



**A FANS GUIDE TO...
THE ULTIMATE BALLPARK TOUR: FULLY LOADED!**

Volume III of the Ballpark Planning E-Guide Series

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QUICK INTRO

This is a sample version of what the guide looks like. This will show you how the guide is set up and how it's designed to help you plan a ballpark trip. Use the bookmarks to easily click between the different chapters. If for some reason you don't see the bookmarks, atop the file menu, click "Windows" and then select "Show Bookmarks."

You should find navigating this sample version very easy and user-friendly. Tampa Bay is the full sample profile I have included for your view. In the Southeast section, under bookmarks, you would also see Atlanta and Florida in the guide you purchase. You can easily click between every team profile in the full guide.

At any time, e-mail me if you have questions jconnor@san.rr.com before you buy the guide. To purchase the guide, simply click click here www.modernerabaseball.com which will take you back to my site. Then, just follow the link off the home page to buy the guide.

SETTING THE TABLE

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

"Planning is the process of overcoming obstacles to accomplish dreams."

This guide will help you effectively plan a ballpark trip - from a long weekend to several weeks. Take a minute to familiarize how each ballpark profile is formatted. Then simply use the bookmarks to quickly jump to every team and other helpful tips.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Full team name (League and Division team competes in) Time Zone Located In.
- Full Ballpark Name, Address, City (link to directions information - depending on where you're coming from).
- Quick Ballpark Facts: (Opened: First baseball game; Capacity: for baseball; Location: part of the city; and who/what ballpark is named after).
- Links and telephone number(s) to schedule and ticket information.
- If driving, link to a Department of Transportation Web site for information on road conditions, as well as links to radio station(s) with most frequent traffic reports.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP:

- **Quick Geography Overview:** Nearest major league ballparks in miles.
- **Getting There And Around:** Where should I fly in? Should I rent a car? Should I use mass transit? Provides links to nearby airports and mass transit.
- **Lodging Options:** Low-end to high-end, what are my options? Where should I stay?
- **When To Go:** Spring, summer, fall? Decisions, decisions, decisions.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR BALLPARK EXPERIENCE:

- **Pre-Game Rituals:** What rituals do local fans practice before the ballgame?
- **Photo Ops:** What are great photo opportunities outside and inside the ballpark?
- **Keep Your Eye Out For...**What should I be looking for I may not know about?
- **Ballpark Pluses:** What you'll like about each ballpark.
- **Ballpark Minuses:** What you probably won't like about each ballpark.
- **Concession Obsession:** If my budget allows and I can only purchase one ballpark food and/or drink, it would be...?
- **Surprise, Surprise:** Anything else interesting about this ballpark I might not know?
- **Hot Tip:** What additional tip can give me to ensure I have a great time?

DISCOVERING (THE CITY THE BALLPARK IS LOCATED IN):

- General link provided to information on hotels, restaurants, attractions and more.
- **Media:** Local newspaper(s) covering baseball and local radio stations talking sports.
- **Other Baseball:** Where are the nearby college and minor league teams?
- **Other Sports:** Any other sports going on in this town while I'm here? Sports bars?
- **Must Sees':** What are the main must see sites if I only have a half-day or day?
- **Off The Beaten Path:** Give me someplace out of the ordinary to check out.
- **Hidden Gem:** Is there somewhat of a hidden gem I think I might like?
- **Getting Away:** Any cool places far outside of town I can check out or en route to my next destination?

10 GLOBAL TIPS

On one page, I provide 10 very important global tips on making the most of a ballpark tour based on my experience.

10 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

On one page, I answer the 10 most frequently asked questions I receive regarding planning for a ballpark tour.

PLANES

In this section, I provide information on securing the best airline rates as well as complete Web site links and phone numbers for most airlines in the continental U.S. and Canada, including where they fly to often so you can plan ahead properly.

TRAINS, BUSES, RENTALS, HOTELS

In this section, I provide information on securing the best rates on car rentals and hotels, and also provide Web site links and/or phone numbers for trains, buses, rental car companies and many, many hotels.

NORTHEAST TOUR

In this section, teams from Montreal to Baltimore are featured like Boston, New York.

SOUTHEAST TOUR

In this section, Atlanta, Tampa Bay and Florida are featured. Here's one sample below.

