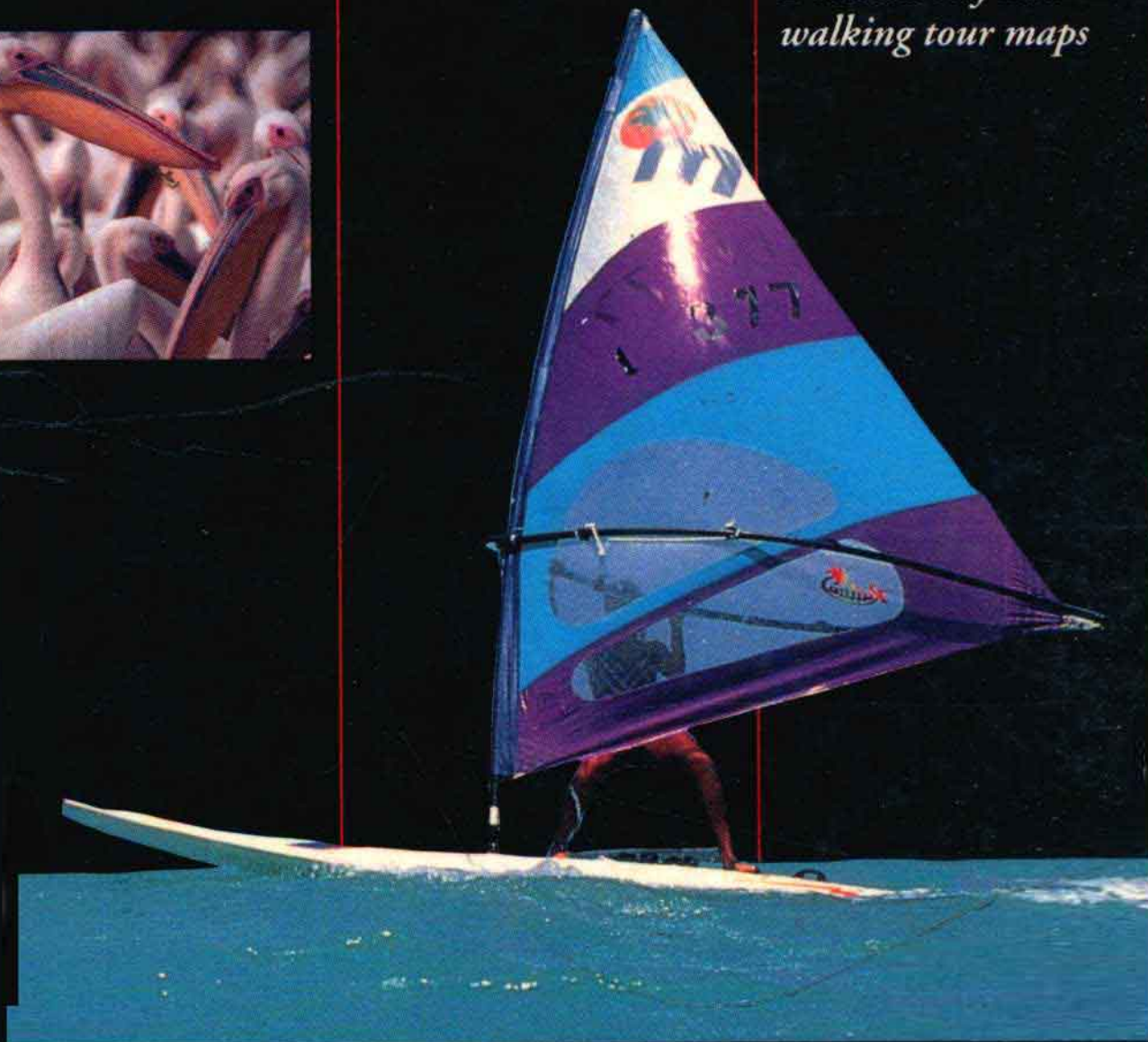
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and sightseeing  
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in all price ranges*



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# FROMMMERS'

