

HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

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Hospitality Education**

EDUCATION

Industry Partnership

Familiarization Tours or FAMS as we refer to them, are the best method to show off our destination and get a real sense of the lay of the land. However, they take quite a bit of coordination working with our partners, within time allotted by the group, trying to cover all that you want to pack in, along with the sometimes unpredictable weather. Having a week of our typically beautiful weather I was excited for a beach FAM scheduled for 20+ Allegiant flight attendants based in Pinellas County. Even the morning of I had hopes the weather would clear so that we could enjoy the stops along the way that included, rooftop views from Pier House 60, the Hyatt and Hurricane Restaurant for sunset. Needless to say it was ‘Freezing’ (at least for Floridians) windy and everyone was ill-prepared for the dip in temperature. Fortunately, we began our tour inside Dolphin Tale Adventure with a hot lunch of pizza as we listened about making the movie and Winter’s story. From there it was out to the beaches on the Jolley Trolley for a true sense of being a tourist, brisk winds and all. Flight Attendants have a good threshold for adventure and were just excited to be learning about the diversity of our beach communities, the gorgeous nature we saw along the way, a few history museum stops, and plenty of watering holes they could come back and visit or tell their passengers about.

Another FAM tour that was a bit more spontaneous was for our Keynote speaker at the VSPC Annual Marketing Meeting, Hannah Ubl. I had been the one to coordinate her presentation and visit after seeing her present at the Governor’s Conference on Generational Marketing Tips. She is a millennial which means she is very connected, likes to collaborate, expects to have input and would like to contribute to our meeting in a meaningful way. Although Hannah was perfectly comfortable reading information about us online – she had never been to our destination before and was from Minnesota. So, even though we had several conversations about the destination, our tourism partners and marketing initiatives; I wanted to show her at least our namesakes St. Pete/Clearwater in what time we had. Picking her up on a perfect CVB sunny morning, we headed directly to the beaches and did a nice loop to get a snap shot of what makes them distinct from one another. Then I turned her on to a lunch with Grouper which she had never had before, much less eating outside in November on the peaceful Gulf of Mexico. That night we did the Central Avenue strip which was hopping even on a ‘school night’ finishing with a late dinner

snack at one of the hip eateries on Beach Drive. Needless to say, I'm pretty sure our brief FAM left a better impression on her taste buds and eyes, than just checking us out online.

It's no secret I'm a fan of FAMs, even more so for our own staff. When we are able to experience what we promote to visitors, it helps us be more accurate and current in the information we give out. I was pretty sure most of our staff hadn't had the pleasure of riding public transportation so wanted to make sure they knew about the Jolley Trolley service that has become so popular between Clearwater Beach, through Dunedin, Palm Harbor and Tarpon Springs. Also timely to know about their service since ridership has exceeded expectations (going in both directions), and they are adding additional service to Safety Harbor beginning February 1st. Part of our tour included a meet and greet by the Chamber presidents along the Trolley route starting with Bob Clifford welcoming us to Clearwater first thing in the morning and Darlene Kole on hand at the beach to show off the Welcome Center inside Surf Style. Later we had a lovely walking tour of downtown 'Dogedin' as Lynne Wargo pointed several beautiful murals on buildings, and ended with Sue Thomas mixing yummy dessert stops into our stroll through the historic Sponge Docks. Just to make sure staff not only got to see these six unique communities, but learn some interesting facts from those destinations; we played a very lively and competitive Trivia /Jeopardy game as we cruised down between stops.

Value of Tourism Presentations

- Swiss Club at Treasure Island Club

HOSPITALITY

VSPC Representation

- Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber (TBBCoC), Board of Directors Retreat
- TBBCoC Be Thankful Breakfast
- TBBCoC Ambassador meeting at Tampa Bay Times
- St. Petersburg Chamber Tourism Promotions Council- Good Burger Awards Committee
- Leadership St. Pete Alumni presentation, St. Pete Police Chief
- Rowdies game for sports
- Pass-a-Grille Chowder challenge
- Don CeSar Anniversary celebration
- E.A.T. St. Pete volunteer
- 25th Anniversary for Sara's Seaside an SSL property
- Peter Kageyama presentation on the "Love of Cities"
- St. Pete Shopaloza
- Sanding Ovations Treasure Island

Professional Development

I had the opportunity to attend a very interesting conference in Sarasota called “Service Design Tourism” This was a first-of-its-kind event that featured more than 40 speakers from 15 different countries on some of the most important up-and-coming business trends, they called “Service Design”. Already big in Europe, service design applies design methods to improve services and deliver better customer experiences. This is especially important now that consumers expect great experiences and relationships with brands and willingly share their feelings about them in blogs, social media and review sites. We had inspiring keynote speakers from Virgin Atlantic Airways, Walt Disney Imagineering, Hyatt Hotels, Marriott International, Adaptive Path, Fjord, Celebrity Cruises and VISIT FLORIDA, along with breakout sessions from top international business school faculty. The kick-off event was even more interesting as two young service design techies guided us through a group interactive design challenge. It was very process driven as we were challenged to arrive at a solution to a current hospitality problem integrating technology. Our team came up with a program that matched local experts on various topics, with a visitor in a particular geographic area – in basically ‘real time’.