



The 112-year-old Columbia Restaurant

MINI GUIDE

Three days in Tampa

Once the world's cigar-making capital, this Floridian bayside city is flourishing thanks to its New Orleans-esque heritage district, Cuban culture and inventive dining scene.

Day one

✂ ULELE 1

Inside a historic red-brick pump house by the Hillsborough River, Ulele is a cavernous modern space starring original art from the owner's collection. The menu is inspired by the ingredients of the bay's native peoples and Spanish explorers. Enjoy creative cocktails and craft beer made on-site (ulele.com; 1810 N Highland Ave; 11am–10pm Sun–Thu, to 11pm Fri–Sat; mains from £10).



Carpaccio of octopus served with a spicy piri piri sauce at Ulele

🕒 HYDE PARK 2

This bayside neighbourhood of 1920s Arts-and-crafts bungalows gives a fascinating insight into Tampa's community before the downtown glass-and-steel towers took over. Stop by French-inspired Piquant for a takeaway coffee (piquanthydepark.com; 1633 W Snow Ave; 8am–8pm Mon–Wed & Sun, to 9pm Thu–Sat). Finish up at glittering Bayshore Boulevard, the world's longest continuous sidewalk.

🍷 CIRO'S SPEAKEASY 3

Call ahead for the daily password to this dimly lit Prohibition-style bar, tucked inside an apartment block. Private curtained booths and retro furniture are eerily authentic, recalling the era when real speakeasies thrived in 1920s Tampa. There's a supper club too, but cocktails are the thing here: Ciro's tie-touting staff can make whatever you fancy (cirostamp.com; 2109 Bayshore Blvd; 5pm–late; happy hour cocktails £6).

Day two

✂ OXFORD EXCHANGE 4

The beautifully chic Oxford Exchange building will have you flitting between its interior-design store and wood-panelled coffee house. The light-filled atrium café-restaurant serves inventive egg dishes and pumpkin pancake breakfasts between tinkling fountains (oxfordexchange.com; 420 West Kennedy Blvd; 7.30am–5pm Mon–Fri, from 9am Sat–Sun; dishes from £5).



Engage your core while piloting a paddle-board through Tampa

🚶 TAMPA RIVERWALK 5

Floridians have taken to Tampa's new Riverwalk with great gusto. There are two and a half miles of waterside track to stroll, jog or cycle along, carving a path through downtown Tampa via the Tampa Bay History Center (tampabayhistorycenter.org) and the worthwhile Tampa Museum of Art (tampamuseum.org). If you fancy cycling, join the Coast Bike Share scheme and unlock a bike from one of downtown's many docking stations (coastbikeshare.com; per hour £6).

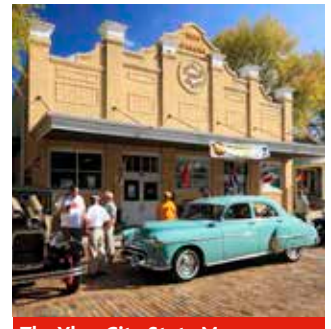
🚣 PADDLE-BOARDING 6

Trying to maintain balance while bobbing around the bay and keeping a watchful eye out for stingrays and (if you're lucky) dolphins makes stand-up paddle-boarding fun exercise. Urban Kai runs private lessons from Tampa's marina, where the bay meets the harbour amid central Tampa's towers. In two hours you'll learn how to stay upright and glide out on a tranquil ecotour of the bay; morning or sunset are best (urbankai.com; 700 S Florida Ave; from £55).

Day three

✂ LA SEGUNDA CENTRAL BAKERY 7

Cuban immigrants landed in droves on Tampa Bay's 19th-century shores to toil in Ybor City, once the world's cigar-making capital. Stop by this old-fashioned Cuban bakery where locals pop in for guava turnovers and Cuban sandwiches (lasegundabakery.com; 2512 N 15th St; 6.30am–5pm Mon–Fri, 7am–3pm Sat–Sun; sandwiches from £6).



