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Daytona Beach Area Story Ideas

For writers who have never fully experienced the natural, cultural and historic wonders of the Daytona Beach area and don't know where to begin, have no fear. The area is rich in story ideas for all types of media writers. Below are some suggested leads.

DAYTONA BEACH: A REVITALIZED DESTINATION

Daytona Beach continues efforts to improve its core tourism areas. A 1.35-mile beautification and streetscaping project along Daytona Beach's core tourism district on Atlantic Avenue was completed in December 2006. New beachfront parks continue to open. Many hotels and motels have invested millions of dollars in renovations, in some cases totally rebuilding their properties. The Ocean Walk Shoppes at Ocean Walk Village completed the multi-faceted, \$250 million, Ocean Walk Village project in November 2002. The completion of the Shoppes, containing a 10-cinema theater complex, Bubba Gump's Seafood Company restaurant, Mai Tai Bar, Johnny Rocket's, Starbucks Coffee Shop and retail establishments, follows the Ocean Walk Resort, Ocean Center Parking Garage and the expanded Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort. The beach has also undergone an impressive facelift with new signage and decorative elements having been added to beach approaches. Historic Beach Street in downtown Daytona Beach has undergone a decorative streetscape project as well, bringing new life – and a wide variety of boutiques and eateries -- to the area.

ORMOND BEACH: BIRTHPLACE OF SPEED

This area's long association with racing began on the hard-packed sands of Ormond Beach in March 1903. For eight years, the small seaside community was the world's center of racing. During those formative years, inventors with names like Olds, Winton, Ford, Chevrolet, Stanley and Packard came to test their machines on the only reliable flat track in the United States. An annual festival takes place each November featuring antique auto beach races, a gaslight parade, an antique car show, music, food and historic tours.

THE TALLEST LIGHTHOUSE IN FLORIDA

The Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse has been operational since 1887 when the Ponce Inlet area was known as Mosquito Inlet. If that name sounds familiar, it should. In 1897, short story writer Stephen Crane experienced a near-death experience when his ship sank offshore in the Daytona Beach area. Crane wrote about his experience in one of his most memorable short stories, "The Open Boat," and he made references to the Mosquito Inlet Light, a.k.a., the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse. Now listed on the National Historic Registry, the 175-foot tall lighthouse offers visitors an interesting slice of local history as well as a unique experience of maritime life in the

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early 20th century. A 203-step climb to the top of this tallest lighthouse in Florida is rewarded with breathtaking views of the area's coastline.

DAYTONA BEACH AREA: FLORIDA'S FASTEST GOLF DESTINATION

Great golf in the Daytona Beach area abounds with beautifully sculptured golf courses designed for amateurs and pros alike. Daytona Beach is also home to the Ladies Professional Golf Association's international headquarters. Because of its growing popularity as a premier golfing destination, the area has established Golf Daytona Beach, a program which offers special customized golf promotional packages to visitors allowing advance tee-time and hotel bookings.

EXPLORE GREATER DEPTHS

Writers inspired by Peter Bentley's book "The Deep" and other deep-sea diving stories will find plenty of deep diving action via the Volusia County Port Authority's Artificial Reef Program. Thirteen artificial reef sites, starting from five miles offshore, dot the area giving scuba enthusiasts a bevy of marine life to explore.

COMMUNE WITH ENDANGERED SPECIES

The area's Marine Science Center provides an innovative learning experience where visitors can discover, enjoy and appreciate the many wonders of marine science. The center, located in Ponce Inlet, houses a wet/dry classroom and lab, gift shop, a sea turtle rehabilitation facility, and a 5,000 gallon artificial reef aquarium, as well as static and interactive educational displays. A boardwalk and nature trail system extending throughout the park allows for wildlife and habitat observation. A seabird rehabilitation sanctuary was added to the center in June 2004.

DISCOVER DAYTONA BEACH'S RICH AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE

Daytona Beach was the home of two of the twentieth century's most prominent Civil Rights Leaders, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune and Dr. Howard Thurman. A brilliant educator, Dr. Bethune spearheaded one of the most successful African-American colleges in the United States, Bethune-Cookman University. One of her friends was former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt who visited her on a number of occasions. The lifetime achievements and history of Dr. Bethune can be researched at the Carl S. Swisher Library "New Deal" Exhibit and the Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation on the campus. Dr. Thurman, a mentor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was born and raised in Daytona Beach. Dr. Thurman wrote of a climate of action-oriented nonviolence that was later inherited and institutionalized by the Civil Rights Movement. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Howard Thurman Home is located in one of the city's oldest residential sections. Daytona Beach is also where fabled baseball legend, Jackie Robinson, broke the color barrier in professional sports in the United States. Daytona Beach's Jackie Robinson Ballpark is named in his honor.

WINTER HOME OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS

The Daytona Beach area was once the winter home of oil magnate and billionaire John D. Rockefeller. One of Rockefeller's final goals was to live to be 100 years old. His friend, Florida railroad magnate Henry Flagler, suggested that in order to reach his goal, he should spend his winters in Ormond Beach, a city just north of Daytona Beach. Rockefeller took his friend's advice and enjoyed his stay so much that he eventually made Ormond Beach his permanent winter home. His former home, The Casements, serves as an interpretive museum for "Neighbor John" Rockefeller's final years.

