

## TRAVEL



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## TACKLE TAMPA

Go to the big game. But if you don't have your tickets by now, find a good bar or comfy hotel room where you can watch.



TAMPA BAY &amp; CO.

**Toss in some Super festivities.** NFL Experience (866-TIX-4NFL, [www.superbowl.com](http://www.superbowl.com)) runs all weekend and Taste of the NFL ([www.TasteoftheNFL.com](http://www.TasteoftheNFL.com)) takes place on the Saturday before the game.

**Be a couch potato.** Check into Renaissance Tampa Hotel International Plaza (800-HOTELS-1 or 813-877-9200, [www.renaissancetampa.com](http://www.renaissancetampa.com)),

near the stadium, and watch the game on your room's 42-inch flat screen or in the lobby bar.

**Be a bar fly.** Arrive early to nearby Champps (813-353-0200) sports bar at International Plaza to hoist, hiss, and hurrah.

**Stay with the big guys.** Innisbrook Resort (800-456-2000, [www.innisbrookgolfresort.com](http://www.innisbrookgolfresort.com)) in Palm Harbor is official NFL headquarters, if you can get a room.

**Kick off your visit sky-high.** Get a Tampa Bay overview with Big Red Balloon ride (813-969-1518, [www.bigredballoon.com](http://www.bigredballoon.com)).

**Make Lower Hillsborough Wilderness Park your goal.** Paddle with a rental from nearby Canoe Escape (813-986-2067, [www.canoeescape.com](http://www.canoeescape.com)).

**Do the wave.** Experienced paddlers hit the mild rapids of Hillsborough River State Park

(813-987-6771, [www.floridastateparks.org](http://www.floridastateparks.org)).

**Tackle science.** Kids of all sizes love interacting at the Museum of Science and Industry (800-995-MOSI, [www.mosi.org](http://www.mosi.org)).



THE FLORIDA AQUARIUM

**Toss in some marine time.** At Florida Aquarium (813-273-4000, [www.flaquarium.org](http://www.flaquarium.org)) you can see sea creatures and even swim with them.

**Cheer for the dolphins.** Not the team from Miami, the ones you'll see on the Florida Aquarium Wild Dolphin EcoTour.

**Chew some pig skin.** I'm talking about the dozen or so varieties at Mel's Hot Dogs (813-985-8000, [www.melshotdogs.com](http://www.melshotdogs.com)).

**Cheer for the panthers.** Not the Carolina Panthers, the Florida panthers at Lowry Park Zoo (813-935-8552, [www.lowryparkzoo.com](http://www.lowryparkzoo.com)).

**Intercept the city scene.** Trade big for small city on a side trip to the antique shops and tea rooms of old-fashioned Plant City ([www.plantcity.org](http://www.plantcity.org)).

**Cheer on the eagles and cardinals.** Visit the bird sanctuary at McKay Nature Park, part of the Great Florida Birding Trail. [www.tampagov.net/dept\\_parks\\_and\\_recreation](http://www.tampagov.net/dept_parks_and_recreation)

**Play the big leagues.** En route to Plant City, Dinosaur World (813-717-9865, [www.dinoworld.net](http://www.dinoworld.net)) has more than 150 life-sized dinosaur statues in gardens where kids love to play Jurassic Park.

**Drop back.** Tampa Bay History Center (813-228-0097, [www.tampabayhistorycenter.org](http://www.tampabayhistorycenter.org)) preserves local history.

**Scream.** Busch Gardens' (813-987-5000 or 813-987-5082, [www.buschgardens.com](http://www.buschgardens.com)) roller coasters will make you do it, but save some voice for the game.



BUSCH GARDENS

**Take possession.** Buy, buy, buy at downtown's Channelside district (813-223-4250, [www.channelsidetampa.com](http://www.channelsidetampa.com)), then dine and bowl. It's also a good place to catch the game on a big screen.

**Win the trophy.** The St. Pete Beach-Clearwater Beach area regularly win awards for the its trophy beaches. Fort De Soto Park (727-582-2267) and Sand Key Park (727-588-4852) are top-rankers.

The Super Bowl officially hits Tampa's Raymond James Stadium on Feb. 1. Though the Dolphins won't be on the field, festivities surrounding the Big Game and Tampa's year-round attractions offer plenty of other reasons to head west. In honor of Super Bowl's 43rd year, here are 43 top options if you plan on visiting. More info: [www.visittampabay.com](http://www.visittampabay.com); 800-44-TAMPA.

