



**The Insider
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February 2023

SPECIAL SESSION 2023B REPORT

On Monday, February 6, 2023 through Friday, February 10, 2023, the Florida Legislature convened for **Special Session 2023B**, to address the ongoing emergency response to Hurricane Ian, as well immigration, election prosecution, college athlete compensation, and of course, the Reedy Creek Improvement District.

Following the action during a 2022 special legislative session that proposed the elimination of several special districts by June 2023, including Reedy Creek, the Legislature sought to finalize this action and revise the governance of the Reedy Creek Improvement District. On Friday, February 10th, the Legislature passed House Bill 9B, which ratified and confirmed the existence of the Reedy Creek Improvement District under its new name, the Central Florida Tourism Oversight District. The main change to the governance of the district is that the landowner-elected board is replaced with a five-member board appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Additionally, the bill removes the ability of the district to operate an airport, to build a nuclear power plant, and to exercise eminent domain outside of its boundaries.

Following the Special Session 2023B, the Florida Legislature finished their final committee week, before the 2023 Regular Session begins on **March 7, 2023**. **CFHLA is looking forward to advocating on behalf of the entire Central Florida tourism and hospitality industry, during the upcoming legislative session.**

To view our 2023 CFHLA Legislative Priorities, please [CLICK HERE](#).

FLORIDA BREAKS RECORD FOR HIGHEST VISITATION IN STATE HISTORY

Recently, **VISIT FLORIDA** announced that Florida experienced record visitation in 2022, with an estimated 137.6 million visitors in 2022. This is an increase of five percent over 2019 and 12.9 percent over 2021.

Additionally, **Florida welcomed 33.2 million travelers between October and December 2022, marking a six percent increase from Q4 2021**, and the sixth consecutive quarter of overall visitation surpassing pre-pandemic levels. According to VISIT FLORIDA, 30.1 million domestic visitors traveled to Florida in Q4 2022, representing 21 months of domestic visitation growth from 2019.

“We could not be more excited with the incredibly impressive record-breaking visitation seen in 2022,” said Dana Young, VISIT FLORIDA President and CEO. “Quarter after quarter, Florida continues to dominate the travel market and our competition, which could not be achieved without the hard work of our local tourism partners. Florida is breaking records despite overseas visitation remaining 28 percent lower than 2019 due to heinous visa wait times and irrational mandates imposed by the federal government. At VISIT FLORIDA, we are committed to building on this growth to ensure Florida continues to be the No. 1 vacation destination in the world.”

Additional highlights from VISIT FLORIDA’s latest visitation estimates include:

- **Florida welcomed 2.0 million overseas travelers in Q4 2022**, an increase of 35.5 percent from Q4 2021.

- **Canadian visitation to Florida during Q4 2022 accounted for 1 million visitors**, an increase of 278 percent from Q4 2021.
- **Air travelers accounted for 38 percent of Florida visitors**, compared to 41 percent in 2019.
- **Hotel room nights sold at Florida hotels increased by nearly 13 percent in 2022 compared to 2021**. Occupancy rose by 9.4 percent to 70.5 percent, as demand growth significantly exceeded the expansion of supply.

Florida welcomed a total of 7.0 million overseas travelers in 2022, an increase of 73 percent over 2021, but still lower than 2019 visitation levels. The lack of overseas travelers is directly correlated to the vaccine mandate still instituted by the Biden administration and staggering visa wait times. The current wait times to receive an interview for visa issuance across the world includes:

Lima, Peru – 831 days

Rio De Janiero, Brazil – 455 days

Tel Aviv, Israel – 191 days

Mexico City – 633 days



ORLANDO NAMED THE LARGEST U.S. TRAVEL AND TOURISM DESTINATION FOR 2022

Home to Disney World, Universal Orlando Resort, SeaWorld Orlando and many other attractions, the city of Orlando, Florida, was named the largest U.S. travel and tourism city destination for 2022 by the World Travel & Tourism Council.

The city earned over **\$31 billion last year from tourism, representing 20% of the city's total gross domestic product**, according to the Cities Economic Impact Report. The destination has made a tremendous comeback from the pandemic, having earned more than 2019's economic contribution by \$2.7 billion.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the full story.

