



**VISIT LOCAL SHOPS**



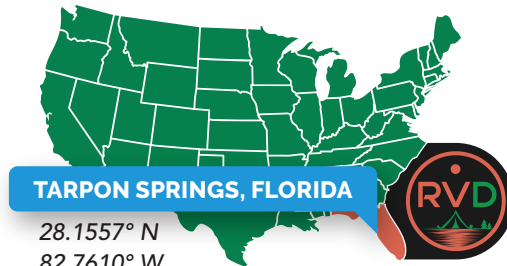
**LEARN THE HISTORY**



**DOLPHIN TOUR**



**DEEP SEA FISHING**



**TARPON SPRINGS, FLORIDA**

28.1557° N  
82.7610° W

**S**ituated in Tarpon Springs—the "Sponge Capital of the World"—are the Sponge Docks. Between the older generation speaking in Greek and the delicious foods filling the air, you'll feel transformed in time to the streets of Greece. The small town has something for everyone: food, dolphin tours, scenic sunset cruises and history abound. The area is very walkable but also has a small-town trolley. The Sponge Docks are most noted for their

sponges, and while most sponges used today are synthetic, natural sea sponges are still harvested in Tarpon Springs. During a walk along the piers, you can witness returning divers cleaning the working boats and sponges.

**10** Shopping may not always be on every traveler's list, but the shops here hold so much history. It's worth stepping into some of these older shops to chat with a fourth-generation shop owner, watch a movie about the sponges' history, or purchase sponges, olive oil, jewelry or "touristy gifts." The Sponge Factory has been around for years and is a top pick. You'll also find new shops toward the end of the walking area offering a younger generation style and feel.

**9** The small area of the Sponge Docks is drenched in history. In many ways, that's what holds this little town together and keeps visitors coming back for more year after year. The local visitor centers are fantastic places to learn about this area, but a favorite thing to do is simply talk to local shop owners and asking questions. Many of the older shops feature movies, and learning more is worth the stop. Some shops even offer a discount on shopping if you sit and watch the entire thing.

**8** Dolphin tours are always a fan favorite, and they hold a place for visitors coming to Florida and the area with limited time. One of the best things about the Spongeorama Dolphin Adventure Beach Cruise is that you may disembark and explore Anclote Island, search for shells, go swimming and get up close and personal with some of Florida's rare wildlife. You also get to see the historic Anclote Key Lighthouse, which was built in 1887 and is still in operation.

**7** There are countless opportunities to make your dream of catching that killer fish off the Sponge Docks come true. A top pick is the 65-foot charter boat Gulfstar. They fish for grouper and snapper at the world-famous Florida Middle Grounds and include special multi-day trips for deep-water grouper, snapper, tuna and swordfish. They take you out and provide you with everything you need, then return to the docks and clean the fish for you while onlookers talk about the day's catch.

**6** One of the best ways to see the ocean is by boat, and a boat tour is a brilliant idea if you haven't brought your own. As with anything, you gain a different perspective of the town and learn so much about the sponges, the divers and all the species of sponges. Boating on the Anclote River and the Gulf of Mexico is a unique treasure. Spotting wildlife is sure to happen, so bring those cameras and learn all the history of this area.



**BOAT TOURS**



**VISIT THE BAYOU**

**5**

It's hard to believe how much history lives in this little area. Ideally situated amongst stunning homes and surrounded by grass lawns, this is the perfect place for a picnic with some of those bakery items available at the Sponge Docks. This area is so famous for one reason alone: the vast ecosystem of marine life. From Florida alligators to the plethora of sponges, Tarpon Springs has much wildlife to enjoy, from the bayou to the shining sea.



**VISIT THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**4**

Less than a mile from the Sponge Docks is Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral. The original frame for this cathedral was erected in 1907; over the years, it has become one of Tarpon Springs's most iconic buildings. The marble in this structure was a gift from the Greek government and was sourced from Mount Pentelicus near Athens, Greece. Locally, it's known for the Epiphany celebration. Every year on January 6th, 16- to 18-year-old young men of the church dive for the symbolic cross tossed into the Tarpon Springs Bayou, with the victor receiving the blessings and grace for the year.



**KAYAK THE ANCLOTE RIVER**

**3**

This is one of the most amazing things to do while in the area, with various options for different times of day and the type of wildlife you may want to see. This Guided Eco Tour is just a few minutes from the Sponge Docks. You'll wind through the mangroves, with water only a few feet deep most of the time. During the winter months, they feature a manatee tour, which is an absolute must-see. Some wildlife you may see includes dolphins, manatees, otters, bald eagles and various other birds.



**ENJOY A LOCAL BAKERY**

**2**

Can we say Greek bakery? The beauty that is situated on the shelves of these bakery shops is like no other; they look like pieces of art. The local favorite is the traditional Greek dessert baklava, and there is nothing like it. Your options are endless; from dark chocolate ganache treats to fruit tarts, there is something sweet for everyone. Don't forget the coffee or cappuccino, and take time to eat your dessert outside and soak it all in. Lastly, take your time and savor every bite. Trust me; you'll dream of these baked items for a long time.

**1**

You don't want to miss the mouthwatering foods offered on these blocks. Greek food is the number one recommendation, although seafood has become increasingly popular. Still, this area is known for its Greek food, so it's highly recommended that you eat at a small mom-and-pop location. A local favorite is Mykonos, with its gyros that will make your mouth water; every detail is homemade and made with love.



**EAT THE LOCAL CUISINE**

The Tarpon Springs Sponge Docks are a must-see when traveling to Florida. It's nothing like anything else you'll see in the state. Light years away from that Disney feel, it adds such a piece of history and culture to your visit. And it's free. There's something for everyone in this small town, from eating the food to looking at the boats and watching the manatees in the bayou. Plan to be here for at least half a day to soak up all there is to offer, wear comfortable walking shoes and be ready to eat.