



## 4. Hayworth Publicity Reports

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**Publicity Report  
January 2021**

**AMELIA ISLAND**  
COME MAKE MEMORIES®

**Summary**  
Total Mentions: 24  
Total Reach: 6,541

Amelia Island - January 2021

**Coverage Summary**

**Top Articles**

**HEADLINES**

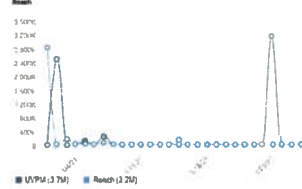
The South: Wild and Unspoiled  
Southern Sea Islands  
Road-tripping around Northeast Florida  
Road-tripping around Northeast Florida  
My year of surprises in the Sunshine State  
Road-tripping around Northeast Florida  
Newsmag: Where to Travel in 2021  
9 Quaint U.S. Islands Ta Explore in 2021  
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**OUTLET**

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Feminine Observer  
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REACH  
2,618,917  
1,944,828  
1,399,650  
143,024  
141,804  
128,641  
125,819  
66,653  
51,000  
33,500  
22,259  
20,000  
7,049  
5,171  
5,171  
5,171  
500

**Reach**



**Total Mentions**



Jan 1, 2021 - Jan 28, 2021 | 1

Amelia Island - January 2021

**Mentions by Location**



**Prominent Terms**

southern secret gulf list held excursion swimming yet deremer local studios commercial photograph see  
getaway create head timehead northeast can't-miss family soak new island remote  
vacation warm coast trip tourism cant-miss family soak new island remote  
great plans barrier couples release around amelia florida beach romance fitness  
partnered coral border habitat meeka 2021 atlantic travel top florida's islands flavor virtual  
center stay natural romantic january coastal year-round sporting georgia packages sweet want 29+  
pool waters road-tripping south creatures beautiful rendezvous reef visited opportunities  
things enjoy forms education weeklong beautiful rendezvous reef visited opportunities

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## WILD ISLAND GETAWAYS

**Amelia Island, FL**  
It's easy to forget there's a real world at this family-friendly treasure on Florida's northeast coast, where both the Omni and Ritz Carlton have established resort beachheads. Whether you're aiming to paddleboard, saddle up, tee off, or just chill out, you won't have trouble finding a great place here.

**Big Talbot Island, FL**  
Nature lovers, choose your path: Blackrock Trail leads to a beach reminiscent of Hawaii. Old Kings Highway and Jones Cut Trails take you to maritime forest, and Big Pine Trail winds its way to the marshland. All promise amazing views.

**Bulls Island, SC**  
Don't miss this sandy spot with 7 miles of undeveloped shore, accessible by public ferry or private boat. With 5,000 acres of maritime forest, it's home to myriad wildlife. Find Boneyard Beach, covered with wind-stripped tree trunks, at its northeastern tip.

**Hilton Head Island, SC**  
Every golfer in the South has either been to Hilton Head or placed it on the proverbial bucket list. No disrespect to its pristine greens, but the beaches here consistently rank as favorites among readers.

**Kiawah Island, SC**  
This dreamy destination is just a hop away from Charleston. While Kiawah has luxe accommodations at The Sanctuary, it also features public Kiawah Beachwalker Park on its west end—an affordable vantage point for taking in the priceless sunsets.

**Little Tybee Island, GA**  
Part of a state heritage preserve, this retreat lies just over Tybee Creek from Tybee Island. It's actually much bigger than its sister island—and it's definitely much wilder. Salt marshes and tidal creeks make it a paddler's dream—you'll need a boat to get here.

**Sea Island, GA**  
Best known for The Cloister, one of the South's most venerable stays, this Isle has lots to explore. The hotel is part of Sea Island resort, which also features two lodges, an inn, and cottages for rent, all in beautiful coastal Georgia.

**Wassaw Island, GA**  
The 10,053-acre barrier island located near Savannah became a National Wildlife Refuge in 1969. You can reach this isolated escape only by boat. It's absolutely teeming with wildlife, making it perfect for hikers, bird watchers, and kayakers.

## Wild and Windswept: The Ultimate Guide to the Sea Islands

With unspoiled beaches washed by the Atlantic, these solitary Sea Islands will take your breath away.

By Tracey Minkin January 22, 2021

### Wild Island Getaways

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## Road-tripping around Northeast Florida

By Catherine Rothman • Spring to the Road Dispatch • Jan 8, 2021



**Y**ou won't find the big-city vibe of Miami or the large theme parks of Orlando. It lacks the wacky characteristics that draw throngs to the Keys, and it's spared the snarling traffic of Gulf Coast beach towns.

More Southern in culture and comparatively less crowded, Northeast Florida is a destination unto itself, one that enjoys a rich colonial heritage dating back more than 500 years while embracing the playful pursuits of modern golf and beach resorts. A road trip along its Atlantic coastal communities takes just a few days, but stretch it out to a week to unwind and soak up local flavor.

Start at the Georgia border where Amelia Island forms a barrier between the Atlantic Ocean and Intracoastal Waterway, a two-hour drive south of Savannah or 30 minutes northeast of the Jacksonville airport. Access the island on Florida A1A, a road you'll jump on frequently as you continue road tripping south about 65 miles to St. Augustine.

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Amelia Island is about the size of Manhattan with a 50-plus block historic district on its north end. French Huguenots were the first Europeans to settle here in 1562, followed by conquerors and colonists from Spain and Great Britain. In Fernandina Beach, you'll see gingerbread-heavy houses, several of them bed-and-breakfasts such as the Addison on Amelia Island comprising three antebellum-style homes surrounding a courtyard.

A photograph of a two-story house with a prominent front porch and balcony. The house has a light-colored exterior, possibly white or cream, with green shutters on the windows. The porch and balcony are enclosed with white railings. The house is set against a clear blue sky, and there are some green plants in the foreground.

The Addison on Amelia Island is a highly-rated, 14-room bed and breakfast in Fernandina Beach.

The Palace often is on the Amelia Island Cocktail Tour led by a guide who spins stories about the island between drinks. The Mermaid Bar inside the Florida House Inn, built in 1857 and claiming to be the state's oldest hotel, also might be a stop. The tour rotates among downtown bars, patronizing four. You'll have a cocktail and something to nibble at each. If you want something more substantial — and love sangria — Espana Restaurant & Tapas is the place to be. It serves up hot and cold tapas along with pans of paella.

At the southern end of Amelia Island, the focus isn't on history but on play, especially on the beach. The island has 13 miles of Atlantic coastal beaches, some of the least crowded in Florida. You'll find plenty of room to put down a beach towel for sunbathing or to walk along the sand searching for shells and fossilized shark teeth.

Segway tours are among the many resort activities at Omni Amelia Island Plantation.

Another luxury beach resort area lies to the south.

Leave Amelia behind, skip past the beaches east of Jacksonville, some of the state's most crowded, and stop at Ponte Vedra Beach, among the least crowded.

Getting there requires a decision: Head west to pick up Interstate 95/295 through Jacksonville, or stay on Florida A1A and take the St. Johns River Ferry. Crossing the river takes five minutes; the ferry runs every half hour.

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MIAMI DAILY JOURNAL

Tuesday, January 7, 2020



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LIFESTYLE

## Road-tripping around Northeast Florida

The Palace Saloon on Amelia Island is the oldest continuously operating bar in Florida.

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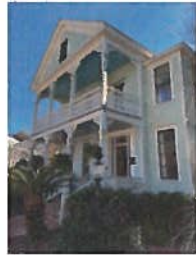
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## A storied island

Amelia Island is about the size of Manhattan with a 50-plus block historic district on its north end. French Huguenots were the first Europeans to settle here in 1562, followed by conquerors and colonists from Spain and Great Britain. In Fernandina Beach, you'll see gingerbread-heavy houses, several of them bed-and-breakfasts such as the Addison on Amelia Island comprising three antebellum-style homes surrounding a courtyard.

Take a walk around downtown Fernandina Beach past the old courthouse and customs house, sample Fernandina Fantastic Fudge and pop into the Book Loft where you might bump into novelist John Grisham who moved to the island a few years ago. For lunch, pick out a picnic table on the patio at Timoti's Seafood Shak. Its fish tacos, shrimp and lobster roll are popular choices.



The Addison on Amelia Island is a highly-rated, 14-room bed-and-breakfast in Fernandina Beach.

Photo by Katherine Rodeghier

When it's cocktail time, mosey up to the bar inside Florida's oldest continuously operating drinking establishment, the Palace Saloon serving suds since 1903. If you're lucky, Fernandina Beach Mayor Johnny Miller will be tending bar and will point out the saloon's tin ceilings, mosaic tile floor and mahogany caryatids.

The Palace often is on the Amelia Island Cocktail Tour led by a guide who spins stories about the island between drinks. The Mermaid Bar inside the Florida House Inn, built in 1857 and claiming to be the state's oldest hotel, also might be a stop. The tour rotates among downtown bars, patronizing four. You'll have a cocktail and something to nibble at each. If you want something more substantial — and love sangria — Espana Restaurant & Tapas is the place to be. It serves up hot and cold tapas along with pans of paella.

## Resort life

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Two resorts with 400-plus rooms front on the ocean. Besides beaches, the Omni Amelia Island Plantation and the Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island has golf courses, clay tennis courts, supervised activities for kids, spas, bike rentals and kayak tours through the Intracoastal Waterway. The Omni also offers Segway tours through the plantation where live oak trees draped with Spanish moss line roadways.



Segway tours are among the many resort activities at Omni Amelia Island Plantation.

Photo by Katherine Rodeghier

Both resorts have casual as well as upscale dining. If you want to go off-site on Amelia's south end, try Pogo's Kitchen helmed by Executive Chef Alan Heckman whose honors include cooking at New York City's James Beard House. For Southern cooking reminiscent of New Orleans, Charleston or Savannah, check out Lagniappe. Chef/owner Brian Grinley's menu tempts with shrimp or oyster po'boys, gumbo, catfish and jambalaya.

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Leave Amelia behind, skip past the beaches east of Jacksonville, some of the state's most crowded, and stop at Ponte Vedra Beach, among the least crowded.

Getting there requires a decision: Head west to pick up Interstate 95/295 through Jacksonville, or stay on Florida A1A and take the St. Johns River Ferry. Crossing the river takes five minutes; the ferry runs every half hour.

Driving along Ponte Vedra Boulevard, you'll pass oceanfront mansions and luxury resorts. Choose the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club, spoiling guests for nearly 90 years, and you'll also have access to its younger sister, the Lodge and Club, a mile and a half down the boulevard. Between them, you'll find plenty of places to play: two 18-hole golf courses, the largest spa in North Florida, a tennis club on the ATP World Tour and a broad stretch of sand with kayaks, stand-up paddleboards and surfboards for rent.

If you go

- Amelia Island Tourist Development Council: 1-904-277-0717, [ameliaisland.com](http://ameliaisland.com)
- St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau: 1-800-418-7529, [floridashistoriccoast.com](http://floridashistoriccoast.com)

## Where to stay

- The Addison on Amelia Island: 1-904-277-1604, [addisononamelia.com](http://addisononamelia.com)
- The Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island: 1-904-277-1100, [ritzcarlton.com/en/hotels/florida/amelia-island](http://ritzcarlton.com/en/hotels/florida/amelia-island)
- [OmniAmeliaIslandPlantation.com](http://OmniAmeliaIslandPlantation.com): 1-904-261-6161, [omnihotels.com/hotels/amelia-island](http://omnihotels.com/hotels/amelia-island)

## Where to eat

- Timoti's Seafood Shak: [timotis.com](http://timotis.com)
- Espana Restaurant & Tapas: [espanadowntown.com](http://espanadowntown.com)
- Pogo's Kitchen: [pogoskitchen.com](http://pogoskitchen.com)
- Lagniappe: [lagniappeamelia.com](http://lagniappeamelia.com)

## Tours and more

- Amelia Island Cocktail tour: Amelia Island Downtown Tasting Tours, 888-446-1712, [ameliaislanddowntown tastingtours.com](http://ameliaislanddowntown tastingtours.com)




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TRAVEL WEEKLY

## My year of surprises in the Sunshine State

By [Tamara Thompson](#) Jan 27, 2021



Tamara Thompson

Florida has so much to offer!

That's the conclusion I have come away with after my first year as the Florida editor for Travel Weekly. I've explored the state from the Georgia border to the tip of Key West, and it has been a revelation how many great things are going on in the Sunshine State.


I've lived here since Ronald Reagan was president, so I kinda knew what it had to offer. Still, there were a few things that took me by surprise in 2020. Here are some of them.

- It is still possible to experience Florida the way it must have appeared when settlers arrived hundreds of years ago. Certainly big parts of the state have been paved over, denuded of native plants and animals, rechanneled for flood control and otherwise altered. No doubt the commercial parts of Florida make it hard to see anything but chain stores and strip malls when we're driving down the highway.
- But I had two moments of wonder that brought me to a stop, and left me with the sensation that I had just felt what others have felt down through the years. The first was a flock of white pelicans in the **Ten Thousand Islands** area of Everglades National Park that flew one after another across the horizon for what seemed like 10 minutes. I'd never seen so many pelicans at once, and it was an awesome sight.
- A few weeks later I had a similar sense of traveling back in time at Amelia Island's **Fort Clinch State Park**, where a road to the fort lined with ancient oaks and Spanish moss seemed unchanged from what Amelia Island must have looked and felt like when it was settled in the 1700s.
- What a lot of car museums there are in Florida! I had the chance on a rain-soaked day to visit the **Tallahassee Automobile Museum** and was mightily entertained for several hours by the quality of the collection. Once I started looking around, I realized there's an auto museum in just about every part of the state, from 'Big Daddy' Don Garlits' temple to drag racing in Ocala to the American Muscle Car Museum in Melbourne, the Sarasota Classic Car Museum on Florida's west coast and the Packard-centric Fort Lauderdale Antique Car Museum.

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## AMERICAN AGENDA



Francesca Page | Travel Journalist

1:54 CT LIVE

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Dezerland Park Orlando will display collector Michael Dezer's trove of auto artifacts in a new 250,000-square-foot Auto Experience scheduled to open later in 2021.

- Weddings are a big draw for visitors, especially in **St. Augustine**. On a visit there this fall, I was stunned by the number of bridal parties I saw preparing for the big day. "On any given weekend, you'll see five or six weddings going on around town," said Joni Barkley, director of sales and catering at the Casa Monica Resort & Spa. "It really is quite amazing, especially for such a small town."

There were 151,768 marriages in Florida in 2019, according to one wedding research company. Many were destination weddings held on the beaches with receptions afterward at historic venues such as those in St. Augustine.

- If you think you've exhausted Florida's theme park bounty, think again. A visit to **Discovery Cove** revealed a new park for me, hiding in plain sight. It was my fault, to be sure, Discovery Cove has been around for 25 years. But its mix of relaxing beach experiences, dolphin interactions, all-inclusive pricing and a killer snuba attraction was a treat I wasn't anticipating. This year, the park's flamingos will take center stage in a new **Flamingo Mingle**.

So make it a point, pandemic permitting, to venture off the beaten path to Legoland, cruise the Drive-Thru Safari Park at Wild Florida, marvel at the reptiles at Gatorland or ogle the mermaids at Weeki Wachee Springs. You won't be disappointed.



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TRAVEL WEEKLY


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## 9 Quaint U.S. Islands To Explore In 2021

By [ERIKA LEONARD](#) JAN 2, 2021

A visit to one of these quaint U.S. islands will make you feel like you're stepping back in time. The pace of life is often slower, and these islands offer an escape from the hustle and bustle of bigger, more touristy cities. But that's not to say there isn't plenty to do and see! Explore our list of the best quaint U.S. islands to visit in 2021, and you'll find more than enough reasons to add one of these locations to your travel plans this year.

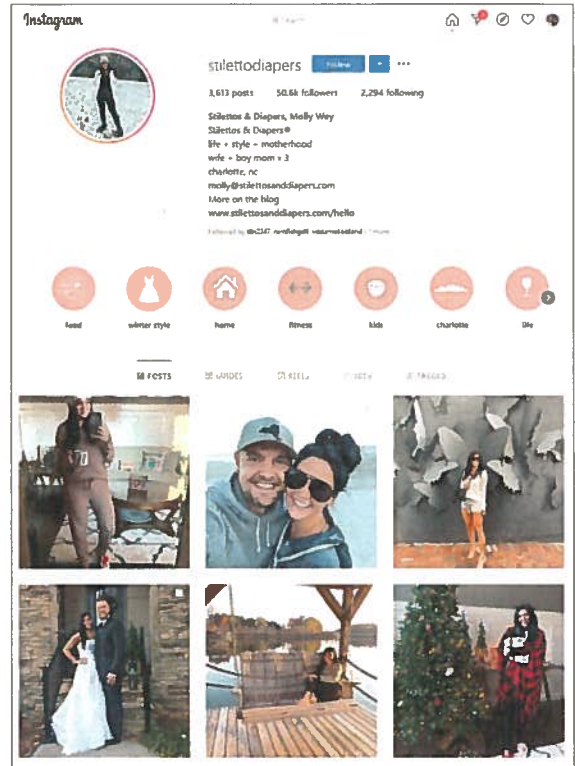


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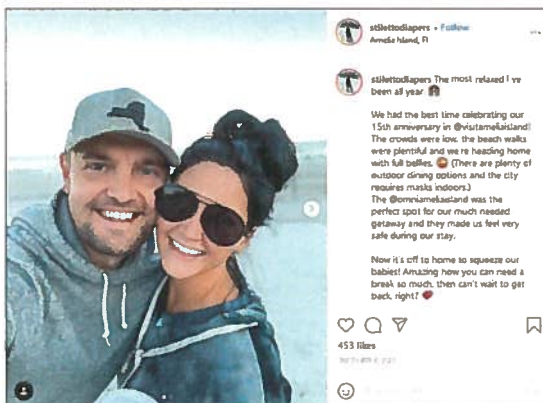
## Amelia Island, Florida

Amelia Island is a stunning spot for the host of outdoor activities you'll find here. Chock full of top-notch golf courses, Amelia Island is the perfect place to hit the links. If you're not a golfer, you will enjoy the diverse wildlife you can view in the state parks or the Amelia Island Nature Center. We think one of the best excuses to visit Amelia Island is that it's a food lover's dream, with mouthwatering seafood and other delicacies to sample. [Find our full list of the best things to see and do during your trip to Amelia Island here](#)

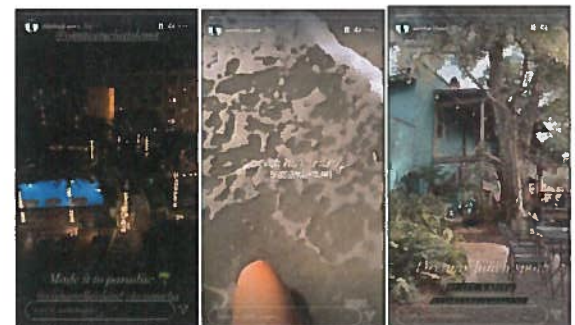


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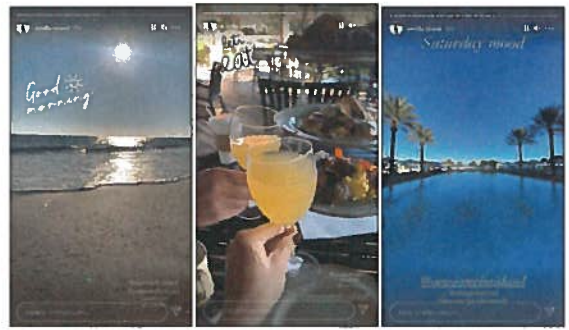
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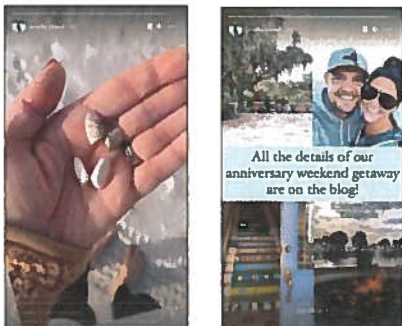
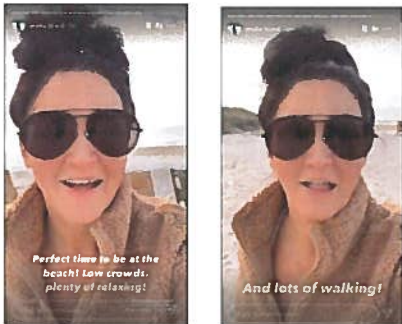


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## 29+ Things To Do In Amelia Island That The Locals Want Kept Secret

**TOPICS:** All Things Florida  
**LAST UPDATED:** 01/25/2021

The **Sunshine State** has seemingly limitless opportunities for a great family vacation or romantic getaway, but if you haven't yet visited Amelia Island and Fernandina Beach, you are missing out!

No matter the season, Amelia's pristine beaches, historic charm, and outdoor adventures — all just a 5-6 hour drive from Atlanta — make it a quintessential Florida destination.

Here are some of our favorite things to do in Amelia Island, so you can enjoy the island like the locals do.

### 20 Things To Do In Amelia Island That The Locals Want Kept Secret

#### Beaches & Outdoor Adventures

Amelia Island and Fernandina Beach offer so many outdoor adventures, you'll never run out of things to do!

#### Sample the Many Public Beaches

Amelia has oodles — and by that, we mean 40+ — of public beach access points, making it easy to enjoy the waterfront no matter where on the island you're staying.

Quite a few of the **beaches here allow dogs**, too! Just make sure you keep them on their leash.

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Fernandina's Main Beach Park is where all the action is. You'll find locals and visitors alike enjoying the picnic tables, grills, gazebos, volleyball courts, children's playground, restaurants, mini-golf, an outdoor skate park, public restrooms, and showers.

