

March 2007

Crist Says He Continues to Welcome Us

Property Insurance and taxes continue to dominate thoughts in Florida. Following the legislation passed on January 25th Governor Crist passed a retroactive emergency amendment preventing companies from dropping policies before May 1st - effective from January 1st. Insurance companies mounted a court challenge on the grounds that it was unclear if they would still have to cover customers who had been notified that they were dropped. The challenge was dropped when the Office of Insurance Regulation issued a clarification that companies could proceed with plans not to renew policies for customers who had already been notified they were being dropped. Companies can also resume cancelling policies when they file their new discounted rates in March (as required by the Jan 25th legislation) as long as they give 100 days notice.

We wrote to Governor Crist outlining the concerns of 'out-of-state' owners with regard to insurance and taxes and this was his reply: *"Because Florida is such a diverse state and growing so rapidly, the property tax issue is tremendously complicated. We have to think about businesses and renters, our senior citizens, new residents, young families, just a tremendous mix,"* said Gov. Crist. *"Right now a lot of attention and a lot of brainpower is focused on this issue, and I thank Florida's leaders for being so responsive. With regard to our out of state and overseas homeowners, Florida has a long history of welcoming its part-time residents, and we look forward to extending our hospitality to all those that seek our magnificent sunshine, pristine beaches, unparalleled natural resources and outstanding quality of life."*

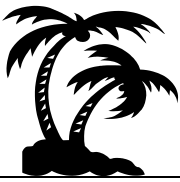
The House and the Senate have been holding meetings with the public around the state as they seek a solution to the property tax headache. The meetings have been very heated as homeowners, business owners and out of state owners take the opportunity to vent their frustrations. A solution suggested by the House of Representatives is to scale back property taxes, to be replaced with a statewide sales tax base rate of 8.5%. California currently has the highest sales tax rate in the country at 7.25%. Under the plan, homesteaded owners would no longer pay local property taxes to local governments except for schools. Commercial and non-residential homes would continue paying local property taxes at a rate which was rolled back to 2001 levels (before the real estate boom) and capped. The plan would leave a \$5.8 billion hole in local governments tax pots. The Senate is concerned that the higher sales tax rate will hurt businesses, and is expected to announce a more middle road approach in mid-March.

Illegal Gates at Lakewood Ranch

Confusion has broken out in Manatee County over the legality of entrance gates to Community Development Districts (CDD's) which homeowners tend to view as private gated communities. Unlike a private subdivision, a CDD is a public entity (because the developers used low interest tax exempt bonds for the development), and therefore entry can not be restricted. A guard is not entitled to ask a visitor for I.D., but can ask for the address of the property they are visiting. Even if that is not forthcoming, the guard cannot actually deny entry. Entry gates which require a remote device to activate are blocking public roads and technically illegal. We spoke to two owners from Lakewood Ranch and Heritage Harbour. Neither owner had been made aware of the legal situation when they bought their property, and had they known that

public access could not be denied, would probably not have chosen that particular area for their purchase. Commissioners are working on new guidelines for CDD's only to allow them to comply with the law.

Other Stories in This Issue	Page
From the Editor	2
News Roundup	3
Homes	4
Preliminary Visitor Numbers	5
Coastal Gazette	6
Renting my villa long term (Jan Doughty)	8
Island of Bones (part 2)	9
Weird News	10
Theme Park News + Late News	11



Florida Homes and Travel

March 2007

From the Editor

Thank you for all the survey forms already received. We are pleased to see that the majority of you are very happy with your management company. Early indications are that you feel the immigration 'welcome' and the number of STR's available were the 2 biggest factors in last year being a 'bad' year (although a few had a good year!) for obtaining guests. Many of you cite the ever increasing costs such as property taxes, insurance, and utilities as a real problem forcing a significant few to rethink a Florida investment. If you have not yet returned your form, there is still time, the deadline is 31st March. Remember you will receive a free month's subscription just for returning your form. The information you have regarding the costs of running your home is just as valid even if you no longer rent your home out, or have friends who look after the property rather than a management company. Please get in touch if you have mislaid your form and need a new one.

Many of you have been considering, or wondering, about the viability of changing to Long Term Rentals for a while. We are going to be running a short series of articles on issues surrounding the subject. We asked Jan Doughty to examine the tax issues of that option for you which she has done on page 7. Next month we have asked Graham Hardy of FloridaHomesOnly to outline the requirements of the LTR client, and the type of incomes that may or may not be generated according to location. We hope to have a personal experience from someone who has done this, as well as the aspect of increasing your portfolio to include this option. If there are any other aspects of LTR that you would like to find out more about, please let us know and we can look into it.

American Accountant

Do you need assistance with your US Federal, State and County Tax filings, Property Tax, mortgage and finance advice, Withholding Certificate applications?

