

State Tourism Director Spotlight

Name: Dana Young

Title: President & CEO

Company/Department: VISIT FLORIDA

City/State: Tallahassee, Florida

Have you always worked within Tourism? What is the path that got you to your current role and how long have you been in your current role?



As sixth-generation Floridian, I have a deep, personal love for Florida and understand the vast experiences that are found here. I am blessed to have been given the opportunity this January to work alongside VISIT FLORIDA's talented staff who are committed to strengthening Florida's number one industry as we strive to attract more visitors, bolster our state's economy and create additional job opportunities for hardworking Floridians.

For the past eight years, I was honored to serve in the Florida Legislature, where I worked to cultivate and protect Florida's exceptional business climate and a world-class quality of life. From 2010 through 2016, I had the honor to serve in the Florida House, rising to Majority Leader for the 2015 and 2016 legislative sessions. In 2016, I was elected to the Florida Senate, where I represented parts of the City of Tampa and Western Hillsborough County.

I'm an environmental attorney and have a deep understanding of the important role that environmental protection plays in attracting visitors and enhancing the quality of life for our citizens.

Is there a signature food or culinary dish in your state that we need to partake in?

If you're looking for a true Florida experience, you can't go wrong with fresh from Florida seafood. Florida ranks among the top 12 U.S. states for fresh seafood production, and Florida fishermen catch more than 84 percent of the nation's supply of grouper, pompano, mullet, stone crab, pink shrimp, spiny lobsters and Spanish mackerel.

While each region of Florida has its own seafood specialties, stone crab claws are my favorite Florida delicacy.

Outside of your state, where have you experienced the best vacation of all time?

Florida truly offers the best vacation experiences! While my family and I have been fortunate enough to travel throughout Europe, Central America and the Caribbean, my favorite vacation destination remains a beach or an island off of Florida's coast.

What remains on your bucket list for travel?

I'd love to take a culinary trip through Southeast Asia.

Any words of wisdom for those just starting out in, or studying for, a career in travel and tourism?

My biggest advice for those interested in working in the tourism industry is to appreciate the value that our visitors provide to our communities both locally and nationally. It's important to recognize and accommodate the needs of visitors, and understand that tourism is a people-focused industry built on relationships. Our tourism industry represents Florida to the entire world. The hospitality provided by Floridians is what makes our state a special place to visit.