



TripAdvisor Names Two Area Beaches Best of 2009

Fort De Soto Nabs Top Spot Second Year Running; Honeymoon Island Makes Top Ten

St. Pete/Clearwater, FL (May 27, 2009) – Two beaches in the St. Pete/Clearwater area made TripAdvisor’s list of the top ten beaches in the U.S., according to the company’s annual summer travel survey released this week.

Pinellas County’s Fort De Soto Park (pictured) took top honors for the second consecutive year, while Honeymoon Island State Park ranked ninth on the list published by the Expedia-owned industry giant, the world’s largest online travel community.



In placing it at the top of their annual survey, the popular travel network lauded Fort De Soto’s North Beach’s “pure white sand and clear water,” describing it as a “wide, family-friendly stretch” that’s “both naturally beautiful and convenient.” Particular kudos went to the parks many amenities, such as picnic tables, grills, and ample restrooms.

Dunedin’s Honeymoon Island was praised for its serene atmosphere and its “undisturbed natural beauty.” Described as “not your typical beachgoer’s beach,” the barrier island sets itself apart because it “lets visitors interact with the scenic natural environment of the area, from swimming to seashells to sunsets.”

Local tourism officials were elated with the news.

“This is particularly flattering because we’ve topped their list twice in two years,” said DT Minich, executive director of Visit St. Pete/Clearwater. “And to have not one, but two area

beaches named travelers' favorites is a powerful statement and a tremendous honor," he added.

Of the ten beaches TripAdvisor named in its official survey, four are in Florida and four are in Hawaii, with beaches in California and South Carolina rounding out the list.

Other [results of the survey](#) include:

- Thirty-six percent of respondents say they'll drink more alcohol while on summer vacation, with the Margarita as the drink of choice (18%).
- Twenty-five percent of respondents said they'll be "more romantic" on vacation than while at home.
- The majority of respondents (58%) named the beach as their top summer destination, followed by museums (41%) and national parks (38%).
- Eighty-nine percent are planning a leisure trip this summer, nearly equal to one year ago.

"Recession be damned," said Michele Perry, vice president of global communications for TripAdvisor. "Americans are preparing to pack up the beach bags and boogie boards en masse this summer."

This marks the fourth time in five years that a pristine Pinellas County beach has received top honors on an annual "best-of" list. Fort De Soto was named the nation's #1 beach in 2005 by Dr. Stephen P. Leatherman -- a.k.a. "Dr. Beach" -- and by TripAdvisor in 2008. Caladesi Island State Park was dubbed best beach by Dr. Beach in 2008.

"This recognition reinforces the fact that our brand identity is much more than just a marketing slogan," said Minich. "The St. Pete/Clearwater area really is home to 'America's Award-Winning Beaches,'" he added.

TripAdvisor-branded sites make up the largest travel community in the world, with more than 25 million monthly visitors and over 10 million registered members. TripAdvisor and the sites comprising the TripAdvisor Media Network are operating companies of Expedia, Inc. (NASDAQ: EXPE).

Visit St. Pete/Clearwater is the destination marketing organization for Pinellas County, Florida.

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