

# TRAVEL

O&E Monday, February 24, 1992

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## Tampa's a fair city in winter

By Sara Kennedy  
New York Times Syndicate

Each winter Tampa, Fla., revels in a round of tropical festivals and fairs, complete with booming cannons, rollicking parades and dress balls. And each year it seems more and more events pop up to tempt visitors: street parties with the scent of Cuban coffee hanging in the air, a vibrant art show that festoons the walkway along the Hillsborough River, open-air concerts that send a thumping beat across the bay and end in showers of fireworks and confetti.

Tampa's treasure is its diversity, an intermingling of Cuban, Italian, Spanish, Indian and Afro-American cultures that began in 1824, when Col. George Mercer Brooke built a post at the mouth of the Hillsborough River alongside a little Cuban settlement.

Although Tampa and the surrounding towns of Hillsborough County, Fla., have grown into a metropolis of almost a million people, the area has managed to maintain the friendliness of a small Southern town.

Beyond the parties and festivals there is great opportunity for silence and solitude on white sand beaches and nature trails.

Of course Tampa Bay's most obvious asset is the weather: day after day of sunshine, mild temperatures and big puffy clouds.

A cadre of new skyscrapers downtown glistens across blue water. The city's signature Bayshore Boulevard — 7.2 miles of uninterrupted sidewalk along the bay — teems with walkers, joggers and cyclists, and the pace of life can be as fast or as slow as you want it to be.

### ATTRACTIONS

The premier tourist attraction is Busch Gardens, at 3000 East Busch Blvd. It is a 300-acre park 10 minutes from downtown.

The park, with an African theme, has a splendid array of rides, trains and trains set among gardens. The food is good and the scale more manageable than Walt Disney World (85 miles east).

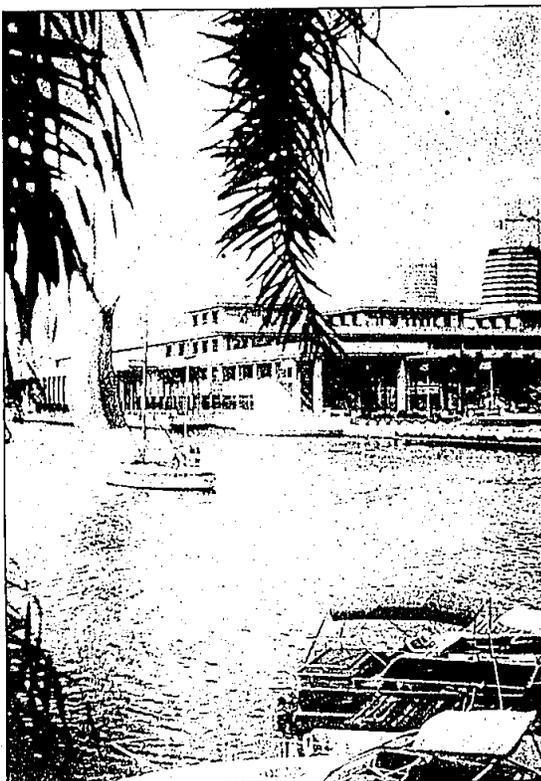
Busch Gardens is also one of the nation's largest zoos, with more than 3,700 animals. Admission, which includes all rides, shows and attractions, is \$26.95; \$22.95 for children 3 to 9; those 2 and younger free. Parking costs another \$3.

Special areas for children have kid-sized rides, tree houses for climbing and fairy-tale sculptures. For more information call 987-5082.

Just a 10-minute drive from Busch Gardens is Lowry Park Zoological Garden, at 7530 North Blvd., and the newly renovated amusement park and new children's museum adjacent to it.

Admission to the Lowry Park Zoo is \$5.50; \$3.50 for children 4 to 12 and \$4.50 for the elderly; children 3 and younger free.