Jan Marie Doughty CPA

[Certified Public Accountant – USA - Licensed in Florida] has been assisting UK owners of Holiday Rental property in Florida for the past twelve years with:- Federal Tax Returns [1040NR], Tangible Personal Property Tax Returns Withholding Certificate applications

Contact Jan Marie Doughty CPA

Florida Property & Business Services LLC
P.O. Box 41, Chichester, West Sussex. PO20 1UZ
Tel: 01243 536026
Or 3000 N Atlantic Avenue, Suite 202, Cocoa Beach, Fl 32931
Tel: 001-321-784-8329
Email FPBS@FloridaPBS.com

Call for a chat or to obtain further details.

Naples Climate Data – March - 1948- 2003

(All in degrees Fahrenheit)

The average high temp is	80.4°
The average low temp is	58.5°
The highest temp (on March 10 th 1974)	91°
The coldest night temp (on March 4 th 1980)	33°

Average Florida Mortgage Rates

With zero points	Dec	Jan	Feb
Fixed 30 yrs	6.35%	6.37%	6.31%
Adjustable 1 yr	6.23%	6.25%	6.41%

Note: Mortgage rates are published as a service to readers to indicate trends and must not be relied on in entering into any agreement.

How to Reach Florida Homes and Travel

Editor

Elle Hubbard

Letters

Mail from UK; Florida Homes And Travel, Freepost SCE1595, LIPHOOK, GU30 7BR

Mail from overseas; Florida Homes And Travel, Bakehouse Cottage, Fernhurst Road, Milland, Liphook, Hants, GU30 7LU, UK.

Email; fhandt@bopenworld.com

Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Telephone

UK: Freephone 0500 50 50 87 or 01428 741438

Overseas: 0144 1428 741438

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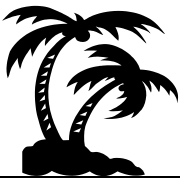
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Florida Homes and Travel

March 2007

News Roundup

BA announced new baggage restrictions which commenced on February 13th. Passengers in World Traveller cabins are restricted to one bag of less than 23 Kgs, unless flying to certain locations where local law allows 2 pieces. The U.S. is fortunately one of those places. However, the size of luggage has still been reduced from 32 kgs to 23 kgs. To allow for a smooth transition, customers on flights that will be completed by 1st September will still be allowed 32 kgs per piece. Exact details of different class allowances can be found on the website www.ba.com under Information.

First Choice has commenced the first ever charter flights from Bristol International Airport (BRS) to Florida. The first arrival landed at Orlando Sanford on time on Sunday, February 4th with 220 people aboard. The new service will operate weekly on Sundays using 258-seat Boeing 767-300 aircraft configured with 62 seats in Star Class Premier and 196 in Star Class (economy). Flights will depart Bristol at 10:20 a.m. and arrive at Orlando Sanford at 5:00 p.m. the same day. Return service is scheduled to leave Orlando Sanford at 6:30 p.m. and arrive in Bristol at 7:50 a.m. the next day (all flight times are local).

Starbucks are testing the use of 2% fat milk as their default type in the Jacksonville area. If successful it will be rolled out in all their coffee houses.

We have mentioned the passing off of other fish as grouper in Florida restaurants before. It would seem this is still a rather major problem. Undercover agents ordered grouper at 24 restaurants in the Madeira Beach area. At 17 of these restaurants the grouper was not grouper, it was emperor fish, asian catfish, painted sweetlips

and in 2 cases the fish could not be identified from DNA. In December a businessman from Panama City pleaded guilty to marketing more than 1 million pounds of asian catfish as grouper. The domestic annual catch of grouper is around 10 million pounds.

Orlando International Airport jumped from 13th in the nation in 2005 to 7th place last year for on-time departures. On time arrival placing went from 19th to 5th! Fort Lauderdale moved up from 27th to 8th in the review by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

A 75-acre brush fire reached right up to the Central Florida GreeneWay and Florida's Turnpike after it began on a wooded lot on the west side of South Orange Avenue on February 11th. The Central Florida toll roads were backed up for hours as firefighters worked to control the blaze and smoke limited visibility.

From April first time applicants for a UK passport (over 16) will have to travel to one of 69 regional centres at their own expense for a 10 - 20 minute interview with officials. From 2009 this will also apply to those renewing existing passports (or replacing lost documents), and at that time fingerprints and iris scans are likely to be taken. Biometric data had to be included on all new passports issued after October 26th in order to comply with the American Visa-waiver system.

MoneyCorp U.S. Dollar Update

The last month brought plenty of action but little clear purpose to Sterling's movements against the Dollar. After the failure of its unconvincing attempt to break above two Dollars in January the Pound slipped lower, dogged by fading hopes of higher UK interest rates. The message from the Bank of England is that inflation is likely to fall back into line without the need for much, or maybe even any, further tightening of monetary policy. As rate expectations have been managed downwards so the Pound has lost its shine. In contrast, the Federal Reserve has cranked up its public hawkishness, increasing the possibility that US rates could go up again this year. The economic data from both countries have been mixed. Until they paint a clearer picture one way or the other, we will be stuck within the trading range that has kept Sterling between \$1.93 and \$1.99 for the last three months.