Of course, the main draw is the beach! There are four lifeguard stations at the beach here, and they're manned everyday from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Slather on the sunscreen and head out into the waves!

## Go Horseback Riding on the Beach

Speaking of beaches, is there anything quite as romantic as a ride with ocean views?

Make date night unforgettable by booking a ride with [Happy Trails Walking Horses](#) or [Amelia Island Horseback Riding](#).

Amelia Island Horseback Riding offers daily rides, sunrise rides, and sunset rides, too. Happy Trails offers 1-hour rides along some of the 13 miles of shoreline with their Tennessee Walking Horses, which are direct descendants of Roy Rogers' famous horse, Trigger.

## Check Out the State Parks

For a relatively small island, Amelia is packed with some amazing Florida State Parks.

We recommend [Fort Clinch](#), [Big Talbot Island](#), [Little Talbot Island](#), and [Amelia Island State Park](#).

These state parks offer a variety of ways to enjoy the island's natural beauty. You'll find lush forests, beach access, hiking and biking trails, fishing, camping, and plenty of chances to spot wildlife.

## Bike the Island Trails

Maybe you're a mountain biking enthusiast, or maybe you prefer to cruise and enjoy a more leisurely ride? There's room for both and everything in between, thanks to the [miles of bike trails](#) that cover the island.

[Renting a bike](#) is easy, and we recommend having a camera at the ready — you'll want to capture the amazing views along the trails!

## Explore by Kayak, Canoe, Hydro-Bike or SUP

Whether guided or unguided, the many waterways that encompass this barrier island are ideal for [kayaks](#), canoes, and [SUP](#) exploration.

Amelia Island is home to [plenty of rental options](#) for those who want to take in the natural beauty of the area by water.

Have a group? Consider a [guided tour in a war canoe](#) — which is an extra long, stable, fast movie canoe. You can all explore together during a half-day, all-day, or overnight trip.

Want something a little on the sillier side? How about [renting a hydro-bike](#) from Amelia River Cycle! It's an adventure the whole family will enjoy.



The Egans Creek Greenway is located on the northern end of the island, and consists of over 300 acres of protected land along Egans Creek. It's perfect for hiking, biking, birding, and photography.

And for those who want to do some working out too, check out the new fitness station along the greenway where you can add some cardio into your walking or biking routine.

## Sea Turtle Watching

While it's extremely rare to see sea turtles nesting or hatching on the beach, it is common to see cordoned-off nests in the summer.

So if you can't easily see baby sea turtles, what's the next best thing? Watching a nest excavation! Visitors are allowed to observe [Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch](#) volunteers conduct nest excavations — which is basically an inventory of all the remaining nest contents after the hatchlings have crawled out to sea.

Some things you may witness include unhatched eggs, empty egg shells, and sometimes — live hatchlings! Watching the excavations is open to the public, and volunteers will share information about the nest and sea turtles. If a live hatchling is found, they'll release them and you will be able to see it!

Excavations usually begin in early to mid July and continue until all nests have hatched.

## Bird Watching

You'll want to keep your binoculars and camera handy in Amelia Island's parks and beaches, where you'll have the chance to see a variety of species, including pelicans, skimmers, plovers and pipers.

Amelia Island State Park, Fort Clinch State Park, and the Egans Creek Greenway are popular birding destinations.

Fort Clinch is the northern most island location in Florida, and is considered a must see destination for birders, since it lies on Audubon's 115-mile designation of the Northern Atlantic Migrant Stopover.

[Playing with Fido? Be sure to check out these beaches!](#)

## The Kids Will Love It

It's a given that your kids will love the beach — but when they're ready to dry off, Amelia Island has plenty of activities and entertainment to keep the fun going.

## Pirate Playground

Voted the island's best playground on Trip Advisor, [Pirate Playground](#) at North Beach Park is accessible to children of all abilities.

Young ones will love the unique play structures that also incorporate history, art and music into the experience. There are benches for parents, and restrooms close by.

It is the best playground around, and one your kids will love.



## Play Golf

Amelia Island is home to some of the [most popular golf courses](#) in the southeast. [LINKS Magazine](#) Named Amelia Island one of the "Top 25 Golf Islands in the World" — making it the only destination from the United States to make the list!

Here you'll find the Fernandina Beach Golf Club, the Amelia Island Golf and Country Club, the Golf Club of North Hampton, the Golf Club of Amelia Island, and so many more! Amelia Island is the perfect place to play for golfers of every skill level.

## Take a River Cruise

A great way to take in the beauty of Amelia Island and the surrounding area is aboard a river cruise.

[Amelia River Cruises & Charters](#) provides narrated, historic and wildlife sightseeing tours with views of dolphins, manatees, sea otters, alligators, and the wild horses of [Cumberland Island National Seashore](#).

The tours are offered during the day, and at sunset — which would be a wonderful time to be on the water. In the summer, they offer educational shrimping eco-tours that the whole family would love.

## Enjoy a Boat Tour

One of the best things you can do to take in all the beauty of the island while learning more about it at the same time, is to take one of Amelia Island's boat tours.

[Riptide Amelia Island](#) offers private and group kayak tours, CraigCat tours (CraigCats are small, powered catamarans), and boat tours. [Amelia Island Charters](#) offers family fishing trips and private wildlife nature tours.

[On the Water Adventures](#) takes you on private guided nature tours through the creeks and rivers of Amelia and Cumberland Island. And [Amelia Island Adventures](#) offers many different guided kayak tours, and boat tours.

## Spot Some Wildlife

Amelia Island is an ecotourist's dream because of its pristine landscapes and abundance of Florida wildlife.

A walk along any trail or beach is full of opportunities to see sea turtles, dolphins, cranes, alligators, crabs, rabbits, deer and more.

Consider taking part in the [Fort Clinch Nature Walk](#) held every Saturday at Fort Clinch State Park, weather permitting. The guided nature walk around Willow Pond Trail winds through a coastal maritime hammock down to freshwater ponds. It's a great way to learn about native plants and animals. The nature walk is free with park admission (\$5 per vehicle).

## Stay Fit at Egans Creek Greenway Park

If you're the type who likes to keep up with their exercise routine while on vacation, you'll love [Egans Creek Greenway](#)!



Courtesy of Amelia Island

## Mini Golf

Take your pick from a selection of mini golf sites, including [Island Falls Adventure Golf](#), where we've been going for the past 10 years. After a long day on the beach, it's a classic way to unwind after dinner!

They also offer soft drinks, slushies, candy, ice cream and light snacks — so it's pretty much a kid's dream outing.

## Historic Reenactments at Fort Clinch

A [state park](#) with beautiful natural scenery, Fort Clinch is perhaps best known for its historic interpretation performances that take visitors back to Amelia Island during the Civil War.

Visit the fort the first weekend of the month to see a whole garrison of soldiers who will teach you about fort living, including cannon firing and other battlefield skills.

## Fish off the Pier at Amelia Island State Park

The mile-long [George Crady Bridge Fishing Pier](#) is dotted with devoted anglers every day of the week, but especially on weekends.

Cast a line with the locals and enjoy gorgeous views of the Nassau Sound.

[On the Line Bait and Tackle shop](#) is open for visitors using their walk up window, offering a great variety of fishing bait and tackle supplies, snacks and refreshments.

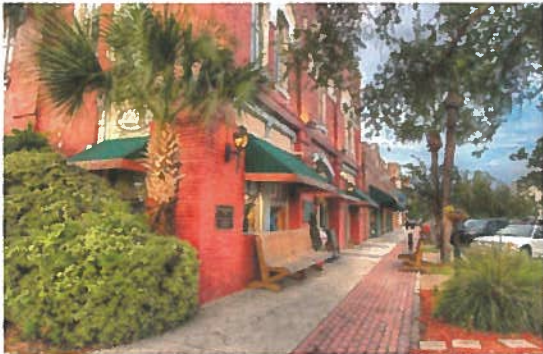


## Take the Ferry from Little Talbot to Jacksonville

If you've got little ones who love "things that go," they'll be charmed by the [St. Johns River Ferry](#).

The St. Johns River Ferry is a car and passenger ferry that connects the north and south ends of Florida State Road A1A in Duval County, linking Mayport Village and Fort George Island via a pleasant sail across the St. Johns River. The ferry departs every half hour.

Continue south to Jacksonville for a day trip to the [city's best family-friendly attractions](#).



## Historic Downtown Fernandina

Fernandina Beach, on Amelia Island at Florida's northeast border, offers boutique shopping, restaurants, amazing views, and lots of history.

### Shopping and Storytime at The Book Loft

Located in historic downtown Fernandina, [The Book Loft](#) is sure to charm readers of all ages.

The Book Loft boasts a multi-genre selection of local and national favorites, plus children's story hours and author signings.

In addition to fiction, nonfiction, classics, cooking, and inspirational titles, they have a selection of books on Amelia Island and its pirate history, as well as the history of Florida, and the Civil War, plus many autographed first editions.

In the loft upstairs, you can find older hardback fiction at half price, and their resident ghost! (Her name is Katherine, by the way.)

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## A Nightcap at The Palace Saloon

Grab a drink at [The Palace Saloon](#), also known as Florida's oldest bar!

There is a lot of history in this place, and it's worth stopping in for a pint or a nightcap.

Read up on its history before you go, so you can really appreciate all the ghosts you're sure to be sharing a drink with.

### Selfie at Fernandina Harbor

Enjoy the views of the Amelia River along South Front Street -- and take a picture while you're there. Fernandina Harbor is the perfect place to snap a sunset shot.

After a walk admiring the views, make sure to try out the [Salty Pelican](#) for dinner.

### Get a History Lesson from the Amelia Island Museum

From Native Americans to pirates to the Spanish, Amelia Island has a fascinating history of residents and rulers, and you'll learn all about it from the docents of the [Amelia Island Museum of History](#), located in a renovated community jailhouse.

The museum is the first spoken history museum in Florida, and offers Ghost Tours and Pub Crawls, in addition to their walking tours and museum tours.

Head a few blocks up the street to check out its partner museum, the [Fernandina Beach Shrimping Museum and Welcome Center](#), for a deeper dive into the community's maritime history.

### Admire the Historic Homes

For even more history and local charm, don't miss the Museum of History's annual [Holiday Home Tour](#), which showcases downtown's finest Victorian homes, all professionally decked out for the season. It's a great way to see the beautiful homes, and get in the spirit of the season.

Held the first weekend in December, the Holiday Home Tour is an annual tradition, with proceeds benefiting the Amelia Island Museum of History.

### Patronize the Local Businesses

Downtown Fernandina is the perfect place to spend a few hours [shopping at local boutiques](#) for the perfect date night outfit, charming antiques, or nautical-inspired home decor.

There are lots of local businesses and shops, and you're sure to find something that you absolutely must have.

### Visit an Art Gallery

There are several art galleries located downtown that are definitely worth a visit.

[2nd Story Gallery and Studios](#) features artwork by local artists, and you'll find work in oils, acrylics, and photography on display. [Art on Centre](#) features works from living American artists using various mediums in a contemporary theme. And [Shady Ladies Art](#) is a new art studio and gallery downtown where you can enjoy great art and conversation.

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## Enjoy the Local Farmer's Market

We love to stop by the Saturday morning [Fernandina Beach Market Place](#) to stock up on snacks and treats before heading to the beach. Farmers, growers, and entrepreneurial individuals sell locally grown and produced goods to those living in, and visiting, Amelia Island. The farmers' market is open EVERY Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., year round, rain or shine.

The [Fernandina Beach Arts Market](#) is the newest addition to the scene -- and is located adjacent to the Farmer's Market. Held on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month, this market features arts and crafts, and is a great place to pick up a souvenir to remember your trip.



Courtesy of Amelia Island

## Holidays and Festivals

Enjoy the holidays and festivals in the area with Amelia Island as the beautiful backdrop.

### Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival

Who knew you could throw such a big party in honor of such a little sea critter?

The [Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival](#) features a pirate costume contest, a beauty pageant, a parade, a Shrimp run, exhibitors, arts and crafts, a kid zone, and more. Don't miss the "Decorated Shrimp Boat" contest!

This community event has been drawing people from across the southeast down to Amelia Island for over 50 years.

### Shrimp Drop

No need to see the ball drop to welcome the New Year -- Amelia Island has you covered with their very own maritime-themed Shrimp Drop!

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Enjoy live music, activities for the kids, and a fireworks show before watching a sparkling shrimp fall to welcome the new year!

### Dickens On Centre

Enjoy Christmas Victorian style at [Dickens on Centre](#)!

Held on a December weekend, this celebration transforms historic downtown Fernandina into an English village, complete with costumed carolers. This free event features themed entertainment and performances, visits from Saint Nick, and a variety of vendors selling seasonal gifts.

There's also a Holiday Cookie Tour too! The cookie tour takes you through the historic bed and breakfasts in the area, and you'll get to see their holiday decorations while enjoying a cookie at each stop. Sounds yummy!

### Wild Amelia Nature Festival

As an island teeming with fascinating ecology, you won't want to miss the [Wild Amelia Nature Festival](#) that takes place each May.

The festival features wildlife exhibits, conservation exhibits, activities for the kids, a silent auction, and live music.

Take guided eco-tours and a narrated river cruise, peruse the eco-expo, and top it all off with a rehabilitated sea turtle release!

### Amelia Island Jazz Festival

There's no better way to celebrate jazz music than with a visit to the [Amelia Island Jazz Festival](#).

The festival features a week of performances by acts both large and small in venues throughout the community.

Held in October each year, the festival presents world-class jazz in many styles -- including swing, bebop, Dixieland, big band, Latin, and contemporary.

## Where to Eat

After a day of adventuring around the island, grab a seat at one of these wonderful restaurants!

### We Scream for This Ice Cream

Looking to cool off with a sweet treat?

We can't resist a stop at [DeNucci's](#) for some soft serve ice cream every time we visit the island. Their brightly colored building has a walk-up window, and little playground that the kids will love.

They have indoor and outdoor seating, and they serve Nathan's hot dogs, sandwiches, and wraps too.

### Snag a Picnic Table at Tasty's

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If you're looking for some of the best burgers and shakes in town, you've got to make a stop at **Tasty's** — a gas station turned burger joint, located downtown.

Tasty's is all about the burgers and fries, but they also have a couple of local seafood options too! With plenty of outdoor seating, Tasty's is a great place to stop after a bike ride back from Main Beach or Fort Clinch.

### Perk Up at Amelia Island Coffee

Looking for a caffeine boost? Try **Amelia Island Coffee** where they have locally roasted coffee, organic tea, pastries, and breakfast and lunch items.



Located in the heart of downtown Fernandina on Centre Street, AIC is the place to go for free, high speed internet and friendly conversation.

### Lunch Like a Local

Savoring lunch on **Cafe Karibo's** terrace is a must for any visit to Amelia Island.

A large garden patio shaded by huge oak trees makes for a relaxed setting for you to enjoy their creative, handmade fare. They serve salads and sandwiches for lunch, and have some great seafood options for dinner.

Consider stopping by for Sunday brunch here to try their Crabby Eggs Benedict, or Kung Pao Shrimp Soft Tacos.

We love their fresh, bright menu and local brews!

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### Shop and Savor

Tucked inside an inconspicuous health food store — Nassau Health Foods — is a little local gem, **The Mustard Seed Cafe**.

Preparing natural, organic daily specials, you can tuck into a bounty of nutritious dishes that taste as good as they look.

They offer breakfast and lunch, and have a bakery and smoothies, too. Vegan and gluten-free options are available here.



The Pirate Tuck In Courtesy of **Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island**

### Where to Stay

There are some great options for places to stay in Amelia Island!

#### Sleep at a Historic B&B

For a true Amelia experience, we recommend staying in one of downtown's many **bed and breakfasts**, where you'll be in walking distance of shops, restaurants, and the river.

Hoyt House is located in the historic district. Blue Heron Inn offers a gourmet breakfast and pool, and the Amelia Island Williams House combines old world attention to details with modern amenities.

The Fairbanks House is an adult-focused inn so you can totally relax, the Florida House Inn combines vintage charm and southern hospitality, and the Addison on Amelia Island is a romantic place to stay. You truly cannot go wrong with any of them!

#### Premium Lodging

It's no secret that Amelia can easily be a luxury destination. The island is home to several **luxury resorts**, including the Ritz-Carlton, the Villas of Amelia Island, and Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort.

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You'll also find plenty of **hotel and motel** choices here — so you're guaranteed to find the one that fits your needs and budget.

### Keep It Natural

For those who prefer a more rustic experience, check out the **campgrounds** at Fort Clinch State Park.

You'll find both full service modern sites and more primitive areas, and both offer all the beauty of the park's natural surroundings.

#### Pin This Post



SPL TRAVEL

## Amelia Island

Nature, history, and culinary adventure await in Northeast Florida



Centre Street in Fernandina Beach offers blocks of quaint shops and coffee shops, including The Book Loft, right, a popular bookstore.

BY MARCIA BIGGS

In my world, there's no better place to relax and get a way from it all than Northeast Florida where the natural beauty of Old Florida is still alive. After what seemed like endless captivity at home, a friend and I decided it was time for a getaway. Amelia Island had been on both of our bucket lists and the timing was right for a destination with plenty of fresh air and wide open space.

After a lovely drive through Central Florida, our stress levels immediately lowered as we entered "island time." We nabbed a last-minute room at the Residence Inn Amelia Island, a Marriott all-suite property with multiple, one-bedroom and two-bedroom, just a six-minute walk from the beach. It was the perfect location between the north and south ends of the 33.5-mile-long barrier island. We were glad we decided to go mid-week as it seemed a lot of others had the same idea — the island was starting to come alive after many months of quiet.

Relaxation was at the top of our agenda, which included exploring the historic restaurants, strolling historic downtown Fernandina Beach, and taking the main city on the island, Fernandina Beach, with a population hovering around 32,000 is a quaint downtown filled with shops and cafes. The entire go-block downtown area is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and has been under eight different flags since its founding in 1564. Hence, there is somewhat of a pre-occupation here with pirates, buried treasure and smuggling, but that's for another story.

We headed to Centre Street, the main drag, for a quick stop at Amelia Island Coffee. Home to a former pharmacy and soda fountain, it's a hip place to grab a coffee or ice cream and sit at a sidewalk table to watch the world go by. Across the street,

The Book Loft, "an old-fashioned book store," beckoned us indoors to peruse a vast selection of Florida culture and history books (many focusing on Amelia Island), classics, travel and fiction. Word has it that John Grisham used Amelia Island and the independent bookstore as a location and plot setting in his "Camino Island" book. If you're lucky, there might be a book signing or reading when you visit.

There are plenty of shops to explore on Centre Street like Twisted Sisters, an art boutique filled to the brim with everything from candles and beaded crafts to fine art and fashionable sandals and tees. Color It Green, an all-natural gift shop, has impressive eco-friendly clothing, jewelry, skin care, pet care and home accessories.

At the foot of Centre Street, the marina sits on the eastern side of the island, giving us a glimpse of the bridge to the mainland and the many sailboats docked here. This was once a bustling port and the restored train depot is worth a visit, especially since it is now the Amelia Island Welcome Center.

We had heard raves about the fresh seafood at Timmy's Seafood Shack so headed in that direction for lunch. This casual family-run cafe is serving guests at a takeout window and they can't wait to serve you. The menu is fresh and wild caught — shrimp, oysters, fish, clams, lobster rolls and fish tacos. We ordered an excellent Polka Beef with Ahu Tuna and a chicken salad. Both came with coconut rice and perfectly fresh bread puppies.

Amelia Island, fresh seafood is a mainstay at many restaurants. We loved the food, service and ambiance of dinner at Pogo's.

SPL TRAVEL

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Wrapping up the 2021 Amelia Island Restaurant Week will be a finale event at The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island on Thursday, January 28th at 6 p.m. featuring a tantalizing four-course dinner and reception with an Oysters & Pearls theme. A culinary tribute to the resort's 30th anniversary, the menu will draw inspiration from the traditional 30th-anniversary gift of pearls, combined with coastal traditions. Dinner will feature fresh oysters, local shrimp and local fish paired with sparkling wines and desserts. Tickets range from \$100 to \$130 per person, with a portion of proceeds benefiting St. Mary's Rivorkeeper.

### About Amelia Island

Northeast Florida's coastal treasure, Amelia Island is a barrier island rich in colorful history and breath-taking natural beauty. Amelia Island offers long, beautiful beaches, abundant wildlife, and pristine waters. Upscale resorts with world-class spas, championship golf and exclusive dining blend effortlessly with a captivating collection of bed and breakfast inns and historic districts. The island is home to Fernandina Beach, once a vibrant Victorian seaport village, and now a charming downtown district of eclectic shops, attractions and eateries. Forget the everyday gateway, come make memories on Amelia Island. For visitor information and online planning, visit [AmeliaIsland.com](http://AmeliaIsland.com).

For a complete list of Valentine's Day offers and events on Amelia Island, and ideas for planning your romantic island getaway, visit [ameiaisland.com/valentines](http://ameiaisland.com/valentines)

\* All packages and special offers are based on availability. Restrictions apply and vary by property. Contact individual properties for restrictions and to book a package.

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Here are the Top 5 romantic destinations that made American Coach's list, all six hours or less from Augusta.





St. Augustine, Florida

Founded by the Spanish in 1565, St. Augustine is the oldest city in the United States. It became a vacation destination after Henry M. Flagler, a founder of Standard Oil, sought to create a new American Riviera. Thus, several luxury resorts popped up, such as Hotel Ponce de Leon, which is now Flagler College; Hotel Alcazar, which is now the Lightner Museum; and Hotel Cordova, which is now Hotel Casa Monica. The city's Historic District is imbued in Gilded Age romance, with cobblestone streets, hidden courtyards, ornate fountains and grand monuments.

For RVers spending the night, the Compass RV Resort offers full hook-up, a patio, swimming pool, fitness center, nature trail and spacious dog park.

