

Tampa's Star Has Risen

From its New Riverwalk to Taprooms to Elite Hotels, Tampa Loves Dogs

BY ROBIN TIERNEY

IM SIPPING A FRESH-MADE BEERMOSA with Cooper and Mr. Wiggles many leagues under the sea. Fantastical animals and undulating aquatic plants surround us.

Actually, this underworld world is an amazing wrap-around interactive mural and video projection wall created by locally based Sebastian Coolidge and Pixel Rain Digital for 81Bay Brewing Co., a newcomer to Tampa's booming craft beer scene. The Beermosa blends 81Bay's Raspberry Ramble ale and pure Florida orange juice. Cooper and Mr. Wiggles are dogs, so they're sticking with water.

Consider 81Bay a microcosm of Tampa: creative, colorful, blessed with water views and Fido-friendly. The Florida Gulf coast city's charms include a splendid new Riverwalk, hip elegant hotels, diverse culture, chef-driven restaurants and lively taprooms.

Riverwalk is so pretty, well laid out and breezy that you and Fido will want to hit the trail every day. Waterside parks perfect for play or lounging dot the path. A securely fenced, beautifully landscaped dog park offers climbing structures and dig-proof turf.

Riverwalk sights include sail-shaped canopies, miniature art trolleys (one decorated with perky canines) and animal sculptures (of course, one is an alligator). Skyscrapers line Hillsborough River's east bank and to the west, at the University of Tampa, sunbeams shimmer on Moorish minarets and domes topping gorgeous Plant Hall.

After dark, the softly illuminated canopies add romance and the Tampa Museum of Art broadcasts a free nightly LED light show cre-



Cooper sits on a keg by the amazing art-projection walls inside new 81Bay Brewing's taproom.



The Henry B. Plant Museum is located in the former quarters of the elegant Tampa Bay Hotel, which opened in 1892. Catch the dog art exhibited there.



Enjoy a dawn or dusk dog walk on Tampa's new Riverwalk.

ated by artist Leo Villareal on one full side of the modern building.

Head to the minarets to visit Henry B. Plant Museum in Plant Hall, formerly the opulent 511-room Tampa Bay Hotel built by railroad magnate Plant in 1891 to attract well-heeled leisure and business travelers. Transformed into Tampa's first museum in 1933, this lifestyle museum showcases original hotel artifacts such as a rug originally made for a queen, an S-curve courting chair, tapestries and a monkey garden seat. It interprets the Victorian lifestyles of America's Gilded Age. Plant and his wife Margaret collected paintings, sculptures and other artworks from around the world to furnish the hotel, some of which featured dogs.

One notable piece in the collection is the bronze "Au Coup de Fusil" near the museum entrance. Sculpted by Eglantine Lemaitre in 1890, the depiction of two hounds was the first piece of public art in the City of Tampa. Others include a Wedgwood vase from England, circa 1920, with white dogs contrasting with the deep blue background. Allow time to stroll the lush, well-shaded grounds out in front of the museum with Fido.

Besides 81Bay, Tampa's numerous Fido-friendly drinking spots include Cigar City Brewing and Ulele Spring Brewery, which shares a lovely riverfront lawn with its adjoining restaurant (try the okra fries). There you'll see cheerful welded canine sculptures made by Rustic Steel Creations artist and dog-lover Dominique Martinez.



Henry B. Plant Museum features dog-themed art, and its gorgeous grounds are nice for walking with dogs.



Great places along the new Riverwalk include a beautifully landscaped dog park.