Average Daily Hotel Room Rate

Area	Jan 06	Jan 07
International Drive	\$96.91	\$101.61
Lake Buena Vista	\$106.34	\$117.31
Kissimmee East	\$73.73	\$79.13
Kissimmee West	\$49.81	\$48.96




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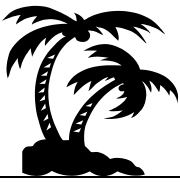
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Contact Valerie or Sandy



Florida Homes and Travel

March 2007

Homes

New Attorney General Bill McCollum issued a consumer alert following the recent theft of data involving customers' information from numerous Florida stores. Consumers who may have used credit cards at TJ Maxx, Marshalls, AJ Wright or HomeGoods stores between May 2003 and December 2006 should closely monitor their financial statements. TJX Companies, Inc., the parent company of TJ Maxx, Marshalls, HomeGoods and A.J. Wright stores, recently reported that its computer systems were hacked late last year and customer data had been stolen. Company officials said the hackers broke into a system that manages credit and debit card transactions as well as checks and merchandise returns for customers throughout the United States and possibly elsewhere. It is not yet known how much or what kind of information may have been taken. Florida has 55 T.J. Maxx stores, 60 Marshalls' stores, 22 HomeGoods stores and two A.J. Wright stores.

Last month, the Government claimed that doubling APD would deliver carbon savings of 0.3m tonnes of carbon (MtC) a year by 2010/11 – equivalent to about 1m tonnes of CO₂. But Tourism Alliance policy director Kurt Janson has said that closer analysis of the figures shows that travellers are being asked to pay £1bn for no appreciable environmental gain. "DEFRA figures show that aviation in the UK (domestic and international) generates about 37 million tonnes of CO₂ per annum. This is about 6.5% of the UK's total carbon emissions of 597m tonnes. Therefore, according to the Treasury's analysis, the doubling of APD will reduce total UK emissions by 0.2%.

"The 1m tonne reduction in CO₂ emissions will be gained at a cost of £1bn to travellers. This means that passengers are paying £1000 for every tonne of CO₂. Compare this to the market cost of one tonne of CO₂ (about £10) and you can see that increasing APD is a hugely inefficient way to

reduce CO₂ emissions – the public are being taxed £1,000m to prevent £10m of pollution. An overpayment of £990m (99% of the entire tax)." He said at a cost of £10 tonne, the offsetting cost of the 37m tonnes of CO₂ produced by aviation is about £370m per annum. Comparing this to the £1bn per year being paid by travellers before the increase, he said they were already paying some 2.5 times their carbon cost. "The new rates of APD mean that travellers are paying five times their carbon cost. "Another way to look at it is that just £1 in every £5 of the new APD rates would be needed to offset total UK air travel carbon emissions through the existing carbon market."However, as APD goes directly into Government consolidated revenue and is not hypothecated, it seems that not one penny of APD revenue will be used for this or any other environmental purpose."

BMI is the first airline to find a loophole in the APD provisions. Under the rules single class airlines pay the lower rate of APD even if it is all business class. BMI have removed the cabin dividers from its airlines so that each plane is now a 'single class' airplane. Business class passengers still have the extended leg room and superior service, just not the dividers. BA has said they have no plans to follow suit – but are watching the situation.

American Strategic Insurance Co. will lower homeowner's insurance rates in Florida an average 11.4 percent. It is the first company with state-approved rate cuts under the recent insurance reform law. Rates will go down March 1 for new customers and May 1 for renewals. State regulators are now reviewing rate decreases of 20.7 percent for Royal Palm Insurance Co. and 22.3 percent for Security First Insurance Co.

A recent meeting of the Central Florida Property Managers Association heard from Osceola County Sheriff Bob Hansell about burglaries being the No.1 problem facing STR's from their point of view. He highlighted a few easy steps that homeowners can take with the help of their property managers to try and prevent their property being targeted. Firstly get a second lock on to the large sliding doors, or more simply, put a broomstick (cut to fit) into the runner of the sliding door. This prevents the door being opened from the outside, and can be easily removed and safely stored when the door is used. Secondly, provide plenty of lighting to try and eliminate dead spots around the home. If these are light sensitive (on all night regardless of occupancy) this could help. Thirdly, try and keep a well maintained landscape to show passing opportunists the home is well cared for.

International Inspection Services

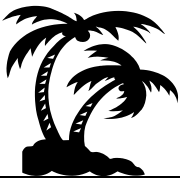


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Florida Homes and Travel

March 2007

State Farm Insurance filed a request to decrease auto insurance rates by an average of about 16 percent Statewide -- if the state's no-fault auto insurance law expires in October. Current law requires motorists to buy at least \$10,000 of coverage to pay medical costs if there's an accident, regardless of who's at fault. State Farm and other insurers contend this coverage makes policies more costly and opens the door to fraud by unscrupulous doctors, attorneys and healthcare clinics. The requested drop includes additional uninsured motorist's coverage and bodily injury coverage that would pay another driver's medical bills if they're at fault, a State Farm spokesman said. The Florida Legislature next month will take up several bills seeking to extend the no-fault law, modify it or let it 'sunset' in October as planned.

