

Delray Beach hosts Marina del Rey's 'Marty the Pelican' mascot

Delray's marketing team has paired with California's Marina del Rey to promote coastal travel

By Marisa Gottesman
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When it comes to marketing, Delray Beach and its new partner Marina del Rey have decided to let mascots send the message.

In a stunt aimed at attracting visitors to both seaside towns, the California city dispatched its celebrity stuffed animal mascot "Marty the Pelican" to hang out in Delray for a week, checking out all the hot spots. Not to be outdone, Delray will send its new stuffed animal mascot, "Swinton the Turtle," out west to do the same thing.

The two cities are calling the Internet-themed marketing ploy "Beach Buddies."

Marty showed up officially Thursday on an American Airlines jet at Palm Beach International. His welcoming committee from the Delray Beach Marketing Cooperative greeted him at the gate and then bundled him off to play some golf at the airport putting green.

Clad in a bathing suit, flip flops and sunglasses, Marty has plans to eat sushi at Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens, feed sharks at Sandoway House Nature Center, go yachting on the Intracoastal Waterway and catch a show at Delray's cultural hub, the Arts Garage.

He's staying at the Delray Marriott and he will dine at restaurants on Atlantic Avenue, after catching some rays on the shore.

"By Marty going around we are going to show people what hot spots they can hit when they come here," said Stephen Chrisanthus, associate director of Delray's Marketing Cooperative. "It's a fun way for us to show people what to do here. It's the same thing for Swinton. He will do all the fun events Marina del Rey has planned for him."

Representatives from Marina del Rey are coming to South Florida Tuesday, where they'll get their first look at Swinton. After they follow Marty's itinerary, they will escort the beach buddies back to the west coast where Marty will give Swinton a bird's-eye view of his favorite places to eat, shop and relax.

All of the activities will be posted on each city's websites and on Marty's "blog."

Stephanie Immelman, executive director of the cooperative, said the collaboration stemmed from the coastal cities sharing the "Delray" name.

"It's great that Delray is getting to be known across the country and that we have enough clout to partner with a city like Marina del Rey. They didn't choose Miami or Fort Lauderdale. They chose Delray."

Immelman said a perk of pairing with the west coast is that they have a different off-season, which helps promote travel to Delray when the city needs it the most.

To encourage folks to vacation on the other coast, marketing officials are planning a social media contest where residents show off their city by uploading sunrise and sunset pictures taken at their favorite hometown hangouts.

The adventures the mascots experience will be blasted across social media sites for folks to look at when planning their own coastal trips.