TAMPA BAY DEVIL RAYS (American League East) on Eastern Standard Time
Tropicana Field (formerly known as the Thunderdome; the city's hockey team, the Lightning, played here before moving to downtown Tampa. Before then, known as the Florida Suncoast Dome), One Tropicana Drive, St. Petersburg (www.mapquest.com)
Quick Tropicana Field Facts: *Opened:* 1998; *Capacity:* 45,000; *Location:* downtown St. Petersburg; *Tropicana:* Orange Juice.

Schedule/Tickets:devilrays.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/tb/schedule/tb_schedule_calendar.jsp **By Telephone:** FREE 1-888-FAN-RAYS.

Driving?: Florida Dept. of Transport. (www11.myflorida.com/publicinformationoffice) for road conditions, detours and applicable tolls. WFLA 970 AM (www.970wfla.com) has the most frequent radio traffic reports in the area and is the Rays flagship.

Quick Geography Overview: Tampa is a five-hour car hike from Miami, and an eight-hour auto journey from Atlanta. Miffed? Well, Orlando is only 90 minutes away. If you want to do a theme park or too, you're not that far away, kiddo (www.orlandoinfo.com).

Getting There And Around: You've got two airports in greater Tampa-St. Petersburg to choose from, Tampa (www.tampaairport.com) and St. Pete-Clearwater (www.stpete-clearwaterairport.com/). If you're planning to rent a car, also check rates in Orlando (www.orlandoairports.net:/goaa/main.htm), as sometimes they're better. Public transportation information can be found at www.psta.net/ for Pinellas County (St. Petersburg area) and www.hartline.org for the Hillsborough County area (Tampa).

Lodging Options: Downtown St. Petersburg is boring. For convenience, try and stay along the waterfront if your budget supports it. Cheapies are off the nearby Interstate. If you're going to do post-game nightlife in Tampa (which I encourage), stay there. Visit www.stpete-clearwater.com or www.visittampabay.com for an overview of your options.

When To Go: You'll get the game in regardless with the dome, but try and aim for spring or September. June-August is monsoon season in Florida, with stifling tropical heat and late day thunderstorms a regular occurrence. Enjoy the Sunshine State.

Pre-Game Rituals: No real solid traditions, but in defense, this is a young franchise that has done more losing than winning since its birth. There are a couple of restaurants within walking distance of the ballpark but they're nothing spectacular.

Photo Ops: None.

Keep Your Eye Out For...Someone falling asleep.

Tropicana Field Pluses: Not a tremendous amount. 1) Plenty of good seats available! The Devil Rays rarely, if ever, draw a huge crowd except when the Yankees come to town or the Red Sox maybe (and when that happens you'll feel as if you're in the Bronx or Boston). 2) No rainouts! (Maybe that isn't such a good thing though. We're talking about the Devil Rays after all). 3) Give them an 'A' for effort. They added fake grass.

Tropicana Field Minuses: 1) Dome. 2) Fan atmosphere. Like a funeral. 3) Quality of play: The Devil Rays really do stink, quality young players or not. 4) Parking is limited to lots adjacent to the ballpark where walking more than mile is not uncommon. Also, a friend and I couldn't free find street parking for the life of us. 5) Location - Let's build a stadium in a retirement community! Brilliant! 6) Sight lines: terrible down the lines.

Concession Obsession: Cuban sandwich.

Surprise, Surprise: 23 elevators permeate the Costco of Major League Baseball.

Hot Tip: Don't waste your time paying for surcharge on tickets over the Internet or phone. You can easily purchase day of game unless the Yankees are in town.

Discovering Tampa-St. Petersburg: In St. Petersburg, www.stpete-clearwater.com provides a good general overview - from restaurants to hotels and attractions. For Tampa exclusive information, try www.visittampabay.com.

Media: To hear what the locals are chirping about, pick up the *Tampa Tribune* (www.tampatrib.com) or the *St. Petersburg Times* (www.sptimes.com). For sports talk on the radio, try 1010 AM (www.bucsradio.com) or 620 WDAE (www.620wdae.com). 970 AM WFLA (www.970wfla.com) is the Devil Rays flagship.

