



Ft. Lauderdale and Daytona Beach are just two of the Florida attractions that Carolina students will flock to over Spring Break. Warm days and cool nights are in the forecast.

DTH/File Photo

Florida offers its cool breezes, sun to Tar Heels

By LINDA ROBERTSON

ONCE again it's time for the annual pilgrimage to pale college student's Mecca, South Fla., for Spring Break. The sun, sand and surf worshippers come in droves, and for good reason. South Florida has a lot to offer to make a vacation memorable.

Of course, there's Fort Lauderdale. The city expects more than 250,000 students to pass through during this peak period.

"Our beaches and our weather appeal to worn out students," said Gayla Barwick, assistant manager of tourism at the Ft. Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce. "The only thing they want to do is have a good time, get plenty of rest and relaxation and watch the guys and the girls."

The beaches are big and crowded and just across the street from the hotels on the strip. Popular bars include the Button, Ocean Mist, Pete and Lenny's, Area Code 305 (with cute phones at every table) and Flanagan's. There's also the Elbow Room, which aptly describes how much space you're likely to have on the beach and in the bars this time of year in Lauderdale.

Everybody goes to Ft. Lauderdale. Ho Hum. Why settle for the ordinary when with just a short drive south you can enter the Magic City.

MIAAMI'S reputation has suffered in the past year. It is going through it's own identity crisis right now. But unless you plan to do your sightseeing in the ghettos or Little Havana, chances are you will not run into any riots or refugees or cocaine cowboys.

Miami Beach is made up mostly of an older crowd (much older), but there are always good shows and performers to see at the hotels—the Fountainbleau, the Deauville, Sheraton Bal Harbor or the Eden Roc.

The Theater of Performing Arts will host an array of talent—Count Basie, Sarah Vaughn, Spirit of Miami Jazz, the Miami Beach Symphony and the Maryland Ballet—on various dates during March 6-16.

The Fountainbleau has an outdoor restaurant in a Caribbean setting with a Calypso band. Other restaurants include Joe's Stone Crabs (227 Biscayne Ave.), Gordon's Seven Seas (79th St.), Benihana's (79th St.), and Nick and Arthur's (79th St. Causeway). You can rent sailboats or go windsurfing at the Eden Roc. 85th St. beach is spacious and clean.

There are games nightly at the Miami Jai Alai Fronton (NW 36th St. and 36th Ave.) Betting is fierce and you can win a bundle if you know who to put your money on and if you're over 18. There is also plenty of horse and dog racing in Miami at Hialeah and

Gulfstream and the Biscayne Kennel club.

Key Biscayne, just south of downtown, boasts to have one of Miami's most beautiful beaches at Crandon Park. But it has other numerous attractions also. Lining the shoreline along Rickenbacker Causeway are a rainbow of Hobie Cat sails. Speed boats race at Marine Stadium. The Rusty Pelican serves a delicious brunch amid its sea lore decor. For Flipper fans there's the Seaquarium and Planet Ocean is right across the street. Besides Crandon Beach, there is Virginia Beach and Cape Florida, which are a bit more secluded and quiet.

Just south of Key Biscayne is Coconut Grove. In the Grove, you will find some of Miami's most eccentric characters, as well as quaint shops and restaurants. Bananas is a popular night spot and its usual band plays everything from reggae to mellow rock. Monty Trainer's has a unique outdoor patio bar. You may want to have drinks in the Encore Room after a play in the Coconut Grove Playhouse or rent a sailboat at Dinner Key Marina for a spin on the bay. The Grove's Vita-course has not diminished in popularity and the weekends see it jammed with tan joggers and roller skaters. There is also a frisbee golf course. You won't be able to afford anything at Mayfair, the Grove's exclusive shopping complex, but it's fun to browse amid tropical plants and fountains, ride the glass elevator and survey the elite and their extravagant purchases.

From Coconut Grove head south beneath a canopy of Banyan trees on Old Cutler Road. Dadeland Mall is big and the prices are reasonable and Raffles is a nice bar.

The Falls shopping mall is a notch above Dadeland and a notch below Mayfair, and the architecture and the waterfalls make for a great atmosphere. Friday's is a very popular restaurant and bar with all kinds of exotic drinks. By the way the drinking age in Florida has recently been raised to 19.

LEAVING the city, heading south on U.S. 1, you enter the Florida Keys, a chain of islands beginning with Key Largo and ending at Key West. The Keys are practically commercialized yet are Florida's last refuge of unspoiled beauty.

Once you are this far South, you cannot pass up snorkeling or scuba diving at John Pennekamp State Park, the last living coral reef in the U.S. The underwater world is incomparable to anything you have ever experienced. The fish are used to divers and often swim right up to your mask. Parrot fish will eat out of your hand. There are more than 30 dive shops all along the highway that take trips and rent equipment.

Snorkeling is as easy as swimming, but you must be certified to go scuba diving.

Key West is well worth the long drive.

"There are always lots of college students here this time of year," Susan Darcell of the Key West Chamber of Commerce said. "Some like to take the sea plane service to the Dry Tortugas and camp out and some prefer to stay on the island and go through all the art galleries."

Fishing and diving boats take off on trips twice daily. There are plays at the Tennessee Williams Playhouse, the Waterfront Playhouse and the Red Barn Theater. The Conch Train and Trolley take visitors on a 14-mile lecture tour around the island. Those searching for Hemingway's ghost can visit his home on 907 Whitehead Dr.

At Old Mallory Square, musicians, jugglers and acrobats gather nightly to entertain people, as a preview to the real show—a sunset in the Keys. Although eventually the sun does go down in South Florida, it's almost guaranteed to be shining the next day.

Linda Robertson is a staff writer for The Daily Tar Heel.

Safe travel tips

STUDENTS traveling long distances over Spring Break can avoid a disastrous vacation by following simple safety guidelines and having their car thoroughly checked before hitting the road.

"Neglect is the main problem with most car owners," John Oster of the Airport Rd. Gulf Service said. "Also driving from one climate to another can create trouble due to a temperature change." Oster advises especially checking fan belts, heater hoses and tires.

"You can see the hoses or belts on your engine wearing out, but for long trips, owners should take their car to a service station and have things like oil, steering, alignment and tire balance checked," Butch Bishop of E. Franklin St. Car Care and Exxon said.

An oil change costs about \$25 and a tune-up can cost \$50 or more, depending on the parts needed.

Jim Julian of the Carolina Motor Club (AAA) advises travelers to take along up-to-date maps, a valid car registration and a flashlight. Drivers should stick to a well-planned route and take 10 minute breaks every 100-150 miles.

"You'll have a greater piece of mind if the car is checked beforehand and you could save a lot of money on the trip," Julian said. He does not anticipate any gasoline price hikes between now and March 6.

— Linda Robertson