#### Amelia Island, Florida

A 90-minute drive north of St. Augustine is Amelia Island, 13 miles of rolling dunes and pristine seashore that oozes relaxation. What could be more romantic than a sunrise horseback ride on the white sand beach? It's worth getting up early for. You can always doze later during a luxe couples treatment from the Omni Resort. Continue your one-of-a-kind day into evening with dinner at Salt at the Ritz-Carlton, one of the only Five Diamond restaurants in Florida and where you can book the chef's table in the kitchen.

Enjoy the beauty and history of Fort Clinch State Park when you stay at its Amelia River Campground. The diverse 1,400-acre park has maritime hammocks with massive live oaks that offer a stunning backdrop for hiking, biking and wildlife viewing. Many of the RV spots lead directly to bank fishing.

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ABOUT US SPECIALS & NEWS ACCOLADES TRIP REVIEWS

## Remote Field Trip

January 26, 2021

Are your children itching to get out of the house and outside as part of their virtual education? The **Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island** has partnered with coral reef conservationists, the Reef Institute, to offer an exciting, five-day **Barrier Island Ecology Field Trip**. The instructor-led class is for school-age children. It is designed to complement earth-science studies and foster a passion for both marine ecology and biology. Your children will witness and explore the native dune ecosystem by kayak and boat to sample and study the region's complex water system and estuaries. They will also examine the local wildlife, learn about wave systems, do a microscopic analysis of beach wildlife, and more. The course dates are February 21-26, March 21-25, or April 19-23. The program includes teacher fees, course materials and supplies, breakfast, lunch, snacks, and more. Hotel stays are additional, but the resort has a dedicated study room for children. While your children are engaging in science, parents can enjoy great golf, tennis, spa, indoor and outdoor pools, fine dining, bike rentals, and more!



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## STILETTOS & DIAPERS

ANNIVERSARY FLORIDA HUSBAND TRAVEL  
COUPLES WEEKEND IN AMELIA ISLAND

Last month, we celebrated our 15th wedding anniversary! We have spent many of our anniversaries with babies at home as we haven't been able to truly celebrate in a big way (now the boys are old enough to leave with their grandparents without any problems and we booked a trip to Amelia Island, Florida).



TRIP WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY with the whole family it was such a fun and relaxing trip! That trip was in the Spring and was spent mostly at the beach and exploring our hotel grounds. We didn't do many of the leisurely or historic things that Amelia Island really has to offer, so I was so excited to get back. Amelia Island is an easy drive from our house in Charlotte, NC. When you're road tripping without kids, it's even easier!

WHERE TO STAY IN AMELIA ISLAND

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We checked into the hotel that was fully and beautifully decorated for Christmas. We were a bit concerned with staying in a hotel due to the current environment, but all our concerns were put at ease. One great thing about the Omni Amelia Island is that the room doors are exterior, so we really don't have to go through interior areas during our stay, outside of check-in. The grounds at the Omni are beautiful and the balcony of our room overlooked the pool and out to the ocean. There were several fire pits that we enjoyed sitting at a couple different times during our stay with the lower crowds of the winter. I think it's a perfect time to visit. The goal of our trip was relaxation and Amelia Island did not disappoint! There's something about waking up to the view of the ocean that instantly brings peace.



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## COUPLES WEEKEND IN AMELIA ISLAND

### FRIDAY

Our first morning, we woke up and instantly went for a walk on the beach. It was December, but not too cold and we soaked all our shoes to feel the sand between our toes for a few more. Growing up on the panhandle of Florida, I can assure you that there are plenty of days in the winter that are warm enough for a walk on the beach! We worked up an appetite and headed to [Cafe Kanbo](#) for lunch.

Cafe Kanbo is an eclectic, family owned restaurant in downtown Fernandina Beach. I was excited just waiting up to its beautiful patio. Filled with giant strangler palm trees. They are known for their Turkey Cubes and shrimp salad and desserts are not to be missed! They are open for brunch, lunch and dinner and have a sangria that is a local favorite.



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After lunch, we took the chance to walk around and explore downtown. What once was a Victorian seaport village is now filled with shops, restaurants and art in all different forms. We walked most of the downtown area and over to the Amelia river without a care in the world. The streets are dotted with cobblestone and we enjoyed soaking up all the history.



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We headed back to the [Amelia River](#) in time for our kayak tour. A guide lead us on kayaks through the saltwater marsh as we spotted birds, fish and plenty of oysters. It was quiet and so peaceful out there, as well as a good arm workout!



After a quick rest, we headed back downtown for dinner at [Joe's](#). Joe's is a local favorite for fine dining, located in a 1900s historic home. It's perfect for a celebratory night like ours or a simple glass of wine in their courtyard. We got to chat with the chef and were very impressed with the food, wine list and kindness of everyone there.

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### SATURDAY

We packed our schedule the day before, so decided on a bit fewer key this day. With coffee in hand, we started the morning with a beach walk and added to our collection of top shells.

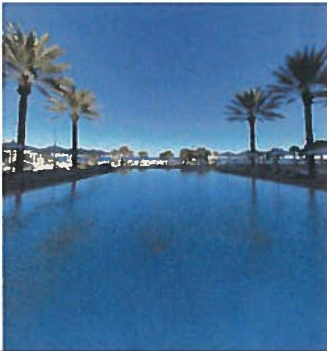


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On The Omni Amelia Resort property is [a lot to see and do](#). If you're there on a Saturday or Sunday get the breakfast tower! It's not only delicious but beautiful. They also sell wine by the bottle, souveners, and to-go food. We ate outside on the patio and sipped a mimosa before we walked around the shops they have there. The grounds at The Omni are absolutely worth exploring!



Even in the winter time it was nice to sit by the gorgeous pool and relax. There isn't a bad view in the whole property.

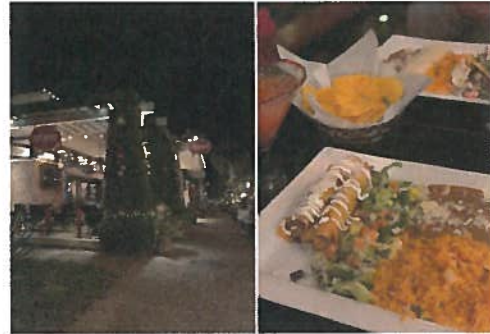


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Since there are an abundance of options for outdoor dining in Downtown Fernandina Beach, we headed back for dinner and landed on [The Streets](#). The streets were lit up for Christmas and it was fun to sit by the sidewalk and people watch while we ate. The food was delicious and so were the margaritas. Walking around after dinner was beautiful and there was some type of outdoor live music around every corner.



Since there are an abundance of options for outdoor dining in Downtown Fernandina Beach, we headed back for dinner and landed on [The Streets](#). The streets were lit up for Christmas and it was fun to sit by the sidewalk and people watch while we ate. The food was delicious and so were the margaritas. Walking around after dinner was beautiful and there was some type of outdoor live music around every corner.



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## SUNDAY

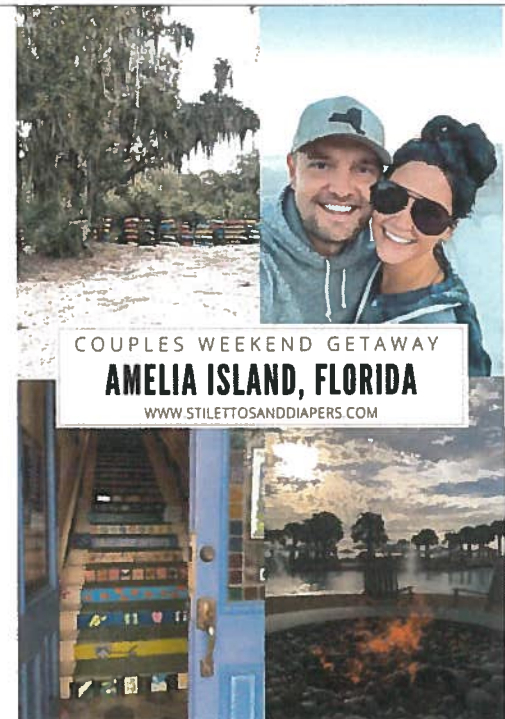
It was time to head back to our babies, but we felt very refreshed, relaxed and happy to have gotten to celebrate 15 years!



Now that we've experienced Amelia Island for a romantic getaway, I can't say enough good about it as a whole. The versatility to be a great trip for couples, as well as a family trip, is impressive. The 13 miles of beaches, the abundance of relaxation as well as the option for plenty of activities makes it a top destination in my book. It's also such a great proximity to so many southern cities, that you can make it a drive instead of a flight. That's always a plus for me!

Have you been to Amelia Island? You can see our trip in real time in [our Instagram](#) in the "Amelia Island" highlight.

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COUPLES WEEKEND GETAWAY  
**AMELIA ISLAND, FLORIDA**  
[WWW.STILETTOSANDDIAPERS.COM](http://WWW.STILETTOSANDDIAPERS.COM)

Thank you, Vixie Amelia, for hosting our trip. All insights and opinions are my own.

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# Top 10 “Must Visit” Beaches in Florida

Posted On December 3, 2020 By William P. | 3595 Views | 44 Likes | Read

Among many things, Florida is known for its year-round beach weather, white-sand beaches, and clear coastal waters. When combined, those three attributes create a blissful scene along Florida's coastline and make them a “must visit” when passing through the Sunshine State.

With over 1,300 miles of coastline, 663 of which qualify as beaches, it's hard to avoid visiting at least one beach when you visit our beautiful state. Whether you're looking to visit a beach where the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean meet, looking for a more secluded beach or a busy beach like a scene out of Baywatch, Florida has it all.

There are too many beaches to choose from. 189 official beaches to be exact, but we have decided to highlight a unique top 10 list of beaches scattered throughout the state for all types of beach goers. The list includes some popular, well-known beaches, some secluded and hard to get to beaches, and some that made the list.

In no particular order, these are our must visit beaches in Florida:

**Amelia Island Beach – 32 N Fletcher Ave, Fernandina Beach, FL 32034**

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**Fernandina Beach on Amelia Island, Florida – Courtesy: Shutterstock-Photo by Madison Y Photo**

– This small island is home to many beaches, the address above will take you to Main Beach Park in specific, but we are just using it as a general reference cause all the beaches here are amazing! Situated just north of Jacksonville, you get residents at the northernmost point of the state and a mix of southern twang. Not too crowded and a slightly older crowd depending on where you look. But don't let this deter you from visiting this absolute Atlantic water gem. Whichever beach you decide to visit in the area, we promise you won't regret it. More warm waters and clean sand, what more can you ask for? Roughly 82 degrees Fahrenheit year-round and relatively unaffected by major storms, you can find sand dunes up to 40 feet high and 13 miles of pure quartz sand.

**Learn more at One Enchanted Island – Amelia Island, Florida**

Remember, there's more than just going to beaches in Florida. We've also covered some of the **best state parks** and **camping grounds** as well! And you can't forget the amusement parks! We hope you enjoyed our list, but feel free to visit more than what we have listed!

**There's plenty to do here in Florida, and whether you are visiting Florida or a resident that wants to see something new, at Florida Insider we have you covered with travel, history, nature, and more!**

**Note – State and National Parks do have fees to enter, check the links attached for more information about fees to enter the parks.**

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# Tourist Development Council seeks to cast tourism in a positive light

By John Riddick | 10:45pm | November 12, 2020

## PERCEPTION PROBLEM

The Amelia Island Tourist Development Council says the work it does promoting tourism in Nassau County has a 6000 million impact in the area, including \$600 million in wages for 14,000 jobs and are supported by tourist spending. Over time, the TDC's Board wants to improve the organization's image and the work it does to attract visitors to the county.

Local people who live in and around a tourist destination, are often derisive of visitors. (And there be a severe lack in a beach community due to all tourism's "income")

But, the Amelia Island Tourist Development Council says to change that perception and make locals realize – and appreciate – the economic impact of visitors to Nassau County.

As the Vice President of the TDC Board of Directors, Managing Director Gil Langley shared the organization's 2019 "Value of Visitors" report, which details the economic benefits of Nassau County's tourism and hospitality.

According to the report, which relies on data such as Nassau County Office of Management and Budget, the Florida Department of Revenue and the Nassau County Tax Collector's Office, visitors paid 38.3% of all local and state taxes in the county in 2019, and 35.2% of taxable sales in the county.

Here are other facts and figures for 2019, according to the report:

- Amelia Island had 1,198,300 visits including "day trippers" and those visiting family and friends who spent \$497 million, creating 18,750 million in economic impact.
- Tourism accounted for 11,342 jobs, or 35.6% of total employment in the county paying \$485 million in wages, accounting for 32.4% of all wages in the county.
- Every 102 visitors to Amelia Island create a job in Nassau County.
- The typical traveler who stays in a paid accommodation on Amelia Island spent \$1,225. That equates to \$84 million in tax revenue attributed to visitors, 26.7% of tax revenue that funds Nassau County government.

To receive the same level of services without visitors to Amelia Island contributing to Nassau County government, each county household would have to pay an additional \$1,179 in taxes per year. When factoring in state sales taxes paid by visitors to the island, visitors spend on average \$1,440 per year in local and state taxes paid to county government and the Nassau County School District.

There is no question many of the visitors to Amelia Island were attracted here due to the effects of the TDC, the TDC says. Marketing has been targeted to areas such as New York and Chicago, as well as Europe, resulting in more visitors and much more money per person over the last 10 years.

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Langley said the TDC pays for 100% of beach cleaning services and the local share of an annual project to "renovate" or place sand on beaches to maintain them, as well as help build events such as the Amelia Island Bowl Festival, Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival and Amelia Island Jazz Festival, helping make Amelia Island a year-round destination.

"In the old days, once September got here, people shut down until spring break," Langley said.

Yet, the TDC does not "base its own budget" on that. "We base our budget on what we're doing with them and capturing their investment."

But, board members said they believe the organization should work to improve its image in the community. There has been some call over the past few years for TDC directors to be elected by the community, not just by the board. Board Chairman Danny Lopez, at his last meeting as a board member after losing his seat on the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners during the August primary and leaving attention to the success of the TDC, said he is a double-edged sword.

"If you lose your success too much, people want to know what you and say there's too many visitors here. Our marketing department want some of the TDC revenue to do this and that. We kind of looked at our success because people need to understand just how important this is and the TDC is to Nassau County and Amelia Island. That could be worked on, but understand it could be detrimental as well."

County Commissioner Aaron Bell will replace Lopez on the TDC Board.

Fernandina Beach Vice Mayor Les Egan, one of the city's two representatives on the board, said he believes the image of visitors and of the TDC is important.

"When I moved here, the high school had what they called 'Tomb Raider Day.' It's not that it was new," Egan said. "I think most government understands what the TDC does. Two years ago, they did a \$31 million renovation and the TDC paid the total local share. I think most people recognize the value of it, but some people just don't want anything here. We have that element."

Board member Will Voss said "we have to assure that the way we're doing it is not a repeat of the last election and election again."

Langley also shared some key data from the latest TDC financials.

The coronavirus pandemic has affected tourism, and Amelia Island is not escaped the downturn. The public health emergency has restricted Langley and that for the last year ended Oct. 31, the TDC has projected its budget for 2020 to be charged on lodging on Amelia Island, would be down 40% but revenue came in at only 22% less than expected. He said August had a "robust" performance up 22% from 2019, while September was up 30.6% due to a hurricane bringing down bed tax revenues in September 2019.

The lack of meeting and convention business is still affecting hospitality. Langley said that business "has almost evaporated" and believes it will be 18 months to two years before it returns. Full recovery of tourism on the island could take as long as three years, he said.

Board member Olivia Bell said the success of a referendum to raise the minimum wage in the state to \$15 per hour.

The Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association fought it as hard as we could, Bell said. "Minimum wage going up will impact the value, the service, the service and the small businesses, the restaurants and the B&Bs. They are going to need to find a way to help market because prices are going to go up. It's going to hurt – businesses, so we need to help to protect the bed tax."

The TDC Board also approved a new contract with the Casa Real, negotiated by Harrison as vice chairman, and appointed Phyllis Davis to replace Melinda Feltner, who is retiring.

interact@newsleader.com

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MICHAEL BAGINSKI / JANUARY 20, 2021

## WHAT'S NEW IN FLORIDA FOR 2021

Florida is gearing up for 2021 with a wide array of new hotels, attractions, restaurants, not to mention a rocket launch or two. From a new state-of-the-art golf course to an adrenaline-filled rollercoaster ride and a new Margaritaville in Jacksonville, here's a small sampling of the new and notable

### AMELIA ISLAND

The new year brings new hotels to Amelia Island. Opening in spring 2021, the Courtyard by Marriott and Springhill Suites by Marriott – located in the main beach area of Fernandina Beach and operating under one roof – will share four storeys and 239 guest rooms, along with a spacious pool and outdoor area, and a state-of-the-art meeting and event space.

### FORT MYERS

With six new hotel properties under construction, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel is set to add 671 guest rooms by the end of 2021. They join the newly opened 243-room Luminary Hotel & Co., which pays tribute to the neighbourhood's electric history nearly 134 years after Thomas Edison put down roots in "The City of Palms."

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## Publicity Report February 2021

AMELIA ISLAND  
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### Summary

Total Mentions: 21  
Total Reach: 78.2M

Amelia Island Feb 2021

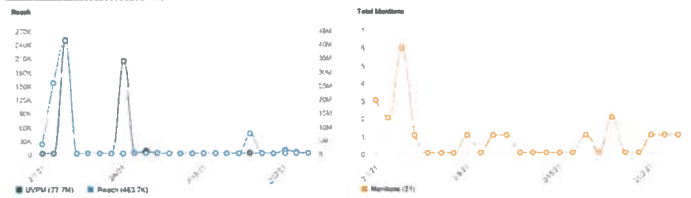
### Coverage Summary

#### Top Articles

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Amelia Island Feb 2021

Mentions by Location



Prominent Terms

among state florida's leading fauberge super small south sadona's cottages fernandina vehicle ultra-romantic discover northern miles  
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## Ten Ultra-Romantic Road Trips By Car Or Recreation Vehicle—Safe, Scenic, Sensual

Lea Lane Contributor

Travel  
Award-winning travel writer/photographer/podcaster, 100-plus countries

Hit the open road with your Valentine (and masks and hand sanitizer!) to explore romantic road stops in the privacy of your car. Or consider an RV, including [American Coach](#), an ultra-luxury brand which recommends RV resorts and parks near romantic destinations.

Each 'Romantic Stop' below focuses on the outdoors, and offers scenic drives, sensual allure, and idyllic scenery. (But due to the pandemic, do confirm hours of operation for parks, restaurants and other attractions and activities. Rules may change.)

A sand dune with sea grass along a sand fence on the beach. ©2021



**Amelia Island, FL** A 90-minute drive south is Amelia Island, with 13 miles of rolling dunes and pristine seashore.

Horseback ride at sunrise on white sand, where seashells include great heart cockles, sand dollars, and olives. At the Omni Resort, try a Swedish massage or cleansing facial, and consider booking the chef's table in the kitchen at Salt at the Ritz-Carlton, one of the only five-diamond restaurants in Florida. A sunset cruise shows spectacular oranges, pinks, and reds, to end a romantic day.

*RVers will find numerous RV resort options.*

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insurance company certainly, the first insurance company - period - depending on who you ask. That was Jacksonville's Afro American Life Insurance Company.

The heyday of American Beach lasted until 1964. That year, Hurricane Dora physically devastated the community and the signature of the Civil Rights Act finally forced beaches around the state and the South to integrate.

For three decades in between, American Beach welcomed thousands of visitors each year, many of them traveling hundreds of miles seeking "a place for recreation and relaxation without humiliation."

As police officers were storming into the surf with batons as nearby as St. Augustine, Florida, 60 miles south, dragging Black protestors engaging in "wade-ins" out of the water at whites-only beaches, American Beach offered a beacon of hospitality.

"Relaxation without humiliation." Or Brutalization. Or Incarceration.

"It was like Pinocchio when he went to Pleasure Island and just did everything that he wanted to do and just had so much fun," Marsha Dean Phelts, author of "An American Beach for African Americans," a history of American Beach, said when interviewed on the "Welcome to Florida" podcast in June of 2020.

Phelts was born and raised in nearby Jacksonville, vacationed at American Beach during its peak and moved to Amelia Island for good in 1988.

"Coming to the beach was a place where you were wanted and you felt the way you felt when you went into your big mama's house - nothing is going to go wrong - coming to the beach my whole life was sooo much fun," Phelts recalled on "Welcome to Florida." "Back then, when family came, it wasn't just your family that lived around the corner and down the street. Uncle Freddie came from Philadelphia - WOW?, that's wonderful - Annabelle came from Tallahassee - there was just a whole lotta' people."

Everyone who experienced American Beach first-hand through the 40s and 50s remembers the crowds. Families. Church groups.

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Forbes

Feb 3, 2021 08:17am EST | 2,681 views

## 'A Place For Recreation And Relaxation Without Humiliation,' American Beach On Amelia Island, Florida



**Chadd Scott** Contributor

Arts

I cover the intersection of art and travel.



NaNa Dune - the tallest dune in Florida, at American Beach on Amelia Island - NORTH FLORIDA AND TRUST

"A place for recreation and relaxation without humiliation."

Those were the words of Abraham Lincoln Lewis describing American Beach, the first resort in Florida purpose built to welcome Black visitors which he helped found in 1935.

Lewis is widely considered Florida's first Black millionaire. His fortune came after starting the state's first insurance company in 1901, the first Black

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Scarcely a car or person can be found there most days now, save for the contractors and builders putting up new luxury homes and the landscaping crews.



Recently built luxury beachfront homes at American Beach. CHADD SCOTT

Phelts especially remembers school trips to American Beach. The entire school went. Her anticipation the week leading up and night before was almost too much to bear.

