



# Closer Look

AN ADVERTISER PROFILE



## Tarpon Springs Is More Than Greek

### Special to The Laker/Lutz News

There is more to Tarpon Springs than Greek culture and cuisine. If you haven't visited this close-by destination recently, a walk through its revived downtown will be a pleasant surprise.

Many of Tarpon Springs buildings date back more than 100 years ago, making it the perfect place to indulge in a little main-street window shopping, dine at a café with sidewalk seating, or enjoy a craft beer at one of several micro-breweries.

Less than 45 minutes from Lutz and Land O' Lakes, Tarpon Springs is someplace new to go for date night, or a weekend outing with the family.

"What really breathes life into our downtown is our variety of restaurants," said Kelley Riedy, operations manager for Tarpon Arts. "There's a pizza and pasta place, a little bistro that makes its own flavored olive oils, and American, Greek and Italian fare."

Before or after you dine, it's fun to explore the city's many museums.

The Historic Train Depot Museum is right in the heart of downtown, the Leepa-Rattner Museum of Art has more than 6,000 exhibits of contemporary and modern art, and the Heritage Museum has a permanent Greek heritage exhibit.

Perhaps the best known museum is the Safford House, which has docent-guided tours of this 1883 Victorian home, and is the only museum on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

"Something the kids will enjoy is the Replay Amusement Museum, home to the world's largest pinball machine, and filled with vintage video games, pinball machines and memorabilia," Riedy said.

Tarpon Springs hosts a full calendar of special events year-round. In fact, this weekend is Night in the Islands — an after-hours festival on the Sponge Docks, on June 29.

"This is a fabulous way to enjoy our beautiful cool evenings," said Riedy. "The streets of the Sponge Docks are blocked off, and there are two stages for live music, including Ellada, considered the premier Greek music band in Florida. We even have a dance troupe giving free, Greek dance lessons."

"Nights in the Islands really captures the Greek heritage of the city," said Reidy. "Several restaurants set up outside tables, so people can dine next to the music and dancing, and enjoy our beautiful waterfront."

You can also explore Tarpon Springs through rosé-colored glasses—as in glasses of rosé wine—at the next Wine Walk on July 20. In August, there is the Hippie Fest on Aug. 10, and the quarterly Arts and Crafts show on the Sponge Docks is Aug. 31. Fall events include Salsa on the Sponge Docks on Oct. 12 and the Seafood Festival from Nov. 8 to Nov. 10.

For outdoor fun, Tarpon Springs has two beaches —Fred Howard Park and Sunset Beach, which hosts the Sunset Beach Concert Series on the first Thursday of every month. Tarpon Springs also has a free Splash Park, hiking trails, playgrounds, dog parks, fishing and kayaking.

