TPA

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U.S. SERIES
THE GULF COAST

Greetings from TAMPA

48 hours, solo, at your own pace

POCKET EDITION · 2027

Welcome to Tampa

Tampa is the Gulf Coast city that got serious about itself. For decades it coasted on Busch Gardens, spring break, and cigar nostalgia — but it's quietly become a genuinely interesting mid-sized city with a world-class food and drink scene and a waterfront that finally lives up to its potential.

Ybor City is Tampa at its most irreplaceable — a cigar manufacturing district built by Cuban, Spanish, and Italian immigrants in the 1880s, too architecturally intact to bulldoze. The Columbia Restaurant has served Cuban food in the same building since 1905.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Day One belongs to Ybor City and its history. Day Two moves into Hyde Park's walkable streets, with an optional St. Petersburg day trip. Solo travel works beautifully here — the bar culture is welcoming and the neighborhoods are walkable within themselves.

ESSENTIAL QUICK FACTS

CURRENCY
US Dollar (contactless widely)

GETTING AROUND
Rideshare · free streetcar

TIME ZONE
Eastern (UTC-5 / UTC-4 summer)

EMERGENCY
911 · Non-emergency 813-231-6130

TIPPING
18–20% restaurants & bars

SALES TAX
8.5% Hillsborough County

01 DAY ONE

Ybor City · Columbia Restaurant · Tampa Museum of Art

The first day belongs to Tampa's history and its most distinctive neighborhood — Ybor City in the morning before the tourists arrive, the Columbia at lunch, the museum in the afternoon.

MORNING · 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

9:00 AM

Ybor City Historic District

Fifteen square blocks of late-19th-century brick buildings built by Cuban, Spanish, and Italian cigar workers. Walk Seventh Avenue (La Séptima) — ornate facades, iron balconies, and a scale that feels more New Orleans than Florida.

10:30 AM

Ybor City Museum State Park & Casita

A former bakery documenting the neighborhood's founding by Vicente Martinez-Ybor and the Cuban, Spanish, Italian, and Romanian Jewish immigrants who built the industry.

12:00 PM

Hand-Rolled Cigars on La Séptima

Several shops on Seventh Avenue still employ hand-rollers. Tampa cigars use a different leaf blend from Cuban production — its own genuine tradition.

AFTERNOON · 1:00 PM – 7:00 PM

1:00 PM

Lunch — Columbia Restaurant

Florida's oldest restaurant, open continuously since 1905. The 1905 Salad (prepared tableside), Cuban sandwich, and ropa vieja are the canonical orders. The bar serves the full menu — excellent for solo diners.

3:00 PM

Tampa Museum of Art

On Gasparilla Plaza along the Riverwalk — a striking Stanley Saitowitz building with aluminum mesh cladding that changes color through the day. Strong Greek and Roman antiquities section.

"None of this is performance. It is simply what remained."

EVENING · 7:00 PM – LATE

5:00 PM

Tampa Riverwalk

The 2.6-mile waterfront promenade along the Hillsborough River. Walk north from the museum toward Armature Works, past Curtis Hixon Waterfront Park.

7:00 PM

Dinner — Armature Works

A converted 1910 streetcar maintenance building in the Heights housing Tampa's best food hall. The rooftop bar has the best view in Tampa.

02 DAY TWO

Hyde Park · Henry B. Plant Museum · Bern's

The second day moves into Hyde Park, Tampa's most walkable historic residential neighborhood, before an optional afternoon day trip across the bay.

MORNING · 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

9:00 AM

Hyde Park Village & Morning Walk

South Tampa's 1910s–1920s bungalow neighborhood. Buddy Brew Coffee for the best independent coffee in Tampa, then a walk down South Boulevard and Magnolia Avenue.

10:30 AM

Henry B. Plant Museum

Housed in the former Tampa Bay Hotel (1891) on the University of Tampa campus — minarets, cupolas, and horseshoe arches. Theodore Roosevelt staged the Rough Riders here before Cuba.

12:30 PM

Lunch — Oxford Exchange

A beautifully designed all-day café in a converted 1891 building — the most Instagrammed room in Tampa, and deservedly so.