"We'd get into the bus and it was at the end of the (school) year, we'd come in May - everybody came, the teachers came, the administrators came, and the cafeteria prepared your lunch which means everybody had the same thing," Phelts remembers. "At school, you had bologna and somebody else had ham, but coming to the beach picnic, everybody had the same delicious fried chicken and lemonade and the super-sweet thing about coming to the beach was that you could go into the water."

While most everything else has changed at American Beach since those days, the "water" - the beach - remains the same. A wide, soft, flat stretch of finely ground sand looking out over an endless expanse of sparkling Atlantic Ocean.

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Looking north from the beach at American Beach on Amelia Island. CHAZO SCOTT

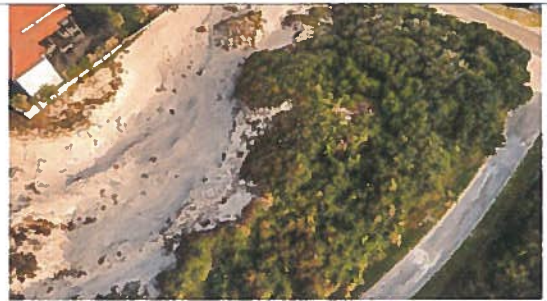
Another prominent remnant remaining untouched from the glory days is Little NaNa Dune. Thanks to its acquisition on January 13, 2021 by the North Florida Land Trust for \$1.255 million, Little NaNa Dune will forever be spared from the development which has scraped parts of American Beach to the ground for vacation homes and remains the greatest threat to the community's past and future.

January 13 was symbolically chosen for the acquisition date to honor the legacy of MaVynne Betsch, A.L. Lewis's great granddaughter, who lived at American Beach and was known affectionately as "the Beach Lady."

Betsch was a champion for the preservation of American Beach, an effective one.

Phelts remembers her as a "busy body" who could aggravate not only Nassau County officials into protecting the landscape, but her neighbors as well, admonishing them about cutting their grass and reducing the "forage" available for the threatened gopher tortoises which call the area home.

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Overhead view of Little NaNa Dune at American Beach acquired by the North Florida Land Trust on ... [-] NORTH FLORIDA LAND TRUST

Phelts recalls Betsch placing signs around NaNa Dune warning of "Danger! Snakes!" to discourage people from climbing it which results in great damage.

"She was much loved by the people on the Beach," Phelts said. "That was her dune."

The NaNa Dune system, of which Little NaNa is a part, is the tallest remaining dune system in Florida.

American Beach, however, was more than a beach, more than a dune.

Much more.

"American Beach was, and is, a teensy, weensy town, and it was a town that welcomed its people," Phelts said. "There were lodging places such as the A.L. Lewis Motel, there was Duck's Inn, but anybody who had a house, they would rent you a room in the house, and buses would come from Atlanta (300 miles away) as if it was just crossing the bridge to get here—there were so many people from Atlanta—and from Alabama. The community was so happy to have you because it meant that (everyone who) the motel and the lodging places couldn't put up, they were knocking on your door—they welcomed you and would rent you a room."

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Evans Rendezvous, the nightclub at American Beach, "that was the heartbeat," Phelts says. Cab Calloway played there. Ray Charles. James Brown.

They were among the many celebrities to visit, a list which included boxing champion Joe Lewis, baseball's Hank Aaron, author Zora Neale Hurston and activist Mary McLeod Bethune.



Evans Rendezvous at American Beach today. CHAZO SCOTT



Duck's Hotel and Restaurant at American Beach today. CHAZO SCOTT

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Visiting American Beach today reveals both "before" and "after." After its glory days during Jim Crow. Before what will hopefully become a dynamic renaissance. Evan's Rendezvous is abandoned and boarded up. Duck's has been condemned. Both stand feet from multi-million dollar residences.

Squint hard, though, and imagine what this place could be. The bones are still here, creek and run down, but extant.

With vision from local leadership working in collaboration with residents, you can almost hear live music coming from Evan's Rendezvous again. Community gardens and parks could occupy the still numerous non developed lots. A new Duck's.

And people.

People from all over.

Wide pedestrian avenues with families, kids eating ice cream cones, food trucks, artists, musicians. Sunbathers and bird watchers. Tourists seeking history and culture.

American Beach has a story which can't be manufactured. Authenticity.

It's quiet here now, but this place wants to sing. American Beach wants to dance. This place, unlike so many of the Civil Rights landmarks around the nation tourists seek out wasn't consecrated by blood and terror, it was consecrated by joy.

A place for recreation and relaxation without humiliation.

To donate in support of North Florida Land Trust's acquisition of Little NaNa Dune, visit its [Amelia Forever campaign](#).


The American Beach Museum is temporarily closed due to COVID-19.

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NEWS BREAK

## 'A Place For Recreation And Relaxation Without Humiliation,' American Beach On Amelia Island, Florida



"A place for recreation and relaxation without humiliation". Those were the words of Abraham Lincoln Lewis describing American Beach, the first resort in Florida purpose-built to welcome Black visitors which he helped found in 1935. Lewis is widely considered Florida's first Black millionaire. His fortune came after starting the state's...

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Summary: Report: 10/10/2021 10:00 AM

Keywords: Beach, History, Culture, Travel

Tags: #AmericanBeach #AmeliaIsland #FloridaHistory

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## The 16 Most Charming Small Towns in Florida

By: [Kathleen Pochy](#) Feb 22, 2021


We're all for a quick escape from Miami, especially when it involves a visit to one of Florida's quaint small towns. Many of them revolve around a beach, and all of them will guarantee you a few days filled with sunshine, charm and relaxation. Here, our 16 favorite small towns in Florida.



1. ST. AUGUSTINE, FL

Established more than 450 years ago, this northern Florida town is as charming as it is old (we mean that as a compliment). Located on the Matanzas River, St. Augustine is brimming with history intertwined with European flair and Southern hospitality. Roam cobblestone streets lined with palm trees and take in the Spanish Renaissance Revival-style architecture.

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15. AMELIA ISLAND, FL

Established in 1562, **Amelia Island** is a timeless city with rich history. It's home to more than 13 miles of quiet beaches, next level golf courses, shore excursions and a historic district replete with ghost tours (👻), art museums and waterfront restaurants. Looking for a slice of heaven? Head to Fernandina Beach for date night and explore the sparkling shoreline.

Where to stay: The **Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island** is worth the splurge here. With more than 400 rooms and four restaurants, plus on-site tennis, an unbelievable spa and an 18-hole golf course, we wouldn't blame you if you never left the resort's grounds.

Summary: Report: 10/10/2021 10:00 AM

Keywords: Beach, History, Culture, Travel

Tags: #AmeliaIsland #FloridaHistory

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ESSENCE 50

## 7 Last Minute Socially Distant Valentine's Day Getaway Ideas

LOOKING FOR A ROMANTIC VALENTINE'S DAY GETAWAY FOR YOU AND YOUR PARTNER?


BY KIMBERLY WILSON - FEBRUARY 10, 2021

Haven't made your Valentine's Day plans yet? With the most romantic day of the year fast approaching, there's no better gift to give than a weekend getaway (during President's Day weekend nonetheless) to escape from everyday life and cherish quality time with one another. And if the ticking clock has you in a panic, don't worry — there's still time to book great options for a last-minute romantic retreat!

Looking for a romantic Valentine's Day getaway for you and your partner? Whether you're opting for adventure or choose to relax in bed for 3-days straight, here are seven options for any type of couple.

### 01 Napa Valley, CA

From picture-perfect proposals and unforgettable honeymoons to quiet weekends away from the bustle of the city, there's nothing quite like a Napa Valley escape to reconnect. With Valentine's Day right around the corner, Napa Valley hotels, wineries, restaurants and retail shops are ready to roll out the red carpet for couples who have been sheltered at home and are craving a romantic escape.



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### 03 Amelia Island, FL

A 90-minute drive from St. Augustine is laid-back Amelia Island with its 13 miles of rolling dunes and pristine seashore. Its picturesque beaches are a perfect backdrop for togetherness. Start the day with a sunrise horseback ride on the white sand beach that ribbons the Atlantic Ocean. For couples' pampering, visit the Omni Resort or make a reservation at Salt at the Ritz-Carlton, one of the only five-diamond restaurants in Florida, and consider booking the chef's table in the kitchen. At the end of the day, take a sunset cruise to catch the spectacular oranges, pinks, and reds as the sun dips behind the horizon.



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## Explore black history in the sunshine state

Lauren Gay from the [Outdoorsy Diva](#) blog joined us with several recommendations.



SAINT PETERSBURG, Fla. — Don't let February pass without taking in some black history. Take a trip back in time to discover the Underground Railroad or The Chitlin' Circuit, without ever leaving Florida. Lauren Gay from the Outdoorsy Diva blog joined us with several recommendations. For a full list of recommendations, visit [outdoorsydiva.com/black-history-in-florida-cities](http://outdoorsydiva.com/black-history-in-florida-cities)

St. Augustine

- Fort Mose State Park and Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center

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Tampa

- Perry Harvey, Sr. Park

### Orlando

• Zora Neale Hurston National Museum and Wells' Built Museum of African American History and Culture

### Amelia Island

- Williams House

The Boston Globe

TRAVEL

## Orlando, it's not, but small-town Florida has its own magic

Tempted to see it for yourself, once it's safe to travel again? Here's what you'll encounter.

By Glenn Kain and Pamela Wright, *Glenn Kain Correspondent*, Updated February 3, 2023, 12:11 p.m.



The Santa Fe River runs through High Springs, Fla. On a day like this, it's not you "allegedly, he'll, hold together, and this... according to multiple... What... 2006... 01/01

Cigar bars, South Beach, Cinderella, Tom Brady (sigh). Those are some of the things that spring to mind when one thinks "Florida."

This is not that Florida.

A road trip from Jacksonville to Gainesville reveals a landscape of horse farms, pasturelands, and tiny burgs with nary a downtown, much less a crystal castle. This is where Florida's wild, green soul comes out to play. A few minutes of paddling a kayak will transport you to a fern-fringed lagoon of frolicking dolphins and crystalline springs, more gorgeous than anything Disney's Imagineers could dream up.

Tempted to see it for yourself, once it's safe to travel again? Here's what you'll encounter

**Fernandina Beach: Pirates, hippies, and charm to spare**

Located off Florida's northern coast, thirty minutes from Jacksonville, Amelia Island isn't a secret. *Condé Nast Traveler* has named it among the top 10 "best islands" in the United States. But there's more to the story than upscale resorts and beaches. The island's main city, Fernandina Beach, is as vibrant as Florida sunsets, thanks to a 50-block historic district lined with well-maintained Victorian buildings. Its history is just as colorful, peopled with pirates, Gilded Age millionaires, bootleggers, and shrimpers. Soak up the view in the Palace Saloon (c. 1903), which bills itself as the oldest bar in Florida. Former mayor Johnny Miller is a bartender; there, a pig he maintained while in office. Writer John Grisham has a home here, too.



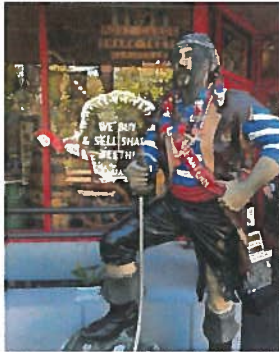
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"Hippies and cowboys co-exist here," a resident told us as we poked around Fernandina Beach. "People land on the island, and they never leave."



There's a long history in Fernandina Beach. If you want to dive into your past with a historical gem, go for it. DINE! DINE!



Hippies and cowboys happily co-exist in Fernandina Beach. Inside say along with pirate lore and Florida's oldest bar, DINE! DINE!

Streets are canopied with massive live oak trees, including a street built with a split in the middle to accommodate an ancient specimen. A bicycle tour is a fun way to explore. Riptide Watersports ([www.riptidewatersports.com](http://www.riptidewatersports.com)) offers guided tours and beach bike rentals. Among other sites, you'll see a house made of tabby (an oyster shell mixture) and the Bailey house, famously furnished with antique carousel horses that the owners found in its attic.

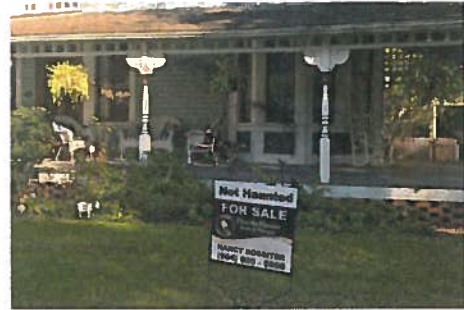
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There's a state park worth visiting on both ends of the island. At the southern tip, Amelia Island State Park offers a fun option: horseback riding on the beach. On the northernmost point, with views of Georgia's Cumberland Island, Fort Clinch State Park is a prime spot for hiking, camping, and birding at the site of a 19th-century masonry fort.

You don't have to go far to find solitude and gorgeous nature. A paddling excursion off Walker's Landing at Omni Amelia Island Plantation reveals a peaceful world of saltmarsh and bayous. Think dolphins and shore birds, not Jet Ski. "People don't realize that this exists here," said kayak guide John Putrino.

Top spots to stay and eat: The 402-room Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort ([www.omnihotels.com/ameliaisland](http://www.omnihotels.com/ameliaisland), from \$199) is a local landmark, with shopping, dining, golf, a nature center and kids' camp. Off property, Timotei's Seafood Shack ([www.timoteis.com](http://www.timoteis.com)) offers fresh local seafood and terrific salads (figs + feta + blackened fish + yum.) Lagniappe ([www.lagniappeamelia.com](http://www.lagniappeamelia.com)), located near the resort, wine rave for updated French Creole menu.

[www.ameliainland.com](http://www.ameliainland.com)



Fernandina Beach is full of stories. The 50-block historic district full of Victorian houses. And because of ghosts (present at this house, visitors don't go near) DINE! DINE!

Amelia Island State Park  
Fort Clinch State Park  
Walker's Landing  
Timotei's Seafood Shack  
Lagniappe  
Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort

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## ESCAPE MORE WITH CABANA LIFE

Feel a million miles away from your daily life with our #EscapeMore series. We're bringing the vacation to you with lifestyle & fitness influencer @beyondblissm. Dress like the getaway you're dreaming of with our new prints & UFF 50+ styles.

SHOP NEW ARRIVALS

Kate's family drove to Amelia Island, FL for a socially distanced weekend escape to the Omni Hotel.

Swimsuits

Beach days

Pool time!

Of course, we packed their bags full of Cabana Life classics, new arrivals and even upcoming collections!

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### ON THE BLOG: Amelia Island Style Guide

See how @beyondblissm and her family dressed for this dreamy vacation.

READ MORE

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For more style guides & vacation inspiration, follow along on Instagram @CabanaLife and check out the #EscapeMore highlight.

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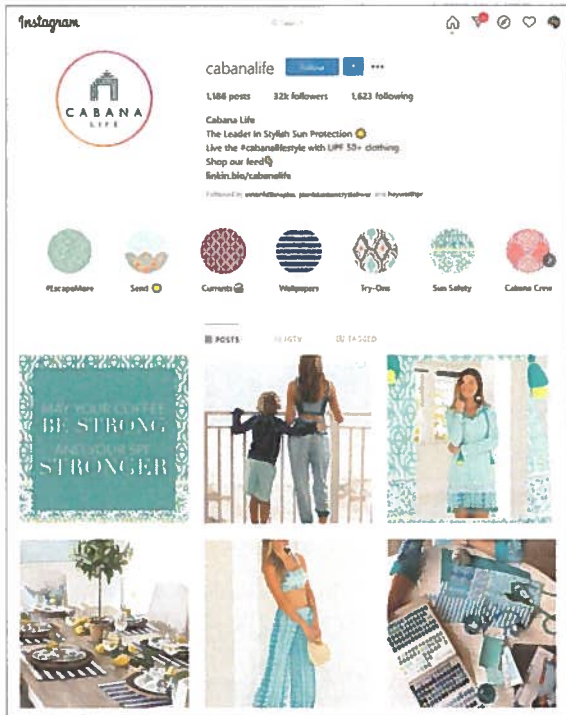
One lucky winner will receive the following:

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- Beachcomber Hat & Hole Bag from Hat Attack
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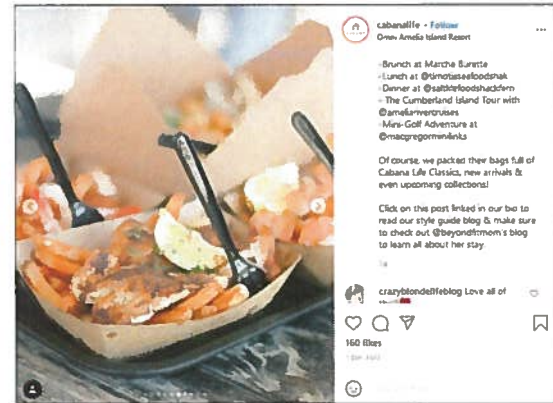
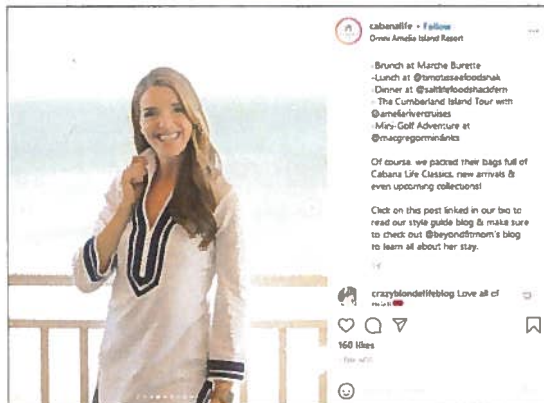
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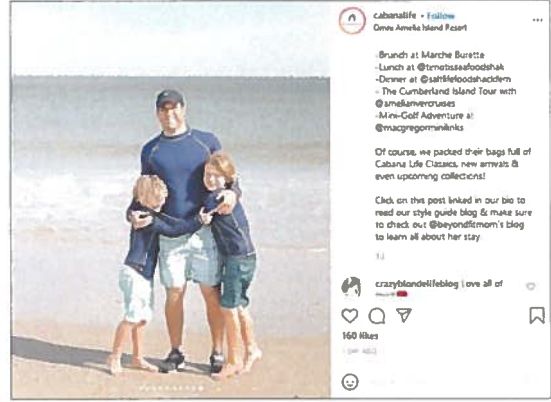
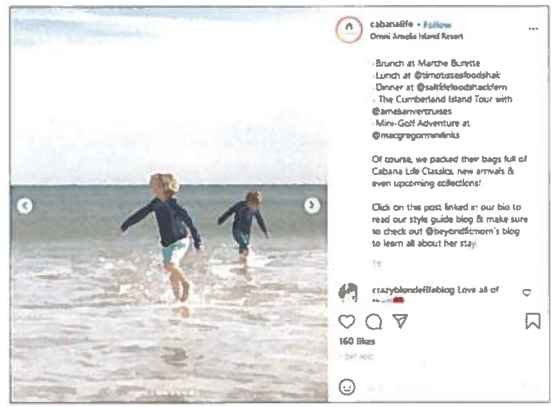
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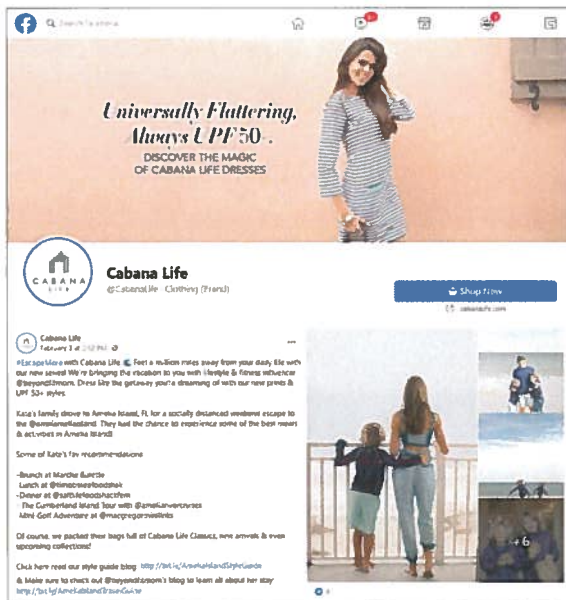






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After arriving at the Crow's Nest (Amelia Island Resort), the Broward PR Family was ready for pool day fun with Cabana Life classics. Kala made sure all her boys were sun safe in our UPF 50+ Navy Rashguards.



She also enjoyed relaxing by the pool in our cozy Vilela Heavy Trim Terry Towel. This classic Cabana Life cover up is also great with a soft & breathable Terry cloth fabric. What better way to enjoy a vibrant than a sunny pool day?

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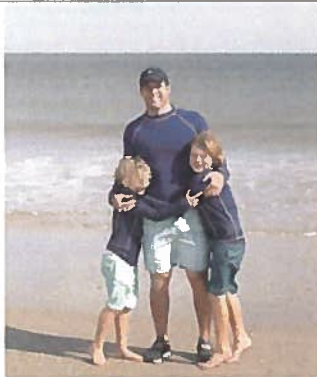


During their stay, Kala had her morning on the balcony with coffee and gorgeous ocean views. While taking in the seascapes & lounging on the balcony, she paired her Amelia Island 66-69 Top with Amelia Island Beach Pants. What could be a safer combo?



The whole family enjoyed Amelia Island's sandy shores in our new Vilela Shorts, Coastal Cellophane and Coral Tides prints. PS. These men & boy styles will be arriving soon!

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When the @browardpr family wasn't splashing in the waves, they stopped for a quick photo with @browardpr to show off their matching rashguards & cool blue swim trunks. Our lightweight & lightweight fabrics made sure everyone stayed cool & covered on all their summer adventures.



