

Tampa, Florida In-Flight Catering and Travel Tips

Tampa is one of the top destinations in Florida, especially as a winter retreat for residents of colder climates. Like the Caribbean and other tropical locations, peak season for Tampa starts in October and lasts through April. The city celebrates a unique combination of thunderstorms, Cuban heritage and pirates.

[Tampa International Airport](#) (KTPA) is the main airport serving the Tampa Bay area. Here you will find two FBOs, [Landmark Aviation](#) and [Tampa International Jet Center](#). [Tampa Executive Airport](#) (TVDF) is a smaller alternative that handles general aviation traffic and houses a [Volo Aviation](#) FBO. If you are headed to a destination in Pinellas County, such as St. Petersburg or Clearwater, you may operate to [St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport](#) (KPIE), affectionately called “Pie in the Sky.” Here you will find [Sheltair](#) and [Signature Flight Support](#) FBOs. Military flights use [MacDill Air Force Base](#) (KMCF), located on the southern tip of Tampa’s peninsula. All of these airports have gourmet in-flight catering available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. While large cabin aircraft orders require the standard 24 hours’ notice, this market is fully-equipped to handle last-minute catering orders.

Florida may be known as the “Sunshine State,” but summers in Tampa are hot and wet. Temperatures reach well above 90 F (32 C) daily, with the only relief from the heat coming from the almost clock-work thunderstorms. Lightning is so frequent in Tampa that it used to hold the title of “Lightning Capital of the World.” However, these storm are typically short-lived, lasting about a half an hour. This pattern remains in place until October, when temperatures start to top out below 90 F (32 C). Even though Tampa is known for its warm climate, winters can get cold, with lows reaching below 20 F (-7 C). A great feature about Tampa is that it is located on the West Coast of Florida, meaning that if you head to the beach you will have to opportunity to catch colorful sunsets.

If you love the lore of pirate legends, you will not want to miss Tampa’s annual [Gasparilla Pirate Fest](#). This is celebrated by local “krewes” partaking in a mock invasion of the city and then sharing the loot with spectators in the form of beaded necklaces. This event is inspired by the legend of Jose Gaspar and has become so popular that it has been split into two events, one for children and one for adults. Tampa is located in Hillsborough County, which has earned the title of “Winter Strawberry capital of the World.” Every year the [Florida Strawberry Festival](#) is held in Plant City, located a short drive outside of Tampa. This festival has carnival games, rides, country music stars, but the real attraction is the strawberry shortcake.

Whether you prefer to stay on land or head to the Bay, there are many ways to spend your time outside in Tampa. Bayshore Boulevard is known as the “World’s Longest Sidewalk.” This is one of the most popular locations for people to walk, run, bike and skate. If you prefer water activities, there are several locations to rent a canoe or kayak along Hillsborough River. Tampa is also home to [Busch Gardens](#), a theme park that features roller coasters, live performances and an animal sanctuary. Sports fans will feel at home with games from the [Tampa Bay Buccaneers](#), [Tampa Bay Lightning](#), [Tampa Bay Rays](#), [Tampa Bay Rowdies](#) and [Tampa Bay Storm](#) available throughout the year. Tampa is also where the [New York Yankees](#) hold their Spring Training.

Tampa gets its nickname, “Cigar City,” from Ybor City’s history of producing hand-rolled Cuban cigars. This is the historic district of Tampa, with distinguishing architecture featuring red brick facades and wrought iron balconies. Walking down the streets of Ybor will bring you back into Tampa’s history and rich Cuban heritage. The [Ybor City Museum](#) is open daily and provides a detailed look into the life of a cigar worker. In addition to the history, while in Ybor you will find shops, restaurants and nightclubs. One of the most famous restaurants in this area is the [Columbia Restaurant](#), where you dine while being entertained by flamenco dancers.

Another gorgeous location to visit is the [Henry B. Plant Museum](#), located within the [University of Tampa](#) campus. Originally, the building was the Tampa Bay Hotel, a luxury resort created by Henry B. Plant as part of his railroad

system in Florida. Here you will be able to view museum artifacts from the original hotel and take in the Moorish architecture, topped off with six minarets.

When it comes to dining in Tampa, there are longtime favorites and a crop of new restaurants, many of which can be found in South Tampa. It seems that new restaurants are being announced on an almost weekly basis. [Bern's Steak House](#), along with the Harry Waugh Dessert Room located upstairs, is a long-standing culinary destination. The restaurant has been popular for so long that the owners have opened [SideBerns](#) (reopening June 24, 2015) and built a hotel and restaurant aptly called [Epicurean](#). Other local favorites include [Datz](#) for sandwiches and comfort food, [La Teresita](#) for authentic Cuban cuisine, [Taco Bus](#) for Mexican eats, and [Mise en Place](#) for an exciting culinary experience.

As a Tampa native, it is hard not to continue on to write a book about everything there is to see and do here. If you are in Orlando for NBAA 2014, it would be wise to plan an extra day for yourself and make the short drive on I-4 to visit Tampa. If you have a favorite place in Tampa that you would like to share with other members of the business aviation community, be sure to add it in the comments below.

Questions?

If you have any questions about this article or about in-flight catering in Tampa, contact me at staceyfarooqui@airculinaire.com.