You’ll have a terrific time in Tampa!

With its sunny weather and long list of family-friendly attractions (not to mention one swashbucklin’ January festival), this Gulf Coast Florida city is a great-right-now destination!

Finding it hard to cope with cloudy weather and a frosty wind chill factor? What you need is a restorative dose of sunshine. And there’s no better place to get your prescription filled than Florida’s Gulf Coast sunshine capital. Visit the sprawling metro region known as Tampa Bay, and discover a vacation destination with something for everyone.

Set on the northeast side of the bay that it’s named for, the city of Tampa is the hub of Gulf Coast commerce. Here, you’ll find not only unique historic neighborhoods to explore and a cosmopolitan cultural scene that growups will love, but also an array of top-notch geared-for-kids attractions. For families, it’s the perfect combination! If you’re in town, don’t miss the kid-pleasing “Piratechnics” fireworks display (January 19) that lights up the Tampa sky and ushers in the city’s annual Pirate Fest.

When a hanker for sand and surf hits, head for nearby St. Petersburg and Clearwater. Along 35 miles of Gulf of Mexico-washed coast, you’re bound to find the soft-sand beach of your dreams. If you max out on beach-basking, spend a day canoeing the inland waterways and exploring the parks and preserves that fringe the city. You’ll fall for Tampa Bay’s bucolic, all-natural side, as well!

Derek Jeter
Suzan Sarandon
Eunice Layasse
Jon Bon Jovi

Celebs you may see there

Jon Bon Jovi had dinner at Amani’s Restaurant; Emeril Lagasse checked out the competition at Bern’s Steakhouse; and Susan Sarandon went for strikes and spares at the Splitzville Bowling Alley at Channelside. Derek Jeter browsed with the rest of the shoppers at International Plaza.
1. GASPARILLA PIRATE FEST
   January 26 kicks off pirate season, when downtown Tampa is transformed into Party Central! The annual celebration, complete with a pirate invasion and parade, live music and a ride-filled midway, is a real blast!

2. HYDE PARK
   In this off-the-beaten-track historic district on the west side of Hillsborough Bay, have fun checking out the trendy boutiques, restaurants and cafes, or browsing the array of upscale national retailers in Hyde Park Village.

3. BUSCH GARDENS
   This African-themed adventure park is an ideal-for-all-ages destination. Satisfy your appetite for thrills on the SheiKra dive coaster; have an off-road encounter with a rhino; or get your adrenaline pumping watching "Pirates 4-D"—you'll see why the park is one of Tampa's top attractions.

4. FORT DE SOTO STATE PARK
   This park's seven-mile stretch of soft, white sand ranks as one of America's top beaches. The popular park's other features include fishing piers, picnic areas, hiking and biking trails and the Civil War-era fort that the park is named for.

5. MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY
   With 300,000 square feet of interactive exhibits, an IMAX Dome theater, a planetarium and the Bookworks "backyard," MOSI is a fascinating, science-rich playground. (Who knew learning could be so much fun?)