A poll by Quinnipiac University Polling Institute of 1,003 Floridians found that 2/3rds approved of Governor Crist's start to his 4 year term while only 6% disapproved.

Preliminary Tourism Figures

The total number of tourists visiting Florida in 2006 increased by 1.2 percent compared to 2005 figures. From January 1 through December 31, 2006, 84.6 million people visited Florida according to preliminary data* released by VISIT FLORIDA, the state's official source for travel planning.

This slight increase in annual visitation comes on the heels of a sharp decrease in tourism during the third quarter of 2006 followed by flat tourism figures for the first six months of 2006. "Though we are encouraged by the recent increase in visitation, the tourism market in Florida is currently quite unstable," said Donna Ross, chairman of the VISIT FLORIDA Board of Directors and CEO of the Florida Attractions Association. "With a relatively flat marketing budget, Florida is being outspent by other destinations who are aggressively marketing to potential visitors."

Tourism is Florida's No. 1 industry, generating revenues that provide funding to help build roads, support schools and pay for other vital statewide programs. Currently, the Sunshine State lags behind Hawaii, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Texas for public funding of tourism marketing.

In 2005, it is estimated that Florida lost 1.6 percentage points of the nation's overseas tourism market share. **As Florida's No. 2 source for international visitation** (behind Canada), **United Kingdom visitor figures have been projected to have decreased nearly five percent in 2006.** A one percent decrease in Florida visitation

represents a loss of approximately \$37.2 million in general revenue collections.

"Although visitation increased one percent in 2006, the state depends on a visitation increase of four or five percent each year to strengthen Florida's economic future," said Bud Nocera, president and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA.

With support from more than 80 statewide tourism leaders, VISIT FLORIDA has launched the Partnership for Florida's Tourism in order to raise awareness about the importance of tourism marketing. The Partnership is asking for an additional \$34.3 million in public funds in order to remain competitive in the tourism marketplace, offset the rising cost of advertising and help stabilize the currently inconsistent tourism market. With an increase in public funding, VISIT FLORIDA expects that visitation to Florida will rise 2.7 percent during the 2008 calendar year, generating more than \$102 million in state sales tax revenues.

VISIT FLORIDA reports that enplanements to Florida's 14 largest airports showed a 0.7 percent increase over 2005 to almost 66.9 million enplanements. From entry-level employees to top-level executives, 983,800 people with a combined income of more than \$16.3 billion are employed statewide in the tourism field.

Research also revealed that fourth quarter (Oct.-Dec.) 2006 visits to Florida increased 9.5 percent compared to the same quarter in 2005. The third quarter of 2006 reflected a visitor decrease of 2.1 percent over the same period the previous year or a loss of 437,000 visitors.

**Preliminary estimates are issued 45 days after the end of each calendar quarter.*

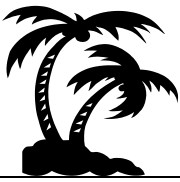
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Florida Homes and Travel

March 2007

Coastal Gazette

A commercial air service to Marathon on the Florida Keys has started, after 6 years without service. Delta Airlines is operating a daily flight to and from its hub in Atlanta, with an extra arrival in Marathon on Friday and departure to Atlanta on Sunday to cater for weekenders.

Collier County could become the location for a new sitcom if all goes well. Writers David Isaacs and Ken Levine, screenwriters for 'Cheers, M*A*S*H and Frasier' have written a pilot episode about a professional golfer who moves to Florida and then becomes the Mayor of a fictional town called Saturn Beach. Titled 'Hurricane Chad', Chad – the golfer – has issues as a homeowner which results in him becoming mayor, and he is billed as 'an incredibly good-looking, charming guy who is just a bit of a scoundrel, a self-serving sort of guy'. The show would have comedic aspects rather than pure comedy, but unlike CSI: Miami which is mainly shot in Los Angeles, 'Hurricane Chad' would be mostly shot locally.

Tourists and residents in South Florida could have a new attraction in the form of a 200 acre theme park with roller coasters, water chutes and other rides. Formerly the possible site of The Scripps Research Institute, Mecca Farms, west of Palm Beach Gardens has been the site of a \$73 million plan submitted by developers to Palm Beach County. The plans also call for a water park, 15 hotels and a festival street with restaurants, nightclubs and a 12,000-seat amphitheatre. The plans will face heavy opposition however, from the environmental groups which eventually put paid to the Scripps project because of the potential spin off development.

Collier County is joining with the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service to provide more wildlife underpasses on county roads. There have been 40 panther deaths in Collier County since 2000, and Collier County has the largest part of the panther's habitat, with wild panthers currently numbering between 80 and 100 making them one of the most critically endangered species on the planet.

Owners of the Sun West mine at Hudson, off U.S. 19 and the Dixie Hwy have hired a team of experts to develop plans for 2,900 residential units, a golf course, hotel, conference center, marina, shopping centres and restaurants on 642 acres.

