



# DESTINATION DAYTONA

## VISIT FOR THE SUN, SAND, SAVINGS + SPEED —AND THE MOSCOW SYMPHONY TOO!

The London Symphony Orchestra has played on the shores of Daytona Beach more times than it has anywhere else outside England. Austria's Bruckner Orchestra Linz and the Moscow State Symphony passed through recently, and the Irish Tenors debut this month. That's just a sliver of the events taking place in the **Peabody Auditorium**, located just minutes from the beach, with seating capacity for 2,500 people.

And there's more. The summer concert series with music ranging from Big Band to the Blues heats up next month at the 5,000-seat oceanfront **Daytona Beach Bandshell**, and then the Peking Acrobats bring their circus act to town. I was surprised during my visit to see how many cultural events the city hosts on a weekly basis. I was surprised by a lot of things.

For example, the bright, crisp and clean **Ocean Walk Village** is a city-within-a-city complex encompassing the **Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort** and the 205,000-sf **Ocean Center** convention space next to the Peabody. During a reception there, waitstaff in formal black tie passed out flutes of champagne with chocolate-covered key lime tarts, while a trio of violin, harp and guitar players set the mood.

At Hilton's Hyde Park restaurant, the juicy steaks, succulent seafood and lots of dark wood all work together to create a classy steakhouse ambience, except that one entire wall is covered in windows overlooking the ocean. Take over the entire restaurant (seats 277) or reserve the private room for 20 pax with a window looking into the kitchen. You'll like the affordable wine list—it's as long as the Magna Carta.

The **Daytona CVB** is proud to show off the city's updated and sophisticated side, and any planner who hasn't

visited recently will be impressed. It will always be the beach, golfing and NASCAR venues—as well as the value—that sells this destination. But I'd recommend also scheduling in a little Rachmaninoff or Verdi, readily available year-round.

### LPGA INTERNATIONAL

Spend a day with your group at two of the most prestigious public golf courses in the state of Florida: the Rees Jones-designed Champions course and Arthur Hills' Legends course at **LPGA International**. If you're into the whole Southern scene with Spanish moss hanging from massive old-growth pine and oak trees, book tee times at Legends. It is so quiet and serene out among the marshes when the fog lifts in the morning.

We took a cart ride by the magnolia-lined fairways with the friendly and amusing GM, Florian Morel, and assistant golf pro Mike Burgess, who I believe knows every inch of the course. I'd definitely connect with him to arrange a putting contest, driving range challenge, a few hours at the practice academy or a full tournament to get the most out of this venue.

The practice facility is really something with 80,000 sf of natural turf and 10 target greens. There are six putting greens and a few of them have bunkers, and there's a dedicated place for working on your short game. I also like the 3-hole practice course that Mike says is maintained to the same standards as the two main courses. Call golf sales manager Kristen Robertson, she and Mike will help you arrange every detail.

### GOT MY MOTOR RUNNING

It's exhilarating, it's exciting, your heart is racing and all eyes are on you. These are just some of the emotions that your attendees

can experience when they're seated behind the wheel in a NASCAR simulator car at the **Daytona 500 Experience**. I had absolutely no clue how much fun this would be.

Picture the boss in car #5 trying to pass the top sales producer on the 31° bank turn, while eight of your "President's Club" winners are neck and neck on the straightaway just inches behind. The entire time you are there, the noise level is as freaking LOUD as if it was actually race day!

Take over the entire "Experience" for an evening, an afternoon or a full day. You will be the most sought after planner ever for making dreams come true for those closet NASCAR fans, as well as the wild and crazy, beer drinking, diehard stock car fanatics—and that could be the CEO!

This is an incredible venue to springboard a sales team's new goals. First get the juices flowing while watching *NASCAR 3D: The IMAX Experience*. My heart is actually pounding just remembering this. Then bring the sales team up to the Bill France Meeting Room, with 3,240 sf of space overlooking the Velocitorium for some strategy sessions.

Back on the "Attraction" floor, team up for the Pit Crew Challenge. It's a total blast. There are two teams who each must change a tire weighing about 50 pounds in less than 16 seconds. I guarantee you will have some teams who won't leave this place until they beat the other team's time.

It really is mandatory to get out onto the actual speedway. Try standing on the 31° bank turn. It's nearly impossible and the fact that cars race around this four deep going 190 mph is mind-boggling. For the "Ultimate Race Experience," enroll up to 48 people in the **Richard Petty Driving Experience**, where your group can actually drive or ride along in NASCAR-style race cars.

About this time everyone is ready for cocktails, good food and relaxation. The Daytona 500 Club Lounge is located in the infield overlooking the speedway, and what better place for an Awards Dinner than Gatorade Victory Lane? No more boring awards dinners!

**HOTEL DAYTONA**  
Here's a hidden jewel in the Daytona area. **The Shores Resort & Spa** is luxurious, it's soothing and it's definitely relaxing. Elegantly comfortably is how I see it. The mahogany columns and banisters, softly lit candelabras and hand-painted walls in hues of sea foam and sand create a tropical, updated oasis, with 212 luxurious rooms and just over 20,000 sf of meeting space in 12 rooms.

The bright and breezy Azore Restaurant serves a fabulous breakfast. Try the stone roasted eggs or the garden fresh ratatouille benedict. Think local and sustainable: blistered corn and artichoke hearts tossed in pumpkin seed dressing. The Shores is aggressively green, they even have a "bulb eater" for

their dead florescent bulbs that separates the mercury from the glass. And it's a AAA 4-diamond property. Not too many of those in green yet!

The Shores S'mores amenity tin with marshmallows, graham crackers and chocolate bars is fun. Bring them down to the ocean terrace and sit back and gaze as the flames dance over the firepit while you're sipping your favorite drink and listening to the waves gently breaking on the sand.

Open before the first stock cars began racing on Daytona Beach, **The Plaza Resort & Spa** is the region's Grand Old Dame with 320 guestrooms and 32,000 sf of flexible meeting space. It was completely renovated in 2005 and it's great for larger groups with so much outdoor space on Daytona's sprawling beachfront.

The Olympic-size pool is perfect for aquatic teambuilding activities, and the hotel can organize soap box derby races on the beach. This is a signature Daytona experience. Groups build the cars together but they have to ensure that they won't go any faster than the 10 mph speed limit on the beach. Any faster than that and you'll need to hit the track. I'm bringing groups back to do exactly that.

**Daytona CVB:** [daytonabeachmeetings.com](http://daytonabeachmeetings.com)

**Ocean Center:** [oceancenter.com](http://oceancenter.com)

**LPGA International:** [lpgainternational.com](http://lpgainternational.com)

**Daytona 500 Experience:** [daytona500experience.com](http://daytona500experience.com)

**Richard Petty Driving Experience:** [1800bepetty.com](http://1800bepetty.com)

**Hilton Daytona Beach Resort:** [daytonahilton.com](http://daytonahilton.com)

**The Shores Resort & Spa:** [shoresresort.com](http://shoresresort.com)

**The Plaza Resort & Spa:** [plazaresortandspa.com](http://plazaresortandspa.com)



“WHAT BETTER PLACE FOR AN AWARDS DINNER THAN  
GATORADE VICTORY LANE?”