

Flagler Beach: Finalist for Coolest Small Towns Contest

Flagler Beach has been named a finalist in Budget Travel's eighth-annual Coolest Small Towns in America contest. After 924 nominations, 96,605 votes, and 2,415 comments — the biggest turnout ever — the contest has been narrowed down to 15 towns throughout the country.

Flagler Beach joins Bay St. Louis, Miss.; Camden, Maine; Elkhart Lake, Wis.; Glenwood Springs, Colo.; Greenville, Ky.; Gulf Shores, Ala.; Le Claire, Iowa; Lititz, Pa.; Mount Carroll, Ill.; Put-in-Bay, Ohio; Quincy, Calif.; Shepherdstown, W. Va.; Travelers Rest, S.C. and Watkins Glen, N.Y.

The contest came to the attention of Terri Pruden, of the Flagler Beach Museum, last year when several small towns in upstate New York were in the running.

"I just kept thinking Flagler Beach should be in the running," she said.

Hammondsport, N.Y., tied for the win in last year's contest and since Pruden knew people there, she called to inquire.

"They said it was one of the greatest things that happened to tourism in their town," Pruden said. Their reservations and merchandise went up after the win, and they even

held a new logo contest to incorporate the Coolest Small Towns Winner logo.

“I believe I live in one of the coolest small towns, and if there is contest for that we should be in it,” Pruden said. “If it boosts our tourism, then that is icing on the cake.”

Social media, Pruden said, is going to be Flagler Beach’s best friend as the contest goes forward. She encourages people to post the voting link on Twitter and Facebook and to ask friends and family to vote as well. In addition to voting, residents and visitors have the chance to leave a comment on their town.

“If people here can describe what is coolest about the town, even if we don’t win, people will be reading about it,” she said.

One comment about Flagler Beach reads: “Living in Flagler Beach was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. Beautiful scenery, very low crime rate, friendly people, awesome neighbors. ... There is absolutely no place on the coast like my little town. However, I don't want it to win too many accolades. ... I'd prefer to keep the small town atmosphere and not let the secret get out to too many.”

There are 28 days left to vote for the winner.

To vote,

visit <http://www.budgettravel.com/contest/americas-coolest-small-towns-2013,14/>. (If you don't get a 'thank you' message after voting, try using another browser.)

<http://www.palmcoastobserver.com/article/flagler-beach-finalist-coolest-small-towns-contest>