By Chelle Koster Walton  
Special to The Miami Herald

**Take a time-out.** Have lunch at downtown's Fly Bar & Restaurant (813-275-5000, [www.flybarandrestaurant.com](http://www.flybarandrestaurant.com)), where style is the best defense.

**Watch the half-time show.** If you have to miss Bruce Springsteen at the stadium, tour the historic Tampa Theatre (813-274-8981, [www.tampatheatre.org](http://www.tampatheatre.org)) and watch a classic film instead.

**Join the fans.** Mise en Place (813-254-5373, [www.miseonline.com](http://www.miseonline.com)) — call it Meez for short — has been the local dining darling for inspired Florida cuisine since 1986.

**Go long.** Do dinner and entertainment at sea aboard the Yacht Starship (877-744-7999, [www.yachtstarship.com](http://www.yachtstarship.com)).

**End-zone your downtown day.** After walking around downtown, get your feet massaged and sink into bed at Marriott Tampa Waterside (888-268-1616, [www.tampawaterside.com](http://www.tampawaterside.com)).

**Head for the sidelines.** Minutes from downtown, Davis Islands is a trip to an insular community for shopping and dining.

**Score some Mexican chow.** Estela's (813-251-0558, [www.estelas.com](http://www.estelas.com)) on Davis Islands is a clear winner.

**Run the 390-yard line.** Hit Bayshore Boulevard's longest continuous sidewalk — 4.5 miles — by bike or foot.

**Check the line-up.** The town's top restaurants line South Howard Avenue, known locally as SoHo.

**Beef up.** Bern's Steak House (813-251-2421, [www.bernssteakhouse.com](http://www.bernssteakhouse.com)) has been doing steak since Shula played for the Colts (i.e. 1956).

**Go for the conversion.** Exchange modern times for the tum of last century on a free weekday tour of Ybor City with the Visitor Information Center at Centro Ybor (813-241-8838, [www.ybor.org](http://www.ybor.org)).



TAMPA BAY &amp; CO.

**Pick a champion.** Practically every Ybor restaurant competes for the best Cuban sandwich. Carmine's (813-248-3834) rates right up there. What's your pick?

**Make a pass.** Slip from present to past tense aboard the historically correct electric TECO Ybor Streetcar (813-254-4278 [www.tecolinestreetcar.org](http://www.tecolinestreetcar.org)), which transports you in minutes from downtown to cigar town.

**Get a kick out of flamenco dancers.** The original Columbia Restaurant (813-248-4961, [www.columbiarestaurant.com](http://www.columbiarestaurant.com)) puts on a show Monday through Saturday night.

**Bring home Cuba.** Buy Cuban bread at La Segunda Bakery (813-248-1531), coffee at El Molino/Naviera Coffee Mills (813-248-2521), and hand-rolled cigars from any number of Ybor City shops.

**Live the instant replay.** Sleep in the past at Don Vicente de Ybor Historic Inn (813-241-4545, [www.donvicenteinn.com](http://www.donvicenteinn.com)), named for Ybor City's founder.

**How about that 'gator chili?** Skipper's Smokehouse (813-971-0666, [www.skipperssmokehouse.com](http://www.skipperssmokehouse.com)) is the ultimate in shack-chic and good Florida eats.

**Get one for the team.** Grab the pizza of your lifetime at Gourmet Pizza Company (813-258-1999, [www.gourmetpizza-company.com](http://www.gourmetpizza-company.com)).

**Cheer for the lions.** No, not the ones from Detroit, but those saved from abuse at Big Cat Rescue (813-920-4130, [www.bigcatrescue.org](http://www.bigcatrescue.org)).



HERALD FILE PHOTO

**Go into overtime.** Party across the bay in downtown St. Petersburg with its lively nightlife scene around The Pier (727-821-6443, [www.stpete-pier.com](http://www.stpete-pier.com)) and BayWalk complex.

**22-43-59 hike!** Take to the nature trails along the freshwater ponds, oyster bars, and oak hammocks at Upper Tampa Bay Park (813-855-1765).

**Cheer for the giants.** Not the New York kind, the bulbous sea mammal kind that gather at TECO Manatee Viewing Center (813) 228-4289, [www.manatee-teco.com](http://www.manatee-teco.com).

**Touch down.** Jump from 13,500 feet with Skydive City (800-404-9399 or 813-783-9399, [www.skydivecity.com](http://www.skydivecity.com)).



THE PALM BEACH POST

