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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 2009

The Daytona Beach Area Is Brimming With Family Fun

Daytona Beach, Fla. -- For families on vacation, the Daytona Beach area makes child's play out of having fun. Twenty-three miles of sparkling white sandy beaches and beautiful blue-green waters make Daytona Beach an irresistible playground for kids of all ages.

Getting There

Daytona Beach is conveniently located 54 miles from Orlando on Florida's Central East Coast, just an hour's drive from many popular theme parks and other favorite tourist destinations. If you are traveling around Florida, Daytona Beach is easy to reach via Interstate 95 or Interstate 4. Daytona Beach International Airport is served by Delta and U.S. Airways, providing service to destinations worldwide.

The Beach

The beach is up to 500 feet wide at low tide and is perfect for sandcastle building, cycling, jogging, fishing or just relaxing in the sun. While at the beach, watersports enthusiasts can grab a surfboard, launch a boat or head out for a parasailing adventure. The Atlantic Ocean is perfect for swimming especially during the spring and summer when temperatures range from 74 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit (23 to 27 degrees Celsius). The average annual air temperature is 70.3 degrees Fahrenheit (21 degrees Celsius).

While driving is permitted on 11 of the 23-mile long beach area, four pedestrian-only zones are found at various intervals. The most central pedestrian beach zone is found north and south of the historic Daytona Beach Pier (formerly known as Main Street Pier) in Daytona Beach.

Things To Do

If you and your family can manage to tear yourselves away from the beach, you'll discover the Daytona Beach area is full of fun activities and attractions. The area's newest shopping, dining and entertainment district, Ocean Walk Shoppes at Ocean Walk Village is the perfect place for family fun. Enjoy the 10-cinema theater complex, new eateries such as Bubba Gump's Shrimp Company and Stone Cold Creamery and plenty of apparel and gift stores all just steps away from the Atlantic Ocean and Oceanfront Park.

One of the area's most exhilarating attractions is the Daytona 500 Experience, located just outside Daytona International Speedway's fourth turn. This motorsports attraction offers a combination of high-tech, hands-on excitement and a fascinating historical perspective that's

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perfect for all ages. Guests can change tires in a timed pit stop competition, design and video-test their own cars, and broadcast a famous race finish. The Daytona 500 Experience also puts visitors in the driver's seat with racing simulator rides Daytona Dream Laps and Acceleration Alley. The Daytona 500 Experience's newest thrill is NASCAR 3D, "The IMAX Experience," featuring rare behind-the-scenes glimpses as well as gripping action on the track and narration by Golden Globe award-winning actor Kiefer Sutherland.

Museum goers will enjoy the Museum of Arts and Sciences, which features a Center for Florida History that is home to a 13 foot-tall, 130,000-year-old Giant Ground Sloth, which was found near the museum in 1974. The amazingly complete skeleton is considered one of the finest specimens of its kind in North America. The museum is also renowned for its multi-cultural exhibitions. The Cuban exhibit features the finest example of modern Cuban art outside of the island nation and the African Wing contains 165 objects from numerous African ethnic groups. Carved commemorative staffs, ritual ornaments, and 130 pieces of Ashante gold highlight this collection. The museum's newest addition is the Charles and Linda Williams Children's Museum – the region's only hands-on science center.

The Museum of Arts and Sciences also features a variety of traveling exhibits that provide frequent guests a new experience each time they visit.

For maritime lovers, the Daytona Beach area has one of Florida's finest nautical museums at the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse. Standing 175 feet tall, this lighthouse is the second tallest in the U.S. Complete with its original lighthouse keeper buildings, it is the only lighthouse in Florida that is recognized as a National Historic Landmark. The museum houses maritime artifacts, educational exhibits and a rare Fresnel Lens exhibit. A climb to the top of the lighthouse's 203 steps is rewarded with a panoramic view of the Ponce de Leon Inlet's north and south arteries and surrounding area.

When planning a trip to the lighthouse set aside extra time for a visit to the nearby Marine Science Center. With interactive exhibits on the area's marine environment, a seabird sanctuary and sea turtle rehabilitation facilities, the center provides a unique and entertaining learning experience for young and old.

The adventurous family will want to cruise the waters of the area's scenic stretch of the Intracoastal Waterway aboard A tiny Cruise Line, Daytona Beach Aqua Safari or Manatee Cruises. Tours range from one to two hours in length.

Deep-sea fishing charters depart from several marinas daily. Half- and full-day trips are available and include all the bait and gear necessary to catch the "big ones." Charter boat companies take their passengers to favored fishing spots to catch red snapper, grouper and other native fish.

Nature lovers will enjoy the many parks and wildlife areas in the region. Tomoka State Park, north of Ormond Beach, was once home to the Timucuan Indians. The scenic state park is a perfect location for fishing, camping, hiking and boating. Escorted boat trips along the Tomoka River are also available for a small fee.

After a full day of beach going or sightseeing, you will discover a wide variety of shopping, restaurants and nightlife. The area has two outdoor markets that are open every weekend.

The Farmers Market, located in downtown Daytona Beach on City Island, features fresh produce, citrus fruit and seafood. The Daytona Flea and Farmer's Market is a bargain hunter's dream featuring everything from food to clothing to antiques.

Beach Street in the downtown Daytona Beach Historic District, offers a nostalgic experience as you stroll amid unique shops and restaurants along a lush, palm-tree lined avenue. Along with the Halifax Historical Museum, Riverfront Park and antique shops, Beach Street is home to Angell and Phelps Chocolate Factory where chocolate lovers can see and learn how Angell and Phelps hand-make more than 100 kinds of candies. A growing number of eateries call the historic downtown area home, including Angell and Phelps Café, The Cellar (home of former President Warren Harding), Bay Street Seafood, Zen Bistro, Siam Spice, Ronin Sushi Bar, McKay's Tavern, Christina's Beach Street Cafe and many others.

Souvenir hunters will enjoy browsing in the many beachside shops along Atlantic Avenue (A1A). Volusia Mall, the area's largest regional shopping mall, features more than 100 department stores, specialty shops and restaurants.

Great golf is another reason worldwide visitors choose the Daytona Beach area for vacation getaways. The area is home to dozens of public golf courses including several championship greens that make it a perfect spot for year-round golfing fun. For customized golf vacation package information, contact Golf Daytona Beach at (386) 255-0415, 1-800-881-7065 (toll free in the U.S. and Canada only) or visit the Golf Daytona Beach Web site at www.golfdaytonabeach.com.

Where To Stay

There are rooms to fit every taste and budget in the Daytona Beach area. The area's more than 200 hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts offer more than 12,000 rooms, suites and apartments -- many directly on the ocean. Condominium and vacation home rentals are also available. Those who love the "great outdoors" will find many campgrounds and RV parks throughout the area.

For Daytona Beach area accommodation, attraction, and tourism event information, contact the Daytona Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau at (386) 255-0415 or 1-800-854-1234. Or visit www.daytonabeach.com.