FEBRUARY GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS MEETING

On Wednesday, February 15th, members of the **CFHLA Governmental Affairs Committee** had the opportunity to meet and hear from the **City of Orlando, Regina Hill District 5 Commissioner** during its most recent meeting.

Commissioner Hill discussed a variety of topics with us, including her support of the Tourist Development Tax and ways to tackle major community issues such as public transportation, affordable housing, vacation rentals and advertising platforms.

Thank you, Commissioner, for joining us, we truly appreciate your willingness to partner with the hospitality and tourism industry as we work together to find solutions to the needs of our community!

Lastly, we would also like to thank our partners at **Visit Orlando (Thank You Casandra Matej and Kristin Westover)** for hosting our meeting this month.



MOVING FLORIDA FORWARD INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVE

On January 30, 2023, Governor DeSantis announced **Moving Florida Forward**, a bold and historic infrastructure initiative.

This proposed investment prioritizes **\$7 billion towards the state's transportation infrastructure** in order to directly and immediately address congestion relief and perpetual safety on roadways, support resiliency in existing and future projects, and maintain the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) as a national leader in transportation technology, all while supporting a robust and active supply chain.



This includes **\$3.61 billion (more than half)** for the following Central Florida Projects that are critically needed:

- #12 - I-4 from Champions Gate to Osceola Pkwy. (\$1.45B)**
- #13 - Poinciana Parkway Ext. Connector from C.R. 532 to S.R. 429 (\$1.32B)**
- #16 - I-4 from U.S. 27 to ChampionsGate (\$635M)**
- #15 - I-4 at S.R. 33 Interchange (\$197M)**

For more information, including the full proposed project map, please [CLICK HERE](#).



CENTRAL FLORIDA RANKS IN TOP 10 OF MOST BOOKED DESTINATIONS IN Q4 OF 2022

With easing travel restrictions, holiday travel, and the appeal of warm weather destinations all influenced the global top 10 list of booked destinations during Q4 2022, this according to the recent Expedia Group's Traveler Insights Report.

Across the super regions, New York, Las Vegas, and London held on to the top spots, Orlando and Cancun moved up in the rankings, and Miami overtook Boston for the No.10 position.

Orlando was one of the Top 10 Booked destinations in North America for Q4 2022 and Kissimmee was one of the Top 10 VRBO booked destinations for the same period.

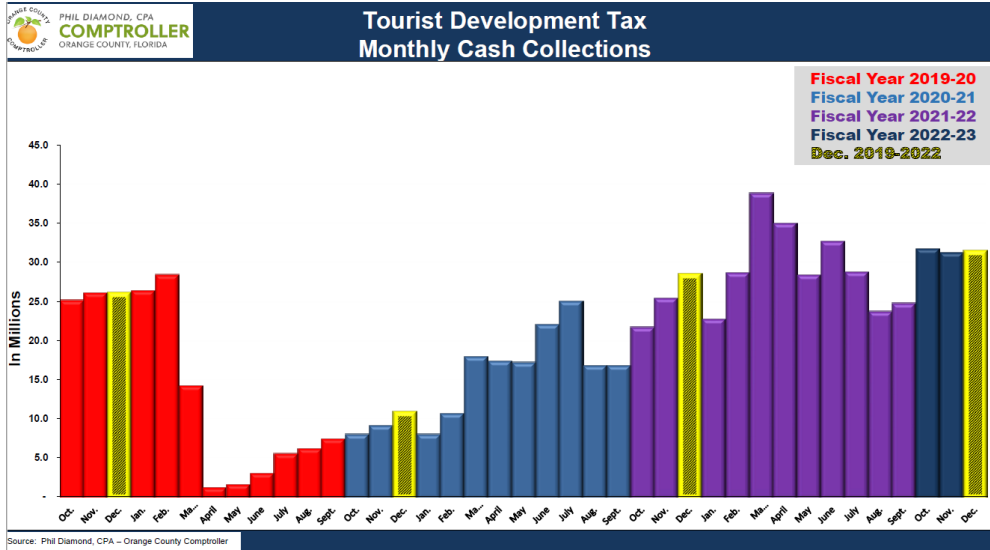
REGIONAL TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX UPDATE

Orange County

The Tourist Development Tax (TDT) collections received by Orange County for the month of **December 2022 were \$31,225,200**. That is a **10.2% increase** over December 2021.