AFTERNOON · 2:00 PM – 7:00 PM

2:00 PM

St. Petersburg Day Trip (Optional)

25 minutes across the Howard Frankland Bridge — the Salvador Dalí Museum alone justifies the trip. Return by 6pm for dinner, or stay for the Florida Aquarium and Channelside waterfront.

4:00 PM

Florida Museum of Photographic Arts

In the Curtis Hixon Park area — one of the few dedicated photography museums in the Southeast. Often overlooked and worth 90 minutes.

EVENING · 7:00 PM – LATE

7:00 PM

Dinner — Bern's Steak House

The most singular restaurant experience in Tampa — family-owned since 1956, a 6,750-bottle wine cellar, and a dessert room upstairs where each table is a private booth. The bar is excellent for a pre-dinner drink with the sommelier.

03 CIGAR CITY

The real history, and when to go

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know Ybor City was once producing 500 million cigars a year — the cigar capital of the world?

At its early-1900s peak, this fifteen-square-block district northeast of Downtown was the center of American cigar manufacturing, built by waves of Cuban, Spanish, Italian, and Romanian Jewish immigrant workers. It survived urban renewal by being, in its own way, too architecturally intact and too weird to bulldoze.

A SHORT HISTORY

The Tampa Cuban sandwich still carries the neighborhood's layered history — it includes Genoa salami, added by the Italian cigar workers who worked alongside their Cuban neighbors, and is pressed flatter than Miami's version. The free-roaming chickens on Seventh Avenue are descendants of birds kept by the earliest Cuban residents.

BEST TIME TO GO

Ybor is genuinely lively Thursday through Saturday nights, when the neighborhood transforms into Tampa's main entertainment district. Gasparilla — Tampa's pirate-invasion festival, running since 1904 — takes over the city each late January with a parade and a music festival.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

— Hand-rollers still working the cigar shops along Seventh Avenue — watch, then buy directly from the source.

— The free-roaming chickens of Ybor, protected in the same spirit as Key West's, but with a Cuban-immigrant backstory.

— Wrought-iron balconies and brick facades on Seventh Avenue — one of the most architecturally intact 19th-century streetscapes in Florida.

> *"The Columbia has been serving Cuban food in the same building since 1905 — none of it is performance."*

04 WHERE TO EAT

Bar seats and tasting menus

Tampa has strong bar culture at its serious restaurants — Bern's, Mise en Place, Rooster & the Till, and Armature Works are all comfortable for solo diners. Prices are per person, excluding drinks.

BREAKFAST & COFFEE

Buddy Brew Coffee
HYDE PARK & MULTIPLE · $
Tampa's best independent roaster — serious espresso, good pour-over.

Oxford Exchange
HYDE PARK · $$
All-day café in an 1891 building — the most beautiful breakfast room in Tampa.

LUNCH

Columbia Restaurant
YBOR CITY · $$
Florida's oldest restaurant (1905). The 1905 Salad, Cuban sandwich, and ropa vieja.

Rooster & the Till
SEMINOLE HEIGHTS · $$$
Tampa's most creative kitchen outside Bern's — vegetable-forward, small plates.

DINNER

Bern's Steak House
SOUTH HOWARD · $$$
Tampa's most iconic restaurant since 1956 — prime dry-aged beef, the Harry Waugh Dessert Room.

Ulele
HEIGHTS · $$$
Native Florida ingredients in a 1903 water works building on the river — the best craft beer list in Tampa.

05 GETTING AROUND

Navigating Tampa

Tampa is a driving city — the rail network doesn't cover most attractions. Budget for rideshare between Ybor City, Hyde Park, the Heights, and Downtown.

Rideshare	**$8–20**	Essential for most neighborhood-to-neighborhood trips.
TECO Streetcar	**Free**	Heritage streetcar connecting Downtown to Ybor City via Channelside — check hartride.org.
Riverwalk Bikes	**$5–15**	Coast Bike Share stations along the 2.6-mile Riverwalk route.
TPA Airport	**~$20**	One of the best airports in the U.S. — about 20 minutes from Downtown.

Doing St. Pete or Clearwater? Rideshare or rental car — 25–45 minutes across the Howard Frankland or Gandy Bridge, with no direct transit connection.

06 BACKUP PLANS

Tampa on a rainy afternoon

Gulf Coast storms move fast and clear quickly — these stay open and dry whatever the sky is doing.