When it was time for lunch at the Marine Bar at the Crow's Nest, the boys bumbled up in their rashguards and showed off the giant cookies they got too!

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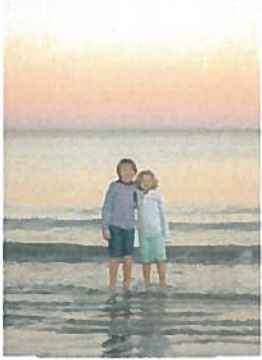
Cabana Life pieces kept everyone comfy while they spent the day adventuring on the Amelia Island Beach. Cool and playful mini golf at Corgi's MacGregor's Mini Links & Drinks. Everyone looked fun & fashionable for delicious lunch at Crow's Nest Seafood Shack and a billing dinner at Salt & the Food Shack.



Whether they were spending a day on the lawn, in the sand or by the pool everyone was protected in Cabana Life's UPF 50+ styles.

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Check out Kait's (@beyondfitmom) full blog here for her complete travel guide and even more style inspiration! For more vacation inspiration look out for our next #EscapeMore blog coming soon and follow along on our Instagram.

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## BEYONDFIT MOM

### FAMILY TRAVEL: OUR AMELIA ISLAND ESCAPE




JANUARY 22, 2021


**BeyondFit Family travel: Amelia Island Edition!**

Last weekend we had the chance to escape getaway with our family to Omni Amelia Island Plantation.

With natural beauty and southern charm, it's a little piece of paradise and the photos don't do it justice...

**You have to visit and experience it first hand!**




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### AMELIA ISLAND: WHERE TO STAY




We had the best stay at Omni Amelia Island Plantation and enjoyed beautiful views of ocean-topping sunrises and spectacular sunsets over green salt marshes. The 1,350-acre Omni Amelia Island Resort offers superior accommodations and activities and Florida's most beautiful natural surroundings.

We loved their amazing pools, and the furnished balcony was perfect for morning coffee and ocean views!




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### AMELIA ISLAND: WHAT TO EAT

We had so many wonderful meals during our stay on Amelia Island.

Here were a few of our favorites...




**Brunch at Marche Burette**

From hearty breakfasts to homemade ice creams, Marche Burette is the market/deli of your dreams. Stop back in time at this grocery and wine shop featuring gourmet products from French Farm, Savannah Bee Co., Pelican Bay, Peterbrooke Chocolates, Nancy's Candy and more!

For brunch, we highly recommend the brunch tower and giant cookies!

**Lunch at Timotti's Seafood Shack**

Timotti's Fire Shack is dedicated to serving fresh local and wild-caught seafood on Amelia Island. Timotti's is passionate about serving the freshest locally procured ingredients available while supporting the local fishermen, farmers, and brewers. Guests order their meals at a window and can dine outside in a fun atmosphere. Favorite menu items include shrimp, oysters, fish, clams, lobster rolls and fish tacos.

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#### Dinner at Salt Life Food Shack

Salt Life Food Shack offers a carefully crafted eclectic menu to cater to all tastes and personalities and provides the perfect locale for beach goes to enjoy great dishes, cool drinks and the opportunity to catch up with family and friends. The casual yet trendy open-air space will accommodate all types from the avid seaman to land lovers looking for a taste of the Salt Life. So back in the life and pull up a stool. Eat. Drink. And Be Salty.

#### AMELIA ISLAND: WHAT TO DO

##### CUMBERLAND ISLAND TOUR WITH AMELIA ISLAND RIVER CRUISE Take a River Cruise

We took what is one of our most popular tours: the Cumberland Island Tour with Amelia Island River Cruise.

This excursion offers an extensive and rich history of Amelia and Cumberland Island with views of wildlife along the way. We cruised by Fernandina's shrimp boats, historic Old Towne and Ft. Clinch to the wild horses of Cumberland Island. The boys loved listening to historians as they shared the colorful stories that define the character of this unique part of the world. Reservations are recommended.

##### Mini-Golf Adventure

Gregor MacGregor's Mini Links & Drinks combines some of Florida's favorite pastimes: a round of golf, a tasty drink, and beautiful scenery in the heart of historic Fernandina Beach. Right now, we're creating a lush garden putt putt course, a beachy bar, and cool, comfy patio to enjoy with friends. Now open!

##### Splash in the Pool or Walk on the Beach

Splash in the pool or take a walk on the beach and enjoy the beautiful scenery. From shell hunting to wave jumping, just make sure you're wearing your Cabana Life for UPF 50+ protection all day long!

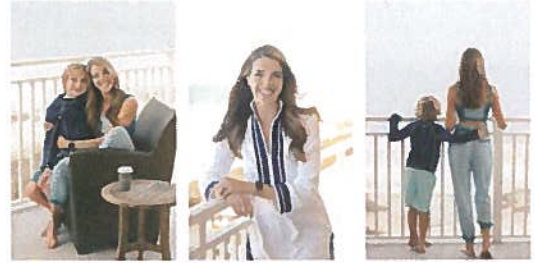


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#### AMELIA ISLAND: WHAT TO PACK

Speaking of what to wear... make sure you pack your Cabana Life for UPF 50+ protection, no matter the season you're planning your visit. Our family packing checklist includes:

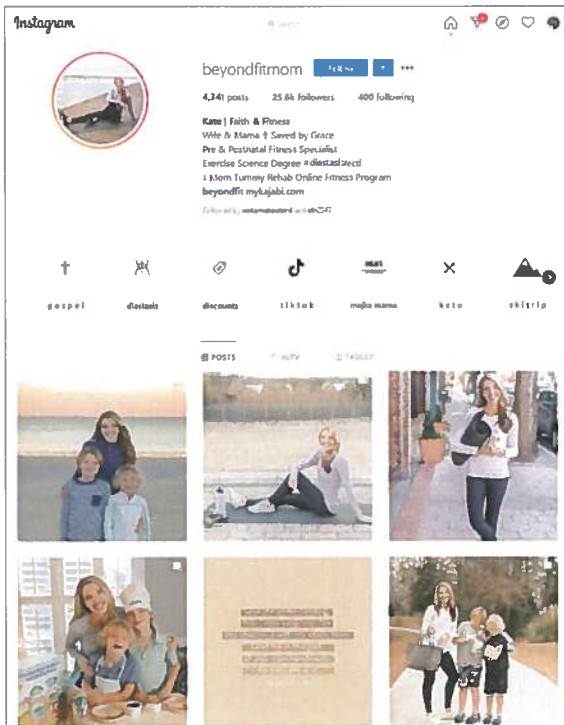
- Trunks & Rash Guards sets (for dad and boys) to keep both my big and little guys protected in sun, sand and surf. The nylon/spandex rash-guard offers 50+ UV Protection for the life of the garment. The UPF 50+ boys and mens swim trunks are made of quick-dry microfiber.
- Swimsuit and Beach Pants (for mom) slip into this new paperbag waist trouser pant for a relaxing on the balcony as you drink your morning coffee. The fabric is soft, lustrous and lightweight, providing the perfect drape look. The removable sash adds an extra fun feel that helps to make the perfect fit. Pairs perfectly with the matching Tassel Blouse or swim top for a complete head to toe ensemble to head from the beach to lunch or dinner!
- Coverups and dresses for strolling around town, and my favorite Cabana Life Sport Zip Polo for sunset beach walks... with the perfect combo of sporty and stylish, this will be your new go-to top! This Solid Navy Sport Zip Polo feels great, looks fabulous & goes everywhere you do, including the water. This long sleeve top is made from our luxurious, wicking sport knit fabric.



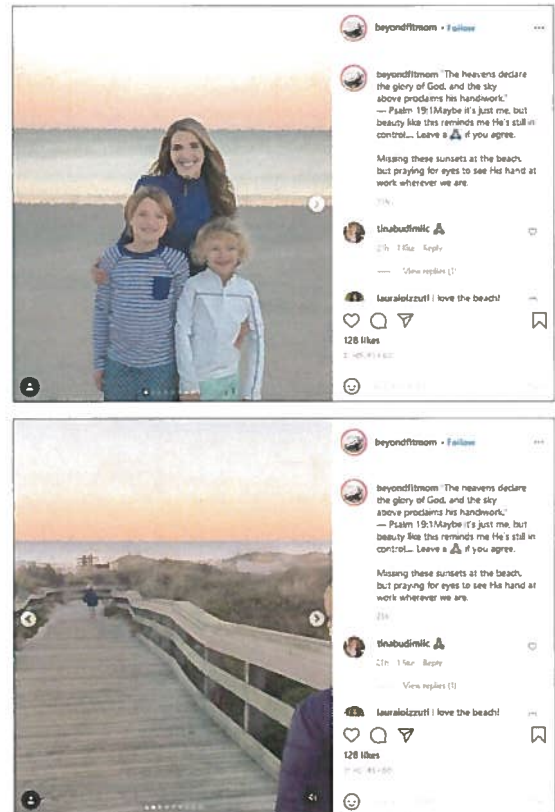
PAN - RASH GUARD SET | PANTS - RASH GUARD SET | PANTS - RASH GUARD SET | PANTS - RASH GUARD SET

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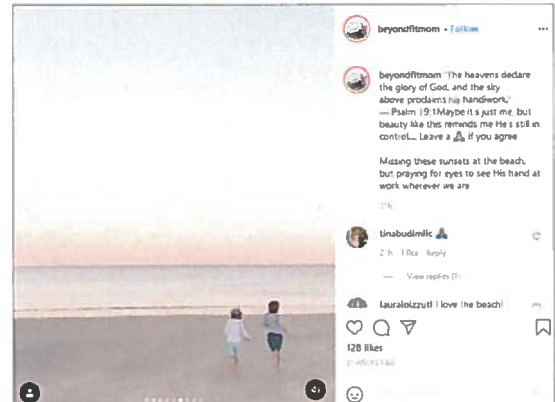
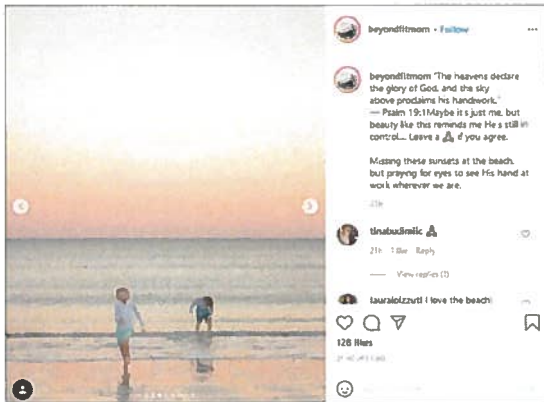
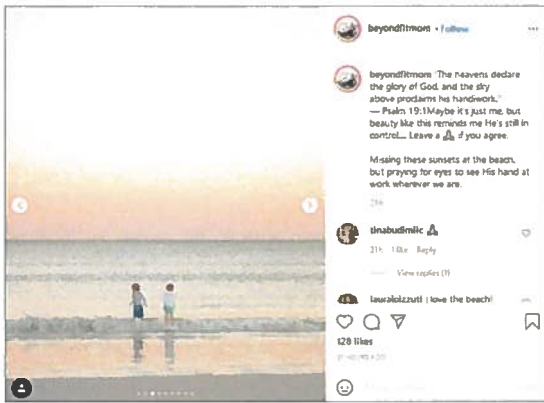
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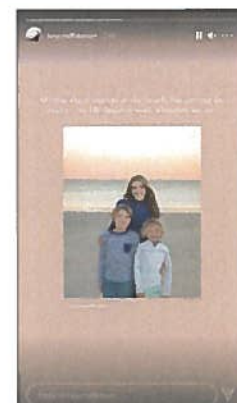
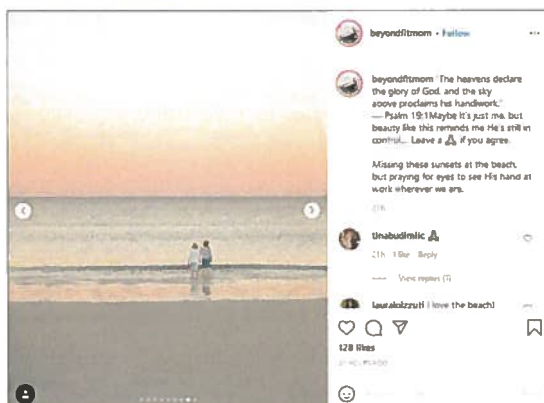
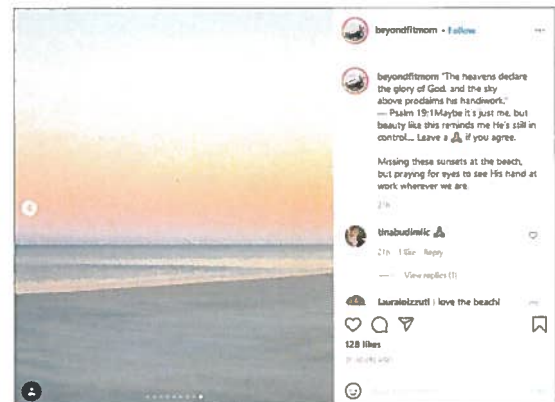
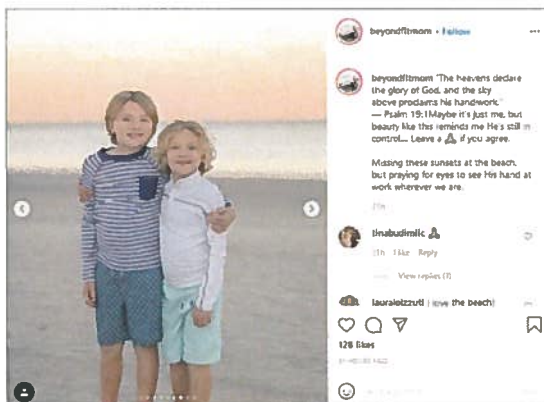


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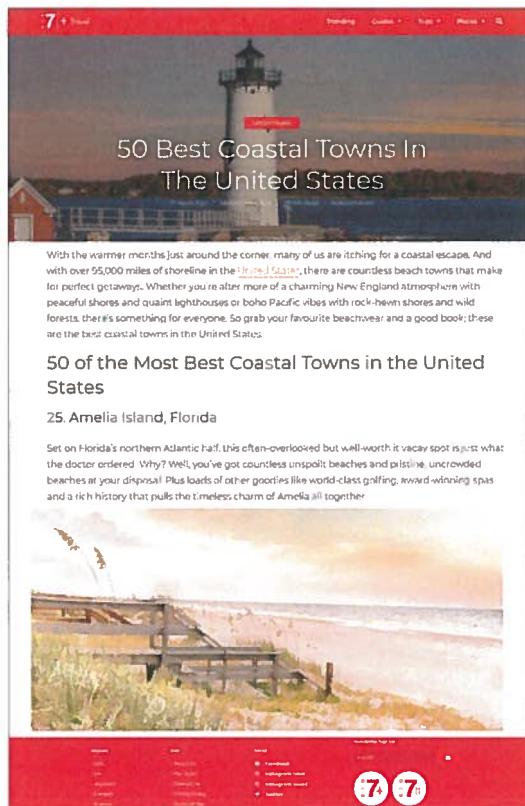
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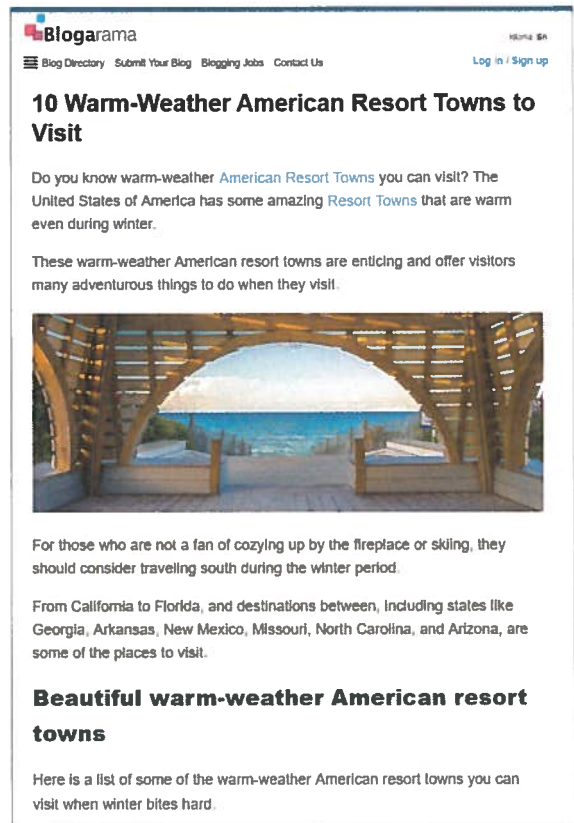


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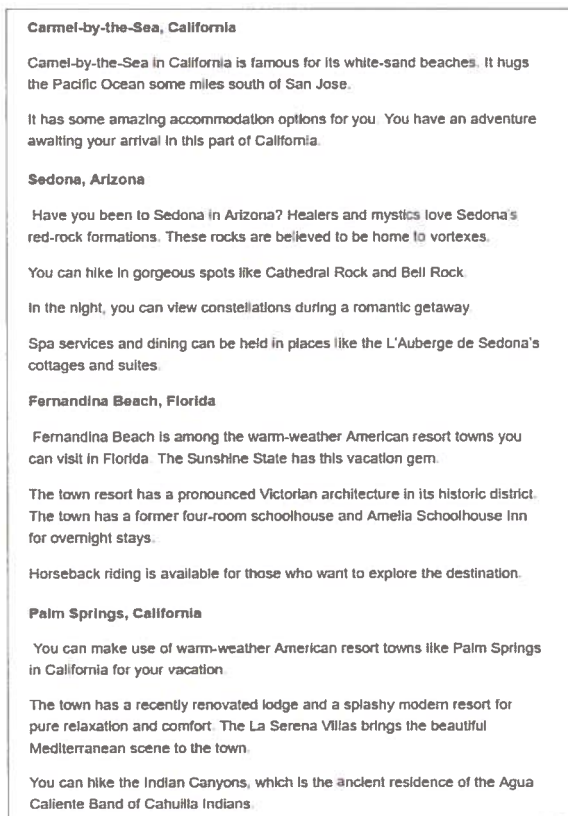
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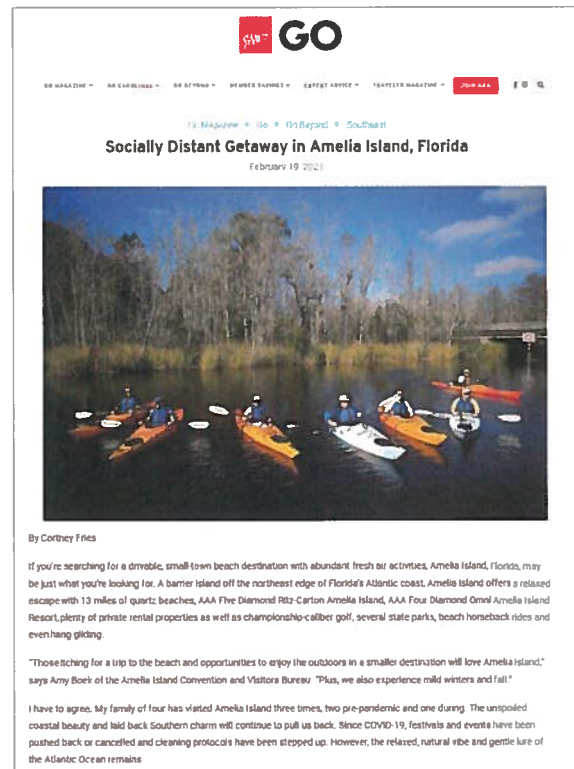
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#### Outdoor Activities

Five golf courses on Amelia Island beckon both experienced golfers and those new to the sport. Visually stunning landscapes and oak-lined fairways designed by some of the best golf architects make it a true golfer's paradise.

Imagine the sunlight shining, a cool ocean breeze and the gentle clop of horse hooves in the sand and surf beneath you. Amelia Island is one of few places where you can ride horseback on the beach. My daughter and I relished the ride with [Amelia Island Horseback Riding](#). The manager told us that their business has been up 70 percent since the pandemic, as people are seeking unique outdoor experiences. Sunrise and sunset tours are spectacular times to take in the sun saying hello to the bright blue sky or bidding adieu with a last dance across the pink horizon.



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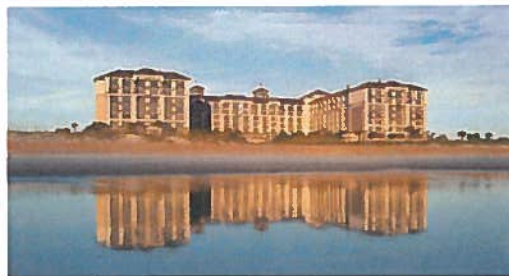
Nature excursions abound with opportunities to canoe, kayak, standup paddleboard, rent cat boats or charter fishing vessels. We've taken the [Amelia River Unlocks](#) tour to Cumberland Island. It's fascinating to see wild horses roaming free and hear of the Carnegie family history on Cumberland Island.

Those up for an adrenaline rush can hang glide with [Florida Adventure Sports](#). Gene, the owner and pilot, recommends 40-minute tours, where you can see [Amelia Island](#) from above and safely return from your power hang glide with a huge grin spread across your face.

Teens and tweens might get a kick out of rolling around on an electric skateboard from [Amelia Island Board Rentals](#) or hydrobiking with [Amelia River Cycle](#). You can also rent bikes, segways and golf carts from many vendors across the island. My family recommends [Amelia's Wheels](#), where we borrowed bicycles and pedaled around seven miles of scenic delights, past pristine golf courses and to a fabulous lunch at Marche Burette at the [Omni Amelia Island Resort](#).