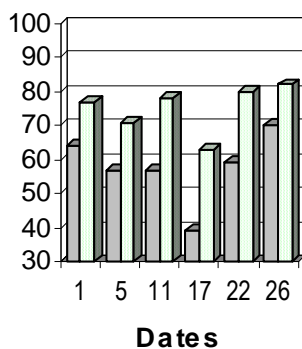
Charlotte County is considering asking voters to support a half a cent sales tax increase to support new school construction that is estimated to cost in excess of \$200 million. The tax would last for 15 – 20 years and generate around \$14 million a year.

An information kiosk for visitors featuring an interactive computer terminal will be installed at 711, Fifth Avenue South in Naples. It will direct visitors to information centres on U.S. 41 and 8th Street South. Both the Kiosk and the center at 8th Street will be up and running by March 17th in time for St Patrick's Day celebrations.

Collier County's water director has warned that if growth continues at its current pace, demand for drinking water will increase from 35 million gallons per day to 104 million gallons a day in 20 years. That will require two new water treatment plants, 57 new wells in the next 5 years and 211 new wells over the next 20 years. The director also indicated that prices will have to go up, although he did not allude to by how much.

Construction is well underway on the clubhouse and first building at Sierra Grande in Naples. Twenty-four units here will be available to be sold as STR's of less than 30 days.

February Miami High/Low Temperatures

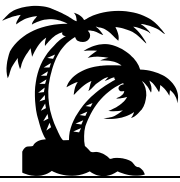


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Florida Homes and Travel

March 2007

Renting my villa on a long term let

As the real estate market in Florida cools, many homeowners are looking to ride out the recovery through long term rental agreements on their vacation villas. What implication does this cause for taxation on these properties?

Vacation villas are generally rented for periods of less than six months. Sales tax is due at the rate of 6 percent on charges or room rates paid in exchange for the right to use or occupy living or sleeping accommodations. Florida law refers to these living or sleeping accommodations as "transient accommodations." Most counties impose a tourist development tax on taxable rentals of transient accommodations. The definition of a long term let is that rental charges are paid by a person who has signed a bona fide written lease for a period of continuous residence longer than 6 months. These rental arrangements are exempt from sales tax and tourist development tax.

Florida's tangible tax is applied to all business personal property and includes anything used in the business except real estate. All individuals, firms and corporations that lease, manage, or have control of any tangible personal property are required to file a return before April 1st of each year. A penalty is assessed for late returns and failure to file a return. This must be filed whether you have short term or long term rental agreements.

Real estate or Ad Valorem taxes on real property are collected by the Tax Collector on an annual basis beginning on November 1st for the tax year January through December. It is the responsibility of each taxpayer to ensure that his/her taxes are paid and that a tax bill is received.

Tax statements are normally mailed out on or before November 1st of each year. The gross amount is due by March 31st. Discounts are applied for early payment: Taxes become delinquent April 1st of each year at which time a 3% penalty must be added to the bill. This is the same for both long term and short term rental agreements.

Federal Income tax returns are filed by non resident aliens who have income generated from US situs real estate. Cash or the fair market value of property you receive for the use of real estate is taxable as rental income, including payment received outside the US. You can deduct expenses of renting property from your rental income. Income and expenses related to real estate rentals are reported for non resident alien individuals on Form 1040NR along with Schedule E. This is the same for long term or short term rental agreements.

Jan Marie Doughty is an American Certified Public Accountant (CPA) - located in Chichester, West Sussex, United Kingdom and Cocoa Beach, Florida, practicing in US taxation for property and business services with particular emphasis on non resident and international clients.

Florida Property and Business Services was established in Chichester, West Sussex, United Kingdom in 1993 by Jan Marie Doughty, CPA for UK clients with US Real Property. Assistance is also given to small US businesses with non resident owners and non residents exploring L1/L2 or E1/E2 Visa applications with their business planning needs. Further information available - www.FloridaPBS.com - 01243 536026.

No responsibility can be accepted for action taken on the basis of this brief article, it is for general guidance only. Specific professional advice should be taken before acting on the issues outlined above.

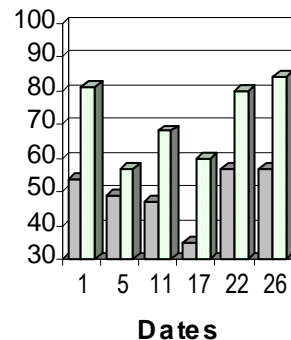
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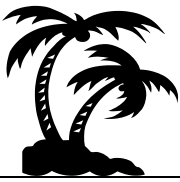


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**February Orlando
High/Low Temperatures**





Florida Homes and Travel

March 2007

Letters

Dear Sirs,

RE: DIRECTV

I received a "Flyer" from the above television company (copy was enclosed). It reads: - Free Installation, Free HD receiver upgrade, Free STARZ or SHOWTIME for a year, Free 7" portable DVD player, plus \$100 CASH BACK.

