



Culturally Yours

St. Petersburg, Florida

There are some days when I think I am going to die from an overdose of satisfaction.

- Salvador Dali

“Have no fear of perfection,” said the Spanish painter best known for surrealist works that tend toward the shock-and-awe. “You’ll never reach it.” Yet Salvador Dali (1904-89), the artist whose genius – some claim madness – he explained by saying, “I don’t do drugs. I am drugs,” seized a piece of perfection himself when \$350 million of his oils, watercolors and graphics acquired a home on this west Florida coast. How exquisite the setting is, this pretty peninsula, with its 35 miles of white sand beaches, its beautiful barrier islands. Bordered by Tampa Bay and the Gulf of Mexico, this place so like the artist’s hometown of Cadaques, in Catalonia, seems a match ideal indeed for his wild and vital creativity. His artistic sensibility. His happy “overdose of satisfaction.”

Salvador Dali’s *Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory*



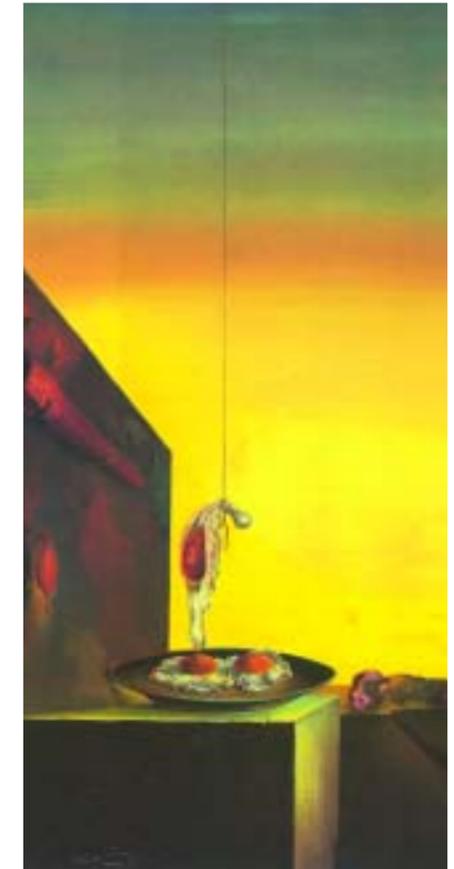
Beauty and the beach: Tampa Bay and miles and miles of barrier island shoreline offer sun and sport galore (left); Dali's *Oeufs Sur le Plat sans le Plat* (Eggs on a Plate Without the Plate). Oil on canvas, 1932 (right); the Airboat, 1914's one-passenger commercial flight between St. Petersburg and Tampa (ticket price, \$5) (below right)

After all, consider it: St. Petersburg, Home of the Salvador Dali Museum, packed with the painter's passionate eccentricities – among the symbolic, often sexually allegorical works, the well-known, Daddy Longlegs of the Evening – Hope! It is a city fashioned from fantastic visions. Of wealth-seeking Spanish, citrus-planting French, sponge-diving Greeks, a tycoon or two, and pirates. Then there is Peter Demens, a certain Russian nobleman who not only brought a railroad but gave the place his beloved hometown's name: St. Petersburg. The city also is the cultural Mecca of Florida, so thick in important museums with heavyweight collections and world-class prestige that no wonder Dali's works are so happy here. "People love a mystery," he said. "That's why they love my paintings."

Yet it's no intrigue why St. Petersburg has lured the likes of *The Treasures of the Tzars*

or *The Splendors of Ancient Egypt* – both blockbuster exhibitions of its Florida International Museum. It doesn't baffle one bit that Renoir, Monet, Gaughin, Rodin and other 19th c. bigwigs are represented at its Museum of Fine Arts. From the million-year-old fossils at the St. Petersburg Museum of History to the country's fourth largest homage to Jewish story – the Florida Holocaust Museum – the cache of impressive collections here is in perfect keeping with the St. Petersburg character. "Don't bother about being modern," said Dali. "It is the one thing that, whatever you do, you cannot avoid."