COMPREHENSIVE TRAVEL GUIDE

## TAMPA & ST. PETERSBURG '91-'92

by Patricia Tunison Preston  
and John Preston

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## **FROMMER BOOKS**

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## **Frommer's Tampa and St. Petersburg '91-'92**

Editor-in-Chief: Marilyn Wood  
Senior Editors: Judith de Rubini, Pamela Marshall, Amit Shah  
Editors: Alice Fellows, Paige Hughes  
Assistant Editors: Suzanne Arkin, Ellen Zucker

# ABOUT THIS FROMMER GUIDE

**What Is a Frommer's City Guide?** It's a comprehensive, easy-to-use guide to the best travel values in all price ranges—from very expensive to budget. The one guidebook to take along with you on any trip.

## WHAT THE SYMBOLS MEAN



**FROMMER'S FAVORITES**—hotels, restaurants, attractions, and entertainments you should not miss



**SUPER-SPECIAL VALUES**—really exceptional values



**FROMMER'S SMART TRAVELER TIPS**—hints on how to secure the best value for your money

## IN HOTEL AND OTHER LISTINGS

The following symbols refer to the standard amenities available in all rooms:

A/C air conditioning    TEL telephone    TV television  
MINIBAR refrigerator stocked with beverages and snacks

The following abbreviations are used for credit cards:

AE American Express	DISC Discover	EU Eurocard
CB Carte Blanche	ER enRoute	MC MasterCard
DC Diners Club		V VISA

## TRIP PLANNING WITH THIS GUIDE

Use the following features:

**Calendar of Events . . .** to plan for or to avoid

**What's Special About Checklist . . .** a summary of the cities' highlights—which lets you check off those that appeal most to you

**Easy-to-Read Maps . . .** showing walking tours; city sights; hotel and restaurant locations—all referring to or keyed to the text

**Fast Facts . . .** all the essentials at a glance: climate, consulates, currency, emergencies, information, safety, tipping, and more

## OTHER SPECIAL FROMMER FEATURES

**Cool for Kids**—hotels, restaurants, and attractions

**Did You Know . . . ?**—offbeat, fun facts

## **INVITATION TO THE READERS**

In researching this book, we have come across many wonderful establishments, the best of which are included here. However, we're sure that many of you will come across other wonderful hotels, inns, restaurants, guesthouses, shops, and attractions. Please don't keep them to yourself. Share your experiences, especially if you want to comment on places that we have covered in this edition. You can address your letters to us:

Pat Tunison Preston and John J. Preston,  
*Frommer's Tampa and St. Petersburg*  
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## **A DISCLAIMER**

Readers are advised that prices fluctuate in the course of time, and travel information changes under the impact of the varied and volatile factors that affect the travel industry. The author and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of the reader while traveling. Readers are invited to write the publisher with ideas, comments, and suggestions for future editions.

## **SAFETY ADVISORY**

Whenever you're traveling in an unfamiliar city or country, stay alert. Be aware of your immediate surroundings. Wear a moneybelt and keep a close eye on your possessions. Be particularly careful with cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

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## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCING TAMPA AND ST. PETERSBURG

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**T**ampa and St. Petersburg, two totally different cities joined by Tampa Bay, comprise one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the United States. Each has its own distinctive history and layout, but together they are synonymous with sunshine and the good life. Rimmed by the Gulf of Mexico on Florida's west coast,

these two cities are in the center of the state, within easy reach of other Florida destinations—just over 80 miles from Orlando and less than 270 from Miami.

Tampa, once considered little more than a landing port for shipments of bananas from Colombia, or a cigar-making enclave, has been born again as a city in the last decade. The downtown area, once dingy, is glowing with new skyscrapers, financial centers, high-tech industries, and entertainment facilities.

St. Petersburg, on the other hand, was known for years primarily as a winter haven for seniors, but in the past decade, the city has been rejuvenated with new industries, an influx of younger citizens, and exciting downtown developments.

With a year-round warm climate and miles of sandy beaches, it's not surprising that tourism is the number-one industry for both cities. More than three million visitors, about one-third from overseas, flock to the Tampa Bay area annually.