I phoned on 21st November and was offered the following:-

A monthly fee of \$39.99 less \$10 per month
2 Control boxes required an additional \$4.99 per month.

Insurance to cover breakdown \$5.99 per month.
Free Showtime and Sports channel for 3 months.
Total cost would be \$40.97 + tax = Grand monthly total of \$44.00.

Installation would take place on 24th November. The engineer arrived and all was connected by 11am. We then spent from 11am till 8 pm trying to get a signal. Please believe me when I say I had the telephone stuck to my ear for 6 hours. Every department of Direct T.V. takes up to an hour to answer.

By coincidence I also received my bank statement on the 24th November. Not only had they taken a month's fee [for] which I had given my Debit card number, but also they had taken an additional \$200 without my authority.

I phoned them immediately (yet another hour waiting for a response) to be told that the \$10 per month deduction they had given me was because of the \$200 charge they had made without my knowledge. I was being given my own \$200 back at the rate of \$10 per month for 20 months. I demanded them to repay the money back to me

which they refused. It also transpired that my monthly fee turned out to be \$50.84. If you add back the \$10 of my own money my actual monthly fee was \$60.84.

I have written 3 letters and have had 3 phone calls to no avail. I finally contacted my bank who eventually got my account credited.

In the meantime I received a further statement for the monthly fee which I paid. Three days later another statement arrived demanding that I paid them the \$200 refunded by the bank. Yet another phone [call] ensued (one and half hours) in which I was threatened that if I did not pay up by return they would disconnect me.

Lo and behold 3 days later I found myself disconnected. Once more on the phone to be told I would not get connected until they received a cheque for \$190. I asked to speak to the supervisor (waited 40 minutes). She said that when I paid \$169 I would be reconnected. Naturally I refused and so she said I had to speak to another department. A further 40 minutes later I was finally connected when it was agreed that, as I would not pay up, the equipment should be returned to them.

I enquired on what day the engineer would call to take the equipment down. I was informed that they do not have anyone employed to return equipment. They would send the required number of boxes to me, I would then have to disconnect everything myself, (including the huge TV. dish 6 feet up on the wall), pack everything and then contact the carrier to collect.

I was also informed that it was I that had broken the "CONTRACT" and that I would receive a charge of \$125.

My reason for writing to you is so that the public can be aware that, not only can you not trust what they promise, but also inefficiency personified.

Yours faithfully John Blake.

JOHN A TUFFIN & CO Chartered Accountants

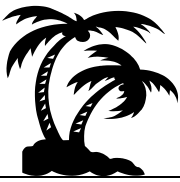
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Florida Lottery Winning Numbers

Date	Numbers
02/24/2007	04 - 10 - 23 - 36 - 40 - 48
02/21/2007	12 - 14 - 16 - 23 - 26 - 45
02/17/2007	11 - 18 - 20 - 24 - 27 - 51
02/14/2007	07 - 11 - 14 - 34 - 42 - 48
02/10/2007	10 - 11 - 18 - 24 - 26 - 35
02/07/2007	06 - 20 - 22 - 24 - 32 - 41
02/03/2007	15 - 19 - 33 - 46 - 47 - 51
01/31/2007	02 - 03 - 06 - 07 - 27 - 45

Numbers are obtained from the Florida Lottery (www.flalottery.com) as a service to readers. We cannot accept liability for any errors.



Florida Homes and Travel

March 2007

The Island Of Bones (part 2)

Continuing from the December/January issue with Kathleen's kind permission:

It was twenty one or so miles south of Homestead through uninspiring scenery, before US 1 took a right and we were at the gateway to the Keys. Celebrated in this instance by a dual highway, lined either side by the now ever familiar sprawl of diners, motels, filling stations, real estate offices, RV and Trailer outlets, and all that goes with US roadside scenery. It is as familiar a part of the scenery in good old Florida as the Palm trees and the Pines. Every mile we travel now will have its Mile Marker. Between a point shortly after taking the right turn and Key West, there are 106 of them. Many businesses along this highway incorporate the mile marker in their address. For example the Glass Bottom Boat cruises to view the coral reefs of the John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, are at the Holiday Inn Docks, MM100 on Ocean Side (East), Key Largo, US1.

No, we did not succumb to the billboard exhorting us to see the marine life and the coral reef through the glass, Key West was our destination for today. That was the trouble with most of the 106 mile journey. If we had stopped off at every interesting or scenic location, we would still be making this trip. Between MM92 and MM91 the urban scenery gives out, and so does the dual highway. From now on its single lane and, supposedly no overtaking. The amount of development on the various Keys was a little surprising. You can't blame anyone for wanting to live in such surroundings, but in my naive way I had assumed they were to be just tropical Islands with the usual swaying palms and white beaches. Maybe the odd grass hut with palm frond roof. Alas, the developers are abroad and the dollar rules. Simplistic dreamer that I am.

