

DeLand, Florida: West Volusia County's New Vibe

West Volusia County is home to the town of DeLand, Florida. This small town treasure packs a punch with its vibrant downtown and fabulous food. Delightful DeLand is about 30 miles north of Orlando. Its prime location makes it a haven of peace from the hustle of Orlando. Boasting over 100 restaurants, this small town has something for everyone.

Timeless Appeal to All Ages

DeLand's Main Street is home to small, independent shops and boutiques. A few of the stores you will find as you wander are Dolls of DeLand, offering modern and vintage, antique dolls and Grrs & Purrs, a pet boutique. Nest, a funky little shop offering one-of-kind furniture and gift items and homemade sangria (it is fantastic!) and Pinup Parlor, edgy fashions for the fashionista. These unique shops are just a taste of the selection you'll find lining the streets of downtown DeLand.

One of our favorite stops was Pat & Toni's Sweet Things. Stepping in the door and over the threshold, you are transported back in time to the neighborhood candy store, where with a few coins in your hand you had enough to buy penny candy. Wood floors give way to wall shelves holding canisters full of candy. The selection will overtake you as you peer into the jars of Now & Later, Sugar Daddies, Tootsie Rolls and more, trying to decide which you will take home.

Wooden barrels in the center of the store hold even more sugary delights for you to ponder purchasing. Glass display cases holding artfully arranged goodies including homemade fudge, chocolate-dipped delights, and key lime bites are among the offerings. It is difficult to decide with such a selection of sugary delights!

Wolf & Dale will gladly help you find your inner drummer at JAMMIN! This globally eclectic shop carries a myriad of fun and mod globally inspired gifts, jewelry and of course, hand drums. Join their weekly World Rhythm Drum Classes held every Thursday and Sunday at the store, and get your rhythm on under Wolf's expert tutelage.

Explore DeLand with a Tour from Great Tasting Tours

A great way to get to know DeLand is with Great Tasting Tours. Exploring the history and food of DeLand is a unique way to discover this enchanting downtown. Uncover its history, culture, and food as you navigate your way through back alleys and streets, exploring old buildings that have sprung to life with new businesses.

Each tour is different, so you never know what you will see. With eight cultural venues, ten historical sites and twenty-four downtown eateries to choose from, each tour is created with a mix

of each. For the craft beer lover, the Brews & Browse tour is a perfect choice. The wine lover will delight in the Sip & Shop tour, as you browse the shops of downtown and sip wines selected just for you by expert sommeliers. For the food lover, the Sweet & Savory tour will set your taste buds dancing as DeLand's food artisans have tasty morsels for you to sample.

Food for Foodies Found in DeLand

DeLand is home to Stetson University, and like most college towns we've explored, it has some fantastic eateries. As foodies, we love discovering new restaurants, and DeLand did not disappoint!

Byte, a Modern Bistro is a laid-back, casual eatery. The entrance to Byte features a sidewalk bar and an accent wall created with reclaimed wood. The reclaimed wood accent wall is carried into the interior and stretches the length of the restaurant. Soft amber lighting completes the intimate ambiance.

Byte's happy hour includes 2-for-1 house wines, well liquors, Bud Light and Fat Tire (on draft.) Their food is an eclectic mix of tapas, main dishes, and accompanying sides. The standout tapas are their Gouda Bytes. These tiny bites of soft, delicious cheese coupled with the delightful guava gastrique just melt in your mouth and leave you wanting more.

For the adventurous foodie, a trip to De La Vega is a must! As De La Vega says, "Celebrate life with food, wine, community and healthy living." Dining at De La Vega will undoubtedly be a celebration of tasty, vibrant Latin food for your taste buds!

"Flavor is Passion...Savor the Difference" describes the incredible taste journey my mouth enjoyed as I slowly savored De La Vega's Hibiscus Tacos. Corn tacos, filled with scrumptious sautéed wilted hibiscus flowers, accented with green onion, Spanish onion, cilantro, garlic, mozzarella cheese and topped with red pepper sauce combine for a tasty, standout dish.

Craft Beer and Mead...Oh, My!

The craft beer lover will not be disappointed in DeLand. Persimmon Hollow is the realization of a dream by Robbie Carelli and Andy Sistrunk. These best friends-turned-home-brewers have created a craft brewery in downtown DeLand that is a place for the community to gather. Robbie and Andy want you to come hang out, bring your four-legged pals as well as your two-legged friends, play some games and drink some great beer. The company motto, "Drink Sensibly, But Get Weird," embodies their philosophy. Craft beer should be fun, a little odd, and each glass should be a work of art.

Odd Elixir Meadworks in DeLand's premier craft bar, Abbey Bar, is a small batch meadery that is serving up an old-fashioned brew made new. Ann-Marie & Blair Willacker are the brewers and faces behind Odd Elixir. Back in 2008, Ann-Marie began brewing mead when she was unable to find suitable mead commercially in Florida. Her inspiration for mead brewing comes from the craft beer scene. When you visit DeLand, a visit to Odd Elixir and Abbey Bar is a must!

DeLand, the surprising vibrant town just 30 miles north of Orlando is worth a visit next time you find yourself in Florida.

For More:

- West Volusia County, <http://visitwestvolusia.com>
- Deland, www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g34178-DeLand_Florida-Vacations.html
- Pat & Toni's Sweet Things, www.patandtonissweetthings.com
- Jammin!, <https://jamminshop.com/>
- Great Tasting Tours, <https://greattastingtours.com>
- Stetson University, www.stetson.edu/home/
- Byte, www.bytebistrodeland.com
- De La Vega, www.delavegart.com
- Persimmon Hollow Brewery, www.persimmonhollowbrewing.com
- Odd Elixir Meadworks & Abbey Bar, www.abbeybardeland.com
- More on our site about Florida: [Lake Worth and Lantana](#) and the [Florida Everglades](#)

-Note: We were offered a complimentary visit to the King and Prince Beach and Golf Resort as part of a Press Trip. All opinions are my own. No other compensation was received.

-All photos by Jim Hill. Cover photo depicts Persimmon Hollow Brewery.