

50 Things You Probably Didn't Know About St. Petersburg

St. Pete is one of Florida's most fun and funky cities.

1. The sun shows its face in St. Petersburg an average of 361 days per year.



Source: Wikimedia user John O'Neill

2. “The Sunshine City” even holds the Guinness World Record for most consecutive days of sunshine, at 768.
3. St. Pete is a leap-year baby, incorporated on February 29, 1892.
4. Back then, only about 300 people lived in the city.
5. The population has grown approximately 833 times since then, to about 250,000.

6. Yes, it's named after Russia's St. Petersburg. One of its co-founders, Peter Demens, was born and raised in Russia and originally known as Pyotr Alexeyevitch Dementyev.

7. Dementyev Anglicized his name upon exile from Russia in 1880. He called it political persecution, but it was more likely due to an embezzlement scandal he and some fellow politicians got caught up in.

8. There are 150 city parks in The 'Burg covering around 2,400 acres.

9. The waterfront public park system in St. Pete is the third-largest in the U.S.



Source: Flickr user Robert Neff

10. St. Petersburg's Salvador Dali Museum contains the most comprehensive collection of Dali's work found outside of Europe.

11. At over 30,000 square feet, Haslam's Bookstore is the biggest independent bookstore in Florida. It's been around since 1933.

12. Downtown's Florida Holocaust Museum is the fourth-largest Holocaust museum in the country.

13. Great Explorations Children's Museum is one of the only 4 percent of children's museums in the U.S. accredited by the American Association of Museums.

14. The Sunshine Skyway Bridge, which traverses the Tampa Bay to connect St. Petersburg to Terra Ceia, is the Western Hemisphere's largest suspension bridge. It's about 4.1 miles long and 19 stories high.



Source: Flickr user Robert Neff

15. The bridge, built in 1982, was ranked No. 3 on The Travel Channel's list of "Top 10 Bridges in the World."

16. The original Manhattan Casino on S. 22nd Street was built in 1925 and hosted performances by jazz and soul legends like Count Basie, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Fats Waller, Lionel Hampton, Cab Calloway, Sarah Vaughn, Nat King Cole, James Brown, Ray Charles, and Fats Domino.

17. The world's first scheduled airline flight took off from The 'Burg on January 1, 1914.

18. Perhaps a bit anticlimactically, that historic flight carried then-mayor Abe Pheil and a sack of mail to Tampa.

19. Legendary tennis player Chris Evert won her first professional match at the St. Petersburg Tennis Center, which opened in 1928.

20. The Jai-Alai Cancha at Jack Puryear Park was the country's first amateur jai-alai court built by a municipality.

21. The still-operating St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Club was once the biggest in the world. It started up in January 1924 and peaked at 116 courts and more than 4,000 members.

22. St. Anthony's Triathlon, hosted in St. Pete, is the fourth-largest triathlon in the nation.



Source: St. Anthony's Triathlon via Facebook

23. A 2003 five-day run of Riverdance was the top-grossing production at the Mahaffey Theater, selling almost 6,000 tickets and netting almost \$19,000.

24. St. Petersburg's famous Vinoy Park Hotel, built in 1925 in only 10 months, is listed in the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

25. The U.S. Army took over the Mediterranean Revival-style property during World War II and used it as a training facility.

26. The hotel closed in the 1970s and lots of homeless and transients moved in. Today, though, the reopened hotel has AAA Four-Diamond status.



Source: Flickr user zoovroo

27. Players from visiting MLB teams staying at the Vinoy Park Hotel have frequently reported ghost sightings and other paranormal activity.

28. In 1914, the city lured the St. Louis Browns—the last-place team at the time—for spring training, beginning an important history as a MLB spring training locale.

29. Unfortunately, the Browns players really didn't like their St. Pete experience and didn't come back the next year. But they were replaced by the Philadelphia Phillies.

30. Jannus Live, the outdoor concert venue in the city's downtown historic district, hosts more music events each year than any other venue in the Tampa Bay area.

31. St. Petersburg has been voted the No. 1 arts destination among mid-sized American cities multiple times by readers of “AmericanStyle” magazine.

32. Arts and cultural organizations in the city are credited with bringing in 1.3 million tourists each year and creating an economic impact of over \$23 million annually.

33. “BellaDog” magazine named The 'Burg the third most dog-friendly city in the country.



Source: Flickr user Alex Beattie

34. On its list “The 25 Best Places to Retire,” CNN Money ranked St. Petersburg No. 7.

35. Despite that, and its longtime reputation as a place with a high number of elderly residents, only about 15 percent of the city's population is over the age of 65.

36. The Grand Central District in St. Pete was named one of the top 10 cottage communities in the U.S. by the magazine “Cottage Living.”

37. The district is also a major center for the city's LGBT community and site of the annual St. Pete Pride event.

38. St. Pete Pride is the city's biggest one-day event and the state's biggest Gay Pride parade.



Source: Flickr user tracey r

39. Dating back to 1903, the 4-acre Sunken Gardens is believed to be the oldest commercial tourist attraction on the west coast of Florida.

40. This botanical garden features more than 50,000 tropical plants, along with an exotic bird aviary, a butterfly garden, and more.

41. More than 500 palm trees and cycads representing 150 species from around the world grow at the Gizella Kopsick Palm Arboretum.

42. Famous author Jack Kerouac died in St. Petersburg at St. Anthony's Hospital in 1969.

43. The city was inhabited by a feral rhesus macaque monkey of unknown origin that was renowned for its ability to evade capture. “The Mystery Monkey of Tampa Bay” romped around St. Pete for about four years, until it was finally captured on October 24, 2012.



Source: Wikimedia user J.M Garg

44. The Pinellas Point Temple Mound, which you can still visit today, was built about 1,000 years ago by Native Americans called the Tocobaga.

45. Legend has it the mound is where Tocobaga Princess Hirrihigua saved the life of Juan Ortiz, a Spanish sailor. Many scholars contend this is the inspiration for the better known tale of Pocahontas and Captain John Smith.

46. Each year, the Oakdale Christmas House Christmas lights display uses between 500,000 and 600,000 lights and wracks up close to \$5,000 in electric bills.

47. The home-plate plaques in the Jim Healey & Jack Lake Baseball Boulevard cost \$35,632.

48. St. Petersburg's water reclamation system was the first one built in the U.S. It's still one of the world's largest, providing an average of more than 20 million gallons per day.

49. The city is home to a 2-ton lizard sculpture made by local artist Paul Epling. It's perched on a roof along I-275 North.

50. The city is also home to “The World's Fastest Spring Break Party,” the Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg, a 1.8-mile, 14-turn IndyCar Series race.