Fort Clinch State Park, Amelia Island State Park and Fernandina Plaza Historic State Park offer opportunities to soak in some Northeast Florida nature and history. Amelia Island is the only site in the United States that has been under the flag of eight different nations. Explore a Civil War-era fort or comb the beach for sharks' teeth at Fort Clinch State Park. Amelia Island State Park was brimming with recreational fishermen on the day that we visited. Fernandina Plaza Historic State Park is a small park with an ocean view, historic plaques and the green Victorian house from the Pippi Longstocking movie across the street.

Stroll the historic downtown district and pop into [Fernandina's Fantastic Fudge](#) for some pecan pralines, ice cream or creamy fudge that you can enjoy on a park bench outside. Swing for a round of mini golf with a cocktail at [Luscious Mimosas & More](#). [Lips and Drinks](#). See if you get spooked on an evening jaunt with [Amelia Island Ghost Tours](#).



#### Accommodations

AAA Five Diamond, The Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island is celebrating their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021 with renovated rooms and suites, three new restaurants, refreshed meeting spaces and [programming](#) appropriate for this social distancing era. Remote learning packages that engage children in earth-science studies and Personal Wellness Retreats for those seeking ways to adapt and relax from the stress and anxiety brought on by COVID-19 are now offered.

AAA Four Diamond Omni Amelia Island Resort also features villas and vacation homes to provide supreme privacy for you and your pandemic bubble. Cook up some of your own meals, have access to a washer and dryer, yet still take advantage of the high-end amenities available at the resort, like golf, tennis, luxurious pools and beaches.

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The Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island and Omni Amelia Island Resort, along with additional Amelia Island hotels and restaurants, received the top sanitation and safety award from Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association in December 2020, which can help you feel more comfortable in the current times. Amelia Island is also home to numerous vacation rental properties.



#### Outdoor Dining

New in 2020, The Ritz-Carlton unveiled Coquina, an oceanfront all-fresco restaurant and bar featuring seafood and coastal dishes like ceviche and rapas that nod to Amelia Island's Eight Flags heritage. The ambience created by the fire pits, swing chairs, and views of the dune-lined beach is almost as irresistible as the poke and sangria.

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España is a Spanish and Portuguese restaurant in downtown Amelia Island with the most delightful outdoor garden that guests can dine in. Their shrimp dish made my husband's eyes roll back in exaggerated glee as he tried to scrape up every last drop of the savory sauce. Amelia Island is the birthplace of the modern shrimp industry and España is a wonderful restaurant to dine on these fresh crustaceans.

For a more casual bite, stop by [Timof's Seafood Shack](#), where you can munch on wild-caught seafood in baskets with fries and hushpuppies or try tacos, poke bowls, salads or soups. Timof's features outdoor picnic tables and a pirate ship playground for the kids to climb on while adults can sip seasonal cocktails.

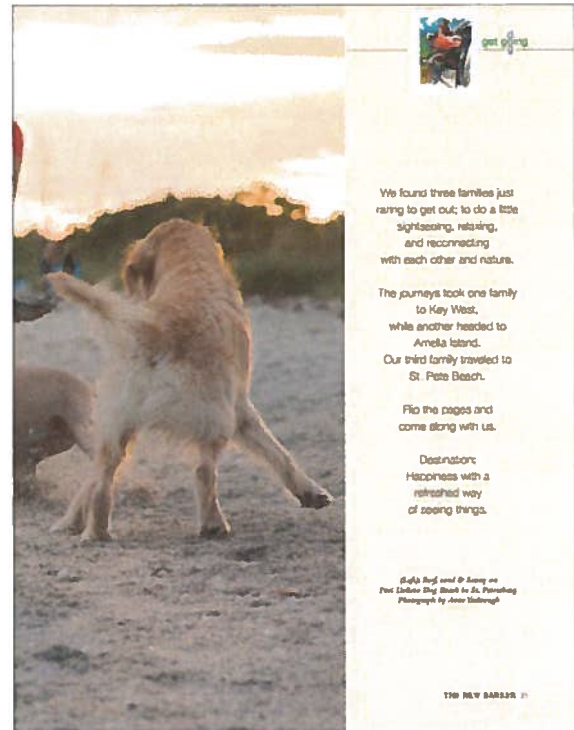
Marche Burette at the Omni Resort is also a favorite of my family. You can sit outside, gaze at the fountain bubbling and dine on casual fare from breakfast sandwiches to wood-fired pizzas. They also have a great market and deli for candy, coffee and other items to go. My daughter still hugs the stuffed animal she picked up there every night.

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get going

## To Travel Is To Live

**Barbara Ann Amelia Island**  
2300 Saddle Road, Fernandina Beach  
904.277.2140  
Married 2005

**Sunny and Photography**  
by Tiffany Pennington  
Counselor and Director of  
Tampa Bay Maritime  
Dive/Boat/Marine.com

*The husband is a great fit. He's a former  
lifeguard, a professional photographer and  
owner of more than 150 dogs who he breeds  
The Little Island. The husband is a former  
lifeguard and the wife is a former lifeguard.*

**With Kyla, our Labrador mix turning 11 years old and  
Peaches, our Jack & P mix turning two, we will spend our  
baby girl Nina into the new year of 2020. As our busy  
family adjusted to the sweet blessings of our little ones,  
combined with a world pandemic and months of quarantine, we soon  
found ourselves planning for our last vacation at The Sunshine State.**

*Several trips to St. Augustine were already in the books when we  
realized we never drove north enough to let Amelia Island. Known as  
the Natural Florida Experience, and renowned for its quiet dog-friendly  
beaches, historic sites and its charming water character, we decided to  
book a dream and take the family on a mini vacation that was  
desperately needed. Continued on the following page.*

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### On the Beach or On the Bay

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#### Residence Inn

With Amelia Island being so dog friendly there were several  
choices in a convenient location for the pups and baby Nina. We booked  
into the Residence Inn  
Amelia Island, a pet friendly  
hotel with a delicious  
complimentary breakfast.  
The hotel is located on  
Sulter Road just two  
blocks from Fernandina  
Beach. Our more offered a  
full kitchen, a pull out  
couch for the pups and two  
separate rooms each with  
their own bathroom. With  
the request for a park and  
play crib for our little one,  
this was the perfect fit for us. Then we discovered the  
biggest bonus the Marine Walk at Cape Canaveral. The  
pups enjoyed their morning walk on the trail with direct  
access behind the hotel off of Sulter Road. A sound sleep  
paired with a yummy breakfast followed by morning fitness on  
the trail is hard to beat!

### Gigi Sauthier

**Sarah Sauthier**  
Office 813.333.3499  
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with her own dogs,  
Pups & Pups

#### PERMANENTLY BUILT FARMERS MARKET

On a Saturday after breakfast we took a short drive downtown to  
the popular Fernandina Farmers Market on 7th street to check  
out the local scene. We parked and unloaded the pups and the  
baby under some shade and picked up some treats where  
local artisans, farmers and makers joined together to sell their  
wares. Live music, with sounds of the Biscayne Bay played in the  
background with vendors and people come market. Between the  
samples of local Elderberry Syrup and the homemade  
Cucumbers, our late lunch was spinning.  
FernandinaBiscayneMarket.com

### Bruce R. Famiglio

**Realtor**  
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#### CARL KARRO

We like to think of vacation as freedom. I guess because we love  
to sit, but mostly because we love to find restaurants that really  
capture flavor and offer fun vibes. We wanted for the best  
dog-friendly restaurants, and we came across Cafe Karlos.  
Known for dishes that  
explode with flavor  
and offer the freshest  
of local ingredients,  
we reserved a table on the patio. Immediately welcomed with  
smiles and water for the dogs, we knew we were in for a great  
meal. One waiter, Chris, was full of energy and offered the best  
suggestions to start us off on the right path. He began by offering  
us the option to order for the pups. As we sat with excitement  
and surprise, we asked what was on their menu. He suggested a  
non-seasoned, grilled burger patty and the local bread normally  
an add-on (and charge of \$6 per meal) for the pups. Chris told us  
that it's a common practice for pups to share in the table.

www.TheNewBarber.com

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*\*Please check with any of the locations mentioned to confirm whether they are open and any safety guidelines or Covid-19 precautions being taken.*



### 5. AMELIA ISLAND

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## THINGS TO DO

# Sweet Valentine's Day Packages Create Season of Romance on Amelia Island

January 28 / 2021 / Press Release / 110 Comments

**January 29, 2021**

COME MAKE MEMORIES®

Media Release

AMELIA ISLAND Fla. (Jan 27, 2021) – Couples will enjoy a romantic rendezvous this Valentine's Day on beautiful Amelia Island, regularly voted among the most romantic getaways in the United States. Whether yearning for outstanding cuisine or longing for a relaxing escape for two, Amelia Island has created eight satisfying sweetheart deals to fall in love with:

- Recharge and reconnect at the Blue Heron Inn, a 19th-century home transformed into a beautiful bed & breakfast in Amelia Island's historic Victorian village. With the Hopeless Romantic Package, couples enjoy a complimentary fresh floral bouquet, bottle of champagne, and chocolate covered strawberries with a two-night minimum stay between Feb. 12 and Feb. 15. Call (904) 445-9034 to book your reservation. Use special code VAL2021.
- Celebrate your special occasion at The Addison on Amelia Island, a stunning family-run bed & breakfast designed with comfort in mind. Lovers will appreciate the Romance Package which features a bouquet of roses, a chilled bottle of Premier Champagne, and a fruit and cheese platter upon arrival. After breakfast the following day, guests can unwind with a 1-hour couples massage, then use a \$60 gift certificate for a romantic dinner at one of their partner restaurants (Burlingame, David's, Espene, Joe's 2nd Street Bistro, or Le Clos) in the downtown historic district. Also at The Addison, the Breakfast In Bed Package encourages a cuddle with your sweetheart while indulging in a 3-course gourmet breakfast and mimosas in bed on Valentine's Day morning. A special treat upon arrival includes chocolate long stem roses. Visit [addisononamelia.com/specials](http://addisononamelia.com/specials) to reserve.
- Valentine's Day can be celebrated the entire month of February at the elegant and intimate Hoyt House Upon an Island. Lovers who book the Valentine's Amore Package will be greeted with a gourmet dessert board of dark chocolates and fresh berries, a bottle of wine, and a dozen roses. Packages begin at just \$195 per night and can be booked by visiting [hoythouse.com](http://hoythouse.com). Use special code AMORE.
- Experience love and luxury at The Omni Amelia Island Resort with their exclusive Romance Offer. Guests can enjoy overnight oceanfront accommodations, two mini bottles of Moët & Chandon Rosé Champagne,



parted with a sweet treat late check-out and more. Visit <https://www.ameliainland.com/specials/romance-and-luxury-to-book>

- Whisk your loved one away for an overnight coastal getaway at Elizabeth Pointe Lodge Their Romance Package is complete with a bottle of champagne in-room upon arrival, a \$100 dining credit at [Dinner's Restaurant](#), 12 chocolate-dipped strawberries, special rose petal turndown, and two Elizabeth Pointe enjoyed champagne flutes to enjoy as a keepsake. The package starts at just \$189 per night and can be booked by visiting [elizabethpointelodgeinland.com/romance-package-1](https://elizabethpointelodgeinland.com/romance-package-1)
- Treat your Valentine to a romantic retreat at the historical FairBank House bed & breakfast. Romance seekers can enjoy two special offers, including the Deluxe Romance Package and Classic Romance Package, featuring a variety of complimentary chocolates and champagne, dining credits at local fine-dining restaurants, on-property amenities and luxury accommodations. Visit [fairbankhouse.com/specials/romance-packages/](https://fairbankhouse.com/specials/romance-packages/) for more details

For a complete list of Valentine's Day offers and events on Amelia Island, and ideas for planning your romantic island getaway, visit [ameliaisland.com/valentines](https://ameliaisland.com/valentines)

*\* All packages and special offers are based on availability. Restrictions apply and vary by property. Contact individual properties for restrictions and to book a package.*

\*\*\*

## About Amelia Island

Northeast Florida's coastal treasure, Amelia Island is a barrier island rich in colorful history and breath-taking natural beauty. Amelia Island offers long, beautiful beaches, abundant wildlife, and pristine waters. Upscale resorts with world-class spas, championship golf and exclusive dining blend effortlessly with a captivating collection of bed and breakfast inns and historic districts. The island is home to Fernandine Beach, once a vibrant Victorian seaport village, and now a charming downtown district of eclectic shops, attractions and eateries. Forget the everyday getaway, come make memories on Amelia Island. For visitor information and online planning, visit [AmeliaIsland.com](https://AmeliaIsland.com)





Travel


## 7 Last Minute Socially Distant Valentine's Day Getaway Ideas

Haven't made your Valentine's Day plans yet? With the most romantic day of the year fast approaching, there's no better [gift](#) to give than a weekend getaway (during President's Day weekend nonetheless) to escape from everyday life and cherish quality time with one another. And if the ticking clock has you in a panic, don't worry — there's still time to book great options for a last-minute romantic retreat!

Looking for a romantic Valentine's Day getaway for you and your partner? Whether you're opting for adventure or choose to relax in bed for 3-days straight, here are seven options for any type of couple.

01  
Napa Valley, CA


From [picture](#)-perfect proposals and unforgettable honeymoons to quiet weekends away from the bustle of the city, there's nothing quite like a [Napa](#) Valley escape to reconnect. With Valentine's Day right around the corner, Napa Valley hotels, wineries, restaurants and retail shops are ready to roll out the red carpet for couples who have been sheltered at home and are craving a romantic escape.



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03  
Amelia Island, FL

A 90-minute drive from St. Augustine is laid back Amelia Island with its 13 miles of rolling dunes and pristine seashore. Its picturesque beaches are a perfect backdrop for togetherness. Start the day with a sunrise horseback ride on the white sand beach that ribbons the [Atlantic](#) Ocean. For couples' pampering, [visit](#) the Omni Resort or make a reservation at Salt at the Ritz Carlton, one of the only five-diamond restaurants in Florida, and consider [booking](#) the chef's table in the kitchen. At the end of the day, take a sunset cruise to catch the spectacular oranges, pinks, and reds as the sun dips behind the horizon.




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lovetoknow Lifestyle

## 12 Best East Coast Beaches for Families to Discover

By Tom May



Beach vacations provide ideal opportunities for families to enjoy time together while exploring portions of the United States. From Maine to Florida, the East Coast offers beautiful locations for the ideal time together. These dozen spots provide the best East Coast beaches for families.

### Amelia Island, Florida

If you are looking for a peaceful, quiet vacation spot on a beach, you need to look no further than Amelia Island. Beautiful beaches, wildlife preserves and crystal clear waters make this a favorite vacation spot. The island features cultures from Spain, France, Britain and America. Golf courses, sandy beaches, a boardwalk, public sports and sand dunes will make this a vacation you will remember and cherish.

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## TOP TEN ROMANTIC ROAD TRIPS

Recommended by the American Cruise Line

**READ ONLINE**

This February, consider hitting the open road with your Valentine to explore the country's unique and romantic road stops.

For luxury RV enthusiasts and those who love travel, this time of year is ideal for exploring the warmer climates of the U.S. and savoring time with your significant other. The following ten romantic destinations have been selected due to their scenic drives, sensual allure, and idyllic scenery.

**American Coach** is an ultra-luxury brand of recreational vehicles that's celebrating its 30th anniversary. American Coach motorhomes are known for their exquisite design, lavish touches and innovative engineering that make a road trip a relaxing and indulgent experience. New models feature such amenities as high-end kitchens with black stainless steel appliances, quartz countertops with waterfall edges and hand-crafted kitchen cabinets; spacious and luxurious master bedrooms and baths with articulating mattresses, spa showers and his and her sinks; and superior technology components such as 50" exterior TVs. American Coach is part of the REV Recreation Group (RRG), a subsidiary of REV Group, Inc.

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American Coach models have earned numerous industry awards, including "Top RV Debut" and "Must See RV." For more information, visit [americancoach.com](http://americancoach.com).

Each 'Romantic Stop' has been researched but, due to COVID-19, be sure to call ahead to confirm hours of operation for parks, restaurants and other attractions and activities.

### Amelia Island, FL

A 90-minute drive from St. Augustine is laid-back Amelia Island with its 13 miles of rolling dunes and pristine seashore. Its picturesque beaches are a perfect backdrop for togetherness.

Start the day with a sunrise horseback ride on the white sand beach that ribbons the Atlantic Ocean (assistance is provided to make the ride accessible to all ages). Afterwards, walk arm-in-arm and discover seashell treasures like great heart coddies, sand dollars, and olives. For couples' pampering, visit the Omni Resort. Try a Swedish massage or cleansing facial. Make a reservation at Salt at the Ritz-Carlton, one of the only five-diamond restaurants in Florida, and consider booking the chef's table in the kitchen. At the end of the day, take a sunset cruise to catch the spectacular oranges, pinks, and reds as the sun dips behind the horizon.

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Destinations Advice Gear Hotels & All Inclusive Cruises

## 10 Dreamy Beach Resorts in Florida That Are Perfect for Families

Home to an abundance of theme parks and one very famous mouse, Florida is a beloved vacation destination for families with kids and kids at heart. But the Sunshine State is about more than just amusement parks. Its beautiful beaches make for a memorable family vacation all on their own – and the best Florida beach resorts are perfectly tailored for families.


### Florida Resorts: The Best Beach Hotels

These 10 beach hotels and picture-perfect waterfront resorts around Florida offer the kinds of accommodations, activities, and amenities that are custom designed to please the entire family. Beyond everyday perks like flat screen TVs, coffee makers, and a hotel fitness center, the amenities at these hotels start with things like epic outdoor pools, movies under the stars, and private balconies to take in the ocean views. And they only get better from there.

### The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island

An unspoiled wisp of a barrier island, Amelia Island's 13 miles of pristine beaches offer sand dunes and unfettered access to the Atlantic Ocean, with a forest of giant oaks draped in Spanish moss nearby just for good measure. The island provides loads of family activities, too, including a visit to well-preserved [Fort Clinch State Park](#) and a hands-on shrimping eco-tour. Though it feels remote, Amelia Island is only a 30-minute drive from Jacksonville International Airport.

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☑ Bonfire on Amelia Island at sunset (Photo: Chris Cybert)

Of all the beach hotels on Amelia Island, the [Ritz Carlton](#) best embodies beachside elegance. The hotel enjoys a magnificent location on an often-empty beach, and there's an indoor-outdoor flow to this resort that showcases ocean views at every turn. The patio, with comfy sofas and over-sized chairs grouped around a large firepit, overlooks the dunes. A series of wooden boardwalks leads to the beach, where dolphins swim close to shore. And the Ritz Carlton offers activities that take full advantage of the beach resort's location, including kayak excursions and surfing lessons.

The [Ritz Kids](#) program for children ages five to 12 provides this age group with a plethora of hands on diversions, too. The Kids Night Out is a supervised evening program offered by Ritz Carlton that's popular with families: Kids can have dinner, watch a movie, and play games, while parents enjoy a child-free evening. For a special treat, book a pirate tuck-in at bedtime.

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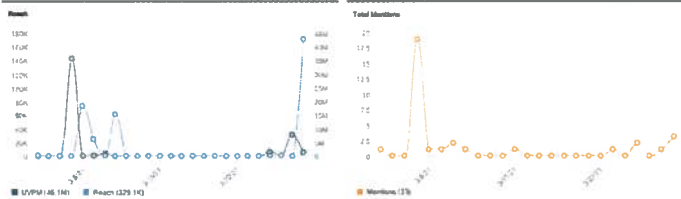
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Amelia Island - March 2021

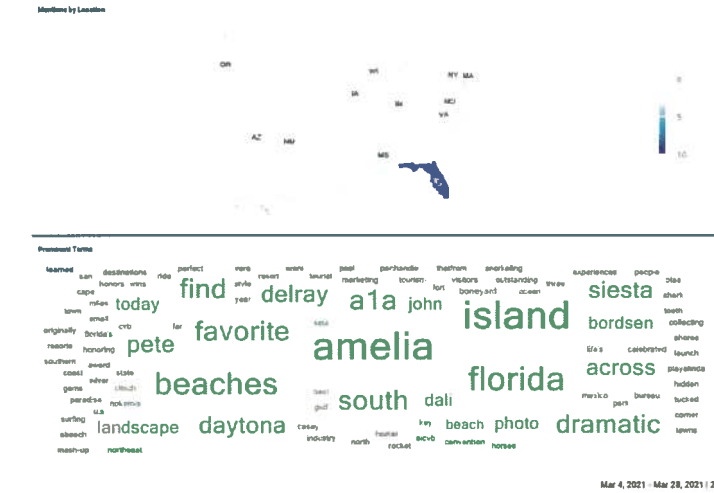
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Top Articles	OUTLET	REACH
HEADLINES 10 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more 10 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more Amelia Island CVB Wins Three HSMMA Awards for Outstanding Marketing 10 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more 10 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more Why Amelia Island is One of Florida's Hidden Gems We've got a beach for that 10 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more 10 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more 18 Best Destinations for Summer Travel 10 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more 10 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more 25 Best Romantic Getaways for Couples 10 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more 19 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more 10 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more We've got beach for off-roam snorkeling to surfing and shark tooth collecting. Florida has the perfect shores for you.	USA Today Online News Break Arizona Republic Online USA Today (U.S.) Travel Zest Orlando Sentinel Online Indianapolis Star Online, The Des Moines Register Online Tampa Tribune Journal News Online, The Tallahassee Democrat Online Vacation Idea TCFarms.com News Journal Online, The Birmingham Journal Online Orlando Sentinel	30,413,944 7,811,056 7,811,056 2,821,995 1,373,029 1,342,252 1,132,860 793,653 632,429 390,972 387,312 381,053 379,660 214,312 208,576 176,395 170,018



Mar 4, 2021 - Mar 28, 2021 | 1

Amelia Island - March 2021



Mar 4, 2021 - Mar 28, 2021 | 2

10 of our favorite beaches from all across Florida: Daytona, Delray, St. Pete, Siesta, more

Wade Tatangelo, Megan Kearney, Dave Osborn, Jake Newby, Tom Scaroleta, Laurie K. Blandford and Jim Abbott | Sarasota Herald-Tribune

Published 8:00 a.m. ET Mar. 7, 2021 | Updated 2:22 p.m. ET Mar. 7, 2021

While the rest of the country shivers, the Sunshine State is enjoying temps approaching the 80s. It's officially beach season in Florida.

