



There's a Small Town in Florida You've Never Heard Of — and It Now Has an \$800-million Resort

Unless you're into horses or hardcore music, you've probably never heard of Ocala.

By [Skye Sherman](#) | Published on April 19, 2022



Outside of central Floridians, there are two groups of people who would have reason to know about the small town of Ocala, Florida: equestrian types and fans of the hardcore band A Day To Remember, whose hometown roots here spawned all sorts of angst-fueled anthems. But many more will now start hearing about Ocala, because [The Equestrian Hotel](#) has arrived to wake up what has long been considered sleepy horse country.



PHOTO: ETHAN TWEEDIE/COURTESY OF THE EQUESTRIAN HOTEL



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Prepare to be blown away by the 248-room, \$800-million resort that quietly opened in summer 2021 as part of the 380-acre [World Equestrian Center](#). In the neoclassical French architecture-inspired building, guests will find Hermès-reminiscent carpeting, more than 80 Schonbek Swarovski crystal chandeliers, and a front desk staff clad head-to-toe in Ralph Lauren. Regulars here include John Travolta, who has lived in Ocala for decades, and Olympians in town for equestrian events.



PHOTO: ETHAN TWEEDIE/COURTESY OF THE EQUESTRIAN HOTEL

Aside from the visual "wow factor," there are seven restaurants (including a horse-shaped bar in the Yellow Pony Pub), a wine program curated by an in-house master sommelier, a spa, a pool, and high-end retail shops such as Lugano Diamonds. Kids will delight in the stay, too: the hotel is home to a fancy toy shop housing the original 15-foot-tall Toys"R"Us Geoffrey from Times Square and there's a six-foot-tall stuffed bear made of Coach leather in the lobby.



PHOTO: ETHAN TWEEDIE/COURTESY OF THE EQUESTRIAN HOTEL

Guests don't have to know anything about horses to enjoy the pageantry of the weekly equestrian competitions, where up to 7,500 spectators gather in the on-property Grand Arena to watch the athletes (and their horses) display their prowess. Just make sure to gussy up for the occasion: rather than rodeo attire, the dress code here could rival the Kentucky Derby.



PHOTO: ETHAN TWEEDIE/COURTESY OF THE EQUESTRIAN HOTEL

The owners of the new hotel are betting on Ocala becoming a destination in its own right – in addition to the equestrian culture, there are some [beautiful natural springs](#) in the area. They've even announced plans to add a second hotel in 2024.

Book your room at The Equestrian Hotel [here](#).