Just 15 miles apart, these two cities are served by Tampa International Airport, one of the best in the nation and often touted as an attraction in itself. Tampa and St. Petersburg are connected by three bridges that span Tampa Bay: the Courtney Campbell, the Howard Frankland, and the Gandy.

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## **1. HISTORY OF THE TAMPA BAY AREA**

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### **EARLY HISTORY**

The Tampa Bay area was first inhabited by large settlements of Native Americans, particularly the Tocobaga and Timucuan tribes.

## 2 • INTRODUCING TAMPA AND ST. PETERSBURG

### DATELINE

- **1521-39** Spanish arrive
- **1750s** Pirates patrol the area
- **1757** Tampa Bay charted
- **1763-83** British take over
- **1824** Fort Brooke established
- **1842** First citrus fruit planted
- **1848** John's Pass formed by flooding
- **1855** Tampa incorporates
- **1875** John Williams begins building new city
- **1884** Railroad comes to Tampa
- **1888** St. Petersburg named
- **1891** Tampa Bay Hotel opens
- **1896** Bellevue Hotel opens
- **1897-98** Rough Riders train in Tampa
- **1903** St. Petersburg incorporates
- **1910** St. Pete nicknamed "Sunshine City"
- **1914** First commercial airline flight
- **1920-26** Building boom
- **1959** Busch Gardens are unveiled
- **1971** Tampa International Airport brings new focus to area
- **1988** The Pier is reborn
- **1990** Suncoast Dome dazzles

The first Europeans arrived in the 16th century. From 1521 to 1539, Spanish adventurers and explorers Juan Ponce de León, Pánfilo de Narváez, and Hernando de Soto explored the area. While searching for gold, de Soto discovered five mineral springs near a large Tocobaga village in what is now Safety Harbor, north of St. Petersburg and west of Tampa. He named the large body of water near the village (Tampa Bay) "La Bahía del Espíritu Santo" or "Bay of the Holy Spirit" since the Native Americans believed the springs had healing qualities—a legend that persists today.

The first use of the name Tampa is usually attributed to a shipwrecked Spaniard named Fountaneda, who spent time living among the natives in the late 1570s. He referred to the area by the Native American name: "Tanpa," variously defined to mean "a town near the bay" or "sticks of fire." Early cartographers apparently changed the spelling to Tampa.

Almost two hundred years later, in 1757, a Spanish expedition led by Don Francisco María Celi charted the first detailed map of Tampa Bay and the surrounding waterways. At about the same time, pirates are said to have been active along the Florida coastline and Caribbean waters.

In 1763, the region came under British rule when the Spanish traded Florida for Havana. Within a decade, Lord Hillsborough, a British colonial secretary of state, lent his name to the river, the bay; eventually the county on the east side of Tampa Bay would also bear his name.

### FLORIDA — THE TWENTY-SEVENTH STATE

In the early 1820s, Florida became a territory of the U.S., and Gen. Andrew Jackson took charge as the region's first



governor. In 1824 after the first American settlers had arrived in the Tampa Bay area, Col. George Brooke built a U.S. Army post, known as Fort Brooke, at the mouth of the Hillsborough River (today the site of downtown Tampa). Ten years later the County of Hillsborough was established by the Territorial Legislature.

On the west side of Tampa Bay, in an area that is now Safety Harbor, Dr. Odet Phillipe, a former surgeon in the French Navy under Napoléon, established a plantation in 1842. With citrus stock brought from the Bahamas, Phillipe cultivated Florida's first grapefruit grove. Florida became the 27th state of the Union in 1845.

In 1848, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee surveyed the area for possible coastal defense installations. He recommended Mullet Key, a site later used as a military post in both the Civil and Spanish-American wars. In that same year, a 90-mph gale ripped across the area, with waters rising from the Gulf to Tampa Bay. All islands and keys were inundated and John's Pass (the narrow strip of water between the southern tip of Sand Key Island and the northern end of Treasure Island) was created.

Meanwhile, a thriving settlement had grown up around the site of Fort Brooke, an important center for trade and transportation. In 1855, this settlement was incorporated as the town of Tampa.