So with spring break around the corner and a forecast of balmy weather for pretty much the next eight months, we thought it would be a good time to share our picks for best beaches in the state. Plus, we can't think of a better way to social-distance than with our toes in the sand.

The list is culled from USA TODAY Network contributors in coastal communities across Florida. Presented in alphabetical order, these are 10 of our favorite places to be when the sun rises over the Atlantic Ocean or sets on the Gulf of Mexico.

**Boneyard Beach**

With the ocean in the background, Boneyard Beach provides a Dali landscape. John Bonifant for USA TODAY

Just south of Amelia Island, you'll find one of the most dramatic beaches in Florida. You can't swim there, the parking lot is kind of small, and you'll have to walk for a few minutes to reach the beach, but be sure to bring your camera. The beach is littered with bleached-out, long-dead trees that have fallen from the eroding shoreline. Think of them as full-tree driftwood. The beach, which borders Nassau Sound in Big Talbot Island State Park, is a favorite of photographers and tree-climbing kids — Tom Scaroleta, *The Florida Times Union*

## Amelia Island CVB Wins Three HSMIA Honors for Outstanding Marketing

By Suzanne Thamm

fernandinaobserver.com 15 days ago

Although the 64th annual Adrian Awards Gala had to be held virtually last night, the Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIA) once again celebrated the tourism industry in style, honoring the Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau (AICVB) with one Silver Award and two Bronze Awards. The focus of this year's Adrian Awards was on best practices, innovation and community in categories related to work done in response to the coronavirus crisis. The three awards won by the AICVB were for marketing initiatives that reflect this challenging new tourism landscape, including an augmented reality portal, the "Tourism Gives" program, and the "Moments" campaign.



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## Why Amelia Island Is One of Florida's Hidden Gems



Andrew Young  
Travel Editor

May 1, 2021

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Tucked just off the coast of Florida's far northeast corner is **Amelia Island**, a mash-up of Southern small town and Florida beach resort, where the unvarnished Lowcountry vibe and Spanish moss-draped oaks have kind of a Southern accent to the wide, white-sand beaches. Upon arrival you'll quickly transition to "Island time." Finding that moment are best measured in shells collected and flip-flops worn as farmwear. After one visit here, you'll feel like you've discovered one of the state's hidden gems.

So with that in mind, let's check out a few reasons to visit the place that Conde Nast Traveler touted as "one of the best islands in the U.S."

### There's no barrier to entry



Amelia Island isn't like a world apart, but Florida's northernmost barrier island is actually quite easy to get to.

It's less than a six-hour drive from Charlotte, Atlanta or Miami, with 1-95 bringing travelers almost to the island's doorstep. If you're flying, the Jacksonville airport is just 30 minutes away with Southwest recently adding flights from St. Louis and Washington, D.C., and jetBlue starting nonstop routes from Los Angeles and Raleigh-Durham.

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### The weather has year-round appeal



The cool sea breezes give Amelia Island some of Florida's mildest temperatures through the spring and summer months, and abundant sunshine means there are many chances to get out and about, whether that's to hike through a coastal maritime hammock on the Willow Pond Trail or Fort Clinch State Park or wander into the boutiques on the cobblestone streets of Fernandina Beach.

### You'll have many different ways to stay

There are numerous options for lodging across the island, ranging from luxury resorts to budget-friendly hotels to quaint B&Bs and vacation rentals. Let's unpack a few of the options in each category.

If you're looking for luxury you're in luck, as the island has two resorts that are regulars on best of lists from the glossy travel mags.

The **Rio-Carillon, Amelia Island** is just completing a refresh of the resort's 444 guest rooms, all of which feature balconies with ocean or coastal views. Among the resort highlights is the Forbes Travel Guide Four-Star Sea Island for its one-of-a-kind 50-minute overnight escape treatment (it's really named "Treasure in a Hammock"). Guests will also want to book a table at Salt, a AAA Five Diamond restaurant where coastal inspired cuisine is prepared using more than 40 different local foods. The Salt Kitchen Table private dining experience is considered one of the best chef's tables in the country, so jump in the chance if it's available.



Photo: American Island Resorts

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The **Owen Amelia Island Resort** is located closer to the island's quieter southern tip and features a massive rear deck with two heated pools, not to mention a 2.5-mile stretch of beach. The Owen is particularly well-known for its tennis program operated by Cliff Drysdale Tennis, named one of the best tennis resorts in the U.S. by *Tennis Magazine*. The golf here is no slouch either, as one of only five Florida resorts named to Golf Digest's 2021 Editors' Choice list. The Pete Dye designed Old Marsh course plays 6,600 yards from the tips, weaving tight fairways around the salt marsh and towering oaks.

Additional hotel choices tend to cluster in historic downtown Fernandina Beach and include familiar budget-friendly brands like the all-suite **Hammond Inn Amelia Island** or the pet-friendly **Hamlet Suites by Hilton Fernandina Beach**. You'll also find smaller sanctuaries like the 25-room **Seaside Amelia** (see your member's rate about the beachfront location and free breakfast) and the **Amelia Seaside House** (built in 1886 to serve as the island's school, then restored in 2018 as a 17-room boutique hotel). Don't panic if you get lost in the Principal's Office, the inn's high-end bar with a putting green.



Photo: Owen

For a taste of Southern hospitality, try one of the island's B&Bs, many of which are set in 19th- and early 20th-century Victorian homes along quiet streets of the Fernandina Beach Historic District. After a three-course breakfast at the **Wedge House**, you can sit on the wrap-around porch and look out on the manicured gardens, or head out for a day of exploring and shopping in the District before returning for the afternoon social hour with complimentary wine.

You can also find vacation rentals for larger groups in spread across the island or get back to basics and reserve a camping spot in Fort Clinch State Park on the island's northern tip.

### It's got beaches for miles



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If you're looking for a quiet stretch of sand, Amelia Island has 13 miles of unspoiled shoreline framed by sand dunes instead of high rises. The beaches closest to Fernandina Beach tend to be busier, especially Islam Beach, which is so famous due to the ample parking, Mequid sands and grassy playground. But there's plenty of space to set out your beach towel with more than 40 public access points along the coastline. Don't miss the chance to look for sea turtles (especially after a storm).

Another natural draw to the beaches is **sea turtle nesting season**, which runs from May through September. These mother turtles return to Amelia Island year after year. Be many visitors, if you try to catch the natural phenomenon, keep a respectful distance, and don't use flashlights or disturb any nests. The best way to help ensure the mother turtles and their hatchlings are successful is to make sure you remove everything at the end of your beach day (bikes can trap turtles and cars can draw predators to the beach) and fill in any holes dug by overwintering young sandcastle engineers.



For a really rare opportunity, head to **Amelia Island State Park** on the island's southern tip and saddle up for a horseback ride on the beach with Kelly Swain's Ranch. The one-hour guided tour takes riders along the pristine beach of the 200-acre nature preserve.

#### Beyond the beach, there's plenty to fill the day (or week)

On an island bordered by state parks, there are abundant opportunities for exploring. On the northern end of the island, the 1,400-acre **Fort Clinch State Park** includes a 6-mile nature trail for hiking or biking. Campgrounds set with arid trees beside the Amelia River or alongside snow-white sand dunes by the Atlantic Ocean, plus a beach that's renowned for shark-knash hunting.



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The island is steeped in history - it's called the **'Isle of 8 Flags'** with French, Spanish, British, Mexican and Confederate history in addition to well-documented tales of pirates lore. The topography of a Fort Clinch State Park visit for any history buff will be the Civil War era fort that guards St. Mary's river. (That's Georgia just to the west.)

But for a lesser-known (but equally important) history lesson, check out the **American Beach Historic District** near the middle of the island. Abelard Lincoln Lewis, Florida's first African American millionaire, established the community in 1925 to provide people of color with a beach resort of their own, when segregation and Jim Crow laws prevented equal access to many beach resorts across the South. American Beach grew into a vibrant resort community in the 1940s and 1950s. The legacy is immortalized at the **American Beach Museum**, which opened in 2014.



Amelia Island is one of a handful of Florida communities to earn Bicycle-Friendly Community status from the League of American Bicyclists. One of the best bike trails on the island is the tree-lined **Amelia Island Trail**, a paved path which starts at Pelican Point Beachfront Park and follows Highway A1A to Amelia Island State Park. The **Egans Creek Greenway** is another popular ride alongside Egans Creek. (Keep an eye out for alligators relaxing in the shade.) Several shops offer bike rentals to visitors, and some homes even have bikes available to guests.



If you'd rather paddle than pedal, rent a kayak or standup paddleboard to explore the calm coves of the island's salt marshes. Pick up a guided tour from **Kayak Amelia** to explore with a naturalist, or get your Om on with SUPP - Standup Paddleboard Yoga.

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Amelia Island is part of Florida's First Coast of golf, a 75-mile stretch of Northeast Florida that draws golfers from around the world. On the island coast, you'll find 99 holes of golf, including the course at the Ocean and the **Golf Club of Amelia Island** at The 18th Carters. Off the resort, the **Amelia River Golf Club** is a challenging track that culminates with a test of nerves (and iron distance) to reach the island green on the par 3 17th hole. It's worth the short drive off the island to try the Arnold Palmer designed **Golf Club at North Haven**, a bird course with generous fairways framed by spring-fed lakes and Florida sanddunes.

#### You won't go home hungry

Amelia Island's proximity to great seafood (it's the birthplace of the modern shrimp industry) and international influences (those eight flags means lots of small resort community packs quite a **salutary punch**).

Here on the scene is **The Blue House**, housed in a building that used to repair boat motors for the nearby marina. Caricatures of local celebrities adorn the wall, while steak and Louisiana favorites like shrimp and red mule grits adorn the menu.

Another acclaimed local is **T-Rex's Burger** kitchen, a one-stop gas station that now handles 18 cups of a different kind. What started as a sandwich kitchen side hustle turned into a local favorite and eventually gained national renown from the likes of Southern Living and USA Today, which named it one of the best burger joints in the U.S.

For a distinctly different feel, dine by candlelight at **La Cite**, where chef and owner Katherine Dwyer brings her impeccable French culinary credentials to decadently delicious dishes in a restored 1906 bungalow.



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You may have to end your stay to eat and drink at all the great spots. There's the small bars of refined Cuban street food at **Michael BAO**, French/Southern fusion at **Lagrange** and modern-traditional grooves at **Burlington's Restaurant**. After dinner, you might want to take in the scene and a cocktail at **The Decadence** or try the Presum Pub (and whatever new is on tap) at the hazy **Mocama Beer Company** taproom or catch a sunset over the Intracoastal with a cold beer at the **Salty Pelican**.

**Ready to go? Take a photo tour of Amelia Island, find even more inspiration and request a visitor's guide to plan your trip.**




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Orlando Sentinel

## We've got a beach for that

By LARRY ARNOLD  
ORLANDO SENTINEL — MAY 24, 2021 AT 12:06 PM



Jeffrey Thompson / iStockphoto.com

With 1,350 miles of coastline, Florida certainly has a stretch of sandy shores suited for every beach passion, whether it's hanging ten on a surfboard, peering at underwater wonders while snorkeling, searching the low tide for the perfect seashell or enjoying a day of tranquil peace on a patch of secluded sand.


From the Florida Keys to the Panhandle, the Sunshine State certainly has a beach for everyone.

### Best Surfing Beach: Palm Beach's Reef Road

Reef Road in West Palm Beach's glitziest neighborhood is one of the few places in the state where the surf can achieve true "big wave" status. The area has beautiful beaches, crystal clear waters and warm temperatures, which make for epic conditions when cold fronts roll through.

**If you go:** The break is located in a residential area on the north end of the county's priciest slab of real estate. There's no public parking within two miles of the spot — and there is a very active police force.

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Shark tooth hunting is a popular activity on almost all of Venice's beaches. (Patrick Connolly / Orlando Sentinel)

## Best Beach for Shark's Teeth: Caspersen Beach in Venice

Beachcombers know the Gulf beaches in and around Southwest Florida are the best places to search for prehistoric shark's teeth. Caspersen Beach in Venice is an exceptionally fine spot — and a good shelling beach too! Walk along the shoreline and look for the shiny black fossils as they roll onto the shore with the tide. Or purchase a "Venice Snow Shovel," a screened basket fitted onto a long handle, and wade out a few feet into the water to scoop up your treasures. Most shark teeth found near the shore are 1/8 inch to 3/4 inch or even a bit larger.

**If you go:** 4100 Harbor Drive in Venice; [visitsarasota.com/beaches/caspersen\\_beach](https://visitsarasota.com/beaches/caspersen_beach)

**Runners-up:** Casey Key in Nokomis and Fort Clinch State Park beaches on Amelia Island




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TRIPS DISCOVER

## 15 Best Destinations for Summer Travel

With much of the world closed to Americans, when it comes to summer travel plans, it can be difficult to know what to do. The good news is that not only are there many fabulous places to experience right in the U.S. but there are some great Caribbean islands, places in Mexico, and even some countries in Europe to consider. Of course, before you book you'll want to confirm the latest details re: COVID-19 as things can change quickly.



Amelia Island, Florida

[VIEW AIRBIS RENTALS](#)

Amelia Island offers a much quieter beach paradise with more than 13 miles of sands far from the big tourist crowds. The barrier island lies off the state's northern coast and is exceptional if you're looking to enjoy the scenery along with peaceful relaxation. There are plenty of things to do for those who want to get active as well, like cycling along the miles of scenic trails, horseback riding on the sand, paddling and sailing in the tidal creeks and marshes, or golfing. Fort Clinch State Park hosts one of the best preserved 19th-century forts in the country as well as a fishing pier, hiking, and biking trails. In the historic downtown of Fernandina Beach, take a horse-drawn carriage ride to see the points of interest.

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VacationIdea

## 25 Best Romantic Getaways for Couples

By VI Staff on March 10, 2021 - Updated



From Charlottesville, Virginia, nestled along the Blue Ridge Mountains, to the music scene of Memphis, Tennessee, couples have many diverse choices when it comes to finding a romantic weekend destination. Coastal getaways offer diverse experiences from the "American Riviera" of Santa Barbara, California, to the dramatic granite coastline of Bar Harbor, Maine. These 25 swoon-worthy destinations offer the perfect match for any couple's long weekend getaway wish list. CDC information for travelers. Hours/availability may have changed.

### 12 Jacksonville, FL

Jacksonville, Florida, is an activity mecca with over 1,000 miles of shoreline, 80,000 acres of parks and trails, numerous



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sporting events, world-class art centers, and premier museums. It is the largest city in the nation, abundant with waterways and ecological preserves. Jacksonville is both a natural playground and a cosmopolitan city. It has an extraordinary restaurant and nightlife scene, exciting events, thrilling attractions, and one-of-a-kind historic districts. Amelia Island, featuring rich Spanish, British, French, and American history; Hanna Park, a fishing, swimming, boating, surfing, and hiking oasis; and Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens are among the top attractions that will keep couples busy on a long weekend.



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## TRAVEL & ARTS

New featured content, story reveal and more images, plus added back reviews and positive notes



John Pennington's 'Coral Reef' is a tribute to his favorite beach. The park is open from 8 AM to 10 PM, 7 days a week. JOE THOMAS/FLORIDA HERITAGE

## WE'VE GOT A BEACH FOR THAT

From snorkeling to surfing and shark tooth collecting, Florida has the perfect shores for you

By Candice Armstrong

With 13,000 miles of coastline, Florida certainly has a variety of sandy shores suited for every beach person, whether it's hanging out on a surfboard, peering at underwater wonders while sunbathing, or enjoying a day of tropical pursuits in a patch of secluded sand. From the Florida Keys to the Panhandle, the Sunshine State certainly has a beach for everyone.

Best Surfing Beach: Palm Beach's Reef Road is West Palm Beach's glitziest neighborhood and one of the best places to stay. Many of the best surfers in the world, including the likes of "Big Boy" and "The Duke," have lived here. The area has beautiful beaches, crystal clear waters and warm temperatures, which make for a perfect vacation. When you visit, be sure to check out the local surf shops and surfers.



Shark tooth hunting is a popular activity on almost all of Florida's beaches. JOE THOMAS/FLORIDA HERITAGE

Best Snorkeling Beach: Key West's Key West Reef is a great place to go for a day of snorkeling. The reef is located just off the shore of Key West, and it's a great place to see a variety of marine life. The reef is also a great place to go for a day of fishing. The reef is also a great place to go for a day of sunbathing. The reef is also a great place to go for a day of swimming. The reef is also a great place to go for a day of surfing. The reef is also a great place to go for a day of surfing.

### Best Beach for Shark's Teeth: Caspersen Beach in Venice

Beachcombers know the Gulf beaches in and around Southwest Florida are the best places to search for prehistoric shark's teeth. Caspersen Beach in Venice is an exceptionally fine spot — and a good shelling beach too. Walk along the shoreline and look for the shiny black fossils as they roll onto the shore with the tide. Or purchase a "Venice Snow Shovel," a screened basket fitted onto a long handle, and wade out a few feet into the water to scoop up your treasures. Most shark teeth found near the shore are 4-inch to 6-inch or even a bit larger.

If you go 4100 Harbor Drive in Venice, visit [spots.com/beaches/caspersen-beach](http://spots.com/beaches/caspersen-beach). Runners-up: Casey Key in Nokomis and Fort Clinch State Park beaches on Amelia Island.

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## The Villages DAILY SUN

Home News Sports Business Entertainment Arts & Culture Local Life The Villages Media

### Florida: Paradise for tourist experiences

By Michael Lerner, Daily Sun Senior Writer | May 10, 2021



Visitors view a manatee as it descends to the bottom of Three Sisters Springs during a manatee tour with River Ventures in Crystal River.

Rachel Stewart, Daily Sun

After more than a year stuck at home, people are increasingly planning to seize the day when they can travel again. To make the most of their vacations, they want to include extraordinary adventures fit for a bucket list, or ones that are possible only at their destinations. Maybe that includes visiting the beach while riding a horse. Or swimming with manatees in Crystal River. Or paddling waters that, thanks to the presence of certain microorganisms, glow naturally at night. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Florida enjoyed a decade of record-breaking tourism, including more than 100 million visitors per year from 2015 to 2019, and not all of them came for theme parks. Florida's unique setting and tourism-rich environment makes it host to a variety of destinations that make unique activities possible for visitors. Florida is becoming a haven for an emerging tourism trend known as "experiential tourism," which offers travelers the chance to seek out unique and/or adventurous experiences for a memorable Sunshine State vacation.

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that goes beyond the obvious. The evolution of social media and how people use it to share their outstanding travel activities has altered how travel and tourism companies market themselves and what they offer. Tourists use photo-sharing apps like Instagram to document aspects of their trips that stand out to them.

Travel is becoming less about the trip itself and more about the story of the trip, said Nathan Line, associate professor at Florida State University's DePaul School of Hospitality.

"When people say, 'Hey, I'm going to Florida,' that's not enough. That's not a story," he said. "So to be visible on social media or even by word of mouth, they want to be featured in the stories of people who are using their tour."

Destinations are a platform for the experience, Line said.

Andy Milman, a tourism professor at the University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management, sums up experiential tourism as traveling not for the destination, but for the journey.

In 2019 — months before the pandemic — Mark Jenkins, spokesman for AAA, the Auto Club Group, said increased demand for experiences travelers can't find anywhere else was a primary driver in a growth in international travel bookings and interest in overseas car rentals.

"More and more travelers are looking for experiential travel opportunities and seeking ways to intimately engage with their destination, whether at home or abroad," he said. "There are many ways to do that, especially with the great American road trip remaining a beloved vacation option. And for many AAA has found that road trips are increasingly appealing to U.S. travelers while overseas."

For those choosing to travel within the states, the great American road trip often leads people to Florida.

Out on the water

With a mild year-round climate as hospitable to wildlife as it is to tourists, two coastlines, and more springs than anywhere else on the planet, many Florida experiences are tied to the outdoors.

The state has 175 state parks, three national parks, three national forests, one of only 11 national scenic trails, two coasts and abundance of inland lakes, rivers and springs.

When Line thinks of adventure tourism, he thinks of the water.

"So much of Florida's tourism is based on beaches, fishing, kayaking," he said. "All these things are in and of themselves adventures, but (also) highly photographable and shareable on social media."

Kayak outfitters in Brevard County offer bioluminescent kayak tours where people paddle the ocean waters at night in see-through vessels with a light show along their path, leaving a trail of iridescent blue.

And visitors can see this natural glow year-round because of the presence of two types of bioluminescent microorganisms, said Sandra BK, chief adventure officer at BK Adventure in Titusville, one of the bioluminescent kayak tour providers.

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"The wow is what we get, 'I can't believe this,' 'This is amazing,'" she said. "People aren't used to seeing plants light up and the water glowing, and it's such a phenomenon out of the range of experience most of us have."

This glow comes from two types of microorganisms: Dinoflagellates and comb jellies. Dinoflagellates, a type of single-cell marine plankton, are most common in the waters from May to November. Comb jellies, which are jelly-like sea creatures that are different from jellyfish, come out in the winter months.

Florida's east coast offers some of the best bioluminescence in the world, BK said.

"I've done it 100 times at least," she said. "And it never gets old."

But kayak tours aren't for everyone.

Others prefer louder, faster adventures.