Month-over-month, **December collections were higher than November collections by \$300K**. In addition, they were **higher than December 2020 collections by \$20.5 million** and were also the **highest December collections on record**.

The chart below shows monthly TDT collections for the current fiscal year and the previous three fiscal years.



Osceola County

The Osceola County **Tourist Development Tax (TDT) collection for the month of December was \$7,400,000**. For the first quarter of the FY 2022-2023, **Osceola County has collected \$20 million in TDT**.

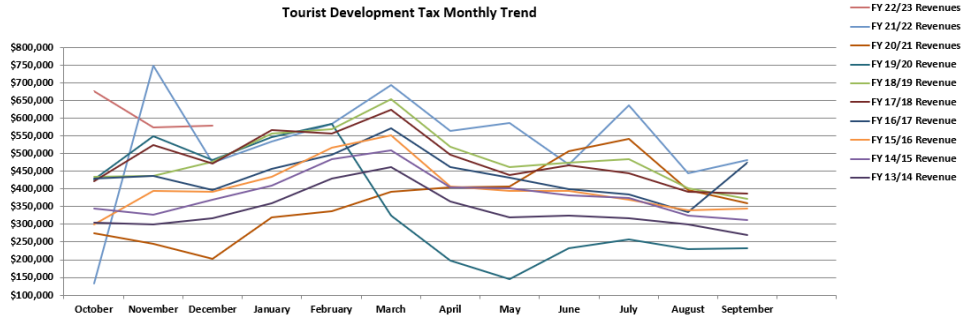
Also, vacation homes accounted for 54% of the TDT collection, with hotels/resorts at 43%.



Seminole County

Seminole County announced that the **Tourist Development Tax (TDT) collection for the month of December was at \$578,977**. This was an increase of \$105,116 over December 2021.

For the first quarter of the FY 2022-2023, **Seminole County has now collected \$1,832,805 in TDT, an increase of \$479,015** over the same period in FY 2021-2022.



DONATE

CFHLA MEMBERS - Please **consider making a donation of \$50** via the link below to the CFHLA PAC/PC. All contributions help CFHLA expand its efforts to support and endorse Hospitality-Friendly candidates for local and state offices. **In the 2022 General election, all 16 CFHLA endorsed candidates were successfully elected into office.**

[DONATE NOW](#)

As a reminder, all CFHLA Board Members, PAC/PC Board Members, and ARC Board Members have committed to contributing \$150 to the CFHLA PAC/PC in 2023. If you are a part of one or more of these groups, please consider fulfilling your commitment today.

IN THE NEWS

[Gov. DeSantis seeks funding boost for VISIT FLORIDA, jobs grant program](#) (Florida Politics)

[First look: New Hyatt House hotel opens near Orlando airport](#) (Orlando Business Journal)

[Travelers Dislike Hotel Resort Fees. Biden Wants to Get Rid of Them](#) (businessinsider.com)

[Will Disney, Universal affordable housing projects lead the way for more?](#) (Orlando Sentinel)

[Florida travel to Orlando, US plagued by this issue](#) (Orlando Business Journal)

[Central Florida Expressway Authority to expand roads in these busy areas. See where.](#) (Orlando Business Journal)

[UCF teams up with Orange County to offer ESOL Classes for I-Drive employees](#) (fox35orlando.com)

[Davidson Hospitality Group Selected to Operate Wyndham Orlando Resort International Drive](#) (prnewswire.com)

[Florida hotel near Disney to be built on Reedy Creek Boulevard - Orlando Business Journal](#) (Orlando Business Journal)

[Florida tourism, sports experts: 2023 Orlando economic outlook - Orlando Business Journal](#) (Orlando Business Journal)

[New luxury hotel planned near Epic Universe theme park](#) (Yahoo.com)



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About CFHLA

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The mission of the Central Florida Hotel and Lodging Association is to represent the Central Florida Hospitality Industry, by setting the standard of excellence through advocacy, collaboration, education, recognition, and service.