Twenty years later, Gen. John Williams, son of the first mayor of Detroit, headed for Florida. Ordered by his doctor to find a milder climate to cure his asthma, Williams bought 1,600 acres west of Tampa Bay and the already-thriving Tampa. After failing as a farmer because his northern methods were unsuited for the semitropical region, Williams set out to build a new city—what would become St. Petersburg.

## **RAILROADS, CIGARS, AND HOTELS**

In 1884, Tampa became even more accessible for travel and trade when railroad tycoon Henry B. Plant brought his narrow-gauge South Florida Railroad to Tampa. The following year, 1885, Tampa residents organized a board of trade (predecessor of today's chamber of commerce). That same year, a prominent physician, Dr. W. C. Van Biber of Baltimore, drew international attention to the area west of Tampa Bay (where Williams was building his city) when he presented a paper, "Where Should a Health City Be Built," to a meeting of the American Medical Society in New Orleans. This spot, he declared, had all the elements to be regarded as the "healthiest place on earth."

Shortly thereafter, in 1886, recognition of a different sort came to the area. Vincente Martínez Ybor, an immigrant from Cuba via Key West, established Tampa's first cigar factory in what eventually became known as Ybor City, and Tampa became the "cigar capital of the world."

John Williams was well into his task of building a city when, in 1887–88, Russian immigrant Peter Demens (Petrovich A. Demenshev) and three partners extended their Orange Belt Railroad from Sanford, northeast of Orlando, to the west of Tampa Bay area. Popular legend has it that, when the railroad was complete, Williams



## 4 • INTRODUCING TAMPA AND ST. PETERSBURG

and Demens drew lots to determine which of them would get to name their new community. Demens won, and christened the new city St. Petersburg, after his hometown in Russia. As a consolation, Williams erected the city's first commercial building—the 40-room Detroit Hotel, naming it for his hometown.

In Tampa, Henry B. Plant opened the Tampa Bay Hotel, a fashionable winter resort for the rich and famous, in 1891. Touted at the time as “the world’s most elegant hotel,” it had over 500 rooms filled with antiques and art from around the world, with a striking Moorish facade topped by 13 silver minarets. Plant followed this achievement by spreading his influence to the other side of Tampa Bay during 1893–96, when he took over the Orange Belt Railroad and built the huge Belleview Hotel (later to become the Belleview Biltmore) north of St. Petersburg, overlooking Clearwater Harbor.

In 1897–98, the U.S. became involved in the Spanish-American War, and Tampa became a staging point for 30,000 troops. One of the officers based here was Teddy Roosevelt, who set up his headquarters at the commandeered Tampa Bay Hotel. He trained his Rough Riders on the hotel’s grounds. On the St. Pete side, Fort DeSoto was built on Mullet Key to protect Tampa Bay during the war—but the war ended before construction was finished and the fort’s cannons were never fired.

## THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By 1903, St. Petersburg became an incorporated city, and in 1907 Noel Mitchell, a St. Pete real estate salesman, ordered 50 orange benches for people who wished to rest and enjoy the sun on the city’s streets. Other businesses followed suit, but the many benches they installed differed in size and color. Eventually, Mitchell sponsored an ordinance that standardized the color of all city benches, thus beginning the era of St. Petersburg’s green benches (a city trademark that lasted until 1969).

Another colorful bit of St. Pete history began in 1910, when the *St. Petersburg Independent*, a newspaper founded four years earlier, made its famous “sunshine offer”—a pledge to distribute free newspapers on any day when the sun didn’t shine. This inspired the nickname “Sunshine City” for St. Pete. A year later, in 1911, Tampa and St. Petersburg were separated into two different counties when Pinellas County was created out of the western portion of Hillsborough County.

The area won a place in the history of aviation in 1914 when the first commercial airline service in the U.S. was inaugurated between St. Pete and Tampa by pioneer aviator Tony Jannus. The fare was \$400, a small fortune at the time, for a 23-minute flight.

As the 1920s roared in, a building boom exploded in the region, with St. Petersburg adding 12 major hotels, including the posh Don CeSar, still in operation today. In Tampa, the Davis Islands were created by dredging Hillsborough Bay, and became one of Tampa’s most attractive residential sections. In 1924, the first bridge (the \$3

million George Gandy Bridge) opened between Tampa and St. Petersburg.