Other Baseball: In the spring, the University of South Florida plays some Division I collegiate baseball at Red McEwen Field in Tampa. Seating is affordable and quaint. Visit the Bulls official Web site www.gousfbulls.com/mbaseball.html for more information. The University of Tampa has one of the most unique and charming college campuses in Florida (www.utampa.edu), and a Division II team baseball program, too (baseball information is also available at the school's Web site).

For a bit of history and great amateur baseball in spring, contact Jefferson High (813-872-5241) and check out a ballgame where Tino Martinez and Luis Gonzalez played. Other MLB players who played their amateur ball in Tampa include Dwight Gooden, Gary Sheffield, Lou Piniella, Fred McGriff and Wade Boggs, among many others.

The Florida State League has teams in Lakeland (www.lakelandtigers.com), Tampa (www.legendsfieldtampa.com/), Clearwater (www.clearwaterphillies.com), Dunedin (www.dunedinbluejays.com/) and Sarasota (www.sarasox.com) where the Tigers, Yankees, Phillies, Blue Jays and Reds hold their spring training respectively in March.

Other Sports: If hockey is your fix, the Lightning (www.tampabaylightning.com) play at the Ice Palace in Tampa in the spring and fall while the Arena Football League returns in summer (www.tampabaystorm.com/). The (www.buccaneers.com/) play across the street from Legends Field in Tampa in the fall. For the race track and the horses, head on over to Tampa Bay Downs (www.tampadowns.com). For the best sports bars in the Tampa-St. Pete area: www.digitalcity.com/tampabay/sportsbar/.

Must Sees': Fort DeSoto Park (www.co.pinellas.fl.us/bcc/park/fort_de_soto_park.htm) offers views of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge and dolphins, not to mention a history lesson! At Indian Rocks Beach, miles of pristine desolate beach await you. The Pinellas Suncoast is renowned for its mostly undeveloped waterfront, unlike Daytona Beach on the Atlantic side of Central Florida. The St. Petersburg Marina is also a place to visit.

In Tampa, for the nightlife and a taste of the city's cigar/Cubanese history, visit Ybor City (www.ybor.org) downtown. Ybor is an awesome place. You'll love it. Hyde Park (www.oldhydeparkvillage.com) near downtown Tampa is also a sight to check out.

Off The Beaten Path: Off the coast of Dunedin sits Caladesi Island, a remarkable state park only reachable by boat and one that is home to miles of unspoiled beach and a plethora of birds and other wildlife too. There are also a number of other barrier islands off of the Dunedin coast too, and all are reachable via boat only, but with plenty of bird sanctuaries to enjoy. My recommendation: rent a kayak from Agua Azul Kayak Shop (727-738-4576), 343 Causeway Blvd., Dunedin, and head out through Clearwater Harbor for Caladesi Island (www.abfla.com/parks/Caladesi/caladesi.html), a trek which will take you about 45 minutes. On your way to, you might just bump into some dolphins swimming in the harbor! You can also ferry out. See the link.

Hidden Gem: Clearwater has arguably some of the most beautiful coastline, not just in Florida but in the world. It's no secret why photo shoots are often held here for models, not to mention a wealth of bikini contests. Sand Key Park (www.sand-key.com) is one of the most magnificent stretches of beach along Florida's Gulf Coast. Featuring sea oats and miles of desolate white sand beaches, Sand Key Park is a must see. While you're in the Clearwater area, consider a trek on Old Tampa Bay with a view of the Bayside Bridge and where you're sure to view plenty of wildlife. Capogna's Dugout (1653 Gulf-To-Bay) has plenty of great Italian food and sports memorabilia.

Getting Away: Visit the Ted Williams Museum (www.tedwilliamsmuseum.com) in Hernando, about 79 miles from anywhere in the greater Tampa-St. Petersburg area. The University of Florida in Gainesville (www.gatorzone.com/baseball/), hometown of rocker Tom Petty, is a larger jaunt, some 132 miles. Also, www.tarponsprings.com.

MIDWEST TOUR

Here teams from Pittsburgh to the College World Series in Omaha are featured.

WEST TOUR

Here teams from Colorado to Seattle are featured like Texas, Los Angeles, Oakland.

FINAL CHECKLIST

In this section, I provide a final checklist of items to bring with you on your trip.

Still Got Questions?

Have some additional questions before you buy? E-mail me: jconnor@san.rr.com.

Also, remember, when you buy the guide I provide free advice on planning your trip!