

THE BIRCHWOOD



LIVING EACH MOMENT

Possibly the best Staycation--just outside the region

For those of us who live in the Sarasota area, there's no better place for a day-trip or an overnight stay—than St. Petersburg: It's a perfect distance, just 45 minutes, yet separated by one of the biggest bridges in the country which makes you feel like you're really spending time in a different area.

The best place in St. Petersburg is Beach Drive. A kinder-gentler-tamer version of Ocean Drive on South Beach. Eclectic shops, restaurants and bars—and great people watching. Easy access to the bayfront, museums and recreation. And the epicenter of fun on Beach Drive is a Spanish Mission-style building called The Birchwood.

It's listed in the National Registry of Historic Places. It's been described as “sophisticated 1920s-inspired rooms in a trendy area featuring a chic restaurant and a rooftop bar.” The rooftop bar is called “The Canopy” and it's one of the coolest places in the area. Great view, attractive crowds and plenty of seating. And if that's not enough, the floors below feature 18 boutique hotel rooms.

The Birchwood was built in 1924 as apartments. It eventually underwent a major renovation—so major, workers added two floors and became a boutique hotel. The rooms are spacious, clean and well-appointed.

After we checked in and unpacked, we showed and went out to find dinner on Beach Drive. The energy and ambiance in front of Parkshore Grill. They specialize in both steak and seafood with fine wines.

We sat outside on the front patio, had a knowledgeable longtime waiter and enjoyed a lazy dinner while watching the world walk by. Very enjoyable experience. We even saw some friends from Sarasota, who came and visited at our table for a few minutes.

After dinner we walked some more along Beach Drive, soaking up the vibrant scenery, before going up to “The Canopy” for a nightcap. It was a happening scene, and a nice place to cap off the night. And the best part of all, was taking the elevator down from the rooftop bar down to our room! No car keys, no parking and no worries!

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We awakened to a Sunday morning rainstorm, making it all the more comforting to go downstairs for a free hot breakfast in the lobby restaurant. A perfect buffet to start the day!.





After brunch we went upstairs to change, asked—and received—a late check-out and walked a few blocks to one of the most popular luxury spas in St. Petersburg. “Tranquility Wellness Spa” has massages, body treatments, facials, manicures, pedicures, waxing, acupuncture and packages. Anne Bessonneau is a young interesting entrepreneur from Paris who moved to St. Peterburg and bought the spa earlier this year to continue it’s legacy. She and her business partner have only built on the long-time spa’s prior 16-year track record.

Erin got a facial and I got a massage—and we both were very happy with our decisions. Lauren, at the front desk, asked us questions beforehand and guided us to the proper therapist to match our preferences.

We actually walked by this spa during a previous trip and were so drawn toward it, I wrote down the name and made a point to get appointments when we were back in St. Petersburg. Success!

Feeling relaxed and refreshed, we enjoyed our walk back to The Birchwood Inn, where the front desk clerk welcomed us back by name one final time. Classy place. The valet pulled up our car, threw in our bags—and we pulled away from the curb for our 45 mile/45 minute drive back to downtown Sarasota. A relatively short drive, but a world away.

Ray Collins