James Gamble of Proctor & Gamble fame also wintered in the area. Though his house along the river burned several years ago, writers will be inspired by Gamble's southern frontier "cracker-style" hunting and fishing retreat located in nearby Port Orange. Located on the 150-acre Spruce Creek Preserve and maintained by The Museum of Arts & Sciences, Gamble Place was built in 1907 and serves as a fine example of a rich man's playhouse, complete with all the modern conveniences of its day. The grounds also house an early 20th century citrus packinghouse and the Snow White house, a cottage fashioned after the one in the original Walt Disney movie. Pontoon boat trips on nearby Spruce Creek provide visitors with a unique view of this pristine, natural setting that's a must-see for Southern/Florida history writers.

EXPLORE 19TH CENTURY-ERA SUGAR MILLS

Sugar mill plantation ruins are rare finds in Florida, and cultural writers will be inspired by these remnants of an era long ago forgotten. Sugar Mill Gardens, located in Port Orange off Herbert Street, contains ruins of an old English period sugar mill surrounded by 12 acres of botanical gardens. The Bulow Plantation Sugar Mill Ruins in Ormond Beach features the coquina-rock remains of a 19th century sugar mill surrounded by a lush and exotic Florida woods, and an open-air interpretive museum that houses Seminole Indian relics and artifacts.

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

While a popular beach destination, the area also offers scenic views from the beautiful Intracoastal Waterway. The Halifax River runs through the heart of the Daytona Beach area offering an inviting opportunity for entertainment and education aboard a guided river boat cruise or sailing charter. Whether for a group outing or a family excursion, area river cruise companies offer a variety of tours.

GO AHEAD, INDULGE YOURSELF

Creative chefs have discovered the Daytona Beach area and are heating up the region's culinary scene. From casual cafes to gourmet sophistication, visitors will discover a delectable selection of restaurants in the Daytona Beach area that showcase some of Florida's young culinary talent. Dine at one of our many popular mainland restaurants or choose a waterfront eatery situated alongside the area's stretch of the Intracoastal Waterway where spectacular sunsets are the house specialty.

GOT A BONE TO PICK?

The Museum of Arts & Sciences is a true find for natural history writers. Daytona Beach is home to the finest example of a prehistoric Ground Sloth in North America. Even a modern mousetrap would be challenged to catch this mammoth-sized rodent. Standing 13 feet high, this 130,000-year old sloth was uncovered in the early 1970s during a nearby road excavation and expansion project. The museum also houses a fine assortment of prehistoric Indian pottery shards, Native American arrow tips and interpretive educational exhibits about prehistoric Florida.

ENJOY SOFT ADVENTURES

The Daytona Beach area is filled with soft adventure opportunities. Visitors can enjoy an early morning hot air balloon ride over the area's scenic countryside or try their hand at parasailing, sky diving, canoeing, kayaking, surfing, or racing around the world-famous Daytona International Speedway at speeds upwards of 165 mph, and more!

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EXPERIENCE WILD FLORIDA IN DAYTONA BEACH

A large number of state, federal, and locally protected recreation areas, parks, and preserves provide plenty of creative inspiration for outdoor writers and nature lovers needing information about exotic Florida wildlife, flora, and fauna. Camping, RV, and motorcoach writers will find an abundant number of campgrounds and parks to write about, including those located near the ocean.

ART, FOR ART'S SAKE

The Daytona Beach area is way more than a beach! Local museums such as the Museum of Arts & Sciences, the Southeast Museum of Photography, the Art League of Daytona Beach, the Ormond Memorial Art Museum & Gardens, and the Harvey W. Lee Jr. Memorial Gallery offer some of the best Master's paintings, portraits and prolific works by rising artists in the southeast. The Museum of Arts & Sciences houses one of the largest modern Cuban art museums in the world and an African art exhibit that showcases carved commemorative staffs, ritual ornaments, fetishes, and 130 pieces of rare Ashante gold.

DAYTONA'S WELL-CULTURED PERFORMING ARTS COMMUNITY

Several performing arts organizations have shared the limelight in the Daytona Beach area for many years. The Daytona Beach Symphony Society annually presents a winter season program and annually sponsors Winterfest, featuring performances by a variety of internationally known musical artists. Surfscap Contemporary Dance Theatre is a modern professional dance company that offers performances throughout the year.

DAYTONA BEACH: WHERE WEDDING DREAMS COME TRUE

While beach weddings are popular along the shores of the Daytona Beach area, those wishing to add even more unique touches to that special day will find plenty of options. Couples can begin their lives together as winners with a wedding ceremony held in Victory Lane at Daytona International Speedway. For more traditional nuptials, there are various garden wedding sites including Chapel in the Garden, where brides and grooms can exchange vows at an historic site surrounded by Japanese-styled gardens.

BIRDING IN TOMOKA STATE PARK

Tomoka State Park is a bird-watcher's paradise, with more than 160 species sighted, especially during the spring and fall migrations. The park is one of over 400 sites throughout Florida selected for their excellent bird watching or bird education opportunities.

STILL STUMPED? WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Writer's block is frustrating, and as writers we know that feeling! The Daytona Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau's Communications Department is here to assist you wherever and whenever possible. If you have any questions about the area, please give us a call at (386) 255-0415, 1-800-544-0415 or visit our Web site at www.DaytonaBeachCVB.org.