The Ybor City State Museum was first built as a bakery in 1923

🕒 YBOR CITY MUSEUM STATE PARK 8

Located in a 1923 building, Ybor City's heritage museum documents the rise and fall of Ybor from the 1880s to the 1940s. Outside, the streets are crammed with relics from its industrial golden age, including old cigar factories, workers' clubs and a memorial to Cuban revolutionary José Martí (ybormuseum.org; 1818 E 9th Ave; 9am–5pm Wed–Sun; £3).

✂ COLUMBIA RESTAURANT 9

Florida's oldest restaurant fills an entire block in Ybor City. Though it has expanded from its bar-and-sandwich-shop 1905 origins, there's still plenty of character in its colonnaded dining hall and Spanish-Cuban menu. Bow-tied waiters make sangría at tables (columbiarestaurant.com; 2025 E 7th Ave; 11am–10pm Mon–Thu, to 11pm Fri–Sat, 11.30am–9pm Sun; mains from £15).

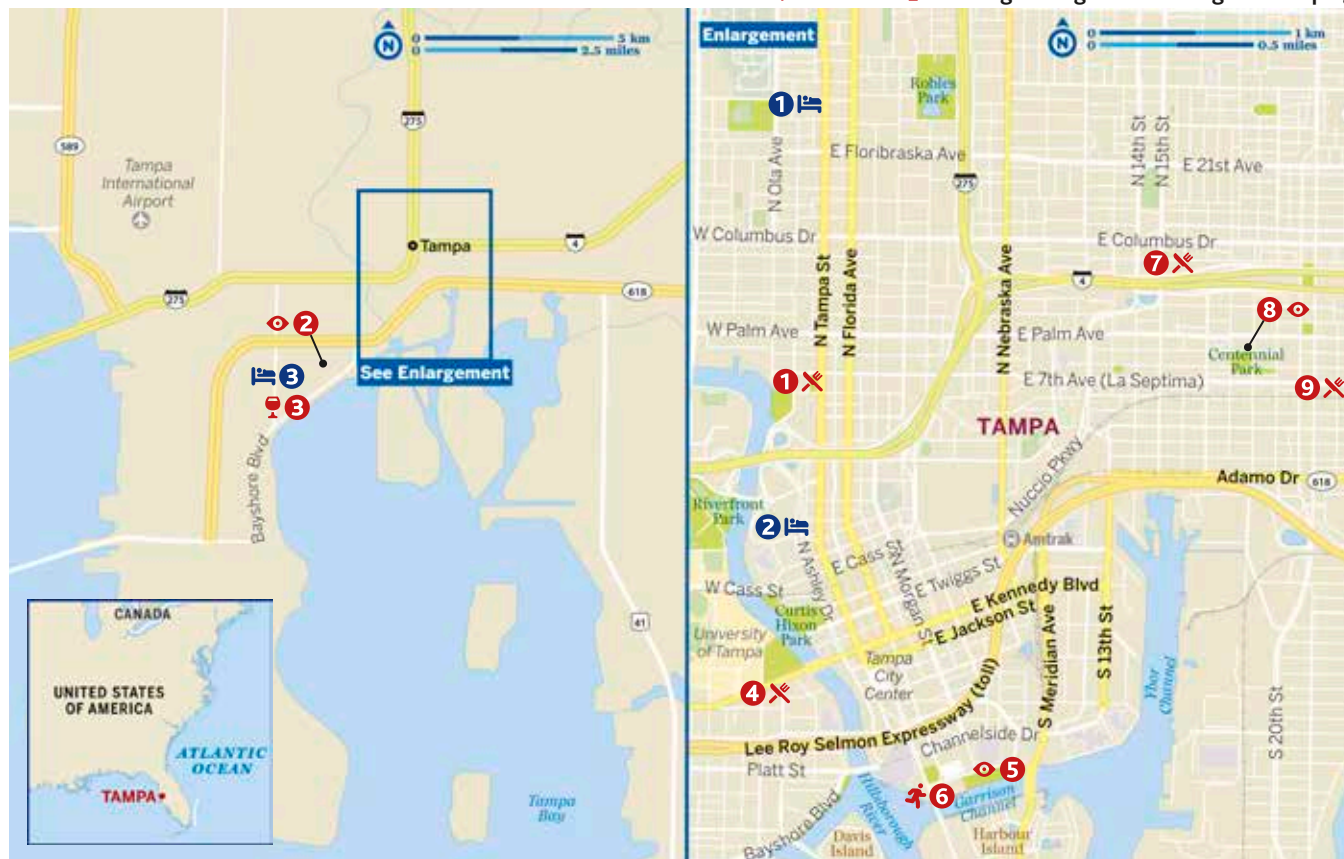
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🚩 Activities 🍷 Drinking 📍 Sights 🍴 Eating 🛏 Sleeping