The newly built zoo has 1,600 animals in enclosures designed to resemble native habitats; attractions include a 175-bird aviary and an underwater view of a manatee — a gentle mammal similar to a large seal



Photos courtesy of Tampa Hillsborough Convention & Visitors Association

Tampa offers water enthusiasts plenty of space for sailing, windsurfing, fishing and sunning.



A national historic landmark district, Ybor city is filled with ornate grillwork, brick-lined streets, historic sites and art galleries.

that is one of Florida's official state animals.

Children love the petting zoo and the fountain at the entrance where they can wade. For more information call (813) 932-0245.

Fun Forest at Lowry Park, at 7530 North Blvd., has 19 rides as well as a playground and a "fairground" walk. Admission to the amusement park is free, but it takes three tickets to board each of the rides; individual tickets cost 40 cents, a 20-ticket book costs \$6.95; an all-day wristband is \$9.95. For more information call (813) 935-5503.

For a cheaper day there's the new hands-on Children's Museum of Tampa, at 7530 North Blvd., behind the Lowry amusement park. Admission is \$2; \$1.75 for the elderly, free to those 2 and younger.

The museum contains Safety Village, a miniature model of downtown Tampa complete with streets, sidewalks, traffic lights and buildings. For more information, call 935-8441.

### EVENTS

Complete vacation packages that include tickets to major events and attractions, as well as hotel, rental car and boating arrangements, can be obtained through Travel Impressions, a tour operator working with the Tampa Hillsborough Convention and Visitors Association. For more information, call (800)284-0044.

Tampa's homegrown festival, Gasparilla, is back again by popular demand after a one-year lapse, during which the main sponsoring organization — Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla — became integrated, admitting black men to what was once an all-white men's group.

Gasparilla began in 1904, when a Tampa Tribune columnist established a carnival based on the antics of the legendary pirate Jose Gaspar, whose band supposedly pillaged 36 ships during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The latest incarnation of Gasparilla, a monthlong celebration that began Feb. 2, has parades, street parties, concerts and, on Feb. 29, the 12th annual Artists and Writers Ball in Ybor City, a costume party and dance held as an alternative to Tampa's society balls.

For more information on all festival events call the Tampa Hillsborough Convention and Visitors Association at (813) 223-1111 or (800) 828-8358.

On Feb. 29 and March 1 is the 22nd Gasparilla Sidewalk Art Festival and Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center Open House, during which the downtown river walk is jammed with art, food booths, free entertainment and exhibits. For more information, call (813) 223-1111.

### MUSEUMS

The Henry B. Plant Museum, at 401 West Kennedy Blvd., is exhibiting through Feb. 29 photos of the eight hotels built or acquired by the Florida railroad magnate Henry B. Plant.

The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, call (813) 254-1891.

The Tampa Museum of Art, at 601 Doyle Carlton Drive, is showing, through March 29, the work of the New York photographer Sandy Skoglund.

The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Wednesday and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, and is closed Monday. Admission is free. For more information call (813) 223-8128.

The new Museum of African-American Art, at 1308 Marion St., houses the Barnett-Aden collection — more than 140 works by black artists. Paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints and traditional African handmade items, brought together by the late Professor James Herring and the late Alonzo Aden, both of Howard University, who began collecting and exhibiting the works in 1943, will be displayed.

The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday. For more information, call (813) 272-2466.

## Need a treat on a trip? Rent a luxury car

By Everett Pottor  
special writer



Not every traveler wants the most economical rental car around. A small but dedicated cadre of consumers wants an exciting, exotic car to drive.

For example, how about a Ferrari 328 to cruise the streets of Beverly Hills or an all-American Ford Mustang convertible to drive to the Florida Keys?

All the major U.S. rental-car firms offer at least one luxury car and several convertibles. Many also rent luxury cars in Europe.

What does it cost to drive a fantasy car and leave the recession behind for seven days?

It depends on the car and where and when it's rented.

In general, drivers must be age 25 and over, except at Alamo Rent A Car, which allows drivers age 21 and over to rent exotic cars.

Reservations are usually required at least 48 hours in advance. But to get the best deal, it's wise to have a travel agent do the legwork.

