

This town's a Delray of sunshine

Art, food, sports and, yes, beach

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Delray Beach, just north of Boca Raton, has experienced enormous growth in the past few years.

Embracing its resident artist community, sites like historic Old School Square — home to Delray elementary and high schools in the 1920s — have been renovated in favor of Crest Theater for the performing arts, the Cornell Museum of Art and History and an outdoor entertainment pavilion. There are pedestrian-friendly streets and new retail shops.

With a spectacular beach just off Atlantic Avenue, a host of new galleries, bistros and a flourishing cultural agenda that includes weekly art walks, music festivals and tennis championships, Delray is a go-to destination in South Florida that's more laid-back than Miami and less glitzy than Palm Beach.

Here are five reasons to check out Delray this spring.

STAY

If you're looking for a swanky hotel, the year-old oceanfront Seagate Hotel & Spa is the place to book a room. Named in Condé Nast Traveler's 2010 Hot List, the Seagate's aquariums and sea-themed decor, holistic spa and two outdoor pools make guests feel relaxed and pampered. Guests receive all the perks of membership across the street at the private beach club, including access to restaurants and cabana rentals. The latest restaurant to generate Delray Beach buzz, the Seagate's massive Atlantic Grille serves up excellent fish-heavy dishes like spicy tuna steak (\$28), grilled mahi-mahi (\$28) and generous crab cocktails (\$17).

The hotel's "Carefree" package (\$199 a person) includes a three-course dinner at Atlantic Grille, breakfast and a waived fee for use of hotel amenities. The deluxe beach package is \$329 per balcony room a night through December and includes a beach towel, a bag, sunscreen and lip balm (877-577-3242, theseagatehotel.com).



Dating back to 1926, the landmark Colony Hotel offers old-time glamour and classic Art Deco.



Why fly a kite when you can board one? This guy spends the day touching the clouds and skimming the waves in Delray Beach, Fla.

STRETCH

If you're looking for digs with more glamour, it's all about the landmark Colony Hotel (561-276-4123, thecolonyhotel.com). Dating to 1926, the Colony's facade is classic Art Deco with an exclusive beach two miles away, reachable by free shuttle.

The Colony is also home to Yoga with Keith Fox, one of South Florida's hottest yoga instructors. Fox teaches daily on the Colony's historic grounds. But reserve early — Fox's classes are often wait-listed, especially Sunday's Yoga With Live Music class (\$20, 561-703-1236, yogafox.com).

SEE

If you're new to the Delray scene, the new two-hour Segway tours (\$68) of Delray Beach give families a way to explore Delray on wheels.

After a 15-minute lesson in Segway safety, visitors can glide across streets to ogle sprawling homes along the Intracoastal, the Marina and Nassau districts, and connect the history of Old School Square and Veterans Park to their 20th-century upgrades. A condensed one-hour tour is \$45 (561-243-4721, segwaytoursofdelray.com).

SOAR

South Florida is a great place to master the sport of kiteboarding and Delray Beach ranks high on that list. Using minimal wind conditions, Superfly Kiteboarding School teaches newcomers the basics of the sport. Superfly's group lessons begin at \$50 an hour; individual lessons start at \$80 (888-801-8761, superflykiteboarding.com).

SPLURGE

Eating is a pastime in Delray. When it's time to chow, the evergreen Tramonti's (561-272-1944, tramontidelray.com) is a Saturday night favorite. It's an offshoot of Angelo's of Mulberry Street in New York's Little Italy. Dine al fresco, starting with garlicky baked clams (\$9.50), then move on to a Parmigiana (\$24) or puttanesca (\$21), and, if you're feeling indulgent, the lobster fra diavolo (market price).

Before you leave town, head to the Sundry House for the killer brunch. Churning out don't-miss eggs Benedict and morning-after Bloody Marys and mimosas (\$50 per person), the Sundry House is worth the money for the giant buffet and gorgeous garden setting (561-272-5678, sundryhouse.com).

IF YOU GO

GETTING THERE Delray Beach is about 15 miles south of West Palm Beach airport and 27 miles north of Fort Lauderdale International.

GETTING AROUND Downtown Delray Beach is pedestrian-friendly with ample free parking. A free bus shuttles passengers between downtown attractions and the beach in 20- to 30-minute loops.

UPCOMING EVENTS
May 7: The 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Cinco De Mayo Festival at Old School Square offers food, entertainment, kids' activities and Latin dancing (\$10 admission).
May 19: Art & Jazz on the Avenue is an open house, all-night affair for restaurants, art galleries and shops along Atlantic Avenue with live entertainment from 6 to 10 p.m.
June-August: Summer evening activities including block parties with live music, dancing, art activities and other entertainment.

MORE INFORMATION
delraybeach.com

COLONY HOTEL PHOTO

SUPERFLY KITEBOARDING SCHOOL PHOTO