

Daytona Beach area isn't just for spring break

BY NORMA AND WENDY SCHORWETTER
CORRESPONDENTS

Love touring palatial Victorian mansions, standing in the majesty of massive oak trees, and visiting state parks of historic significance? Then go to Daytona Beach, Florida. There's much more to the Daytona Beach area than spring break and NASCAR.

Daytona Beach is primarily a summer family destination. With more than 13,000 sleeping rooms spread across 400 hotels and motels, there's a place that's just right for your tastes. The area is a year-round destination because of good weather and a variety of activities.

For those seeking well-known Florida activities, twenty-five public golf courses beckon, and after just an hour's drive, you can be cooling your heels in St. Augustine or up to your ears in mouse cars in Orlando.

The Daytona Beach area is in Florida's Central East Coast region and includes eight communities stretching 23 miles along the Atlantic Coast.

There are lots of historical sites, state parks and historic Victorian architecture of the well-to-do who wintered in Florida.

Jackie Robinson Ballpark was renamed to honor this legendary baseball player, who broke the race barrier with the first racially integrated major league game, at this very stadium.

The spring-run sugar mill at DeLeon Springs State Park has a reconstructed water wheel and the Old Spanish Sugar Mill Grill and Griddle House, famous for its pancake breakfast. There are 603 acres of beautiful grounds, with giant live oak trees and a huge spring-fed pool for swimming. The legend of Ponce de Leon lives on here, where stories



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abound regarding his quest for the Fountain of Youth and whether he visited this spring during his exploration of Florida.

If you haven't found the Fountain of Youth yet, follow

the steps of Ponce de Leon, and look here. A delightful, short cruise takes you to the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse. The 175-foot red brick lighthouse is the second tallest in the U.S., and was completed in 1867.

This inlet's treacherous waters and shifting sands claimed many ships before it was constructed. Ponce de Leon is purported to have landed in the area in 1513 seeking his Fountain of Youth. For a spectacular view of the inlet and the surrounding area



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climb the 203 steps to the gallery deck. Tired of all the history? Get refreshed with the sea life at Marineland, one of the first theme parks in Florida. It is home to hundreds of ocean species, the most well known include bottlenose dolphins, a California sea lion and Black-Footed penguins from South Africa. They have the oldest dolphin born in captivity (57 years old) and a rare Champagne Dolphin. The 450,000-gallon Oceanarium contains more than 500 fish

representing 50 ocean species, including sharks, sea turtles and sting rays, all visible from viewing windows on two levels and the top deck. For an even closer view, guests can snorkel or scuba dive in the Oceanarium.

Daytona Beach is where car racing all began in 1903. The 100th Anniversary of Speed was celebrated in March. In 1936, the 1.2-mile track that combined road (AIA) and beach was established and continued until 1950. You can drive on a piece of history - 16 miles of the beach - but only at ten miles per hour.

In 1948, the National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing was organized and by 1959 the Daytona Beach International Speedway opened due to the growth of NASCAR and auto racing. The Daytona 500 is the most watched motor sports event in the world. The track in Brooklyn, Mich. hosts the NASCAR Winston Cup Race.

Daytona USA is a chance to experience NASCAR first-hand. This is the ultimate motor sports attraction, with interactive exhibits and a historical look of NASCAR racing. You can experience the thrill of driving a stock car at the motion-simulator ride "Daytona Dream Laps" or for the more adventurous try "Acceleration Alley" where you can accelerate to over 200 mph. Both are white-knuckle drives. Try your hand at the 16-Second Pit Stop Challenge. This is a live pit stop where four tires are changed and the cars are filled with gas, just like during the races. Be sure to catch the Speedway tour with behind the scene views.

Norma and Wendy Schorwetter are a mother-daughter travel writing team. Norma lives in Farmington Hills and Wendy in Seattle

IF YOU GO

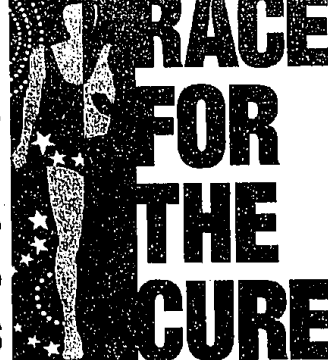
For information:
Call (800) 544-0415

Web sites:
www.daytonabeach.com,
www.daytonabeachcvb.org.

Best time to go: From November-January, Daytona Beach offers great vacation values. Call (866) 296-8977 for list of participating hotels and special offers.

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