The Depression and the onset of the World War II era hit Tampa Bay in the thirties and forties. Many major St. Petersburg-area hotels, such as the Don CeSar, the Vinoy, and the Belleview Biltmore, were taken over by the military for use as hospitals during World War II. The legendary Tampa Bay Hotel was annexed permanently by the University of Tampa. MacDill Air Force Base was established on Hillsborough Bay. Also at this time, the Courtney Campbell Bridge, linking upper Hillsborough and Pinellas counties, opened.

In the fifties and sixties the Tampa Bay area began to perk up again. The first Sunshine Skyway bridge, then the longest open-water crossing in the United States, was built in 1954, linking St. Petersburg with the Bradenton/Sarasota area; the area's first television station, WSUN, began broadcasting; St. Pete unveiled a new Museum of Fine Arts and the Bayfront Center; and Tampa became the site of Busch Gardens. The population of both cities began to soar, and the Howard Frankland Bridge, the third of the overwater links between them, opened.

The last two decades have been equally positive for the Tampa Bay area, starting in 1971 with the opening of the state-of-the-art Tampa International Airport, increasing tourist access. Downtown St. Petersburg launched the Bayfront Center, an entertainment and sports complex, plus the Dali Museum, a new Pier, and has revitalized the waterfront as well. Downtown Tampa blossomed, too, with dozens of new skyscrapers and a Performing Arts Center; and Harbour Island was developed as a new recreational and residential focal point for the city.

In the past year, as the 1990s take hold, expansion has continued, with the opening of the Florida Suncoast Dome in St. Petersburg and a brand-new riverside convention center in Tampa. Future developments in St. Petersburg include a new nine-block, \$200 million waterfront shopping district, and the extensive \$88 million dollar restoration of the landmark Vinoy Hotel by the Stouffer Corporation, slated for a 1992 reopening. Across the bay, Tampa is the future site for the \$84 million waterfront Florida Aquarium, a new four-story marine-science center, set to debut in 1993 and touted as the largest facility of its kind in the world.

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## 2. RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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Campbell, A. Stuart. *The Cigar Industry of Tampa*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1939.

Dunn, Hampton. *Yesterday's Clearwater*. Miami: E.A. Seaman, 1973.

———. *Yesterday's St. Petersburg*. Miami: E. A. Seaman, 1973.

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- Neill, Wilfred. *The Story of Florida's Seminole Indians*. St. Petersburg: Great Outdoors Publishing, 1964.
- Roosevelt, Theodore. *The Rough Riders*. New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1906.
- Schell, Rolfe F. *De Soto Didn't Land at Tampa*. Ft. Myers Beach, Island Press, 1974.
- Young, June Hurley. *The Don CeSar Story*. St. Petersburg: Partnership Press, 1983.
- . *Florida's Pinellas Peninsula*. St. Petersburg: Byron Kennedy & Son, 1983.



## CHAPTER 2

# PLANNING A TRIP TO TAMPA AND ST. PETERSBURG

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**T**his chapter is devoted to the where, when, and how of your trip—the advance-planning issues required to get it together and take it on the road. This chapter will also resolve other important questions, such as when to go and where to obtain more information about the destination.

To get the most for your money, consider traveling to the St. Petersburg/Tampa area in the off-season, i.e., the months of

May and June, September through November, and, to a lesser extent, July and August.

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## 1. INFORMATION

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While you are planning your trip, you can obtain helpful brochures and information by contacting tourist offices in advance. For the St. Petersburg area:

- Pinellas Suncoast Tourist Development Council, 4625 East Bay Drive, Suite 109, Clearwater, FL 34624-9973 (tel. 813/530-6452, fax 813/530-6132)
- Pinellas Suncoast Canadian Office, 232B Gerrard Street E., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5A 2E8 (tel. 416/927-1505, fax 416/927-7809)
- Pinellas Suncoast U.K. Office, 182/184 Addington Road, 1st floor, Selsdon, Surrey CR2 8LB, England (tel. 081/651-4742, fax 081/651-5702)



