



Gaylord Palms Resort Poised to Become Lodging Crown Jewel in Central Florida's Kissimmee-St. Cloud Resort Area; New Resort and Convention Center Features 4.5-acre Atrium Under Glass

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KISSIMMEE, Fla., Jan. 23 /PRNewswire/ -- At 2:02 p.m. on Feb. 2 (that's 02-02-02), Gaylord Entertainment (NYSE: GET) will ceremoniously open Gaylord Palms, a landmark new \$450 million resort and convention center in the Kissimmee-St. Cloud Resort Area of Central Florida. Gaylord Palms features massive convention facilities, innovative restaurants, a Canyon Ranch SpaClub, and colorful Florida themes that carry throughout an expansive 4.5-acre glass-topped atrium and into each of the 1,406 guest rooms.

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20020123/FLW004>)

The 2.1-million-square-foot resort, located five minutes from the gates of Walt Disney World, is designed in the tradition of the grand 19th-century Florida seaside resorts. The hotel's appearance is distinct and completely themed to the Sunshine State, including the locales of St. Augustine, Key West, the Emerald Coast, Miami's South Beach and the Everglades.

With 400,000 square feet of meeting and convention space, Gaylord Palms is the first resort in Central Florida to focus entirely on the meetings and conventions market.

"The opening of Gaylord Palms is a monumental occasion for Gaylord Entertainment, as we expand the first national brand of convention resorts," said president and CEO Colin Reed. "The quality of Gaylord Palms' facilities is just a hint at the top level of service we will offer our guests."

Industry leaders are already calling the resort a success. In January, Gaylord announced that more than one million room nights had been pre-sold to meeting and convention groups, breaking an industry record for pre-opening sales.

Gaylord Palms is the first new resort construction project by parent company Gaylord Entertainment since the last phase of the legendary Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center (formerly Opryland Hotel) was completed in Nashville in 1996.

Under the glass-covered atriums, guests are transported to three distinct Florida locales: Key West, St. Augustine and the Everglades. Each atrium reflects the architecture, beauty, and personality of the destination. Standing tall inside the St. Augustine atrium is a reproduction of Castillo de San Marcos, the oldest Spanish fort in America. Guests can explore caves adjacent to the fort and take a drink from the "fountain of youth." The focal point for the Key West atrium is a 60-foot sailboat in a 161,000-gallon wave-filled coral reef. Every evening, the atrium is the setting of a sunset celebration reminiscent of Key West's Mallory Square. In the Everglades, the mysterious "river of grass" comes to life with an eerie fog and lush vegetation. Guests who explore the atrium will find a storyteller who tells tales of gators that got away.

The resort features the best in guest amenities, including a Canyon Ranch SpaClub, the largest hotel spa and fitness center in Central Florida. The spa is operated by the legendary Canyon Ranch and features the level of service for which they are famous. For children, La Petite Academy, the nation's largest privately held early childhood education company, operates Kids Station, a 4,000-square-foot activity center where youngsters can enjoy supervised activities in interactive play areas.

Gaylord Palms is the most technologically sophisticated convention resort in the world. In the convention center, nearly 400 miles of cabling forms the backbone for the most flexible and sophisticated menu of technology offerings ever available to meeting and convention groups.

Guest rooms include free high-speed Internet access, secure E-mail access, alarm clocks with CD players, cordless dual-line telephones, dual-line speakerphones, and guestroom doorbells with electronic "do not disturb" indicators. Other perks are technology-friendly, like guestroom safes that are large enough to fit a laptop computer and include an AC outlet inside for charging.

The guest rooms are the largest in their Central Florida competitive set and reflect the themes of the atrium -- from the bedspread to the artwork. In Key West, guests escape to the tropics, where they visually encounter vibrant, bold colors with crisp white walls, trim, shutters and furnishings. Design for the St. Augustine rooms feature warm colors and old Spanish and Mission styles, tapestry motifs, mosaic designs and historic tile patterns. Nature enthusiasts can bed down in the lush Everglades, with textured elements that combine to offer the unique appeal of a private retreat.

"It's unusual for a hotel to be so elaborately and deeply themed," said John Caparella, senior vice president and general manager. "While our atriums take you to these fabulous Florida destinations, so do our guest rooms. Every thing in your guest room, right down the ice bucket, evokes a theme."

Dining at Gaylord Palms includes three signature restaurants: Old Hickory, a traditional and serious steakhouse in a whimsical Everglades setting; Sunset Sam's Fish Camp, featuring fresh seafood and Key West fun; and Villa de Flora, a unique Mediterranean marketplace.

Most noteworthy is Old Hickory's artisanal cheese course, the creation of celebrity Chef Terrance Brennan. Diners can choose from a selection of handcrafted cheeses from Artisanal, Chef Brennan's award-winning New York City fromagerie and bistro; and Picholine, his celebrated West 64th Street restaurant.

Meetings and conventions are served in grand style for groups from ten to 10,000 with 61 breakout rooms in the resort's Convention Center. Conveniently, the three ballrooms and meeting rooms are located on two levels and connected to the hotel by an enclosed walkway. The 28,690-square-foot Sun Ballroom can be divided into separate meeting rooms and the 46,650-square-foot Osceola Ballroom includes a 40- by 100-foot stage complete with lighting, sound and satellite feed capabilities. A third ballroom offers an additional 3,600-square foot of intimate function space.

Perhaps the most valuable amenity -- the Consider it Done button -- is located on every guest phone. This button is part of the commitment made by the hotel's 1,500 employees to meet the diverse needs of every resort guest. By pressing "Consider it Done," guests can request a wide range of services -- from common requests, like theme park transportation, to not-so-common needs, like a chartered helicopter ride.

Gaylord Palms also features two swimming areas, the family Marine Activities pool, with its octopus water slide; and the adult South Beach pool, featuring art deco styling and cabanas with high-speed Internet access. The resort is also home to several entertainment locations, shops and boutiques, including Mel Fisher's Treasures, featuring authentic treasure recovered by Fisher from the richest Spanish Galleon ever salvaged.

Gaylord Entertainment Company is a diversified hospitality and entertainment business whose portfolio includes Gaylord Hotels: Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville, Tenn.; Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center in Kissimmee, Fla.; and Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas. The company's businesses also include the Grand Ole Opry, The Ryman Auditorium, The General Jackson Showboat, WSM Radio and Acuff-Rose Music Publishing. Gaylord Entertainment's stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol GET.

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