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Tampa Bay tourism revenues soar nearly 20 percent in October

Leisure travel, large conventions help push bed taxes to new heights

TAMPA (Dec. 9, 2015) – Visit Tampa Bay and Hillsborough County generated nearly 20 percent more Tourist Development Taxes in October than the same month in 2014, according to the latest report from the county Tax Collector's Office.

The November report, which covers taxes collected by Hillsborough County hotels in October, shows the county collected more than \$2.3 million in Tourist Development Taxes, commonly known as bed taxes. The tax is a 5 percent levy on short-term stays in the county.

October's bed taxes were the largest ever collected for that month.

"We are thrilled to see such strong results for October," said Santiago Corrada, president and CEO of Visit Tampa Bay. "Major events like Taylor Swift's closing show are an important reminder of the role tourism plays in the economic life of the Tampa Bay region."

Vacation travel to Tampa Bay was up 18 percent over the same month last year. The largest tour operator sending visitors to Tampa Bay say its business grow by 56 percent year-over-year in October. Vacation travelers make up more than three-quarters of Tampa Bay's tourism business.

October was the month Tampa Bay hosted the closing night of Taylor Swift's "1989" national tour. The Halloween night concert generated an estimate 9,000 room-nights. Hotel occupancy that night reached

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89.1 percent – the peak for the month, and a 34 percent jump from the previous Halloween, according to STR Inc., formerly Smith Travel Research.

Weekend hotel occupancy hovered around 80 percent for the entire month, according to STR.

October was also a busy month for conventions in Hillsborough County:

- MetalCon International, Oct. 10-16, generated more than 5,300 room-nights and nearly \$2.3 million in economic impact.
- The Biomedical Engineering Society annual meeting, Oct. 7-10, generated more than 4,200 room-nights and nearly \$1.4 million in economic impact.
- MILCOM 2015, the gathering of the Armed Forces Communications & Electronics Association, Oct. 25-30, generated more than 3,300 room-nights and \$1.6 million in economic impact.

In all, hotel revenues for October surpassed \$50 million, up 13 percent from the previous October.

As a result of such strong performance, Tampa Bay led its 10 national competitors in the rate of growth for hotel occupancy in October.

Hillsborough also continues to lead its competitors so far this year for growth in both occupancy and hotel profitability. Hillsborough's competitive set includes: Orlando and Fort Lauderdale; Austin, Fort Worth and San Antonio, Texas; Nashville, Tenn.; Charlotte, N.C.; Milwaukee, Wis.; Long Beach, Calif.; and Baltimore.

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About Visit Tampa Bay

Visit Tampa Bay encourages adventurous travelers to unlock our destination's trove of unique treasures. We are a not-for-profit corporation that works with more than 750 partners to tell the world the story of our home – the hip, urban heart of the Gulf Coast of Florida.

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