DOWNTOWN
Tampa Museum of Art

CURTIS HIXON PARK
Fla. Museum of Photographic Arts

HYDE PARK
Henry B. Plant Museum

HEIGHTS
Armature Works food hall

07 NEIGHBORHOODS

Know your neighborhoods

THE IRREPLACEABLE ONE

Ybor City

National Historic Landmark, cigar history, Columbia Restaurant, Tampa's most authentic streetscape. Best mornings and late nights.

THE WALKABLE VILLAGE

Hyde Park

South Tampa's residential village — bungalows, tree-lined streets, Oxford Exchange. Best for a slow morning.

WHERE TAMPA GOES OUT

The Heights

The emerging neighborhood north of Downtown — Armature Works, Ulele, the best Riverwalk stretch. Best on weekend evenings.

THE DAYTIME CORE

Downtown / Channelside

The office core with the Tampa Museum of Art and the Riverwalk. Primarily a daytime destination.

08 GOOD TO KNOW

What nobody tells you

— Tampa's Cuban sandwich differs from Miami's — it includes Genoa salami and is pressed flatter. The Columbia and La Segunda Bakery are the canonical sources.

— Rideshare and the TECO Streetcar plus Riverwalk bike rental covers the core itinerary — a car helps for Seminole Heights and St. Pete.

— Reserve Bern's and the Columbia well in advance — both book out, especially on weekends.

— The free TECO Streetcar is the most convenient connection between downtown hotels and Ybor — no need to rideshare that leg.

— Hurricane season runs June through November — check the forecast before booking a summer trip.

09 SOLO TRAVELER SAFETY

Is Tampa safe?

Safe, with standard city awareness. Ybor City, Hyde Park, Downtown, and the Heights are all well-trafficked and comfortable for solo travelers by day and evening; as in any mid-sized city, know which pockets quiet down late.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AT A GLANCE

Hyde Park	●●●●●
Downtown / Channelside	●●●●○
Ybor City (day)	●●●●○
Ybor City (late night)	●●●○○
The Heights	●●●●○

COMMON SCAMS

No major tourist-specific scams stand out — the usual rideshare and street-vendor caution applies. Confirm cover charges before entering Ybor's late-night clubs on busy weekend nights.

HEALTH & MEDICAL

Dial 911 for emergencies. Tampa General Hospital is the region's major trauma center. Tap water is safe. Summer heat and humidity, plus sudden afternoon thunderstorms June through September, are the most common real-world risks.

SOLO WOMEN TRAVELERS

Ybor's Seventh Avenue stays busy and well-lit Thursday through Saturday nights; stick to the main entertainment strip after dark, and use rideshare rather than walking between neighborhoods late.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Police / Fire / Medical	911
Tampa PD Non-Emergency	813-231-6130
Florida Poison Control	1-800-222-1222

10 PLANNING CALENDAR

Tampa, month by month

Exact dates shift annually — confirm before booking.

January GASPARILLA

- Gasparilla Pirate Fest, late January — a full pirate-invasion parade running since 1904.

February PEAK SEASON

- Mild, dry weather continues; Gasparilla Music Festival follows the main event.

March FAIR WEATHER

- Comfortable temperatures for the Riverwalk and Hyde Park walking.

April SHOULDER SEASON

- Warming up; still comfortable for outdoor exploring.

May LATE SPRING

- Last comfortable month before summer humidity sets in.

June STORMS BEGIN

- Hurricane season opens (through November); daily afternoon thunderstorms.

July PEAK HEAT

- Very hot and humid — plan around the Tampa Museum, Plant Museum, and Armature Works indoors.

August QUIET & HOT

- Lower hotel rates, continued hurricane risk — watch the forecast.

September STORM WATCH

- Peak hurricane season — travel insurance recommended.

October SEASON RETURNS

- Mild temperatures and low humidity return — the start of the best stretch of the year.

November FAIR WEATHER

- Comfortable, dry, and increasingly busy as snowbird season approaches.

December HOLIDAY SEASON

- Mild weather, holiday events along the Riverwalk and in Hyde Park Village.

TPA

Every Stop, Mapped

Scan the code to open the free interactive Tampa map — every stop in this guide, filterable by day, food, and transport.

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