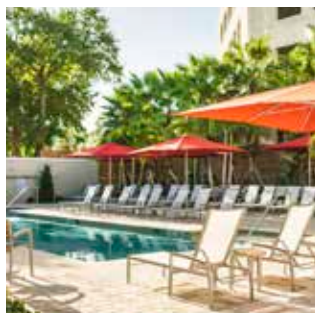
Essentials

🚩 TRANSPORT

British Airways operates direct flights from London Gatwick to Tampa International Airport, with a flight time of around 10 hours (from £470; britishairways.com). HART bus 30 picks up and drops off at the eastern end of the airport's red baggage claim area every 30 minutes and takes about 25 minutes to get into town (£1.60, exact change required; gohart.org). HART also operates buses around the city (£1.60), plus an In-Towner Trolleybus (20p) around the city centre and a 'streetcar' (£2) between downtown Tampa and Ybor City. Uber taxis are popular, too.

🛏 WHERE TO STAY

1 As charismatic as an ageing rock star, **Gram's Place Hostel** is a small, welcoming spot for travellers who prefer personality over perfect linens. There are communal kitchens, a hot tub and Saturday night live music jams (grams-inn-tampa.com; 3109 N Ola Ave; from £55).



Take a dip at the Epicurean after a day in the Hyde Park district

2 The **Barrymore Hotel** doesn't look like much from the outside, but this former Hilton has been given a new independent lease of life with a slick refurb. It's slap-bang in downtown Tampa by the Riverwalk (barrymorehotel.com; 11 W Fortune St; from £100).
 3 The fashionable **Epicurean** is Tampa's top hotel. It's designed for food lovers, with a kitchen theatre, excellent restaurant, wine shop and popular rooftop bar. Guests are wined with a glass of wine (epicureanhotel.com; 1207 S Howard Ave; from £180).

The know-how

TAMPA'S BOOZE REVOLUTION

- **Coppertail** One of Tampa's best new-breed craft breweries (its Unholy Trippel is pictured below), Coppertail runs regular site tours and packs the crowds into its cavernous beer hall (coppertailbrewing.com).
- **Cigar City Cider & Mead** Join a tour of this casual brewhouse/bar in Ybor City. Its rotating line-up of ciders stars flavours such as lychee, pineapple and cactus (cigarcitycider.com).
- **Fodder & Shine** An industrial hangar-style bar and restaurant in Seminole Heights serving crafted cocktails with a very American flavour (fodderandshine.com).
- **Florida Cane Distillery** A tiny small-batch distillery in Ybor City offering tours and tastings (cane-vodka.com).



FURTHER READING

The Tampa Bay & Southwest Florida chapter of Lonely Planet's *Florida* (£15.99) can be downloaded for £2.99 at lonelyplanet.com; *Discover Florida* (£14.99) is a full-colour guide to the region. Tampa Bay's exploding craft-beer scene is comprehensively mapped on *The Brewery Bay* (thebrewerybay.com). Read *The Infiltrator* by Robert Mazur (£7.99; Corgi); this true-crime novel about a major drug-cartel operation is set around Tampa and was made into a film in 2016.



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