

ESCAPE



QUICK TRIPS

Today's TAMPA

The five-star JW Marriott Tampa Water Street reflects the city's evolution

By Mary Murray

If you haven't been to downtown Tampa in a while, there are a lot of new experiences, places, bites, and sights in store. The city is experiencing a renaissance of sorts, propelled in part by its championship-winning sports teams and an infusion of millennials planting roots and raising families in the area. Leading the way is the Tampa Riverwalk and Channel District. Here, next door to the Amalie Arena, you'll find the new JW Marriott Tampa Water Street, a sleek addition to the skyline that acts as a chic second home for travelers and locals alike.

From top to bottom, this property combines sophisticated surrounds with an inviting atmosphere inclusive of restaurants, amenities, and unique accommodations. A standout offering among the hotel's 519 rooms and suites are the Stay Well rooms, which boast elements geared toward improving well-being, such as advanced air-purification systems and circadian lighting.

Head to the sixth floor to continue this wellness trajectory at the Spa by JW and the rooftop pool and lounge area. Spend the day in a poolside cabana, escaping to the adjacent Six restaurant for a light lunch or evening cocktails overlooking Tampa.

When hunger hits, you can also venture over to the JW Marriott Tampa Water Street's sister Marriott property to dine on the Garrison Channel at Anchor & Brine, which specializes in what Matthew Brennan, the resort's executive chef, describes as coastal Florida cuisine with a Latin influence. Sense of place and seasonality play a role across many of the on-site restaurant concepts, with Brennan sourcing local lettuces from Brick Street Farms in St. Petersburg and tomatoes from The Villages Grown.

But perhaps no space exudes the essence of Water Street quite like the JW Marriott's lobby area. Here, mid-century modern decor and soaring design elements cradle communal gathering spots. Sip on a nightcap at the Driftlight Lounge bar or savor a morning pastry by chef Natalia Meshalkina at the JW Market coffee house.



COURTESY OF THE JW MARRIOTT TAMPA WATER STREET



SCENES FROM THE JW MARRIOTT TAMPA WATER STREET, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ROOFTOP POOL; LOBBY LOUNGE; INTERIOR OF DRIFTLIGHT RESTAURANT; COCKTAIL AT SIX.

Anchoring it all is Driftlight, the JW Marriott's signature restaurant. The scene is *Mad Men* meets twenty-first-century urban cool, with wraparound booths that invite intimate conversation. Start the day with a breakfast of chicken sausage hash, acai bowls, or lemon poppy seed pancakes that are bright, light, and just the right amount of sweet. Come evening, Driftlight transforms into an upscale steak house with a Florida twist. Sous chef Dylan Rebusch has taken the reins of the restaurant's dry-aging program, which enhances a menu dotted with Floridian ingredients like grouper and Latin touches including a chimichurri steak sauce.

Driftlight captures the essence of the hotel as a whole—a hip hangout for discerning travelers who enjoy the finer things in life but don't sweat the small stuff. Whether it be for dinner, a spa treatment, or the entire weekend, a visit to the JW Marriott Tampa Water Street is much like the city itself: up-and-coming, carefree, and a whole lot of fun. (jwmarriotttampawaterstreet.com) <<