So, too, this city. Up to the minute, even cutting-edge, the former land of sun-loving, rest-seeking "old folks" lately has whooped itself up into a Dali-esque destination that like the artist's Impressionist paintings that bewilder, the Cubish graphics that bemuse, is loaded with interesting angles. A perspec-





An Art Affair to Remember

To the surrealist mind of the artist Salvador Dali, “it is either easy or impossible.” When the “it” in question is how to know what to know to go, it’s easy. Below are some must-see St. Petersburg museums whose websites are delighted to dispense with all details:

Salvador Dali Museum

From early Impressionism through Surrealism through the painter’s later classical masterworks, a stunning collection by the Spaniard who said, “The only difference between myself and a madman is I am not mad.”
www.salvadoralimuseum.org
727.823.3767

Florida International Museum

From Norman Rockwell’s Saturday Evening Post covers to Treasures of the Titanic and the Kennedy Collection’s replica of the Oval Office and Rose Garden, world-class temporary and permanent exhibits.
www.floridamuseum.org
727.822.3693

St. Petersburg Museum of Fine Arts

Asian, Indian, African, pre-Columbian, South American and major European works – Renoir, Gaughin, Rodin, etc. – join other important periods to represent a stellar and beautifully mounted history of art.
www.fine-arts.org
727.896.2667

St. Petersburg Museum of History

From a 400-year-old carved cypress canoe to the Safety First airboat of 1914, a compelling collection of historic Florida artifacts.
www.stpetemuseumofhistory.org
727.894.1052

Florida Holocaust Museum

Holocaust exhibits including a box-car used to take prisoners to death camps, a quiet meditation garden, and well-mounted exhibitions of Jewish life around the world.
www.flholocaustmuseum.org
727.820.0100



tive that’s equally thrilling as well.

Alight at St. Petersburg/Clearwater Int’l Airport (PIE), 10 miles north of downtown. Admire the dominant landmarks: Oilman Aymer Vinoy Laughner’s 1923 Mediterranean Revival darling, the Renaissance Vinoy Resort & Golf Club. The Moorish pink palace beloved by gangster Al Capone and F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald that is the Don Cesar Beach Resort & Spa, or “The Don.” The massive domed Tropicana Field, home of baseball’s Tampa Bay Devil Rays. Before pickling yourself in days or weeks of the pleasurable St. Petersburg art scene, it’s a good idea to plan. Carefully. There are those melting watches of Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory to see at the Dali, but there is also rod-bending, reel-screaming sportfishing fun awaiting in the city’s brilliant waters. At St. Pete’s Museum of History, there is the not-to-miss Benoist Airboat, that historic one-passenger wood-and-wire plane that inaugurated (in 1914) the planet’s first commercial airline service – a 19-mile flight at 55 mph and five feet above the water from St. Petersburg to Tampa; ticket price: \$5. But there is also seven miles of sun-worshipping beach at Fort De Soto Park, boat tours for porpoise and manatee sighting, and nature’s wonders – rare, endangered – to enjoy at the Anclote Key Preserve.

And say you want to peruse the beautiful artisan jewelry at Nancy Markoe Fine American Crafts, or spirit junior and his sister to the incredible hands-on animal experience of the Science Center of Pinellas County, or even pore over pioneer families’ cookbooks and journals at the Dorothy Thompson African-American Museum. St. Petersburg’s prodigious gifts are more than fit into mere minutes – even if they could be mind-bendingly molten in surrealist Dali style.

“The one thing the world will never have enough of,” said the artist, “is the outrageous.” Wouldn’t Dali be pleased, then, that his namesake museum’s still lifes, landscapes and the other masterworks of his occasionally hair-raising oeuvre (how else to label a painting titled,

Galacidalacidesoxiribunucleicacid ?) are the mere tip of the outrageous enjoyment, outrageous discovery and simply outsize outrageous delight there is in a trip to St. Petersburg. Add to the Dali a whole city of sensational art, from the pre-Columbian sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts, to the Museum of History’s dog-powered butter churn; mix-in an entire sun-warmed peninsula ever at play (try 18 great holes at the stylish Vinoy Golf Club). And there it is: One sweet overdose of satisfaction. Or, as Dali himself so originally put it: “Every morning when I wake up I experience an exquisite joy – the joy of being Salvador Dali – and I ask myself in rapture, what wonderful things [is] this Salvador Dali going to accomplish today?” In St. Petersburg, it can be plenty.

Further St. Petersburg info maybe obtained at www.floridasbeach.com (877) 352-3224. ✕



ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER (KPIE)

AIRPORT DATA

Elevation: 10'
Runways: 17L/35R 8,800' 17R/35L 4,000'
9/27 5,165' 4/22 5,500'
Approaches: ILS, LOC BC, VDR/DME, NDB, GPS
ATIS / ASOS: 727.531.3456

FIXED BASE OPERATIONS / FUEL / SERVICES

1. Air-1 727.539.6545
2. Jet Executive Center 727.530.3453
3. Signature Flight Support 727.531.1441

TRANSPORTATION

Avis 727.530.1406
Enterprise 727.524.1239
Hertz 727.531.3774
Yellow Cab 727.799.2222

AIRPORT RESTAURANTS

Palm Terrace Restaurant/Lounge 727.531.1611

AIRPORT LODGING

1. Comfort Inn 727.577.1171
2. Holiday Inn 727.572.7222