Under a canopy of blue sky, the Overseas Highway leads off into the distance, island hopping on stilts, with 42 bridges carrying the road over the watery gaps. With the waters of the Gulf of Mexico on our right, and on the other side the Atlantic Ocean, we clock up the miles to our destination. Or should I say clock them down, because the zero mile marker is at the far end of Key West. Despite the supposed ban on passing, a few impatient drivers pull past and swan off into the distance. Is that a clue to the tyre marks that go up the banked sides? Most come down again, but some don't. Missing, believed drowned? Or is it high spirited youth, bank climbing for a dare, or to impress some beautiful girl friend? One of the drawbacks to the sides being banked, is that the wonderful views have little foreground.

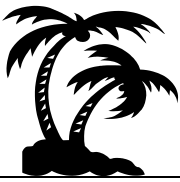
Keys are traversed, large and small, with evocative names like Indian Key, Conch Key, and Duck Key. The remains of Flaglers old railroad marches alongside, with gaps indicating where the hurricane tore the

structure to shreds in 1935. Numerous picnic spots tempt the traveller to take a break and sit in the shade, to dream of a win on the Florida Lottery to make the dreams reality. The horizon is dotted with numerous small islands, almost all with palms swaying in the breeze.

Marathon Key comes up on the sign-board. MM49 so its a good place for an indulgence in the Dunkin' Donuts on the right. A pretty big place Marathon, and judging by the ads in the Real Estate window next door, a row of noughts preceded by three digits seems to come with every asking price. We pass the airport, crowded with assorted light aircraft, a clue to the affluent Robinson Crusoes on this well developed Key. Guess we won't be settling here. Motor on young man, there is the famous 7 mile bridge ahead. The traffic is very light in both directions, giving me a chance to glance at the views, and also giving me another clue to the tyre marks on the banking, as I smartly get back onto the flat bit. Big Pine Key and 33 miles to go, then we pass the US Naval Air Station on Boca Chica Key. I never had a posting like that!

A T-junction looms ahead and suddenly we are there. Left or Right? "Take a left" says the navigator, as if she knows where we are headed. It appears we are on Roosevelt Boulevard South. On our right, after the usual stretch of diners, motels and what have you, is Key West International Airport. The scruffy looking narrow stretch on our left, turns out to be the George Smathers Municipal Beach. We have, it seems missed the Key West Visitor Center, so it will be lucky dip. Suburbia hoves into view. Any right and any left finds us in Washington Street. El Patio Motel sounds good and it proved to be so. Book in, shower, change and join a group of people around the pool. For a meal we should "try Jeromes, it is very near the southernmost point, so take your camera along". Yes Ma'am. Jeromes was good. So good that further exercise seemed an imposition. Being good tourists we tottered off to find that famous Buoy marking the southern most point of the USA. Judging by the number of people of all nationalities around it Kodak were going to have a very good year. Smiles abound as cameras click and whirr, and camcorders record all. Justice done to Messrs Kodak and Agfa, we became aware that the late afternoon was turning into evening. On studying the map from the motel, we discovered to our dismay that Mallory Square was on the other side of the island. We will remember that forced march for a long, long time. Duval Street and all its attractions passed in a blur. Having promised to "take in the shops later dear", averted a mutiny. We joined the press of humanity already there awaiting the sunset. The Sunset? A lack lustre display, as it was on the next two nights. But that's where we started the story of course.

Join us next month as Keith & Kathleen explore more of Key West.



Florida Homes and Travel

March 2007

Weird News

Star Crossed Lovers. Could a phrase be more appropriate for the NASA astronauts caught up in a love triangle? Lisa Marie Nowak, a 43-year-old married mother of three developed a rather unhealthy obsession with fellow unmarried astronaut Navy Cmdr William Oefelein, 41. She described their relationship as more than a working one, but less than a romantic one. According to authorities Nowak believed that Oefelein had begun a romantic relationship with Colleen Shipman who worked at Patrick Air Force Base near the Kennedy Space Center. Nowak allegedly wanted to confront Shipman, so on discovering that Shipman was flying from Houston to Orlando, Nowak drove non-stop from Houston to Orlando using astronauts diapers to save have to stop! She reached Orlando International before Shipman and followed her out to the car park. By this time Shipman was suspicious and locked herself in the car. Nowak knocked on the window and tried to open the door to ask for a lift. When that failed she started to cry. At this point Shipman opened the window slightly whereupon she was sprayed with a chemical spray. She managed to drive to the parking lot booth where the police were called. An officer reported seeing Nowak throwaway a bag containing a wig and a BB gun. Nowak was still carrying a bag containing a steel mallet, a 4 inch folding knife, rubber tubing, \$600 and garbage bags when she was arrested

A man who retrieves golf balls from lakes for resale found more than he bargained for when his foot picked up a seven foot alligator in the lake on the fifth hole at Timber Greens Country Club, New Port Richey. The man managed to beat off the gator which was subsequently removed and destroyed. The 'hazard' was well known amongst

golfers who allowed each other to take shots, which had strayed to close to the lake, from a safer distance.