Traveling through wetlands and swamps might involve a journey on an airboat, speedy and noisy vessels that bring passengers on a journey into natural Florida ecosystems with little signs of development in sight.

Florida offers countless opportunities for riding airboats, and one is just a short drive from The Villages — Airboat Rides Unlimited, which offers airboat tours of the Ocklawaha River.

Its airboat captain, Justin Finser, spent 22 years guiding visitors through the swampy waters in search of alligators, birds and turtles.

"It's pretty intense when you show them an alligator nest or get close to some babies," Finser said. "You see a lot of birds."

Wind blows in people's hair as the airboat zooms through the water, with every corner offering a different view of natural Florida, where trees are a more common sight than roads.

Finser enjoys being personable with his guests and tries to make feel as relaxed as possible, even if they fear snakes, alligators or the roar of the airboat fan.

"I just want to make it more than an airboat ride," he said. "I want to make it an experience of a lifetime."

Where the wild things are

Florida's temperate climate and diverse habitats also allow many types of wildlife species to thrive here.

Alligators can be found in the waters of all 67 counties, nature spots like the Lake Apopka North Shore and Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge attract hundreds of unique bird species, and springs in the winter draw high numbers of manatees.

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"The fact we have these dinosaur-like reptiles in this ecosystem is how people might perceive this ecosystem to be different," said Taylor Stein, a professor with the University of Florida's College of Forest Resources. "And then you attach manatees and palm trees. Florida still surprises people. What Florida offers is not in the common thinking of most Americans, especially the inland areas."

Tourists and Floridians alike can see manatees when exploring the sea cows' warm water refuges during the winter months. But only in the Crystal River and Homosassa Springs region on Florida's west coast are people allowed to swim with manatees.

River Ventures, a tour company in Crystal River that specializes in manatee swim and snorkel tours, takes visitors out every day on three-hour voyages aboard a covered pontoon boat where they can see and swim with manatees.

Although there's more to Crystal River than the manatees, it's the manatees that make it a special place — and snorkeling there a special experience — for people, said Brandie Wooten, operations manager for River Ventures.

"When it comes to wild animal encounters, there's not many where you can look (manatees) in the eye in their natural habitat on their terms," she said.

For most people, the juxtaposition of manatees' giant size versus how gentle they are is what makes these federally threatened creatures so unique to see, Wooten said.

"It changes people very deeply," she said. "I'd say most of us don't have a chance to look wildlife in the eyes, and (manatees) are as curious about you as you are about them. They're like big puppy dogs."

In Kenansville, about 35 miles southeast of Disney World, lies an ecotourism destination that offers airboat rides, along with a rarity among destinations in the U.S.: a place where people can cuddle with sloths.

Wild Florida, whose attractions include airboat rides, a gator park and a drive-thru safari, offers a number of VIP animal encounters. These private experiences allow close access to the park's alligators, sloths, lemurs and tamanduas, the latter a type of anteater.

But the most popular wildlife encounter Wild Florida offers is its rare VIP sloth experience.

Sloths, native to the rainforests of Central and South America, are the world's slowest mammals. They've attracted strong interest on the Internet in recent years and that interest has translated into people wanting to meet them for themselves.

Wild Florida's VIP sloth experience is booked out three months in advance — and this is considered slower than normal due to COVID-19, said PJ Brown, Wild Florida's director of sales.

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The sloth that Wild Florida guests will meet in the VIP experience was hand raised and enjoys interacting with humans, but in that and other experiences, staff look for signs the animals might not want to be around humans that day. When that happens, encounters may be rescheduled.

During these experiences, guests can feed one of the park's two-toed sloths. They can also hold the sloth and take "slothies" or a selfie with a sloth.

"Grown men will start tearing up and crying when they meet a sloth," Brown said. "I think that's why people cry and get so emotional; they're gaining an actual connection. To get to hold one is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It's an unforgettable moment we're trying to capture for our guests."

Immersing in history

Then there's Florida's rich history, which tourists can learn about in museums.

Or, they can step through the gates of St. Augustine's historic forts during the day and spend the night in one of the oldest city's historic bed and breakfasts.

As companies seek to offer more than just places to sleep, the lodging industry is just as much a part of experiential tourism as anything. Line once rented a house in Fort Myers with friends that he booked on Airbnb, and the hosts tried to sell the group fishing charter experiences.

"They're trying to tie experiences to the sale of the rooms," he said.

In St. Augustine, the oldest continuously inhabited European-established settlement in the continental U.S., bed and breakfasts are scattered along the city's historic district.

These independently operated guest houses are part of the city's charm and character, said Michael O'Neill, who co-owns the Carriage Way Inn. The Victorian cottage is located two blocks from the St. George Street shopping and dining district, and a short drive from the Castillo de San Marcos, a historic fort that is the nation's oldest standing structure.

O'Neill and her husband have co-owned the bed and breakfast since 2013. When people enter the historic inn, they catch the scent of custom candles burning scents of exotic oud and leather. Guests are greeted by name and pampered at check-in, she said.

The Carriage Way also offers a horse-drawn carriage ride through St. Augustine and other experiences.

As someone who worked for a large hotel chain before and now owns a bed and breakfast, O'Neill appreciates how historic inns offer a personalized experience for guests.

"You're greeted in the parlor, you get aromatherapy, a welcome drink, and we do an orientation based on their likes and desires," O'Neill said. "We really want them to maximize their time in town and get a local's perspective."

Immersing in history doesn't always involve quaint bed and breakfast inns.

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One experience in the Space Coast is comparable to a thrill ride — tours aboard a World War II-era biplane.

Mark Grainger, of Florida Air Tours in Cocoa Beach, offers tours aboard one of his two open cockpit Waco biplanes that were built as trainer aircraft during the war. He said his two biplanes were built 90 days apart in 1940 and 1941.

What he likes about the Waco biplanes is that, in contrast with typical biplanes that seat one person in the front and one person in the back, the seats are wide enough to fit three people — a pilot and two passengers.

"Two can go up and share the ride, share the experience," he said.

Grainger's biplane tours fly over Port Canaveral, Merritt Island and Kennedy Space Center. Longer tours also include a St. Johns River eco-tour and a pass of the space center's Shuttle Landing Facility.

Hearing the rumble of the engine and feeling the wind in his hair in flight makes Grainger think of biplane rides as like riding a Harley-Davidson in the sky.

"When we fly over pastures and you can smell the cows, it's a refreshing thing," he said. "It's like if you rode your motorcycle through rolling hills. You're more in tune with the elements. You open your senses to everything."

On the Farm

That farm air aroma may also explain the allure of agritourism, or travel to farms.

Florida farms with aspects of agritourism such as U-picks, farm tours and special events generated \$27 million in income in 2017, up from \$15.7 million in 2012, according to the most recent numbers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture.

There were 761 agritourism farms in 2017, offering venues for weddings, pumpkin patches, corn mazes, and even yoga with goats.

People also go to see the processes that go into making the crops behind the food they eat and the beverages they drink.

At Lakeridge Winery in Clermont, Florida's largest winery, guests can go on free winery tours that let them see the equipment used and have some complimentary wine tastings.

"It's how we sell the product," said Barry Hus, CEO of Lakeridge Winery's parent company, Seavin Inc. "We want people to experience the winery, see it's a Florida-made product and give them the opportunity to taste them."

Hus thinks what sets Lakeridge apart from California's Napa Valley, where tourism depends on its wineries and winery tours, is that it's the only winery in Florida offering comparable behind-the-scenes tours that introduce visitors to the wine-making process.

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"If you were in California, this would be one of several," he said.

Plus, the wine is different.

Grapes grown for the dry wine varieties made in California don't grow well in Florida's climate, so Florida's wineries make wine from the muscadine grapes that thrive here. Wine from muscadine grapes has a sweeter taste than dry wines.

As the winery had to adapt to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, the free tastings changed from tours with a guide to self-guided walkthroughs with tasting stations, Hus said. Each station can handle about six to eight people.

But the winery also introduced a paid VIP experience that includes a personalized winery tour and tastings in a private room with purified air. Hus said it's been popular among couples going on dates and small groups of people celebrating birthdays and anniversaries.

Tours are "booked solid" on Fridays and weekends.

"They're looking for something beyond paying for something and getting it," Hus said. "They're looking for something they'll remember and something they can share on social media."

Also part of the state's agritourism is the tri-county area's horse farms. Ocala is considered the Horse Capital of the World for its hundreds of horse farms, and the region is a major draw for people who wish to experience the region's idyllic countryside through horseback rides.

The Ocala National Forest and the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway include horseback trails.

Not far from The Villages is Blue Moon Ranch in Fruitland Park, which offers horseback rides along the ranch's trails. CEO D'Anne Phillips described the trails as an adventure for new and experienced horseback riders alike.

"It's not Disney World," she said. "We get first-time riders, we have good horses, and it's exciting. It's a great time. Fun, challenging, and an experience for people who have never ridden."

The trail rides offer views of the idyllic scenery of the ranch's wooded areas and nearby Lake Geneva. Phillips said the 90-minute ride the ranch offers also includes the added challenge of changes in elevation along the route.

Many out-of-state visitors come to the ranch, especially the visiting families of Villagers. They're searching for an experience they'll remember.

"You're up off the ground, maintaining control of a thousand-pound animal," Phillips said. "That's always an adventure. And it's a safe adventure."

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## Unique Florida

While horse farms and horseback trails may be adventurous enough for some, others come to Florida for a more unique setting: the beach.

About 825 miles of Florida's 1,350 miles of coastline consists of beaches, according to the Florida Shore and Beach Preservation Association.

But there are very few miles of Florida beaches where people can ride horses.

Amelia Island in North Florida and Cape San Blas in the Panhandle have portions of beaches that are accessible for horseback riding.

And in Bradenton, people can go horse surfing, where you ride a horse into the water.

Kelly Seahorse Ranch, a family-owned ranch in Amelia Island, offers experiences that take horseback riders along parts of Amelia Island State Park — Florida's only state park where people can ride horses on the beach — that aren't easily accessible.

Owner Kelly Kelly said the tours take about an hour and riders traverse about five miles of trails.

The reactions she gets from riders is what makes the job of operating the ranch worthwhile.

"Just the look on their faces when they're out there and they're like, 'Wow,'" Kelly said. "Some people are in tears when it happens. It's on their bucket list. They say they've wanted to ride a horse on the beach since they were a little girl. It hits home."

Kathleen LaMorte, co-president of the Horse 'N' Around Club in The Villages, rode a horse on the beach for the first time in Amelia Island. She said it was something she wanted to do since she was a teenager.

She remembered her horse was just as excited as she was to be on the beach, something she thinks had to do with the sea air.

"He was like 'Let's go' and wanted to gallop," said LaMorte, of the Village Santiago. "I had to hold him back to keep him in check because he was excited. Many horses had to be urged to go, but mine was excited to be there."

Outside of beach horses, North Florida offers a number of other adventurous experiences, including the chance to explore sinkholes on land and underwater.

One of the most unique state parks in Florida is Devil's Millhopper Geological State Park, which has an ecosystem state leaders describe as a tropical rainforest. At 120 feet deep below the ground, visitors can find lush vegetation, birds and reptiles within the sinkhole.

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It's popular with people who come to Florida for its hiking opportunities.

Exploring sinkholes underwater can be done in Williston, a Levy County city close to the borders of Alachua and Marion counties. Two privately-owned diving resorts in the city, Blue Grotto and Devil's Den, offer exploration of underground, prehistoric springs within a deep cavern.

Both are considered sinkholes because they do not connect to another body of water.

Although this may be a unique phenomenon to visitors, it's a common hangout for members of The Villages Scuba Club. They go on monthly dive trips to Williston, visiting Blue Grotto one month and Devil's Den the next.

Scuba Club President Mike Blatti said the two locations are ideal for honing divers' skills in preparation for dives in the ocean.

"It's on the cusp of being a cave dive, and it's good for someone who hasn't yet been in that environment," said Blatti, of the Village of Osceola Hills.

Yet, it can still be a challenge. He noted that Blue Grotto has a large area down to 50 feet where divers must be conscious that there's a rock above them.

Williston's sinkhole dives — along with other regional experiences like UF's bat houses and the Worm Gruntin' Festival in the Panhandle town of Sopchoppy — explain in part why North Florida offers experiences people can't find in many other places, said Ron Gromoll, a UF hospitality professor.

"All these things are unique, and I think that's what makes them an experience," he said. "They aren't cookie cutter. You can get the very nice hotel, but it won't be a memory to you."

For those who are ready to go from sinkhole dives to ocean dives, there's the Maritime Heritage Trail at Biscayne National Park — the National Park Service's only underwater trail.

This trail consists of six historical shipwrecks and structures, and they're far enough apart in miles that it requires multiple days of diving to experience all six of them, said Jay Johnstone, park ranger supervisor at Biscayne National Park.

"They represented different time periods, going from sailing vessels to steam-assisted sailing vessels to steamers," he said. "Most of them still have a lot of structure left, which makes it very attractive for the fish and (visitors) enjoy seeing that as well."

What separates the Maritime Heritage Trail from other shipwrecks is they offer divers and snorkelers a chance to view true shipwrecks in as intact a form as possible, Johnstone said. Many shipwreck dives with intact structures were intentionally sunk, not true shipwrecks.

Shipwreck diving exposes people to a whole new world, he said.

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"Seventy percent of our planet is covered in water," Johnstone said. "The majority of us have never snuck under the waves and interfaced with the creatures below the surface. We owe a lot to our oceans and this is our way of directly connecting with that."

And the appeal in such places — whether deep in the ocean or within a sinkhole — comes from how the experiences can't be replicated outside of Florida, Gromoll said.

"All these things are unique, and I think that's what makes them an experience," he said. "There's nothing wrong with the beach or one of the theme parks, but people are looking for exciting or different."

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From New England to Washington and California, coastal areas of the United States altogether encompass many thousands of small islands worth seeking out. Some of these have become popular retreats for both local and international travellers and known globally for their natural riches, unique history and unmistakable charm.

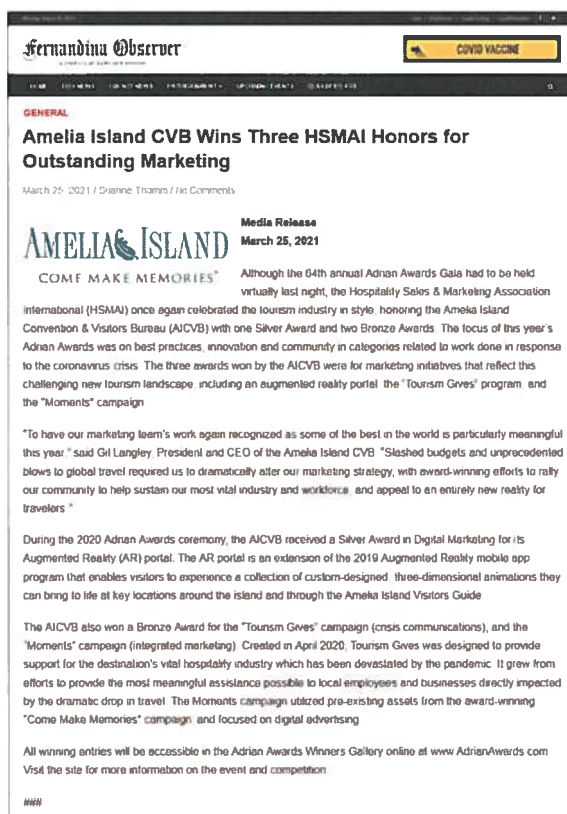
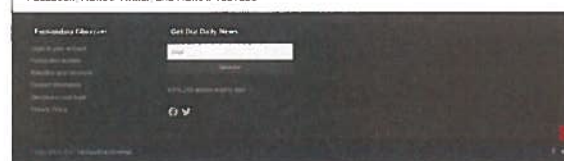
#### AMELIA ISLAND, FLORIDA

Displaying wealth of natural beauty and history, Amelia Island continually inspires. The popular island is a part of the Sea Islands, a chain of barrier islands on Florida's Atlantic coast. Outside of the main hub, Fernandina Beach, the island offers wide-open space, miles of quiet beaches and an environment of rivers, greenways and marshes home to wildlife, birdlife and marine creatures. Spend your time here exploring the historic district of Fernando Beach where independent shops stretch along the harbour-front, dine on local seafood and farm-to-table fare in the district's restaurants, and get involved in outdoor activities like e-bike tours, guided hikes, golf, kayaking and sailing. You can arrange a private nature tour, ride along the beach on horseback and visit the heritage-rich Amelia Island Lighthouse. The diverse offering of accommodation here includes The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island, which sits right on the beachfront.




**About Amelia Island**  
Northeast Florida's coastal treasure. Amelia Island offers long, beautiful beaches, abundant wildlife, and pristine waters. Upscale resorts with world-class spas, championship golf and exclusive dining blend effortlessly with a captivating collection of bed and breakfast inns and historic districts. The island is home to Fernandina Beach, once a vibrant Victorian seaport village, and now a charming downtown district of eclectic shops, attractions, and eateries. Forget the everyday getaway, come make memories on Amelia Island. For visitor information and online planning, visit [AmeliaIsland.com](http://AmeliaIsland.com).

**About HSMIAI**  
The Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMIAI) is committed to growing business for hotels and their partners and is the industry's leading advocate for intelligent, sustainable hotel revenue growth. The association provides hotel professionals and their partners with tools, insights, and expertise to fuel sales, inspire marketing, and optimize revenue through programs such as the Marketing Strategy Conference, Adrian Awards, and HSMIAI ROC. Founded in 1927, HSMIAI is a membership organization comprising more than 5,000 members worldwide, with 40 chapters in the Americas Region. Connect with HSMIAI at [hsmia.org](http://hsmia.org), HSMIAI Facebook, HSMIAI Twitter, and HSMIAI YouTube.













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6/2/19/2021

FLORIDA

BY: JOSH GRUNDIGS

## The Best Florida Beach Towns

If you love the sea, salt, and sand as much as I do, you probably want to visit lots of different beaches on your family vacations. The southern state of Florida (known as the Sunshine State), as a peninsula, offers so many different types of beaches – on the panhandle, Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic Ocean. While I love the actual sand and surf of the beaches, I also really enjoy the attractions, restaurants, and resorts of the Florida beach towns – some of which are small beach towns.

These coastal towns in Florida offer so many different things for families to explore, beyond the great beaches, including museums, state parks, nature trails, aquariums, art galleries, eco-activities, and shopping. While you may want to have some beach days during your vacation, you may want to spend some time doing other things – especially if it's raining or if you've had too many days in the sun. Here are the best Florida beach towns for families – including coastal towns in Florida that are great for family vacations.

### Coastal Towns in Florida: The Best Florida Beach Towns

When planning a visit to one of these beach towns in Florida, find a centrally located hotel, vacation home rental, or resort. That will allow you the opportunity to do all of the different attractions and activities on your vacation itinerary.

Visits to some of these towns can be combined while others are pretty far apart, so consider geography when planning your Florida visit. You may be able to combine destinations either with day trips or a Florida coastal road trip.

#### St. Augustine

This beautiful historic city on the East coast of Florida is one of my favorite places to visit and is one of the oldest towns. While there are beaches and boat rides in St. Augustine, there are so many other things to do as a family. Popular activities include the historic St. George Street, where you'll find shops and restaurants, as well as the Castillo de San Marcos National Monument.

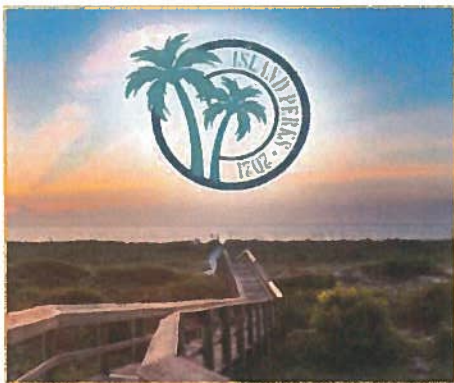
There's a popular hop-on, hop-off bus tour, where you can explore the city and learn more about the history and various attractions that are available. Younger kids will also enjoy the St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park, as well as the St. Augustine Pirate & Treasure Museum.

HAYWORTH PR



## Amelia Island Launches Island Perks Incentive Card Promotion

The Amelia Island CVB recently launched its new Island Perks Incentive Card Promotion, a recovery effort designed to boost the destination's vital tourism industry by generating short-term bookings and increasing traffic and revenue at local businesses. The program provides \$100 Visa incentive cards for participating lodging partners to include in special overnight accommodation packages for visitors. The cards are geofenced to allow purchases only within Nassau County. [AmeliaIsland.com/IslandPerks](http://AmeliaIsland.com/IslandPerks)



Island Perks incentive program is driving business to Nassau County

You can stay right in St. Augustine, or visit as part of a day trip from a nearby destination. During my trips to St. Augustine, we typically stayed elsewhere and visited for the day. If you do stay in St. Augustine, here are some of the [more popular hotels](#).

### Amelia Island

I originally learned about Amelia Island through a conference hosted there, and immediately fell in love with this great place for a family vacation. This barrier island is located on the Florida Atlantic Coast, not too far from Jacksonville. It's about 13 miles long and 4 miles wide and includes Fernandina Beach, American Beach, and Amelia City.

While you are there, you can explore the historic district, with restaurants and shops. There is also the Amelia Island State Park as well as the Fort Clinch State Park.

During my visit, I enjoyed a complimentary stay at the [Omni Amelia Island Resort](#). This family-friendly resort is located right on the beach and would be great for a family vacation. It offers luxurious rooms, golf, two pools, a splash pad, Segway tours, fishing, and a nature center offering nature tours and activities.

In addition to the Omni, you'll find other places to stay on the island. These include a Ritz-Carlton, Hampton Inn, Holiday Inn, and more. You can fly into the Jacksonville airport and it's a quick drive over to Amelia Island.

See reviews of [Amelia Island hotels here](#)

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