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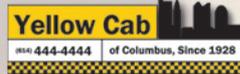
Featuring Food From:

- Brewery District
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- Short North
- University District
- Upper Arlington
- Worthington

Reader Favorites Revealed!

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HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA

The Perfect Winter Getaway



Mention you vacationed in Hollywood, Florida, and the response often is, "Where's that?" Explain that Hollywood is a historic resort destination, wedged between Fort Lauderdale and Miami Beach, and you start to get their attention.

Founded by California developer Joseph Wesley Young in 1921, Hollywood, Florida was named for the glamorous film capital that so captured his imagination. Young's goal was to create a new city along the Atlantic Ocean coastline that would lure wealthy northerners to its sunny sub-tropical climate.

Unfortunately, a ferocious hurricane decimated Young's embryonic community, and he died before he could witness the rebirth of his grand vision. After many economic hardships, Hollywood finally emerged in the late 1950s, with the opening of the world-renowned Diplomat Hotel, as a popular, internationally acclaimed resort destination.

There are significant differences between Hollywood and the upscale, seaside communities that surround it. Hollywood has no pretensions of being chic, sophisticated and hip to the latest music, art, and fashion trends. It is intentionally laid-back, tranquil and moderately priced. Snowbirds from Quebec, along with budget-minded Europeans and South Americans, are the resort's major aficionados.

With the exception of the recently renovated Marriott Hollywood Beach and Westin Diplomat Resort Spa, which anchor the boardwalk, Hollywood vacation properties are small, two-level inns and beach cottages reminiscent of Lake Erie hotels of the 1950s.

A rental car is not necessary in Hollywood. The beach is only a 20-minute taxi fare from Fort Lauderdale International Airport. You can get around on the **Water Taxi** (www.watertaxi.com), which runs day and night along the intercoastal waterway with frequent stops at restaurants and attractions in Hollywood and Fort Lauderdale (954-467-6677). Also, **Hollywood Trolley** (www.visithollywoodfl.org/trolley.aspx) runs Wednesday - Sunday, 10 a.m. - 10 p.m. for only \$1, with stops along the beach and the historic downtown.

In addition to being a travel writer, I also am a small

group operator. I have organized a winter getaway to Hollywood from January 18 - 22, 2012. Listed below are some of the attractions that will be included in the itinerary:

Hollywood Beach Oceanfront

Broadwalk is a 30-foot wide pedestrian thoroughfare stretching more than two miles along the sandy, palm-fringed shoreline. Fashioned after Atlantic City's famed boardwalk, it is checkered with dozens of outdoor cafes, restaurants, bars, boutiques, ice cream stands and tacky souvenir shops. There are plenty of benches to relax and take in the menagerie of young couples, local families, seniors, cyclists and skaters whizzing by on their own concrete bike path. At the northern end of the boardwalk is a lovely park. USA Today named it one of America's top 10 nostalgic promenades.

Downtown Hollywood has maintained its historic ambience with dozens of fine restaurants, art galleries, salons, boutiques and specialty shops, lining the palm-scaped Hollywood Boulevard. Nearby is the Harrison Street Art and Design District with artists' studios, galleries and shops, and the 10-acre ArtsPark on Young Circle.

Casinos are unique to Hollywood in South Florida. They provide a few hours of fun, with gambling, fine dining, shopping and excellent entertainment.

Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino (www.seminolehardrock.com) has 125 table games, 2,500 slots world-class concert. **Mardi Gras Casino** (www.mardigrascasinofl.com) features greyhound racing, the French Quarter restaurant overlooking the track and 20,000 square feet of casino gambling.

Gulf Stream Park (www.gulfstreampark.com) showcases horse racing and the Village with 17 restaurants, 30 boutiques, shops and nightclubs. All of the casinos have electronic blackjack and poker rooms with Texas Hold 'Em.

Dining is eclectic and favors fresh fish and seafood. All of the restaurants listed will be included on the tour: **Oceans Eleven on the Beach** (www.oceans11beach.com) offers a boardwalk patio view and casual dining at breakfast, lunch and dinner. **Rivals Waterfront Sports Grill**



Hollywood Beach

(www.rivalshollywood.com) is located dockside along the intercoastal waterway, with classic American fare. **La Piazza Pasta Café** (www.lapiazzapasta.com) on Hollywood Boulevard is noted for its Italian specialties, ranging from pizzas and pastas, to pollo, veal, scaloppini and focaccia.

Where to Stay

Twelve rooms for the tour have been booked at the **Marriott Hollywood Beach** (www.hollywoodbeachmarriott.com) resort on the boardwalk, featuring a beachfront outdoor pool, whirlpool spa, fitness center and oceanside dining. Bicycle and sailboat rentals are available. The hotel is located only six miles from the Fort Lauderdale Airport.

For more information, contact the Hollywood Florida Community Redevelopment Agency at www.visithollywoodfl.org or (866) 672-2468.

Aaron Leventhal is a professional travel writer from Columbus and operates LeventhalTravel.com. Photo by Beth Ervin Leventhal.

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