Port Tampa Bay Area Cruise Guide

Parking, waterfront dining, Ybor City history, attractions, and annual events

Information reviewed July 31, 2026. Restaurant hours, event dates, admission prices, parking rates, road conditions, and terminal procedures can change. Confirm details before travel.

Port and Area Overview

Port Tampa Bay's terminals are in the Channel District beside Sparkman Wharf, The Florida Aquarium, Water Street, and the Tampa Riverwalk. The compact waterfront area makes Tampa one of Florida's easiest ports for adding dining and sightseeing before or after a cruise.

Official Port Parking Costs

Official self-parking	Port Tampa Bay sells parking through its sailing-specific online system. The public page does not display one universal daily self-parking rate; obtain the current total by selecting the cruise line and sailing.
Valet upgrade	The official port FAQ lists a $20 valet upgrade fee.
Oversized parking	Available through the official parking system; price depends on vehicle and sailing.
Location	Main garage is across from Terminal 3 at 810 Channelside Drive; additional parking is used near Terminal 6.
Best practice	Prepay through the official port link and retain the confirmation.

Local Eateries to Consider

Columbia Restaurant

Historic Ybor City restaurant founded in 1905, known for Spanish and Cuban cuisine.

Ulele

Native-inspired Florida dishes, seafood, and on-site brewery along the Riverwalk.

Sparkman Wharf

Waterfront food hall-style collection of local concepts near the terminals.

Armature Works

Restored industrial building with Heights Public Market and riverfront dining.

La Segunda Bakery

Historic Tampa bakery famous for Cuban bread and sandwiches.

Bern's Steak House

Landmark Tampa dining experience with extensive wine and dessert rooms; reservations are important.

Things to Do and Places to Visit

The Florida Aquarium

Major family attraction immediately beside the cruise terminals.

Tampa Riverwalk

Connects museums, parks, restaurants, Water Street, and downtown attractions.

Tampa Bay History Center

Regional history, including Indigenous peoples, cigar culture, shipping, and sports.

Ybor City

Historic cigar district with architecture, restaurants, shops, and nightlife.

Sparkman Wharf and Water Street

Walkable waterfront dining and public spaces next to the port.

Henry B. Plant Museum

Gilded Age hotel and railroad history on the University of Tampa campus.

Local History and Noteworthy Background

Tampa grew through shipping, railroads, phosphate, and cigar manufacturing. In the late 1800s, Ybor City became an internationally important cigar center populated by Cuban, Spanish, Italian, Afro-Cuban, and other immigrant communities. Port activity and the Hillsborough River remain central to the city's identity.

Annual Festivals and Recurring Events

Gasparilla Pirate Festival

Tampa's signature annual parade season, generally held in January and February.

Florida State Fair

Large annual fair usually held in February.

River O'Green Fest

City St. Patrick's celebration on the downtown waterfront, generally in March.

Tampa Riverfest

Annual Riverwalk celebration with music, activities, and waterfront events.

Cuban Sandwich Festival

Recurring celebration of Tampa's Cuban sandwich traditions.

Sant' Yago Knight Parade

Night parade associated with Gasparilla season in Ybor City.

Scott's planning tip: Major festivals, sporting events, boat shows, and rocket launches can raise hotel prices and create traffic. Check the local event calendar before booking a pre-cruise hotel.

Official and local-information sources

Port Tampa Bay cruise parking
https://www.porttb.com/cruise/cruise-parking/

City of Tampa things to do
https://www.tampa.gov/info/things-to-do

Visit Tampa Bay food and drink
https://www.visittampabay.com/food-and-drink/

My Port Notes