Here is a sampling of current rates. All prices quoted are for February and are very much subject to change.

Hertz Rent A Car offers two luxury cars in the United States at identical rental rates: the Lincoln Continental and the slightly larger Lincoln Town Car.

A seven-day rental in Los Angeles or San Francisco is \$199, in Miami \$189, in Orlando \$184 and in Denver \$228. Hertz offers seven-day rentals of convertibles such as the Ford Mustang for \$183.99 in Orlando and \$189.99 in Miami; the same car rents for \$248.99 in California and \$246.99 in Hawaii.

All these rates include unlimited mileage. For information call Hertz at (800) 654-3131.

General Rent A Car offers the 1992 Chrysler Imperial in Florida at \$189.95 per week and in California at \$187.95 per week. For convertible fans, the Chrysler Le Baron rents in Florida at \$189.95 per week.

All these rentals come with unlimited mileage. For information call (800) 327-7607.

Alamo also has special weekly rates for various cars. In Orlando a Geo Metro convertible is \$149.99 and \$183.99 a Pontiac Sunbird convertible is \$183.99. The same cars are \$192.99 per week and \$244.99 per week, respectively, in Los Angeles. The Geo Metro is available from Alamo on Maui for \$234.99 per week.

Alamo's luxury rental is the Cadillac Sedan de Ville. It rents for \$199.99 per week in both Orlando and Los Angeles and \$299.99 per week on Maui. All cars include unlimited mileage. For information call (800) 327-9433.

Avia Rent A Car offers the Sedan de Ville throughout Florida as its

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luxury car. In Orlando, the weekly rate is \$184. The firm also offers the Chrysler LeBaron and the Pontiac Sunbird for \$195 per week throughout Florida.

All rates include unlimited mileage. For information call Avia at (800) 331-1212.

In California and Nevada, renters who want to make a big impression may choose from a stable of luxury automobiles at Showcase Rental Cars, which has locations in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Las Vegas.

The company rents its cars at a daily rate. For example, a BMW 325i convertible is \$99.95 per day, a Chevrolet Corvette or a Mercedes 560L is \$149.95 per day, a Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit is \$350.95 per day and a Lamborghini Countach is \$1,000 per day.

Mileage charges run from 75 cents to 95 cents per mile. Clients between age 18 and age 25 pay higher rates for rentals.

Spokenperson Susan Herndon says Showcase's clients range from "comedian Joe Piscopo to a 21-year-old kid with a hot date."

For information call the company at (800) 421-6808.

Budget Rent A Car offers exotic rentals in California, including a Ferrari 328 at \$600 per day plus 50 cents per mile and a Mazda Miata at \$99 per day, with a fee of 50 cents per mile after 50 free miles.

Across the nation, Budget offers the Lincoln Town Car as its luxury car and the Ford Mustang and Pontiac Sunbird as convertibles. Currently, all three cars rent for \$178 per week in Orlando, with unlimited mileage. For information call Budget at (800) 527-0700.

An affordable alternative, if such a term can be used, is Europe by Car. They will rent a BMW 318i for \$410 per week or a BMW 735 for \$689 per week in more than a dozen German cities. The rate includes unlimited mileage, but the 14 percent value-added tax is extra.

Europe by Car has a wide range of Mercedeses, Volvos, Saabs and BMWs for rent throughout western Europe. The prices are far less than those offered by major American rental firms. For information call (212) 581-3041.

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**Beginning Scuba Classes Forming in Ann Arbor**

Beginning Date:	Time:
Monday, March 2nd	6:00-10:00 p.m.
Tuesday, March 3rd	6:30-10:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 4th	6:00-10:00 p.m.
Thursday, March 5th	6:30-10:30 p.m.
Friday, March 6th	9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

**Beginning Scuba Classes Forming At Novi Senior High School**

Beginning Date:	Time:
Monday, March 2nd	8:00-10:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 4th	6:00-10:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 28th	10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

*These Classes Meet For 7 Sessions*

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