Coming soon to a high end resort near you.... If you have been through one of the family blow dryers at the local swimming pool complex then you will be able to imagine the next offering at luxury locations – a sunscreen booth. Looking rather like a cross between a port-a-loo, a shower and a gate house for security guards complete with barrel tiles on the roof, the Sunscreen Mist booth can apply 2 ounces of water-proof sunscreen (twice the amount recommended by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration – note) or Tan accelerator or cooling aloe mist, in 15 seconds with a silent spray. The booth is apparently easy enough for children to use (no mention of the ease for adults who can't even programme a video player) and all formulas are tear free and non-staining. Payment is made through a wireless vending unit which accepts cash, credit/debit cards or even vouchers.

An elderly woman has lived without electricity for 15 years since her house was badly damaged by hurricane Andrew in 1992. Ripped off by an unscrupulous contractor her house was not restored to code, which meant the electricity could not be restored. She managed without hot baths, or air-conditioning through all the hot summers and cold winters until finally a neighbour realised what had happened and tipped off authorities. A few hours of work and a clean inspection later, and power was restored.

An amazing 2-legged dog was reunited after several hours with her owner after wrongly being placed upon a separate flight, from Oklahoma to Florida, to her owner. Faith the dog was born with 3 legs, the front one failed to develop and she learnt to walk upright!

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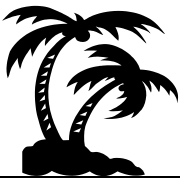
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Florida Homes and Travel

March 2007

Theme Park News

Disney has been in the news again for the wrong reasons following the arrest of one of its cast members, charged with having Child Pornography images on his computer – some of toddler age children. The 20 – year-old had worked dressed as Beast from Beauty and the Beast, and sometimes as Goofy at all the parks, but mainly at EPCOT. Recently Tigger was in the news for allegedly hitting a teenager. The investigation for that case has since been dropped, but a previous incarnation of Tigger was accused of fondling women. The most serious arrest involving a Disney employee was in 1995 when a Pluto cast member was sentenced to 2 years in prison for hiding the murder weapon from an Osceola County murder.

Disney has introduced an annual pass for its water parks. For \$59 plus tax for residents 10 and older, and \$47.20 for children ages 3 to 9 residents can have daily admission to Blizzard Beach or Typhoon Lagoon after 2 pm. Another option allowing unlimited use of both water attractions costs \$99.95 or \$80.50 for children 3 to 9. **Typhoon Lagoon** reopens on March 18th following a refurbishment.

Disney Cruise Line is to double in size with an order for two new 1,250-cabin ships. The new vessels are due to enter service in 2011 and 2012 and will be larger than the line's current ships. The increased capacity will enable the line to offer more varied itineraries. Disney will operate in Europe for the first time this summer with sailings from Barcelona. Disney said the new builds will be "a modern interpretation of classic ocean liners of the 1930s" and "evoke images of the glamour of the golden age of cruising".

Busch Gardens – Tampa Bay – has been trialling a new product for the garden during recent cold snaps. Many of the parks tender plants would not survive the cold overnight temperatures, some of which bring frost, so staff normally have to wrap the plants in protective fleece. But a Tampa company has developed a white foam that can be sprayed on temporarily to the plants, trapping the plants own heat under the foam. The foam looks like fire extinguisher foam and is blown from a small back pack with an extra large nozzle. The foam lasts from 8 to 24 hours and disintegrates as the temperature rises, leaving no marks on the plants.

Late News!

Some of you have for some time asked why we do not offer Budget car hire. We have been seeking

to do this for quite a while now, and, quite literally, we have just secured a facility to offer Budget cars. We are very happy with our Dollar product and continue to offer it; however, as you will see from the back page, we are now able to offer even more competitive rates using Budget.

We can offer a **pre-registration facility** for Sanford and Orlando (commencing this month) which provides the luxury of simply going to a dedicated booth situated in the car park, collecting your keys and you are done!

We can also now offer an affordable **Young Drivers** package for just £50 per week – rather than \$25 per day plus taxes. This provides a realistic alternative for drivers 21 – 24 years of age without having to go offsite.

Many clients and most particularly guests require **satellite navigation** systems now. These are available on a first come first serve basis with Dollar for \$9.99 per day plus tax. We can now offer a **Garmin C550 Where2** sat nav: The unit not only comes with an abundance of features but also with a simple and easy to use menu. Here are just some of the features available on the unit. Touch screen, dynamic routing with live traffic updates, 3D map, simple user interface, 36 spoken languages, 20 text languages, text to speech capabilities, bluetooth hands free, ipod interface 3.5inch QVQA tft screen, plus many more. The Where 2 kit comprises of: Where 2 unit, cigarette lighter adaptor, quick start guide, user guide, window suction cup. All this for a very reasonable £35 per week paid upfront, no taxes!

All this, and a **special offer** – a free upgrade for all cars from the compact right through to full-size for cars collected between April 9th and September 4th.

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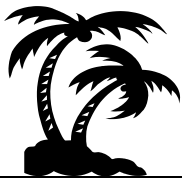
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